



Centre for Distance and Online Education,  
Punjabi University, Patiala.

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Class:M.A.I(Economics)

Semester:3

Paper: I (Political Economy of Development)

Unit:I

Medium:English

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*LessonNo.*

- 1.1 : Political Economy – Scientific Socialist World Outlook
- 1.2 : Dialectical and Historical Materialism
- 1.3 : Mode of Production, Superstructure and Economic Laws
- 1.4 : Mode of Production and Process of Social Development
- 1.5 : Historical Social Formations
- 1.6 : Asiatic Mode of Production

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## ECOM22301T: Political Economy of Development

<b>For Regular</b> Maximum Marks: 100 Internal Assessment: 25 Marks External Assessment: 75 Marks
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Time Allowed: 3 Hours Pass Marks: 35% Teaching Hours (For Regular Students): 55
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<b>For Private Students</b> Maximum Marks: 100
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### INSTRUCTIONS TO THE PAPER-SETTER

For **Regular and Distance Education Students**, the question paper will consist of three sections: A, B and C. Sections A and B will have four questions from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 12 marks each. Section C will consist of 9 short-answer type questions of three marks each, which will cover the entire syllabus uniformly and will carry 27 marks.

For **Private Students**, the question paper will consist of three sections: A, B and C. Sections A and B will have four questions from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 16 marks each. Section C will consist of 9 short-answer type questions of four marks each, which will cover the entire syllabus uniformly and will carry 36 marks.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES

Candidates are required to attempt five questions in all selecting two questions from each of the Section A and B and the entire section C.

#### SECTION-A

Scientific Socialist World Outlook: World outlook, Idealism and materialism, Metaphysics and dialectics, Laws of dialectics, Categories of philosophy, Theory of cognition.

Dialectical and Historical Materialism: Its theory and method, Dialectical materialism (Materialistic conception of human/social history), Nature and role of contradictions.

Mode of Production and Social Superstructure: Factors constituting and forces governing mode of production, Social superstructure and its elements, Dialectical interaction of base and superstructure, About economic development, social transition.

Historical Social Formations: Rise of private property, classes and the State, Distinguishing features of Primitive Communism/ society, Slavery, Feudalism/serfdom, Capitalism/imperialism and Socialism/communism.

Asiatic Mode of Production: The concept and controversy, Characteristics of Asiatic mode. Its specific nature.

#### SECTION-B

Non-Marxian Theories of Development. Critique of the Bourgeois Economics: Basic assumptions, Theoretical gaps and Inadequate guide to practice.

Mode of Punjab Economy : Its social implications, Genesis of economic development in Punjab, Towards industrialization urbanization and socialization. Transition from Agrarian to Industrial Economy.

T.W. Schultz; Transformation of Traditional Agriculture: The problem, The associative efficiency, Farm size, control and incentives, Role of technological change and investment in human agent, A Critique.

Joseph A. Schumpeter; Nature & process of Capitalist development: Framework of analysis, Prime factors in development, Nature of development, Process of decline/end, A Critique.

W.W. Rostow; Transition to Capitalism through stages of Growth: The traditional society, The pre-conditions for take-off, The take-off, The drive to maturity, The age of high mass consumption, A critique.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Karl Marx & F. Engels (1977) : Manifesto of the Communist Party, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 2nd edition, pp. 34-74.
- Joseph Stalin (1978) : Dialectical Materialism, National Book Agency, Pvt. Ltd. , Calcutta, pp.5 to 48.
- Maurice Cornforth (1971) : Dialectical Materialism, National Book Agency, Pvt. Ltd. , Calcutta, 3rd edition, Vol. 1, Chs. 2-9, Vol. II, Chs. 3-10.
- John Eaton (1973) : Political Economy, International Publishers, New York, revised edition, Chs. 2-11.
- J.A. Schumpeter: Theory of Economic Development & Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy.
- W.W. Rostow (1971) : The Stages of Economic Growth, Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, Chs. 1,2 and 10.
- T.W. Schultz (1970) : Transforming Traditional Agriculture, Lyall Book Depot, Ludhiana, 1st Indian edition, Chs. 1-12.
- Paul M. Sweezy (1991) : The Theory of Capitalist Development, K.P.Bagchi & Co., New Delhi, 1st Indian reprint, , Chs. 1,2,4,5,6,8,9,14,15 & 17.
- V.I. Lenin (1978): Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 17th ed., Chs. 1 to 10 or Lenin's Collected Works, Vol.22.
- Andre Gunder Frank (1975) : On Capitalist Underdevelopment, Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- Balbir Singh (2003) : Vikas di Rajnitik Arthikta, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala.
- John S. Augustine (ed.) (1983): Punjab Economy of Punjab: Some Fundamental Issues (menograph), Department of Economics, Punjabi University, Patiala.
- ### SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS
- Karl Marx: Capital , Vol, I Progress Publishers, Moscow (undated), Chs. I,V,VII & VIII. Paul A, Baran (1962): The Political Economy of Growth, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, Indian edition, Chs. 12,5 & 8.
- Leo Huberman (1969): Man's Worldly Goods, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1st Indian edition (reprint), Parts I and II.
- G.M.Meier (ed.) (1964): Leading Issues in Development Economics, Oxford University Press , New York, pp.,3-47.
- Ernest Mandel (1971): Marxist Economy Theory, Rupa & Co., Delhi, 2nd edition. Maurice Dobb (1978): Studies in the Development of Capitalism. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, Chs, 1 to 6.
- Harry Magdoff (1982): The Age of Imperialism, Monthly Review Press, 2nd edition New York and London.
- R.S. Johar and J.S. Khana (ed.) (1983): Studies in Punjab Economy. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.
- G.K Chadha (1986): The State and Rural Economy Transformation: A Case of Punjab 1950 -85, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

**POLITICAL ECONOMY - WORLD SCIENTIFIC  
OUTLOOK**

**1.1.1 Objectives of this Lesson**

**1.1.2 Introduction**

**1.1.3 POLITICAL ECONOMY - WORLD SCIENTIFIC  
OUTLOOK**

**1.1.3.1. Scientific Socialist World Outlook**

**1.1.3.2. Idealism and Materialism**

**1.1.3.3. Dialectical and Historical Materialism**

**1.1.3.4. Laws of Marxist Dialectics**

**1.1.3.5. Law of Transition of Quantitative into Qualitative  
Changes**

**1.1.3.6. Theory of Cognition**

**1.1.4 Summary**

**1.1.5 Key Concepts**

**1.1.6 Long Questions**

**1.1.7 Short Questions**

**1.1.8 Suggested Readings**

**1.1.1 Objectives of this lesson**

The objectives of this lesson are to understand and promote the Marxist dialectical and historical materialist worldview as opposed to idealism.

### 1.1.2 Introduction :

The word meaning of Political Economy is related to two Greek words: Politikos i.e., state, social and Oikonomia denoting managing the household economy. It (Political Economy) is a science which studies the social relations that evolve between people in the process of production, distribution, exchange and consumption of the material benefits. It appeared as a science with the emergence of capitalism. Marxists are of the view that Political Economy has always been a class science. Mercantilism was the first systematic attempt to understand the economic phenomena of the nascent capitalism. But the mercantilists restricted themselves only to analysing the process of circulation and failed to highlight the inner law of capitalist mode of production. The classical bourgeois economists such as Quesnay, Adam Smith and David Ricardo tried mainly to analyse the sphere of production rather than the sphere of circulation. The labour theory of value is regarded as a major contribution of this school. But the representatives of this school were unable to grasp the historically transient character of capitalism. It may be because the internal contradictions of capitalism were just evolving and could not fully reveal themselves at that time.

This classical political economy was replaced by vulgar bourgeois political economy with Malhus, Say and Bastiat as its major representatives. These scholars tried to create a 'semblance of harmony' of class interests by ignoring the internal law of capitalist production system. Sismondi and Proudhon, representing the petty bourgeois political economy, while criticising the contradictions of capitalist system, did not see the way out, called for return to outdated, archaic economic forms.

Karl Marx and F. Engels introduced a major change in the study of political economy. They tried to prove in a scientific way a historically transient character of the capitalist mode of production by revealing the laws of its development. The political economy represented mainly by Marx and Engels expresses the interest which coincide with the wider and vital interest of working class and the progressive development of the productive forces. Marx explained the inner contradictions of the capitalist system on

the basis of his theory of dual character of labour creating a commodity. The theory of surplus value systematically given by Marxist political economy has unveiled the secret of capitalist exploitation. The method of Marxist Leninist political economy is dialectical materialism that tries to explain the general laws governing the development of nature, society and human thought. Marx and Engels developed a genuinely scientific method of studying production relations in political economy.

Now, in this chapter, we shall explain the concepts and method used in the political economy by Marxists and also comparison with those used by non-marxists.

### **1.1.3.1 Scientific Socialist World Outlook**

The scientific socialist world outlook is the Marxian world outlook. It is opposed to the idealist world outlook about life, phenomena and events.

#### **World Outlook**

As a member of society, man witnesses hundreds, thousands of phenomena. We often think about natural phenomena, wishing to penetrate into the secrets of the universe. When came the planets, the stars, the earth and all that exists on it ? What happens to man after the death ?

What is the

purpose of life ? What is happiness and how a society is to be created where all people are happy ? We come upon such questions always and everywhere. They are indispensable, without them people cannot correctly decide what they must do and cannot find their proper place in life.

Only a person who guides himself by a correct world outlook and answers these questions properly can understand what is happening all around us.

But what is world outlook ? A world outlook is the sum total of views on life, phenomena and events. Man must have a well thought out and steadfast world outlook to master events so that events will not master him. Marxian world outlook is based on dialectical and historical materialism and is directly opposed to idealism and metaphysics. This outlook, also known as scientific socialist world outlook, provides a world view which is thought to be scientific and correct.

#### **Metaphysics and Dialectics**

The method by which phenomena are studied is very important. That there can be nothing new in the world, what has been always be and that the society does not stand still, these are two opposite concepts of life, each based on its own method. The former regards life as something invariable, unchanging; it is the metaphysical method. The later regards things and phenomena as variable developing and changing; it is the dialectical

method.

But what is metaphysics ? Metaphysics is that way of thinking which considers things in abstraction from their conditions of existence and in abstraction from their change and development. The concept of fixed, unchanging human nature is an example of the metaphysics, "abstraction or the metaphysical" way of thinking. Engels said, "The method of investigation and thought called metaphysics, preferred to investigate things as given, fixed and stable."<sup>1</sup>

In general metaphysics is a method of thinking which tries to fix the nature, properties and potentialities of everything, it considers once for all. Consequently, it presupposes that each thing has a fixed nature and properties and it thinks in terms of 'things' rather than 'processes'. Therefore,

metaphysics takes the things in terms of hard and fast antitheses of either-or and tries to settle the nature and properties of each thing as a given, separate object of investigation, not considering things in their interconnection and in their change and development.

In opposition to the metaphysical way of thinking, dialectics, teaches us to think of things in their real changes and interconnections. Dialectics, Engels said "Comprehends things and representations, in their essential connection, concentration, motion, origin and ending."<sup>2</sup> The Marxian dialectical method is far richer in content and far wider in its scope as compared with the Pre-marxian dialectics. For it is a method of materialistic understanding of the world which grows out and the guides the practice to change the world.

The properties of things, their relationships, their modes of action and interaction, the processes into which they enter, all are divided into fundamental opposites. The metaphysical way of thinking tries to ignore and discount this opposition and seeks to understand a given subject matter simply in terms of whole number of different properties and different relations of things. But contrary to metaphysics the dialectics, not only are fundamental opposites involved in every subject-matter, these opposites mutually simply each other, are inseparably connected together. This characteristics of opposition is known as polarity: fundamental opposites are polar opposites.

In brief, as Lenin said, "dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites, and this unity is neither harmonious and stable, nor in a state of equilibrium."<sup>3</sup> Rather on the contrary, to quote Lenin; "the unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary,

transitory and relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites, is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute." The existence of fundamental polar opposites, manifesting in every sphere of nature and society, expresses itself in the conflict and struggle of opposed tendencies, which despite of phases of temporary equilibrium, lead to a continuous motion and development, to sharp changes and transformation.

Thus contrary to metaphysics, dialectics refuses to think of things each by itself, as having a fixed nature and properties, but recognises that things come into beings, exist and cease to be in process of unending change and development, in its connection with other things, and in which always manifest the unity and struggle of the opposite properties, aspects and tendencies. This process is characterised of all phenomena, nature and society and leads series of transformation in them.

Self check exercise-1

Q. 1. 1. What is the scientific socialist world outlook, and how does it differ from the idealist world outlook? How does it shape our understanding of natural phenomena and the universe?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. How does historical materialism differ from mechanistic materialism, and what are its guiding principles?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What role do ideas play in social development according to historical materialism?

Ans.....  
.....  
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**1.1.3.2 Idealism and Materialism**

The things and phenomena which exist outside our consciousness, independent of us and which we perceive through our senses-vision, hearing, touch, tastes and smell-are materials (a stone, a tree, a book and all that surrounds us, the boundless external world) and they constitute nature also called matter. On the other hand, our thoughts, sensations, emotions, desires and will etc. that which we can neither measure nor weigh, see or hear constitute our consciousness. Consciousness is not a matter because it cannot exist outside the human brain and independent of man.



What is the relationship between matter and consciousness ? In other words, does consciousness engender nature, matter or on the contrary, does nature, give rise to consciousness ? It follows that no thinking proceeded nature, matter but on the contrary, nature, matter proceeded thinking consciousness. Thinking or consciousness came into being at a definite stage or development of nature before that there was no consciousness although nature already existed.

Consciousness depends on processes operating in the body, the brain and the nerves. For man to have consciousness it is not enough to have a brain, but in addition to that man must live in human society. Consciousness is a social phenomenon because man's consciousness is always formed on the basis of his surroundings or the conditions of the material world in which he lives. Thus matter is primary and man's consciousness is secondary, because it is being that determines consciousness.

The essence of the question of primacy of consciousness or matter lies in the relation of thinking and being, in the difference between idealism and materialism. Materialism and idealism are two opposed abstract theories about the nature of the world. These are opposed ways of interpreting and understanding every question, and consequently, they express opposite approaches in practice and lead to very different conclusions in terms of practical activity. Idealism is that way of interpreting things which regards the spiritual as prior to the material and supposes that a thing material is dependent on and determined by something spiritual. Materialism regards the material as prior and recognizes that everything, spiritual is dependent on and determined by something material.

Idealism is a continuation of the religious approach to question, even though particular idealist theories have shed their religious skin. Idealism is inseparable from superstition and belief in the supernatural, the mysterious and unknowable. "Idealism is clerical obscurantism"<sup>4</sup> wrote Lenin. The roots of the idealist conception of things are the same as those of religion and it has at its heart a kind of doubling of the world and invents a dominating ideal or supernatural world over and against the real material world. It is, thus, a doctrine which says beyond material reality there is higher, spiritual

reality in terms of which the material world is in the last analysis, to be explained.

Two important forms of idealism are : subjective idealism and objective idealism. The doctrine which holds that everything commonly regarded as material exists solely in the mind of the subject (man) is called subjective idealism, as distinct from objective idealism which holds that the primary source of being is not man's consciousness but consciousness without man, some objective spirit independent of human consciousness.

In opposition to all the forms of idealism and tricky compromise between materialism and idealism, for materialism there is only one world, the materialist world and it refuses to invent a second for imaginary or superior ideal world. Materialism seeks an explanation in terms belonging to the material world, in terms of factors which we can verify, understand and control.

By emphasizing that the most important truths and beyond the reach of science, that belief the things should be on the basis not of evidence, experience and practice but in some 'higher' source of information of those who pretend to know best, that solution of human problem is possible through the inner regeneration of the soul, idealism right through history

has been weapon of reaction and essentially a conservation force. It has been ideology helping the defence of things as they are and the preservation of illusions in men's mind about their true conditions. On the other hand, every advance of science generates materialism and is helped along by materialist ideas. In fact, the whole history of human thought has been history of the fight of materialism against idealism. 'The genius of Marx and Engels lies precisely in the fact that during a very long period, nearly half a century, they developed materialism, further advanced one fundamental trend in philosophy.....'"<sup>5</sup> wrote Lenin.

### **1.1.3.3 Dialectical and Historical Materialism**

Before Marx and Engels materialism was predominantly mechanistic, produced in the past by the revolutionary bourgeoisie. Mechanistic materialism was in essence an ideology, a mode of theorising of the rising bourgeoisie, which arose and developed in opposition of feudal ideology. Mechanistic materialism makes certain dogmatic assumptions; that the world consists of permanent and stable things which have definite and fixed properties that the particles of matter or things are by nature inert and no change ever takes place except by the action of some external cause, that the motion in matter or the change in things can be reduced to the mechanical interaction of the separate particles of matter, that each particle has its own fixed nature independent of every thing else and that relationship between separate things are merely external relationships.

Overcoming and passing beyond the dogmatic standing of mechanistic materialism dialectical materialism explain that the world is not a complex of things but a complex of processes; that the matter is inseparable from its motion, that the motion of matter comprehends an infinite diversity of forms,

which arise one from another and pass into one another, and that things exist not as a separate individual units but in essential relations and interconnection.

Dialectical materialism understands the world not as a complex of ready-made things but complex of processes in which all things go through in an uninterrupted change into being and passing away. It considers that matter is always in motion and motion is the mode of existence of matter. It is not through some outside force that motion is impressed upon matter rather it is caused by the inner impulses of development, the self motion inherent in all processes. The motion of matter comprehends all changes and processes in the universe, from mere change of place thinking. Dialectical materialism recognise, therefore, the infinite diversity of the

forms of motion of matter, the transformation of one form into another, the development of the forms of motion of matter from the simple to the complex from the lower to the higher. Further, according to dialectical materialism in the manifold processes taking place in the universe, things come into being, change and pass out of being, not as separate individual units but in essential relations and interconnection. In dialectical materialism, therefore is establish a materialist conception for richer in context and more comprehensive in scope that in the former mechanistic materialism.

Dialectical materialism is a scientific world outlook, because it does not seek to establish and philosophy above' science but bases its conception of the material world, on the discoveries of the science. Every advance in science, is an advance of materialism against idealism, for it shows the order and development of the world. "With each epoch making discovery even in the sphere of natural science, materialism has to change its form."<sup>6</sup> The discoveries of the natural science (e.g. the law of transmutation of energy the Darwinian theory of evolution, the theory of the cell, etc.) have demonstrated that the materialist picture which they unfold is dialectical one. Again to quote Engels. "Nature is the proof, with very rich materials incur daily and thus has shown that, in the last resort, nature works dialectically and not metaphysically."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, dialectical materialism means understanding things just as they are, in their interconnection and movement. It is this sense that dialectical materialists is a scientific world and is the basis of Marxism which has provided the science of society. The scientific study of society shows that human history developed from stage to stage according to definite laws and that men themselves by understanding laws of social development are the active force in the development.

The general theory of the motive forces and the laws of social changes developed on the basis of Marxism is known as the materialist conception of history or historical materialism. This was arrived at by applying the materialist world outlook (dialectical materialism) to the solution of social questions.

Materialism was with Marx no longer simply a theory aimed at interpreting the world but a guide to the practice of changing the world. Marx declared that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however, is to change it."<sup>8</sup>

The basic principle of historical materialism is that change and development is society, as in nature take place in accordance with objective laws. What happens in society is brought about by the nature, conscious

activities of human individuals which in the last analysis, are conditioned by the operation of laws economic development operating independent of the will of men. From this basic standpoint are derived three guiding principles which historical materialism employs in the understanding of social development.<sup>9</sup>

The first guiding principle is that social processes, like processes in nature, are regulated by objective laws which are discoverable and are characteristic of the process and objects concerned. For materialism the history of man is the history of the development of society according to these regular and objective laws. It means that social events take place only when the condition causing them have come into being, that once certain events have taken place, their effects will follow independently of our desires or intentions and that though the circumstances are continually changing nevertheless, the same causal connections are discoverable in different sequence of events. In this sense, the development of society has unique features which distinguish social changes from natural events.

The force that determines the outcome of people's intended acts, the development of the circumstances under which people form their different aims and the interests which these aims express are determined by operation of the objective laws which are economic in character. They are the laws governing the development of production, the condition in production and exchange, the rise of classes, class relationships and the class struggle. In the context, Marxism maintains that the historical development is determined, not by the role played in history and influence exerted on the course of events, by some exceptional individuals, but by the movement of classes and the class struggles and called exceptional individuals only play their role as representatives of social classes.

The second guiding principle is that the views current in society, together with the institutions of society, are of material life. The material life of society determines its spiritual life. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence determines their consciousness"<sup>10</sup>, wrote Marx.

The ultimate causes of historical events are not to be found in the changes in men's minds, but in the changes in the conditions of material life. In this context while explaining Marx's standpoint Stalin said that, "the source of the formation of that spiritual life of society, the origin of social ideas, social theories, political views and political institutions, should not be sought for in the ideas, theories, political institutions themselves,

but in the conditions of the material life of society in the social being, of which these ideas, theories, views etc., are the reflection."<sup>11</sup> Earlier, Engels wrote that the conceptions and ideals of historical period are most simply to be "explained from the economic conditions to life and from the social and political relations of the period which are in turn determined by their economic conditions."<sup>12</sup>

In general, whatever are conditions of material life of society always, such are the ideas, theories, views and institutions of the society. The economic structure of society always constitutes the basis on which the whole superstructure of social views and institutions arises and to which it corresponds. The rise of new views and institutions (superstructure) always reflects that the fact the material conditions and economic structure (the base) of society is changing.

The third guiding principle of historical materialism deals with the significance and role which ideas play in social development. Having arisen on the basis of material conditions, ideas play an active role in the change and development of material life of society. "Everything which sets men in motion must go through their minds" wrote Engels. "But what form it takes in the mind will depend very much upon the circumstances."<sup>13</sup> "Therefore, materialism, in opposition to idealism, stresses that ideas rise only as reflection of given material conditions and, in turn these ideas play a role in the human activity of changing the material conditions.

There is a tendency for ideas to linger on. Such ideas tend to continue in existence even after the condition which gave rise to them have disappeared, or in the state of disappearing. These ideas come to act as reactionary, conserving forces hindering the progress development in society and, thus, serve the forces which are striving to preserve the old social conditions and hamper the forces striving to bring new social conditions into being.

In class society, ideas reflect the standpoint and tendencies of different classes and the class struggle is waged by means of ideas. The old ideas which hamper the progressive transformation of society are championed by the reactionary classes and the new ideas based on the need of social development are championed by the progressive historical classes. "New social ideas and theories", write Stalin, "arise only after the development of the material life of society has set new tasks before society. But once they have arisen they become a most potent force which facilitates the progress of society." Because, "the new social ideas and theories force their way through the possession of masses, mobilize and organize them against the

moribund forces of society, and thus facilitate and overthrow of those forces which hamper development of the material life of society."<sup>14</sup>

Self check exercise-2

Q.1. what are the three laws of Marxist dialectics, and how do they explain the development of the material world and society? Provide examples of how these laws are applicable in different contexts.

Ans.....  
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Q.2. What is the concept of laws in Marxist dialectics, and how do they relate to the objective world?

Ans.....  
.....  
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Q. 3. What are the three fundamental laws of Marxist dialectics?

Ans.....  
.....  
.....

**1.1.3.4 Laws of Marxist Dialectics**

A law was described by Lenin as "one of the stages of the cognition of man, unity and connection, of the reciprocal dependent totality of the world process."<sup>15</sup> A law gives expression to the general of necessary, essential and relatively stable recurring connection of the real world which, gives the corresponding conditions, determine the character and direction of development. A law is a form of universality in nature and expressed the similar or identical feature common to a group of objectives and phenomena, it is unity of multiform phenomena.

The objective laws of nature and society are a concrete expression of the universal connection and development of the material world. Materialist dialectics recognise the material world, the objective laws of its motion and forms of existence, as a reflection of its objective reality. The laws of dialectics constitute a unity in content and are the laws of the dialectical development of nature, of society and thought. There are three laws of the Marxist (materialist) dialectics. Law of the unity and struggle of opposites; law of the transition of quantity into quality and law of negation of the negation.

**Law of the Unity and Struggle of Opposites**

The law of the unity and struggle of opposites is the most important law of dialectics. It reveals the objectives, source of the motions and development of all phenomena and processes of material world. The essential aspects and tendencies inside the objects, which at once exclude

and imply each other, are called opposites. The whole of reality, all the natural and social world is an endless diversity of various antipodal properties, aspects and tendencies. The two sides of magnet, the positive and negative, electric charge, attraction and repulsion, etc., are opposites in organic nature. Assimilation and dissimilation, heredity and mutability, growth of the cells and the atrophy of the old, are such opposites in living nature.

The connection and interaction within one and the same objects or phenomena, helps us to understand their nature. That is why, dialectics speaks not simply of opposites, but of their unity aspects of phenomena within some concrete whole. The parts of the whole are always connected and interact with each other at the time. This interaction is the struggle of opposites, which is absolute, it never ceases and constantly upsets the temporary equilibrium, stability and unity of new opposites, making the



latter no more than relative. The struggle causes qualitative changes in objects and phenomena and leads to the substitution of a new unity of new opposites for given unity. The interaction to the aspect of the law-relative unity and absolute struggle of opposite gives rise to a compound dialectical contradiction, which constitutes the internal source of the motion and development of all phenomena in nature, society and human cognition. In social life however, the transformation of opposites may occur in different directions, depending on conditions, the time and places.<sup>16</sup>

The conflict of opposites in the process of development assumes various forms, leading to a variety of contradictions in reality itself. The change in the relation between opposites also explains the fact of the development of contradictions, their varying intensity and the character in which they manifest themselves as different stages of development of phenomena. Moreover, contradictions may be at different stages of development and may have a different character, direction and intensity opposites play different roles in each stage.

This type of contradiction is classified in a materialist dialectics by their specific nature, their character and their role in development process. The most important of the main types of contradictions are the internal, the external, basic and secondary, and antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. Internal contradictions are those which express the relation between opposite aspects of tendencies within a given system, object or phenomena. They play the leading part in the self-development of things and phenomena. External contradictions between various things, phenomena, or their aspects are the conditions in which self-development takes place. The difference between internal and external condition is relative and should never be considered as absolute. Basic contradictions are those internal contradictions which express between relations of the most essential determinative aspects and tendencies of a given thing or phenomena. The relations of non-essential aspects, on the other hand, or non-basic secondary contradictions. Their elimination does not alter the essence of the given thing or phenomena.

The prime distinction of social contradictions is that it may be antagonistic or non-antagonistic. Antagonistic contradictions are typical of the exploiting social formation with their production relations of domination and subordination. In them, the social opposites are irreconcilably hostile and their relation take the form of extremely acute contradictions. These are resolved through social conflicts. The antagonism of classes is the leading contradiction and the motive force of the development of antagonistic

societies. On the other hand, non-antagonistic contradiction in social life express different, but not inimically antithetical, interest of men, which is why the method of resolving them do not result in the destruction of any classes and social groups. Non-antagonistic contradiction may sometimes occur in antagonistic class formations, but on the whole, such contradictions are typical of socialist society.

#### **1.1.3.5 Law of Transition of Quantitative into Qualitative changes**

The law of the transformation of quantitative into qualitative changes defines the way and the form of development in all the spheres of natural and social world. It represents a definite connection between the opposites of quantity and expresses the leap like character of the transition from one quality to another.

The first immediate distinction between objects of the surrounding world, with which man has to deal and who are infinite in diversity, is made by differentiating between the qualitative and quantitative aspects. Quality is the internal definiteness of objects and phenomena, the sum total of the stable characteristics which distinguish them from each other. The various properties of an object are immediate expression of its quality in relation to, and in connection with other objects, this determines the nature of interaction between them. Apart from specific qualities, all objects and phenomena have quantitative side. Quality is the definiteness of an object which expresses in size, volume, scale, degree of development, sum of parts number as properties, etc. Like quality is objective property of objects but takes the form above all of external definiteness.

The qualitative and quantitative aspects play different part in the process of development. When an object or phenomenon loses its properties it undergoes to substantial changes; its structure and nature becomes fundamentally different and gives rise to new objects or phenomenon. Change within certain limits in the quantitative side of a thing-size, volume, dimension does not work for radical transformation and does not affect their internal nature. But once quantitative change goes beyond these limits, called measure, the given correspondence or unity of quantity and quality, is upset.

Quantitative changes are non-essential evolutionary changes, which do not upto a point affect the internal nature of phenomena. Qualitative change, on the other hand, lead to fundamental transformation as a result of which phenomena change their essence and internal nature. But there is a deep mutual connection that exists between quantitative and qualitative changes and this connection is law-governed. This law is that in the process of

development the quantitative change, leads to qualitative change. From an accumulated evolutionary development revolutionary changes or development takes place. This is the essence of the dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality. The law like all the laws of materialist dialectics is universal and objective. Modern science provides increasing evidence about the transformation of quantity into quality in all natural and social processes.

In the history of mankind the dialectical forms of social development of a highly complex character and the transformation in the development of nature, the distinction lies in that the qualitative transition from one state of society to another takes place as a result of human activity, the struggle of the working masses. The revolutionary transition from the old to the new society which is the transformation of quantitative into qualitative changes in the development of society, is the most important of dialectical regularity of man's history and is the main line of the dialectic of revolutionary transitions. However, all revolution upheavals and transformations, which radically alter the course of human history, are never sudden and unexpected, rather they are the result of long economical, political and ideological development in the preceding periods.

There is a connection between the dialectical laws of the unity and struggle of opposites and the transformations of the quantity into quality. This transition of the quantitative into qualitative changes is a turning-point, a break in gradual development manifested in the substitution of new quality for the old. The decisive turn is a dialectical leap in the development. Lenin noted the radical role of leaps in social development and stressed; "it is in such periods that the numerous contradictions which slowly accumulate during periods of so called peaceful development become resolved. It is in such periods that the direct role of the different classes in determining the form of social life is manifested with the greater force, and that the foundations are laid for the political superstructure which then persists for a long time on the basis of the new relations of production."<sup>17</sup>

Materialist dialectics distinguishes leaps by their content, scale, rate and form. But in every case, any dialectical leap always marks a transition to a new quality in the development of processes and phenomena.

#### Law of Negation of the Negation

The law of negation of the negation is that law of dialectics which defines the main tendency and relation of the old to the new in the development of the natural and social world. The transition of objects or phenomena into their opposites engenders qualitatively new objects and phenomena

which differ from the old and may, therefore, be said to negate them in the process of development. The resolution of contradiction leads to a dialectical negation of the old and obsolete by the new and progressive. Dialectical negation is the product of the struggle of opposites and derives objectively from the existence of contradictory, mutually negating tendencies of development.

Dialectical negation is not identical with the simple destruction of an object or phenomenon. It implies not absolute destruction of the old, but retention of some of the aspects. The moment of connection between the new and valuable and positive in their earlier stages in continuity of development. Historical continuity is an important moment in the development of social life. Transition from one mode of production to another takes the form of a dialectical negation, marked by the retention of the positive elements of the old mode and, above all, of the earlier productive forces.

The process of continuous development is a process of the origination of the new, its rise and fall, and the emergence of subsequent new movement, and so on ad infinitum. A series of transformation occurs, the initial state is negated by its opposite (first negation) which, for its parts, turns into its parts, turns into its own opposition in the process of development and negates the preceding stage second negation, (negation of the animals and negation). Lenin said that, this is a development that repeats, as it were, stages that already been passed but repeats them in a different way on a higher basis. It is this sort of development that the law of negation of the negation embraces.<sup>18</sup>

The law of negation the of negation has very broad scope. Engels described it as, "an extremely general and for this reason extremely far-reaching and important law of development of nature, history of thought, : a law which hold good in the animal and plant kingdoms, in mathematics, in history and in philosophy."<sup>19</sup> Modern science and socio-historical practice furnish a variety of proofs of the operations of this law in the inorganic nature, in the organic world, and in human society and thought.

The progressive development however has a different content in living nature and in human society. The basic regularities of socio-historical progress depend on the level of development of material production. The degree of human control over the forces of nature (as expressed through the development of the productive forces) and man's own social relations (as expressed through the relation of production) is the concrete historical measure of social progress. The dialectics of upgrade development,

preceding from the lower forms to the higher is most strikingly revealed in the replacement of obsolete socio economic formations by improved ones and the development of the material productive forces is decisive factor in this process.

The fact that the law of the negation of the negation is universal and that its content is specific, affects the forms in which it manifests itself. The nature and character of the concrete process of development determine the number of its stages. The history of human society, for example embraces in general, five social formations which unquestionably constitute a series of negations, stages or cycles of progressive development. This process of development is highly complex and dialectically contradictory process and therefore, does not rule out regressive movements in the various stages.

Thus, in brief, the laws of the Marxist (Materialist) dialectics reveal the inner objective processes of the motion and development of the whole material world and show the sources of motive forces of development. They open to man the real prospects of social progress and indicate the way for the revolutionary transformation of reality.

#### Categories of Marxian Philosophy

Everything man knows about the surrounding world and about himself is couched in the form of general concepts, that is categories. Categories are forms of reflection in the mind of universal laws governing the objective world. Lenin described them as "stages of distinguishing i.e. of cognising the world, focal point in the web, which assist in cognising and mastering it."<sup>20</sup>

The categories of dialectics reflect the aspects of dialectical development and its various regular concepts. Whereas the law of dialectics reflect the most general regularities of the motion of the material world, dialectical categories express the various essential aspects and connections in the complex and contradictory process of development. Every category reflects some general laws governed connections of the objective world, while as Lenin put it, together they "embrace conditionally, approximately, the universal law governing character of extremely moving and developing nature."<sup>21</sup>

The category of matter is primary philosophical category. Motion is the mode of existence of matter. Space and time are the forms of its existence, consciousness is a function of highly organized matter, a reflection of the material world; quantity and quality, causes and effects, and other categories as well, are also characteristics of matter in motion. Dialectical

categories are, therefore, all organically in connection with the categories of matter and motion. The categories of dialectics are mutually connected and turn into each other in certain conditions.

This fluid interconnection of categories is a generalized, reflection of the interconnection of phenomenon in objective reality. All categories are historical and, hence cannot be any immobile, external system of categories.

Some of the basic categories of the Marxian materialist dialectics are ; matter and mind, motion and the rest; the universal and individual; the general and the particular, the part or the whole ofthe system; content and form, essence and appearance, cause and effect, necessity and change, necessity and freedom, possibility, probability and reality, substance and phenomena, quality, structure and function and so on.

Each category embraces an enormous number of narrower concepts while all categories combine or embrace all concepts at the command of human thought. These categories develop represent a unity of posites and are connected as they reflect different characteristics and aspects of the external world and different processes in it.

In this way dialectics equips us with a scientific method of analysing the complex social process, enables us to foresee the future and to determine ne the direction and the appropriate forms of struggle. In the sense, the Marxist dialectics is an important method for the revolutionary reconstruction of material world.

Self check exercise-3

Q.1. How does metaphysical thinking differ from dialectical thinking in the study of phenomena? Explain the concept of polarity and its significance in dialectical materialism.

Ans.....  
.....  
.....

Q.2. How does Marxist dialectics understand the development of society and nature?

Ans.....  
.....  
.....

Q. 3. How does Marxism view the relationship between material conditions and human consciousness?

Ans.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**1.1.3.6. Theory of Cognition**

Cognition: (1) The act or process of knowing: perception. (2) The product of such a process: Thing known, perceived, etc. 3 Obs knowledge

The mental processes which enable the people to know objects, their qualities and relations are known as cognitive process or cognitions. These mental processes generally accompany such different nervous processes as receive their excitation from sensitive or sense cells in the sense-organs. Such sense cells are specially developed parts of the bodily tissues which are most easily excitable by particular parts of stimuli, e.g. sense cells of hearing in the ear are excitable by particular vibrations in the air or sound waves; the sense cells of vision in the eye are excitable by certain vibrations in light waves. Every sense cell becomes receptive to only selected stimuli from its environment. Hence sometimes sense-organs, especially the sensory cells are known as receptors (Herrick, C.J.) Essentials of psychology, Jalote, S., Dec. 2014 1974, Chandigarh.

Cognition is a social- historical process of people's a creative activity for designing to shape their knowledge which in turn underlines the men's aims and models of their actions. throughout the history of class antagonistic society, when there was an antithesis between mental and physical labour and where creative activity was socially opposed to monotonous routine work, C. was a rule, a special function of those who were professionally engaged in spiritual production. q.v. (scientific, aesthetic, ethical, religious, moral and other activities). Due to this reasons the theory of knowledge was elaborated as a theory of specific, exclusively spiritual activities alienated from practice (see theory and practice). This engendered agnosticism and idealism in the understanding of C. The dialectico- materialist theory of knowledge views practical activity as a basis of c. and a criterion of true knowledge. C. Begins with man's action on nature, with the processing of natural substances and utilization of objects and their properties for the needs of production. Actually practical activity of men is at the same time a means of their communication. As men cut stones or smelted metals etc. the essential properties of these objects were reflected and fixed in their thought. Metals and stones ceased to be for man just a sum total of their external properties perceived by his sense organs. For example seeing an object, man, as it were, superimposed on it the historically shaped habits of processing and utilizing it. It is because of this objects become the aim of his actions consequently living perception becomes, an element of man's sensuous- practical activities and this living perception takes place in such forms as sensation, perception, motion etc. These properties and function of objects, their objects value fixed in man's single-speech activity become the meaning and the sense of the words. It is with the help man created definitions of the objects, their properties and manifestations thanks to his ability of abstract thinking. The logical activities of thought is effected in various forms, i.e. notion and judgement, induction and deduction, beside analysis and synthesis, construction and hypothesis and theories. It happens only when socio-productive practice confirms the coincidence of ideas and hypotheses with reality, so it can be said that they are true. In the words of Lenin, " From living perception to abstract thought, and from this to practice- such as a dialectical path of the cognition of truth, of the cognition of objective reality". (Vol. 38, p. 171), It is the truth of knowledge which is practically verified, not only in an isolated special experiment. Social-productive activities as a whole, the entire social being defines, deepens and verifies knowledge throughout its history. In as much as it is definition enough to distinguish objective



truth from error, to confirm the truth of our knowledge, practice is at the same time a developing process, which is limited at every given stage by the potentialities of production, its technical level, etc. This means that it is also a reality, as a result of which its development does not allow truth to be transformed into a dogma, into an immutable absolute. However the revolutionary remarking of the old and the building of the new society is only possible given the true knowledge of the objective laws governing nature and social development

#### **1.1.4. Summary**

The scientific socialist world outlook, based on Marxian principles, opposes the idealist perspective and aims to comprehend natural phenomena and life's purpose. It recognizes that a correct world outlook helps individuals navigate life effectively. Dialectical and historical materialism form the foundation of this outlook, rejecting metaphysics and emphasizing interconnected processes. Materialism posits that matter is primary, consciousness is secondary, and social development is driven by objective laws independent of individual will. Historical materialism explains societal changes as the result of economic conditions. Marxist dialectics involve three laws: unity and struggle of opposites, transition of quantity into quality, and negation of the negation.

#### **1.1.5. Key Concepts**

1. **Scientific socialist world outlook:** Socialist worldview based on empirical analysis, advocating equitable progress.
2. **Marxist dialectics:** Dialectical reasoning, central to Marxism, explores contradictions' development.
3. **Historical materialism:** Marxist theory linking society's evolution with material conditions.
4. **Metaphysics:** Philosophical study of reality, beyond observable phenomena and nature.

#### **Long Questions**

Describe the relationship between matter and consciousness according to the scientific socialist world outlook. Why is consciousness considered a social phenomenon, and how does it depend on material conditions?

What is historical materialism, and how does it apply the principles of dialectical materialism to understand social development and change? How do ideas play a role in the process of social transformation, according to historical materialism?

#### **1.1.7. Short Questions**

1. What is the difference between the scientific socialist and idealist world outlooks?
2. Why is it important to have a well-thought-out and steadfast world outlook?
3. How does metaphysical thinking differ from dialectics?
4. Define idealism and materialism, and explain their relationship with matter and consciousness.

### 1.1.8 Suggested Readings

1. F. Engels : Ludwing Feuerbach, *In K. Marx and F Engels, Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1870, p. 393.
2. Frolov,I : Dictionary of Political Economy, Program Publishers, Maxcow, 1994
3. F. Engels : *Anti Duhring*, Moscow, 1969, p. 31
4. V.I. Lenin : *Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works*, Vol. 31. Moscow. 1962, p. 360.
5. V.I. Lenin : *Ibid*, p. 363
6. V.I. Lenin : *Empirio-Criticism and Historical Materialism'* Collected Works Vol. 14, Moscow, 1972, p. 336.
7. F. Engels : 'Ludwing Feuerbach' ..... op. cit., p. 349.
8. F. Engels : '*Anti Duhring*', op. cit., p. 33.
9. K. Marx : 'Thesis' on Feureback XI in K Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, Moscow
10. Maurice Cornforth : *Dialectical Materialism*, Vol. 2, Calcutta, 1971, p. 9.
11. K. Marx : *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Preface, Moscow, 1970, p. 21.
12. J. Stalin : *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Calcutta, 968. p. 16.
13. F. Engels : In K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, op. cit., p. 85.
14. F. Engels : "Ludwing Feuerbach, op. cit., pp. 367-368.
15. J. Stalin : op. cit, p. 18.
16. V.I. Lenin : Collected Works.
17. J. Andreyew et al : *Fundamentals of Dialectical Materialism*, Ch. 4, Moscow, 1967, pp. 10-186.
18. V.I. Lenin : *Collected Works*, Vol. 13, Moscow, 1972 p. 37

19. V.I. Lenin : *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, Moscow, 1964 p. 54
20. F. Engels : *Anti-Duhring*, op. cit., p. 168.
21. V.I. Lenin : *"Philosophical Notebooks"* op. cit., p. 93.
22. V.I. Lenin : *Ibid*, p. 182.

## DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

### 1.2.1 Objectives of this lesson

### 1.2.2 Introduction

### 1.2.3 DIALECTICAL AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

#### 1.2.3.1. Marxist Philosophical Materialism

#### 1.2.3.2. Laws of Development

#### 1.2.3.3. Role of Contradiction

#### 1.2.3.4. Historical Materialism

#### 1.2.3.5. Materialist Conception Human/social History

#### 1.2.3.6. Materialism and Science of Society

#### 1.2.3.7. Role of Ideas in Social Life

#### 1.2.3.8. Mode of Production and social Superstructure

### 1.2.4 Summary

### 1.2.5 Key Concepts

### 1.2.6 Long Questions

### 1.2.7 Short Questions

### 1.2.8 Suggested Readings

#### 1.2.1. Objectives of this lesson

Understand the materialist conception of history, which applies a dialectical and materialist worldview to interpret and change society. It emphasizes objective laws governing social development, the role of ideas, and the dialectical relationship between the economic base and the superstructure.

#### 1.2.2. Introduction

Marxian world outlook has two integrated components; dialectical materialism, and historical materialism. The science of dialectical and historical materialism has given to the marxian world view the status of a scientific world outlook.

#### **Dialectical Materialism**

The first aspect of the Marxist world outlook is dialectical materialism. "It is called dialectical and historical materialism because its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them, is dialectical, while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of the phenomena, its theory, is materialistic."<sup>1</sup>

Dialectics comes from the Greek word 'dialego' which means to discuss, to debate. In its modern sense, dialectics is a method of apprehending nature. Marx and Engels took from the Hegel's dialectics only its rational kernel, casting aside its Hegelian idealistic shell, and developed dialectics further so as to lend it a 'modern scientific form. Only the revolutionary aspect of Hegel's Philosophy was adopted and developed by them. Further Marx and Engels took from Feuerbach's materialism its inner kernel, developed it into a scientific philosophical theory of materialism and cast aside its idealist and religious ethical encumbrances.

### **Marxist Dialectical Method**

The principle features of the Marxist dialectical method highlight the fact that in its essence dialectics is the direct opposite of metaphysics. The principal features, as outlined by Stalin<sup>2</sup> are :

- (a) Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics does not regard nature as an accidental agglomeration of things, of phenomena, unconnected with, isolated from and independent of each other, but as a connect and integral whole in which things, phenomena are organically connected with, dependent on, and determine by, each other.
- (b) Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics holds that nature is not in a state of rest and immobility, stagnation and immutability, but in a state of continuous movement and change, of continuous renewal and

development, where something is always arising and developing and something always disintegrating and dying away.

- (c) Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics does not regard the process of development as a simple process of growth, where quantitative changes do not lead to qualitative changes but as a development which passes from insignificant and imperceptible quantitative changes to open another, they occur not accidentally but as the natural result of an accumulation of imperceptible and gradual quantitative changes.
- (d) Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics holds that internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature, for they all have their negative and positive sides, a past and future, something dying away and something developing, and that the struggle between these opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between that which is disappearing and that which is developing constitutes the internal content of the process of development, the internal content of the formation of quantitative changes into qualitative changes.

Therefore, all nature from the smallest thing to the biggest is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change. In its proper meaning, dialectics is the study of the contradiction with in the very essence of things, because, as Lenin said, "the essence of dialectics" is embodied in the doctrine of the unity of opposites" and "development is the struggle of opposites."<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.3.1. Marxist Philosophical Materialism**

The principle features of Marxist philosophical materialism, which is the direct opposite of philosophical idealism, as outlined and elaborated by Stalin<sup>4</sup>, are :

- (a) Contrary to idealism, which regards the world as the embodiment of an 'absolute idea', a 'Universal spirit', 'consciousness', Marx's philosophical materialism holds that the world is by its very nature material, that interconnection and interdependence of phenomena, as established by the dialectic method, is a law of the development of moving matter, and that the world develops in accordance with the laws of movement of matter and stands in no need of an 'Universal spirit'.
- (b) Contrary to idealism, which as that only our consciousness really exists and that the material world; being nature, exists only in our consciousness in our sensations, ideas and perceptions, the Marxist materialist philosophy holds that, matter, nature being, is an objective

reality existing outside and independent of our consciousness, in our consciousness, and that consciousness is secondary, derivative, since it is a reflection of matter, a reflection of being that thought is a product of matter which in its development has reached a high degree of perfection, namely of the brain, and the brain is the organ of thought; and that therefore one cannot separate thought from matter without committing a grave error.

- (c) Contrary to idealism, which denies the possibility to knowing the world and its laws which does not believe in the authenticity of our knowledge, does not recognize objective truth, and holds that the world is full of "things in themselves" that can never be known to science, Marxist philosophical materialism holds that the world and its laws are fully knowable, that our knowledge of the laws of nature, tested by experiment and practice is authentic knowledge having the validity of objective truth, and that there are no things in the world which are unknowable, but only things which are still not known but which will be disclosed and made by the efforts of science and practice.

In this way, Marxism decisively rejects idealism and such other views which are always linked in one way or another with religion. Materialist outlook on nature simply conceives nature just as it exists without any foreign admixture. The essence of the Marxist philosophical materialism lies in the understanding that it is impossible to separate thought from matter that things and that matter is subject of all changes. In fact, The paramount question of the whole of philosophy is that concerning the relation of thinking to being, of the spirit to nature. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness<sup>5</sup>," Wrote Marx.

### **Dialectical Conception of Social Development**

Whereas the earlier philosophers considered that the universe always remained the same perpetual cycle of the same processes, science has demonstrated the fact of evolution. But while recognising the fact of evolutionary development, bourgeois philosophers have tried to interpret and explain it in fatalistic and idealistic terms. They have conceived of development as being a smooth continuous process not recognising the occurrence of abrupt breaks in continuity, the leap from one stage to another and The contradictory nature of all social processes. Marx and Engels on the other hand have established the dialectical materialist conception of development. According to it, the key to understanding

development in nature and society and the leaps and breaks in continuity which characterize all real development, lies in the inner contradictions and opposite tendencies which are in operation in all processes.

The dialectical conception of development as formulated by Marx and Engels, on the basis of revolutionary aspect of Hegel's philosophy is summed up by Lenin in the following words: "A development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed by repeating them in a different way, on a higher basis ("the negation of negation"), a development, so to speak, that breaks in continuity, the transformation of quantity into quality, inner implies towards development, imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies acting on a given body, or within a given phenomenon, or within a given society, independence and closest and indissoluble connection between all aspects of any phenomenon (history constantly revealing over new aspects) a connection that provides a uniform, and universal process of motion, one that follows definite laws-these are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of development that is richer than the conventional one."<sup>6</sup> This discovery by Marx and Engels of understanding, interpreting and explaining development in a materialist way, on the basis of dialectical materialism, was a revolution in philosophy.

#### Self check exercise-1

Q.1. How was the materialist conception of history arrived at, and what does it seek to achieve?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q.2. How was the materialist conception of history arrived at?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q.3. What does historical materialism consider history of society to be?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

#### **1.2.3.2. Laws of Development**

The dialectical conception of social development is based on the laws of the materialist dialectics, which are the unity and struggle of opposites; the transformation of quantitative into qualitative changes and the negation of the negation. In this context, Lenin emphasized that "development is the 'struggle' of opposites", It "alone furnishes the key to the self movement of everything existing, it alone furnishes the key to the 'leaps', to the 'break in continuity', to the transformation into the opposite', to the destruction



of the old and the emergence of the new"<sup>7</sup>.

These laws of the development of society are, in essence, the same as those of the development of nature, though different in their form of manifestation in each case. This distinction however, cannot alter the fact that the course of history is governed by inner general laws, because the conflicts of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in domain of history produce a state of affairs entirely analogous to the prevailing in the realm of unconscious nature. "Therefore, in the realm of historical events where on the surface accident holds always. They are actually always governed by inner, hidden laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws"<sup>8</sup>, Wrote Engels. He also noted that "in nature amid the welter of

innumerable changes, the same dialectical laws of motion force their way through as those which in history govern the apparent fortuitousness of events"<sup>9</sup>

The Marxist dialectical method helps us to understand processes of development in terms of the transformation into qualitative changes and to seek the grounds and the explanations of such development in the unity and struggle of opposites and the process of negation of the negation. In the dialectical processes of nature and society there is always continuous renewal and development through which emerges something new. The difference between mere change and development is that development is change in the process of an object proceeding according to its own internal law where stage by stage something new keep emerging. There is also difference between growth and development; growth means getting bigger, having only quantitative change : development means passing into a qualitative new stage. All the process of nature and society exemplify, not merely growth, but development"<sup>10</sup>.

At a certain critical point quantitative change always leads to qualitative change and this development is complex process. The transformation takes place as result of unity and struggle or conflict of opposite tendencies which always operate on the basis of contradictions inherent in all things and processes. The nature of this change-replacing the old unity of opposites by the new one is determined by the nature and essence of the internal contradictions of which it is outcome, though it may often be occasioned, and is always conditioned by external causes or contradictions. The struggle of opposites through which change comes about takes different forms, depending on its place, time and context and in general, in society, a distinction arise between antagonistic and non-antagonistic forms of struggles. A forward movement of development takes place when the resolution of a series of contradictions in a process carried that process forward from one stage to another. This forward development, however, can only proceed by the negation of the old by the new and not by its preservation. No doubt negation is the condition for positive advance, but the old is abolished only after it has already produced the conditions for the transition to the new in which the positive achievement of the old stage is carried forward. It is only through a double negation, the negation of the negation, the stage already passed can be recreated at a higher level.

Thus, the laws of development are the feature of dialectics as a doctrine of development, "it is from the history of nature and human society that the

laws of dialectics are abstracted. For they are nothing but the most general laws of these two aspects of historical development, as well as of thought itself," emphasized Engels, "An exact representation of the universe, of its evolution of the development of making, and of the reflection of this evolution in the minds of the men, can only be obtained by the methods of dialectics with its constant regard to the innumerable actions and reactions of life and death of progressive or retrogressive changes."<sup>11</sup>

### **1.2.3.3. Role of Contradiction**

The laws of contradiction in things, that is the laws of unity of opposites, is the basic law of materialist dialectics. Lenin said, "Dialectics in the proper sense is the study of contradiction in the very essence of objects." He often called this law as essence of dialectics or the Kernel of dialectics. It is the doctrine of the unity of opposites, and "this unity of opposites is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, mutually exclusive opposite tendencies in phenomena and processes of nature including mind and society."<sup>12</sup>

As opposed to the metaphysical world outlook, materialist dialectics hold that, there is internal contradiction in every single thing, hence its motion and development. In this context Mao wrote that "external causes are the conditions of change and internal causes are the basis of changes, and the external causes become operative through internal causes. In a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken, because each has different basis. Changes in society, as in nature, are due chiefly, to the development of the internal contradictions in society contradiction between the productive forces and relation of production, between the old and the new etc."<sup>13</sup>

Since there is nothing that does not contain contradiction and without contradiction nothing would exist, it follows that contradiction exist universally and in all processes, and that each particular kind of process has its own particular contradiction. Mao has outlined the distinction between the 'universality' and the 'particularity' of contradiction. "The universality or obsolescence of contradiction has a two fold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposite exists from the beginning to end. About the particularity or relativity of contradiction, he wrote that the contradiction in each form of motion or matter has its particularity because there is nothing in this world except matter in motion and this motion assume

certain forms."<sup>14</sup>

While explaining the universality of contradiction, Engels said, "Life is also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves and which constantly originates and resolves itself and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life too, comes to an end and death steps in."<sup>15</sup> The emergence of the new process only signifies that the old unity with its constituent opposites. The new process contains new contradiction and brings its own history of the development of conditions. But in order to observe and analyse the movement of opposites in different things to indicate the methods of resolving contradiction particularity of any contradiction, dialectical materialism emphasizes the importance of the concrete analysis of the concrete conditions. Lenin said that "what is most important", and that which constitutes the very gist, the living soul, of Marxism, is "a concrete analysis of a concrete situation."<sup>16</sup>

These contradictions which are qualitatively different can only be resolved by qualitatively different methods. But the fundamental contradiction in the process of development of a thing and essence of the process will not disappear until if the process is completed and the condition usually different each stage in lengthy process. When Marx and Engels applied the law of contradiction in things to the study of the socio-historical process, they discovered the contradiction between the forces of production and the relation of production between the exploiting and exploited classes and also the resultant contradiction between the economic base and structure. When Marx applied the law of contradiction to the study of the economic structure of a capitalist society he discovered that the basic contradiction, is between the social character of production and the private character of appropriation, ownership, or which in terms of class relations, manifest, itself in the contradiction between the bourgeois and the proletariat.

Because the range of things is vast and there is no limit to their development, Mao<sup>17</sup> noted that ;

- (i) "What is universal in one context becomes particular in another. Conversely what is particular in one context, becomes universal in another."
- (ii) "The relationship between universality and the particularity of contradiction is the relationship between the general character and the individual character of contradiction."
- (iii) "But this general character is contained in every individual character, without individual character there can be no general

character."

- (iv) "All individual characters exist conditionally and temporarily and hence are relative."

And further, "This truth concerning general and individual character, concerning obsolescence and relativity, is the quintessence of the problem of contradiction in things, failure to understand it is tantamount to abandoning dialectics."

The unity of opposites, is a contradiction which is characterised by a definite relation of domination between the opposites. The resolution of contradiction also implies a change in the domination relation characterised of the initial unity of opposites, and through new opposites a new unity of opposite a new contradiction.

In the problem, of the particularity of contradiction there are two other aspects : the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction. There is only one principal contradiction at every stage in the development of a process which plays the leading role, while a number of other contradictions in any process occupy a secondary and subordinate position. In a capitalist society, the two forces in contradiction, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, form the principal contradiction. The contradictions between other classes, strata and forces are all determined and influenced by this principal contradiction.

In any given contradiction, whether principal or secondary, the development of two contradictory aspects is generally uneven because equilibrium, if at all it appears is only temporary and relative, while unevenness is always basic. But this situation is not static, the principal and non principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and the nature of things changes accordingly. For instance, the productive process forces, practice and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role, but in certain concrete conditions, such aspects as the relation of theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role.

The fact that no contradictory aspect can exist in isolation, that without its opposite aspect, each loses the condition of its existence, means in given concrete conditions on the one hand they are opposed to each, and on the other they are interconnected, inter-penetrating, and interdependent. This character of phenomenon or object is described as unity of opposites. The relation between unity and struggle is such that the struggle between opposites permeates a process from beginning to end. The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary,

transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposite is absolute, just as development, and motion are absolute. "However, there is an absolute within the relative", said Lenin.<sup>18</sup> There, "the combination of conditional, relative identity and unconditional, absolute struggle, constitutes the movement of opposites in all things." And "in identity there is struggle, in particularity there is universality, and in individuality there is generality"<sup>19</sup>, noted Mao.

The question of the struggle of opposites also includes the antagonism. A given contradiction takes either the form of antagonism or non-antagonism and the methods of resolving contradictions, that is, the form of struggle, differ in accordance to the difference in the nature of the contradictions. Moreover, in accordance with the concrete development of things in certain situations the antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions develop into one another, they change their places, the distinction between antagonism and non-antagonism in contradiction within society is a distinction between those contradictions which can, be resolved only by the use of material force (the contradiction between social character of production and its private character of appropriation in a capitalist society) by one side against the other (by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie) and those which can be resolved entirely as a result of discussions-criticism and self-criticism-among the members of society (the contradiction between the petty peasantry and the proletariat in a Socialist society).

A forward movement in social development is possible because as Engels wrote, "in spite of all seeming accidentally and of all temporary retrogression, a progressive development asserts itself in the end."<sup>20</sup> With the struggle of man to resolve contradiction between the force of production and the social relations of production, the human society moves forward, in general from primitive Communism to slavery, from slavery to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism and from capitalism to socialism.

#### Self check exercise-2

Q.1. What are the three guiding principles employed by historical materialism in understanding social questions?

Ans.....  
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 .....

Q.2. According to materialism, how are the processes of society regulated?

Ans.....  
 .....  
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Q. 3. Does materialism recognize divine interventions in human affairs or nature?

Ans.....  
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#### **1.2.3.4. Historical Materialism**

The second aspect of the Marxist world outlook is historical materialism. Historical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life, an application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the phenomena of the life of society, to the study of society and of its history.<sup>21</sup> The connection and interdependence of the phenomena of social life, as that of nature, are governed by regular law and, therefore, the history of the development of society and the study of the history of society becomes a science.

The material life of society, as an objective reality existing independent of

the will of men, is primarily and its spiritual life, as only a reflection of this objective reality is secondary and derivative. Hence emphasized Stalin, "the source of formation of the spiritual life of the society, the origin of social ideas, theories, political views and political institutions should not be sought for in the ideas, theories, views and political institutions themselves, but in the conditions of the material life of society, in social being of which these ideas, theories, views etc. are the reflection."<sup>22</sup>

Historical materialism also stresses the important role and significance of the organizing, mobilizing and transforming action of social views, theories, ideas and institutions in the life of society, in its history. But theory becomes a material force only if originates on the basis of urgent task of the development of the material life of society and, therefore, grips the masses. The relation between theory and reality (material life of society) is dialectical; theory arises on the basis of the condition of material life of society and to renders its further development possible.

The concept conditions of materials in life of society includes nature which surrounds society, geographical environment, which is one of the indispensable and constant conditions of the existence of material life, and density of population of one degree or another. But neither geographical environment, nor growth of population is the determining or chief force in the historical development of society, the character of the social system (the physiognomy of society) is the method of procuring the means of life necessary for human existence, the mode of production of material values which are indispensable for the life and development of society.

Material production is the basis of human existence and the process of production consists in the interaction between man (or society) and nature. Regardless of the form of society, the interaction between man and nature consists in unity of three elements : labour (purposeful human activity aimed at adopting natural objects to satisfy human wants), objects of labour (things found in nature and raw material to which man applies his labour), and instruments of Labour (things used by man to act upon objects of labour) are called the productive forces of society. In the process of labour people simultaneously enter into social relations with one another are known as production relations. The forces of production and the relations of production as a specific historical entity, form the mode of production. Production relations ultimately depend on the level of character of development of productive forces, although they do influence that development in turn. In any society, the conflict in the social pattern of the relations and forces of productions provides the basis for the social



revolution. That is why, as historical materialism outlines, there have been five modes of production: primitive-communal, slave, feudal, capitalist and communist (Socialist mode as its first phase).

The process of production is always in a state of change and development and, as a result, changes in mode of production inevitably call forth changes in the whole social and political order social system, social ideas; political views and political institutions. Whatever is the mode of production of a society, such in the main is the society itself, because the history of the development of society is the history of the development of production therefore the clue to the study of the laws of history of society must be sought in the mode of production (social pattern of the relations and forces of production) practised by society in any given historical period.

The change and development in the modes of production always begin with changes and development of the productive forces, and then depending on and in conformity with these changes men's relations of production, also change. The relation of production in turn react upon the development of the productive forces, accelerating or retarding it. They cannot for a long time lag behind and be in a state of contradiction to the development of the forces of production, because, otherwise, a disruption and a crisis of production and destruction of productive forces, can result, "Social relations" Marx said, "are closely bound up with the productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living : they change all their social relations."<sup>23</sup>

Speaking of historical materialism, as formulated in the Communist Manifesto, of "the fundamental proposition, which forms its nucleus". Engels said, "The proposition is, that in every historical epoch, the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange and the social organization "necessary following from it, form the basis upon which it is built up and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind (since the dissolution of primitive tribal society, holding land in common ownership) has been a history of class struggle between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes; that the history of class struggles form a series of evolutions in which now a days, a stage has been reached where the exploited and oppressed class; the proletariat cannot attain its emancipation from the way of the exploiting and ruling class, the bourgeoisie without at the same time and once for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class

distinctions and class struggles."<sup>24</sup>

Thus the transition from one mode of production to another usually takes place by means of the revolutionary overthrow of the old relations of production and the establishment of the new. Such transitions are always realized through the medium of class struggles in order to resolve antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions among the social classes.

#### **1.2.3.5. Materialist Conception Human/social History**

Marx and Engels based their materialist conception of history on a scientific investigation and understanding of the laws of social development, of class struggle. Engels wrote: "The materialist conception of history starts from the propositions that the production of the means to support human life and next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth distributed and society divided into classes or order is dependent upon what is produced, how is produced, and how products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes at all social changes and political revolution are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into external truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought not in the philosophy but in economics of each particular epoch."<sup>25</sup> The essence of the materialist conception of history of historical materialism was summed up by Marx as follows: in the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will namely relations of production, appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions, the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of "development, the (material) productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relation of production or with the property relations within the frame work of which they have operated hitherto. From development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole

immense, superstructure. No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.<sup>26</sup>

### **1.2.3.6. Materialism and Science of Society**

The materialist conception of history was arrived at by applying the dialectical (and materialist) world outlook to solutions of problems. Historical materialism makes history of society into a science because it is not only a theory about how to interpret history, but also a theory about how to change or make history of society. Marx was of the view that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point, however, is to change."<sup>27</sup> As such materialism was with Marx no longer simply a theory aimed at interpreting the world but a guide to the practice of changing the world and a building a society without exploitation of man by man.

The three guiding principles which historical materialism employs in the understanding of social questions are; the society in its development is regulated by objective laws discoverable by science : that views and institutions arise on the basis of the development of the material life of society and that ideas and institutions, which thus arise, play an active role in the development of the material life of society.

#### **Regulation of Social Processes**

Materialism maintains that the processes of nature of society are governed and regulated by objective laws which are discoverable and are characteristics of the processes and objects concerned. Laws are expressions usually only approximate, of objective regularities discoverable in events. In so far they are objective and scientifically valid, they express objective connections and regularities which operate independently of our consciousness and will.

Materialism does not recognize inexplicable happenings, divine interventions or control of material events by non-material supernatural agencies in human affairs any more than it does in nature. Consequently, for materialism, the social life of the history of society ceases to be an agglomeration of accident, but becomes the history of the development of society, according to regular laws, which are objective in character.

The development of society has, however some unique features which distinguish social changes from natural events; "In one point, however, the history of the development of society proves to be essentially different from

that of nature," wrote Engels. In nature... "there is only blind unconsciousness acting upon one another, out of whose interplay the general law comes into operation. In the history of social, on the contrary actors, are all endowed with consciousness are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals, nothing happens without a conscious purpose, without an intended, aim. But this distinction cannot alter the fact that the course of history is governed by inner general laws." Because the conflicts of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produce a state of affairs entirely analogous to that prevailing in the realm of unconscious nature."<sup>28</sup>

The materialist conception of history emphasizes that the fundamental laws regulating change and development in society are the laws governing the development of production, the conditions of production and exchange, the rise of classes, class relations and the class struggle among them. The social events are determined by men's action in the historical circumstances in which they find themselves. "Men make their own history" wrote Marx. "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by them selves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>29</sup>

"These circumstances given and transmitted from the past and themselves the consequence of men's activities. Therefore, far from leading to fatalistic in action, the materialist conception of history leads to a programme of action. Such a programme of action based on the scientific knowledge of fundamental law of social development is possible only for a progressive class of an historical epoch, interested in overthrowing the old social system and establishing a new one. In a Capitalist society, for the elimination of bourgeois mode of press production (and its social relations) which is the last antagonistic of social process of production. Marx entrusted the proletarian class with the historical task of overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie:

Marxism however does not deny the role played by exceptional individuals and the influence which they have on the course of events. But the historical development is determined by the movement of classes, the forces of class struggle in which .the so called exceptional individuals play their role only as representative of classes whose interest they represent "when, therefore, it is a question of investigation the driving powers which lie behind the motives of men who act on history", wrote Engels, "then it, is not a question so much of the motives of single individuals, however, eminent, as of those motives which set in motion great masses, whole

people, and again whole classes of the people in each epoch, for a fasting action resulting in a great historical transformation. To ascertain the rising causes which bear in the minds, of acting masses and their leaders the so-called great men are reflected as conscious motives .... that is only path which can put us on the track of the laws holding away both in history asa whole and at particular periods and in particular lands."<sup>30</sup>

Self check exercise-3

Q.1. How does materialism view the regulation of social processes and the development of society?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. How does the materialist conception of history view the development of society compared to nature?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What are the three guiding principles employed by historical materialism to understand social questions?

Ans.....  
.....  
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**1.2.3.7. Role of Ideas in Social Life**

According to the materialistic conception of history the views current in history and the institutions of society are always, in the last analysis determined by the conditions of material life. While explaining Marx's discovery of the materialist conception of the world history, Engels wrote: The whole previous view of history was based on the conception that the ultimate causes of all historical changes, political changes are the most important and dominate the whole of history. Now Marx has proved that the whole of previous history is the history of class struggles; that in all the manifold and complicated political struggle the only thing at issue has been the social and political rule of social classes. The maintenance of domination by older classes and the consequent of domination by newly rising classes.

To what, however, do these classes owe their origin and continued existence? "They owe it on the particular material, physical sensible conditions in which society at a given period produces and exchanges its means of subsistence. Therefore, the conceptions and ideas of each

historical period are most simply to be explained from the economic conditions."<sup>31</sup> Similarly the difference in the views of different classes in different periods, are always, in the last analysis, to be explained in the terms of the difference in conditions of material life.

The materialist conception of history, of social development, also indicates the process, whereby on the basis of the given material conditions of society, there arise a whole superstructure of social views and corresponding views and corresponding political institutions. It is on the basis of the economic structure of society that the social superstructure arises and this superstructure always reflects the conditions of its basis. In Marx's views, the productive forces give rise to relations of production and in these relations not the forces themselves which constitute the economic structure of society. The economic structure in turn is the foundation on which the superstructure rises. Therefore, the emergence of a particular superstructure cannot be explained by the 'nature' and 'properties' of the ideas, theories, views and institutions themselves but

the conditions of material life of society at the period of social development.

The ideas, which thus arise, play an active role in the development of the material conditions they become an active force reacting back upon the conditions they arise from. People carry out their socially productive activities with the help of the ideas which arise as a result of their productive practice. "Everything, which sets men in motion must go through their minds" said Engels, "but what form it will take in the mind depends very much upon the circumstances."<sup>32</sup>

In relation to social development, ideas either promote or hinder the development of society are either progressive or reactionary. It is characteristic of certain social ideas that they lend to continue in existence even after the conditions which gave rise to them have disappeared or are in the process of disappearance. Such ideas reflecting the outlived social conditions come to act as a reactionary, conservative force and serve the forces which are striving to preserve the old social conditions and hinder the new progressive development in society by hampering the forces which are striving to bring new social conditions into being. In class societies, ideas always reflect the stand point, tendencies and interests of different classes because class struggles are waged also by means of ideas.

The significance of the new and progressive ideas and theories, which serve the interests of the advance forces of society, lies in the fact that they facilitate the progressive development of society. The more accurately they reflect the needs of development of the material society, the greater is their significance and role. As regard the influence of theory, Marx, wrote "The weapon of criticism cannot of course, replace the criticism of weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses, theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter."<sup>33</sup> Thus the knowledge of the law, condition and needs of development of the material life of society becomes a great force to end the old social conditions of life and bring in new ones. In this way the tremendous organizing, mobilizing and transforming value of the new and radical social ideas, theories, views and institutions manifests itself.

#### **1.2.3.8. Mode of Production and social Superstructure**

The productive forces give rise to relations and it is these relations and not the forces themselves which constitute the economic structure or basis of society, The productive forces and productive relations, as a specific

historical entity form a mode of production. Production relations are the economic basis of society, while political and legal views and ideology and appropriate institutions made up its superstructure and the most important part of the superstructure is the State.

The dialectics of the productive forces and production relations is the motive force behind social development. When the growth of the productive forces to a new level and existing production relations no longer correspond to it, reconstruction begins through the revolutionary transformation of the entire social structure. Production relations are the load bearing structure of the social edifice, the foundations on which the superstructure is built and the various forms of social consciousness emerge. The nature and development of political superstructure (the state and its institutions) and also the development of the forms of social consciousness (ideology, law, morality, religion, science, philosophy etc.) are determined in the final analysis by the movement of production relations, and the growth of the productive forces provides, the momentum for the whole process of history. So we have a four stage process; forces of production determine relations of production and together they constitute mode of production which in turn determined the superstructure and form of social consciousness. Marx wrote: "Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive force men change their mode of production and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning for living, they change all their social relations, the hand mill gives you society with the feudal lord ; the steam will give society with industrial capitalist. The same men who establish their social relation in conformity with their material productivity produce also principles, ideas and categories in conformity with their social relations. Thus these ideas, these categories are as little eternal as the relations they express. They are historical and products. There are a continuous movement of growth of productive force of destruction in social relations of formation in ideas."<sup>34</sup>

On the basic relations of the mode of production and superstructure while emphasizing Marx's contribution on the discovery of the law of development of human history, Engels said, "that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue policies, science and religion etc. that therefore, the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch from the foundation which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, are and even the ideas



on the religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore be explained, instead of vice-versa as had hitherto been the case."<sup>35</sup>

In fact, the change in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformations of the whole immense superstructure, because, the ultimate determining factor in history is the production and reproduction of real material life. Regarding the dialectical interaction of the economic basis and the socio-political superstructure to quote Engels again : "The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases determine their form in particular. There is an interaction which, amid all the endless host of accidents the economic movements is finally bound to assert itself"<sup>36</sup>

The historical situation in which the role of superstructure becomes decisive is identified by Mao in his theory on contradiction. 'True, the productive forces practise and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of a production theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role. When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop even at one percent without a change in relation of production then the change in the relation of production play the principal and decisive role. The creation and advocacy or revolutionary theory play the principal and decisive role in those times of which Lenin said, without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. When the superstructure (politics, culture etc.) obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive."<sup>37</sup>

The materialist conception of history, as the theory about the causes of historical change, emphasizes the decisive influence, in certain concrete conditions of superstructure on its economic base. Engels noted, "once a historical element has been brought into the, world by other causes, but ultimately there are economic causes, it reacts, and can react on its environment and even on the causes that have given rise to it."<sup>38</sup> Reason ? It is the interaction of the two unequal forces: on the one hand the economic movements, on the other hand, the new political power, which strive for as much independence as possible,' and which have once been set up is endowed with a movement of its own. On the whole the economic movement prevails but it has also to endure reaction from the

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political movement which itself set up is endowed with relative independence from the movement of the state power on the one hand and of opposition simultaneously engendered, on the other."<sup>39</sup> The retroaction of the state power, the most important part of the superstructure upon economic development can be of three kinds: it can proceed in the same direction, it can move in the opposite direction or it can prevent the economic development from proceeding along certain line and prescribed other lines. Similarly law, religion and in particular, ideological outlook influence in its turn economic basis and may within certain limits, modify it.

In general however, the superstructure serves, the basis by actively helping to shape and consolidate it. In society, based on the class antagonism and exploitation, the superstructure always reflects and serves the interest of dominant class, so that the ruling ideas of each age have been the ideas of its ruling class, "worked out"<sup>40</sup> and upheld by its intellectual representatives. At that stage of development when the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production and with new forms of development of productive forces, these relations turn into their fetters, new revolutionary ideas are formulated by the emerging revolutionary class. The revolutionary class, in a capitalist society, the class of proletariat utilizes them in its struggle against the force of the old society and in fundamental reconstruction of a new economic structure and the corresponding socio-political instructions of the superstructure.

#### 1.2.4 Summary

The materialist conception of history views society's development as governed by objective laws, making history a science. It emphasizes that society's evolution is rooted in the development of productive forces and relations. Ideas and institutions arise based on material conditions, playing an active role in shaping society. The mode of production forms the economic foundation, while the superstructure, including politics and ideology, arises from it. The interplay between economic forces and the superstructure can lead to transformative historical changes. The ruling class often shapes the superstructure to maintain its dominance, but revolutionary ideas from emerging classes can lead to social transformation.

#### 1.2.5 Key Concepts

**Dialectical Materialism:** Marxist philosophy integrating contradictions, matter, and societal change.

**Law of Development:** Principle explaining progressive change in materialist societies.

**Contradiction:** Clashing elements propelling societal development, fundamental in dialectics.

**Historical Materialism:** Marxist approach connecting history and societal evolution.

#### Long Questions

1. What role do ideas play in social life according to the materialistic

conception of history?

2. How does the mode of production relate to the social superstructure, and what is the dialectical interaction between them in shaping society?

### 1.2.6 Short Questions

1. How are views and institutions in society explained according to the materialist conception of history?
2. What role do ideas play in the development of society, according to materialism?
3. How does materialism view the influence of exceptional individuals on historical events?
4. What is the relationship between the mode of production, the economic base, and the socio-political superstructure, according to the materialist conception of history?

### 1.2.8. Suggested Readings

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8. F. Engels, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1970, p. 366
9. -do- *Anti-Duhring*, Moscow, 1969, p. 16.
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24. K. Marx, *The poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow. 1965.p.
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30. K. Marx, *Selected Work*, Vol. I, p. 398.
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32. *ibid.*, pp 84-85.
33. K Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
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37. Mao Tse-tung, *op. cit.*, pp. 678-79.
38. F. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 435.
39. *ibid.*, p. 399.
40. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Community Party*, p. 52.

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MODE OF PRODUCTION, SOCIAL SUPERSTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC LAWS

**1.3.1. Objectives of this lesson**

**1.3.2. Introduction**

**1.3.3. MODE OF PRODUCTION, SOCIAL SUPERSTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC LAWS**

**1.3.3.1. Economic Laws**

**1.3.3.2. Social Superstructure**

**1.3.3.3. Dialectical Interaction of Superstructure and Basis**

**1.3.4 Summary**

**1.3.5 Key Concepts**

**1.3.6 Long Questions**

**1.3.7 Short Questions**

**1.3.8 Suggested Readings**

**1.3.1. Objectives of this lesson**

To understand the dialectical relationship between the social relations of production and the economic laws, and how they shape the superstructure, leading to social development and change.

**1.3.2. Introduction**

Marxian political economy is concerned with the social relations among people in the process of production. The mode of production is the basis of society. The economic and social relations of people are economic basis of society in which a related superstructure is built. Human history knows mainly five socio-economic formations; primitive-communism, slave owning system, Feudalism, Capitalism and Communism, the first stage of which is Socialism. The essence of the production relations is expressed in economic laws which govern the development of socio-economic formations.

**Mode of Production**

Material production is the basis of human existence. The process of material production consists of the interaction between man or society and nature. Regardless of the form of society, the interaction between man and nature consist in the unity of three elements, viz., labour, objects of labour and means of labour.

Labour is the purposeful human activity aimed at adopting natural objects to satisfy human wants. In acting on nature, men acquire knowledge and skills and introduce improvements into the process of labour. Engels pointed out that "labour is the prime basic condition for all human existences and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say, that labour created man himself."<sup>1</sup> Objects of labour are things found in nature to which man applies his labour. An object to which labour has already been applied which is to be subjected to further processing is called raw material. Means of labour are the things used by man to act upon objects of labour. These are the instrument of labour and Marx called them the bone and muscle of production. These are the level of their development is the main characteristic of each historical production epoch. Means and objects of labour together are called means of production which cannot produce by themselves but must be put into operation of production by people. The means of production and people with their production experience and skill are called productive forces.

Their level of development indicates the degree of man's control over nature. As production forces progress, an increasing role is played by science, "which becomes a direct productive force itself. But since the means of production are made, improved and used by people, the latter are chief productive force."

The forces of production form only one aspect of social production, the other consists of the social relations of production or economic relations among people in the process of production. In the process of labour to change nature, people simultaneously enter into social relations with one another known as relations of production. The relations among people with respect to the appropriation of material good are called property relations. They emerge in the process of production as "production is always appropriation of nature by an individual within and with the help of a definite social organisation"<sup>2</sup>, wrote Marx. Property relations (either social or private) determine the way in which labour power is linked with the means of production.

Besides property relations, the production include the exchange of activity among people in process of production. The relations of production also determine character of relation of distribution among other, an important form of economic relations consists of relation of consumption because consumption is the purpose of production and a part of the process of production. The different aspects of production relations form an integrated system in which all parts influence and are influenced by one another. The relations of ownership of the means of production, however, play the leading role in the this system, for they blind all economic relations as a whole and furnish the main characteristic of the society.

The relations of production ultimately depend on the level and character of development of forces of production because the development of productive forces eventually brings about a change in production relations. However, the social relations of production are not passive, they influence in turn, the development of productive forces. New relations of production promote the development of productive forces but afterwards they act as a brake on their further progress. The conflict between the relations and forces of production provides economic basis for the social revolution. Thus, the forces of production and relations of production as a specific historical entity form the mode of production. The whole development of society is determined by the development of the productive forces and consequent changes in the relations among men in production. The productive forces and production relations of a given period together

constitute the mode of production. Every society is based on a mode of production which ultimately determines the character of all social activities and institutions. The change and development of the mode of production of all the material means of life constitutes the basis of the whole of social development in human history.

### **1.3.3.1. Economic Laws**

The social relations of production and their intrinsic causal relationship, find expression, in economic laws which are laws of change and development in society, "Political economy investigates the laws of - development of man's relations of production"<sup>3</sup>, wrote Stalin. Its province includes; "(a) the form ownership of the means of production; (b) the status of the various social groups in production and their interrelations that follow from these forms, or what Marx calls they exchange their activities; (c) the forms of distribution of products, which are entirely determined by them."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the laws of economic development regulate the development of forms of ownership, of means of production, of classes and class distribution.

The laws of economic development include both the specific laws peculiar to each particular social-economic formation and the general laws common to all social formations. Each system of economy has its own specific economic laws which operate only during the life time to that particular system. Then follow from the objectively existing conditions of material life of society and are not permanent but only temporary, transient economic laws. The economic laws regulate not only the working of economic systems in a given stage of their development but also their development through a series of stages. There are other economic laws which regulate the eventual replacement of one system by another. Next, there are very general but fundamental economic laws which operate through out the whole course of evolution of society asserting themselves throughout all its stages and determining the transition from one stage to the next. Such in the productive forces, "The various social formations are governed in their economic development not only by their own specific economic laws, but also by the economic laws that are common to all formations", wrote Stalin. Consequently, "Social formations are not only divided from one another by their own specific laws but also connected with one another by the economic laws common to all formations."<sup>5</sup>

The laws of economic development are objective laws reflecting process of economic development which take place independently of the will of man. These regulate the mutual relations of people in their economic activity



with the same objective necessity as natural laws regulate the relationship of things in nature. Just as the economic laws assert themselves with objective necessity independent of the will of man in a given mode of development of a social system, similarly, in the long run, there are economic laws which determine the passing away of given social system and the transition to a higher stage of economic development. "One of them are in permanent, that they, or at least the majority of them operate for a definite historical period, after which they give place to new laws. However, these laws are not abolished, but lose their validity owing to the new economic conditions and depart from the scene in order to new economic conditions."<sup>6</sup> Here, it is worth emphasising that unlike the laws of natural science (where the discovery and application of a new law proceeds more or less smoothly) the discovery and application of a new law in the economic field (affecting as it does the interest of obsolescent forces of society) meets the most powerful resistance. That is why a social force capable of overcoming this resistance becomes necessary.

In this context, it is important to know the nature of utilization of economic law in the interest of a certain type of socio-economic development and for bringing about social changes.' About the nature of utilization of economic laws Stalin wrote: "Man may discover those laws, get to know them and, relying upon them, utilize them in the interests of society, impart a different direction of the destructive action or some of the laws, restrict their sphere of action, and allow fuller scope to other laws that are forcing their way to the forefront; but he cannot destroy them or create new economic laws."<sup>7</sup> The utilisation of economic laws by the associated action of people to bring about social changes, is subject to number of considerations.

(1) The utilization of economic laws by people in society is always determined by economics of class interest. In a society divided in hostile classes, this is particularly so. "The utilisation of economic laws in class society always and everywhere, has a class background and moreover, always and everywhere the champion of the utilization of economic laws in the interests of society is the advanced class, while the obsolescent classes resist it"<sup>8</sup>, Wrote Stalin. The economic laws of social development and change were used by the rising bourgeoisie to replace the feudal forms of property by the capitalist property and ownership and the emerging working class movement, likewise attempts to replace the bourgeoisie form of property by the socialized means of production and public property. In general the economic laws are always utilized by,

definite classes in furtherance of their definite economic interest and against the interest of the other classes. Nevertheless, in the long run, the utilization of economic laws serve the purpose of the material progress of society and of advancing society to higher stage of development. In a class society this can never happen smoothly and by general agreement but means of class struggle and by overcoming the resistance of the reactionary class; of course it is quite possible for some classes to resist the utilization, on of economic laws by other classes, but they cannot prevent the operation of economic laws.

(2) While the utilization of economic-laws is always determined by class interests, their utilization by working class in its struggle for Socialism nevertheless, gives the whole process a new character. To quote by Stalin : "the difference in this matter between the proletariat and the other class which at any time in the course of history revolutionized the relation of production consists in the fact that the class interest of the proletariat merge with the interest of the overwhelming majority of society because proletariat revolution implies that abolition not of one or another form of exploitation, but of all exploitation, while revolution of other classes, which abolish only one or another form of exploitation, were confined with in the limits of their narrow class interests, which conflicted with the interests of the majority of society."<sup>9</sup> Economic laws of social development continue to operate even when socialism is established and the whole economic life of society is brought under conscious and planned control of man to satisfy people's material and cultural needs.

(3) The exact and scientific knowledge of economic laws is not necessary for the people who utilize these laws to advance their exclusive class interest. There is, however, a great difference between blindly taking advantage of economic laws and utilizing them with full understanding. The scientific understanding of economic laws is necessary only when they are to be used not for a narrow class interest but in the interest of overwhelming majority of the society. Similarly, there is a difference between men utilizing certain organisation. To be the real master of their social organisation, men must possess full understanding of its laws and establish social control over all the sectors and processes of economy through a social plan. Only when people have at least become the real master of the condition of their unrestricted social action to satisfy the growing material and cultural needs of the whole of society.

Thus, active social forces and the economic laws based upon them work exactly like natural forces. So long as we do not understand them they

work blindly, forcibly and destructively. But once we understand them, grasp their action, their direction, their effects, then, it depends only upon ourselves to subject them more and more to our own will and control and to use them to attain our aims. People gain knowledge of economic laws and utilize them but limits of this knowledge, as the extent and ends to which the economic laws are utilized, are determined by the character production relations.

#### Self check exercise-1

Q.1. How do social relations of production find expression in economic laws that govern society's development and change?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. How do social relations of production relate to economic laws?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What is the focus of political economy according to Stalin?

Ans.....  
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#### **1.3.3.2. Social Superstructure**

Production relations are the basis of the social structure of society and are the economic basis of society. The political and legal views and ideology, and appropriate social institution make up the superstructure of the society. The nature of superstructure is detennined by the basis and the character, extent and effects so the superstructure on the economic basis in ultimately conditioned and determined by the basis. The concrete historical sum total of productive forces the economic basis and the superstructure make up a socio-economic system.

The foundation on which the superstructure is built and the various forms of social conscioness emerge is provided by the production relation which are the load braining structure of the social edifice. The nature and development of political superstructure (the state and its institutions) and also the development of the forms of social consciousness are determined, in the final analysis, by the movement of production relation, and the growth of the productive forces provides the momentum or the whole process of social history.

In society, there is always basis and a superstructure. The basis is the economic structure of society at the given stage of social development. The

superstructure is the political, legal, religious, artistic and philosophical views of society, and the political, legal and such other institutions corresponding to them. These necessarily arises a system of views and institutions peculiar to and corresponding to the development of a given social economic formation and its system of relation. These are the dominate views and institution of society so long as that economic basis is maintained. The history of ideas and institutions proves that different elements of superstructure and the whole of the superstructure changes its character in proportion as the material production is changed. Therefore, the superstructure, is the product of one epoch, an epoch in hich the given economic basis exists and operates, it is eliminated and disappears with the elimination and appearance of the given basis. In this context Stalin wrote: "every base has its own corresponding super-ture.

The base of the feudal system has its own structure, its political; and other views, and the institutions corresponding to it."<sup>10</sup>

In Marx's views, the productive forces give rise to relations of production and it is these relations which constitute the economic structure of society. The economic structure is the foundation on which the superstructure arises. Therefore, the emergence of a particular superstructure cannot be explained by the condition of the material life of society at that period of social development. The ideas, institutions, which thus arise, play an active role in the development of the material conditions, they become an active force reacting back on the condition they arise from.

In relation of social development, ideas and institutions of superstructure either promote or hinder the development of society, they are either progressive or reactionary. In class societies the ideas and institutions of superstructure always reflect the standpoints, tendencies and interests of different classes because class struggles are waged also means of them.

#### Self check exercise-2

Q.1. According to Stalin, what does political economy investigate, and what does its province include?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. Why are economic laws considered temporary and transient?

Ans.....  
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Q.3. What are the three main aspects studied by political economy?

Ans.....  
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#### **1.3.3.3. Dialectical Interaction of Superstructure and Basis**

The superstructure which is product of a given mode of production and its economic structure is an extremely complex social phenomenon. Many factors influence its actual development and its varying forms in a period. There is ceaseless interaction between the various elements of the superstructure and between all of them and economic basis. This interaction is in itself a very complex phenomenon and express itself in various ways-and through different tendencies.

In the first place, every structure is the product of an economic basis. On the given basis there is created a whole system of ideas, social organisation and institutions which serve to maintain consolidate and develop that basis. The basis consists of the economic structure of society, the sum total of the relation of production and it is the relation of

production and not the productive forces which are the basis on which the superstructure arises. The ways in which changes in production technique and scientific discoveries receive expression in the views and institution of society depends upon the type of production relations. However, as Stalin noted : "the superstructure is not directly connected with production with man's productive activity. it is connected with production only directly through the economy, through the base. The superstructure therefore, reflects changes in the level of development of the productive forces not immediately and indirectly, but only after changes in the base, through the

prism of the changes brought in the base, the change in production."<sup>11</sup> Secondly, since the superstructure is the product of the economic basis, it also changes with the change in the basis. The type of views and institutions observed in any society always correspond to the type of economic structure of that society. Every basis has corresponding superstructure and, therefore, a given superstructure can be more permanent than its, basis. The views and institutions which are typical of a given epoch of social formation always prove transitory since they do not and cannot out live the economy system of which they are product and which they reflect. That is why it is possible to distinguish between capitalist views and institutions from feudal views and institutions. It was a crime for a serf to leave his lord's estate and feudal laws and institutions were formed accordingly. But such a dependence according to capitalist system views was a gross restriction or violation of the liberty of the social individual. In a capitalist system, the dominating view is that the capitalist has a legal right to profits by the employment of workers and extracting and appropriating surplus value. The capitalist institutions are designed to protect, safeguard and promote this right of the capitalist. Opposed to it is the socialist views that no man should exploit the labour of others that there should be no exploitation of man by man.

Thirdly, the superstructure reflects the condition of economic basis of the society. The superstructure which arises on the basis is never an integral and self consistent. No economic structure of society is free from internal contradictions and these contradictions also get manifested in the sphere of views and institutions of superstructure. In fact, different elements of the superstructure have their own contradictions. But in the final analysis the views and institutions of superstructure reflects only the contradiction and struggle in the sphere of economic life of the society. In a period of transition from one type of socio-economic structure to a new one contradictions develop in the economic life of the society and they also find their reflection at the level of the superstructure with a new basis, new contradictions and forms of struggle take the place of the old ones. But even in such a situation there are also relics of old views and of institutions left over from the past which survive for a time at the level superstructure. Views which linger on form an old basis, or views which prepare the fight for anew basis are respectively, the relics of an old superstructure and the rising and formative element of old superstructure. In the struggle at the level of views and institution, the new superstructure, depending on the corresponding changes in the economic

superstructure. But this elimination, which is the way of resolution of the contradiction, arising economic basis of the society and reflecting at the level of the superstructure, does not mean that every thing in the views and institution of society, that is, politics, law, religion, art or philosophy, is periodically, scrapped and a new beginning made. In the process of replacement of old by new superstructure, old views and institutions are discredited and disappear. At the same time everything positively achieved in the old structure and that which is useful in the new is retained, utilized and further developed in terms of the views and institutions of superstructure.

Fourthly, the various elements of the superstructure also exert their influence on the economic structure of the society and in certain situation preponderate in determining its form. For instance the political institutions and laws which come into being on the basis of economic relations, have a very profound influence on the actual course of historical events and on the whole life of the society including its economic structure. According to the materialist conception of history wrote Engels, "the ultimately determining elements in history is the production and reproduction of real life. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure also exercise their influence upon the course of historical struggles and in many cases determine their form in particular."<sup>12</sup> However in his interaction, amid all the endless host of factors and accidents the economic movement, its structure, is finally bound to assert itself.

So, the theory about the cause of historical change, the materialist conception of history, emphasises the decisive influence, in certain concrete condition of superstructure on its economic basis. Engels noted that, "once an historical element has been brought into the world by other ultimately economic causes, it reacts, and can react on its environment and even on the causes that have given rise to it. " Because, "it is the interaction of the two unequal forces, on the one hand, the economic movement on the other, the new political power which strives for as much independence as possible and which having been set up, is endowed with a movement of its own. On the whole the economic movement prevails, but it has also to endure reaction from the movement of the state power, on the one hand and of the opposition simultaneously engendered on the other."<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in the dialectical interaction of the economic basis and the superstructure there is always historical determination of form of view and



institutions of the superstructure and products of economic conditions but the exact form which they take in particular society of country at a particular period cannot be explained exclusively from the economic condition of that society. The final form which views and institutions take at any time must always depend on a variety of specific factors in the life or the society of country which, apart from other thing, include the character and traditions of the people, the personalities of its leading men and its past history. For instance the legal conceptions and codes of law cannot rise as direct product of economic conditions. They are the product of a process of working upon and adapting the already existing legal conception and codes, which belong to the past epoch, into forms suitable for the new epoch. The case of philosophy is the same. That is why the problem always remains of determining the peculiarities of the development views and institutions of the superstructure in each particular society or country.

In general, to sum up, the superstructure serves the basis by actively keeping to shape and consolidate it. In society based on the class antagonism and exploitation, the superstructure always reflects and serves the interests of the dominate class. At that stage of social development when the productive forces come into conflict with the established production relations of the society and with forms of development of productive forces these relations turn into their fetters, then new ideas are formulated by the social forces of the old society and in reconstruction of a new economic structure and the corresponding institution of the superstructure.

Self check exercise-3

Q.1. How do economic laws regulate the development of forms of ownership, means of production, and classes in society?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. How do economic laws operate independently of human will in society?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What is the importance of economic laws in shaping economic systems?

Ans.....  
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**1.3.4 Summary**

The social relations of production find expression in economic laws that govern society's development. Economic laws regulate ownership, class distribution, and means of production. They apply to specific social formations and common to all

formations. Economic laws are objective and independent of human will, operating like natural laws. Utilizing economic laws serves class interests, with the working class aiming for socialism and ending all exploitation. The superstructure, including politics, law, religion, and philosophy, emerges from the economic basis but also influences it. The interaction between the superstructure and economic basis is complex and determines the character of society.

### 1.3.5 Key Concepts

**Economic Laws:** Principles governing production, distribution, and consumption in societies.

**Mode of Production:** Specific economic system influencing societal organization and relations.

**Social Superstructure:** Ideologies, culture, and institutions shaped by economic infrastructure.

**Class Struggle:** Ongoing conflict between social classes over resources and power.

### 1.3.6 Long Questions

1. What is the role of economic laws in the transition from one social-economic formation to another?
2. How does the utilization of economic laws differ when used for class interests versus the interests of the overwhelming majority of society?

### 1.3.7 Short Questions

1. What role does class interest play in using economic laws in society?
2. How does the working class's utilization of economic laws differ from other classes?
3. Is a scientific understanding of economic laws necessary for their utilization?
4. How does the superstructure interact with the economic basis in history, as per materialist conception?

### 1.3.8 Suggested Readings

1. F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 2.. 1980, p. 80.
2. K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow, 1977, p. 192.
3. J. Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, Peking, 1972, pp. 74-75.
4. J. Stalin, *ibid.*, pp. 72,73.
5. J. Stalin, *ibid.*, p.4.
6. M. Cornforth, *Dialectical Materialism*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1971, Chapter 6.
7. J. Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 4. ,
8. J. Stalin, *ibid.*, p. 51.

9. J. Stalin, *ibid.*, p. 51.
10. J. Stalin, *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics, Peking, 1976*, pp. 3, 4.
11. J. Stalin, *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
12. Engels, *Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1975*, pp.394-395.
13. F. Engels, *ibid.*, p. 435,

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## MODE OF PRODUCTION AND PROCESS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1.4.1. Objectives of this lesson

### 1.4.2. Introduction

### 1.4.3. MODE OF PRODUCTION AND PROCESS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 1.4.3.1. Factors Constituting Mode of Production

#### 1.4.3.2. Process of Social Development through Historical Social Formations

#### 1.4.3.3. Class Struggle, State and Social Revolution

### 1.4.4. Summary

### 1.4.5. Key Concepts

### 1.4.6. Long Questions

### 1.4.7. Short Questions

### 1.4.8. Suggested Readings

### 1.4.1. Objectives of this lesson

To understand the factors constituting the mode of production, analyze social productive forces and relations of production, and examine the historical process of social development through different social formations such as primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist, and socialist systems.

### 1.4.2. Introduction

The history of human society knows five socio-economic formations : the primitive communal (clan and tribal), slave-owning, feudal, capitalist and socialist systems. How did one particular socio-economic system emerge ? What made for its development ? What opposing forces brought about its decline? Throughout the ages people have pondered over these questions, various view points have been expounded to answer to these questions. In other words, different explanations have been furnished to understand the development of human society to the will of God. Scientific knowledge, however, has disproved the existence of supernatural force. Hence, it is incorrect to suggest that the social development takes place by God's will

The bourgeois scholars have held the view that social development depends to a decisive extent on geographical environment, that is on definite natural conditions (climate, soil, minerals, etc). In the span of three thousand years there have been three successive social systems in Europe and four central and eastern Europe yet during that period the geographical conditions in Europe have either not changed at all or so little that geographers take no account of them. Hence, it stands to reason that geographical environment is one of the essential conditions of social development, but it is not decisive. Some people consider that the development of society depends only on the will of outstanding personalities-statesmen, generals and so on. In actual fact, however, these personalities do accelerate or retard the onset of the event, but they are unable to alter the course of the history of social development.

What, then, determines the process of social development ? Marx was the first to provide clear answer to this question. He rejected the metaphysical or psychological explanation of social development. Alternative he gives is the materialistic interpretation of the history of social development. The materialistic interpretation of history brings out that the development of the society, through various stages, is governed by the materialistic

factors. Marx summed up these forces in his famous concept, mode of production. In order to live, people must work, any society will collapse if it ceases to produce material wealth. Therefore, says, Marx, "The mode of production of wealth is the basis of life and development of any society.

#### **1.4.3.1. Factors Constituting Mode of Production**

The term 'mode of production' refers to a particular social arrangement of production in a society. The social arrangement of production implies social production forces and the relations of production. Oskar Lange has defined mode of production, as representing the level of social productive forces and relations of production. In other words, the production forces and production relations are two factors which constitute any means of production. It is imperative to analyse social productive forces and relations of production in order to understand the Marxian concept of mode of production.

(1) Labour means all those physical and mental efforts of the human being which are directed towards the production of material wealth, in the process of labour, man acts upon nature in order to adapt everything in nature to his needs, for example, from founts in the mines, it transformed into steel to satisfy our need. It involves the use of human labour power.

The second component of the social productive forces is the means of production. Means of labour constitute the means of production.

(a) **Means of labour:** The process of production is inconceivable without the means of labour. The means (instruments) of labour denote all the things with the aid of which people act upon the objects of labour (the land and bowels of the earth). The means of labour, therefore, include machinery equipment, tools appliances, buildings and transport facilities used for production purpose. As a matter, nature has given us a number of products, but we cannot use them in their original form. In fact, man with aid of instruments of production transforms the products of nature into goods needed for living. Marx point out that economic systems are distinguished one from another not by that is produced by the instruments that are used to produce material wealth. It is also important to emphasise that the instruments of production cannot produce the material wealth unless man uses his labour-power through them.

(b) **Objects of Labour:** All the primary objects of labour that are available in nature. In other words, nature itself is a universal object of labour. It means land, the bowels of the earth are the objects of labour. The objects of labour, therefore, include, soil, minerals, water, solar energy and other semi finished commodities.

The above discussion clearly brings out the significance of the social

productive forces as one of the components of the mode of production. Though labour power and means of production are the two constituents of the social productive forces. Yet the decisive factor in all production is man himself, his labour skill, who sets in motion the instruments of production, and also improves them. He invents machines. In this way development of productive forces is ensured and ever increasing volume of material wealth obtained. Changes in productive forces, according to Marx do take place under all economic conditions.

(2) **Relations of Production** : Man is social animal. He performs economic activities in co-operation with other members of society. In other words, people produce material wealth not by working separately, but by working together in groups. In the process of producing material wealth people are linked together, depend upon one another and enter into definite relation with one another. The relations which arise among people during the process of production, distribution, and exchange of material wealth are called relations of production. Production relations may take the form either of co-operation and mutual assistance among people free of exploitation, or exploitation of man by man. This depends on who owns the means of production, the land and the bowels of earth, factories and workshops. When the means of production are privately owned, that is, belong not to the whole of society but to separate individuals, the relations established are that the exploitation of man by man, domination and subordination. It is because the workers under capitalism are deprived of the means of production that are obliged of work for the capitalists. Under such a social economic system, the capitalists who own the means of production, also own the material wealth produced. This leads to the emergence of production relations, based on exploitation. Under socialism the means of production are owned by the whole of society, consequently, there is no exploitation of man by man and the relations, among people are those of comradely co-operation and socialist assistance. It follows that production relations must be classified according to the ownership of the means of production which can be either social or private.

The relations of people to the means of production determine the place and position people occupy in society, the methods by which the products of labour are distributed. Under capitalism for instance, the bourgeois who possesses the means of production, has at his disposal the whole output of the workers. As a result of majority of workers live in poverty. Under socialism where the means of production are collectively owned by the people (are the property of society), consumer goods are

distributed according to labour which people have contributed. As a result, a steady rise in the material and cultural standard of living is ensured for all the working people. Five basic types of production relations are known to human history: Primitive-communal, Slave, feudal, capitalist and socialist.

The relations of production correspond to the level of development of the social productive forces. The productive forces are the most mobile elements in the mode of production. They are continually changing because people are constantly improving their instruments and are accumulating production experience. The relations of production change according to the level of development of productive forces and they in turn influence the developments of the productive forces. It means that the relations of production adjusted to the requirements of the productive forces stimulate the further development of these forces. In socialist countries harmonious relations of production, emanating from the collective ownership of the means of production ensure greater increase in the stock of means of production and quicker economic growth than under capitalist ownership. In this way the stimuli-resulting from production relations either help or hinder the growth of productive forces.

The analysis of modes of production shows that they can be classified into two types according to their production relations. Under capitalism, hired labourers are put to work in the means of production owned by one section of the society. In such case we say that society is divided into social classes and the production relations, and consequently, the whole mode of production, are antagonistic. Antagonism exists between workers and capitalists because the latter exploit the former. The socialist mode of production is non-antagonistic because the collective ownership of the means of production does not create exploiting social classes in the society.

Self check exercise-1

Q.1. How do the social productive forces and production relations constitute the mode of production? Explain with examples from different historical social formations.

Ans.....  
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Q.2. What is the term "mode of production" referring to in society?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. How does Oskar Lange define the mode of production?

Ans.....  
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**1.4.3.2. Process of Social Development through Historical Social Formations**



The 'mode of production' plays a critical role in the process of social development. In every society apart from production relations, political, moral, legal and social relations also exist. These political, moral, legal, religious and social relations and the institutions which correspond to them are called 'superstructure of society'. The mode of production together with its 'superstructure' is called the 'social formation.' The production relations proper to a given socio-economic formation are called its 'economic base'. Since production relations correspond to the level of development of the productive forces, therefore, it is logical to suggest that productive forces constitute basis of socio-economic formation.

The above discussion suggests that the process of social development through different historical social formations should be analysed in relations to development of productive forces and the changes in production relations. The dialectical method has been employed by Marx in order to explain social development through different social formations such as primitive communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist and socialist system in the beginning there is synthesis between the relations of production and social production forces. However, the productive forces being dynamic develop further and come in conflict with the existing production relations. This happens because the existing production relations fail to accommodate the developing productive forces. This conflict gives rise to class struggle which leads to the breakdown of the existing production relations. The new production relations emerge in consonance with the developing productive forces. As a result new synthesis between productive forces and production relations is established. The new synthesis manifests itself in front of a new socio-economic formations. This is how primitive-communal system gave way to slave-owning system when the productive forces developed further and came in conflict with the production relations prevailing in the former. Similarly slave-owning system gave way to feudalism and the later on capitalism.

The different historical social formations followed a definite pattern. We now deal briefly with the origin, development collapse of different socio-economic formations.

1. **Primitive-Communal System** : The first socio-economic formation was the primitive communal system, which covered a period of many hundreds thousand years. It marked the rise of human society. A classless (primates clan and tribal) system initially existed in all countries and on all continents. At this stage of social development the productive forces were weak. The instruments of production were chipped for striking, cutting and digging. The discovery of fire was a great significance for primitive people in their struggle with nature. Fire was used by primitive man for protection from cold and wild animals and also for preparing food and making tools. The growth of hunting led to the rise of primitive stock-raising. The rise of agriculture was a further great stride in the development of productive forces. Thus primitive people began to adopt a settled mode of life.

What were the production relations under the primitive society ? In primitive society relations of production were determined by the state of the productive forces. The basis of production relations was commonly

(joint) ownership of the primitive instruments of labour and the means of production. Collective ownership corresponded to the level of development of productive forces. As a result of the absence of private ownership of the means of production the division of society into 'haves' and 'have-nots' also did not emerge. Thus, there was no class struggle in primitive communal system. In short, primitive communal system excluded every form of domination or exploitation.

Why did primitive-communal system break down ? With the growth of the productive forces man's labour productivity and his power over nature increased considerably, and he was able to satisfy his requirements more fully. But restricted nature communal ownership and equal labour becomes no longer essential and the need arose for individual labour, since the latter was already more productive. The joint labour required collective ownership of the means of production, whereas individual labour demand private ownership. Private ownership of the means of production, emerged with the growth of private property in the means of production, primitive-communal system disintegrated. The inequality of property among the people led to the emergence of rich people and poor people. In these conditions it became possible for some people to make others work in their households. As a result of further expansion of the productive forces and rise in labour productivity, a man could produce more than what was required for his subsistence. This gave rise to surplus product. The phenomenon the surplus product inspired the rich to enslave not only prisoners, but also any of their own fellow tribesmen who had become impoverished or fallen into debt Thus, exploitation of man by man emerged. This meant the end of primitive-communal system, the primitive communal system was superseded by a new society-the slave-owning system.

2. **Slave Owning System** : Slavery is the most crudest and open form of exploitation in history. The slave-owning system was the first social formation based on division of society into classes and on oppression of majority by minority. The slave owner was the owner not only of the means of production but also of the producers, the slave. Thus, a distinctive feature of slave mode of production was that even slaves were the private property of their masters.

How did slave-owning system emerge ? The transition from primitive-communal system to slave owning system was made possible of the further growth of productive forces, the development of a social division of labour and exchange. The making of metal tools to the appearance of special

group of workmen, the handicraftsmen, whose occupation became increasingly independent. "Thus, handicrafts became separated from agriculture. This was the second major social division of labour, whereas the first major social division of labour was the separation of pastoral tribes from primitive tribes at the end of primitive communal system. As a result of this expansion of division of labour there was further growth of exchange. As exchange became

regular phenomenon, money made its appearance. The growing division of labour and exchange through the market money gave rise to the merchants. The emergence of the merchants was the third major social division of labour. The expansion of productive forces and further social division of labour and exchange intensified property inequality. The instruments of production and money accumulated in the hands of rich. The poor, however, became more improvised and had turn to the rich for loans.. Thus, usury arose with its relations of debtors and creditors. According to Marx, "The class struggles of the ancient world took the form chiefly of a contest between debtors and creditors, which in Rome ended in the ruin of the plebian debtors. They were replaced by slaves." A large scale slave owning economy made its appearance. The rich slave-owners made thousand of slaves to work in their estates.

What were the production relations under the slave-owning system ? The slave was solely at the disposal of his owner. The slave was known as the 'speaking tool'; it means that in the eyes of the slave-owners the slave was different from the axe or ox only in the faculty of speech. In other respects he was as much the property of his master as the domestic animals, house, land and instruments of labour. The slaves were exploited much worse than the cattle. They were driven to work with whips. The slave owner used to appropriate the slave-created surplus product. The slave was given just sufficient means to subsistence to save him from death by starvation and keep him working for the slave-owner. Hence, antagonistic production existed under the slave owning system.

Why did slave-owning system collapse ? The slave-owning mode of production contained deep contradiction which led its destruction. Slave labour, which at a certain stage contributed to the growth of productive forces, became an insurmountable obstacle to further progress of productive forces. The historical necessity arose for the replacement of slave-owning production relation by other, which would change the position of society's main productive force, the slaves. As slave-owning economy

developed the class struggle of the enslaved masses against their oppressors became intensified. This struggle flared up as revolt of the slaves against the slave-owners. The ranks of the slaves were joined by peasants and craftsmen who were also exploited by large landlords and the slave-owning state. The slave owning system collapsed.

3. **Feudal Mode of Production** : The feudal systems has existed with particular features of one kind or another, in almost all countries. In China feudal system existed for more than two thousand years. In the west European countries feudalism spread over a number of centuries. In Russia it lasted from 9th century to the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Under feudalism, the peasants worked on the land owned by feudal lords and paid a share of produce, called rent of these landlords. The peasant, who used to till the land belonging to the landlords on return for a share of produce, were called serfs. The landlords, who used to receive the rent and other service from serfs were known as feudal lords. This socio-economic formation exhibited the basic features of an antagonistic mode of production.

How did feudalism merge? The feudal system emerged as result of the disintegration to the social life based on slave-owning system. The feudalism also emerged as result of the disintegration of the primitive-community system of the tribes. The tribes that conquered Roman Empire took over a large part of its land became concentrated in the hands of chiefs and other influential people of the tribes. This led to the monarchy system. Under the monarches for their power used to depend upon the feudal-lords and churches. It is for this reason the monarches distributed their land among feudal-lords. In the beginning the feudal lords were given land only for their life time. However, after some time became fully loyal to the monarches. They, therefore, undertook the responsibility of providing soldiers to the monarches in time of need. The feudal lords used to their lands tilled by the peasants.

What were the production relations under feudalism ? The production relations of feudal society were based on the private landed property of the feudal-lords and their incomplete right over the serfs. Large-scale feudal landed property was the basis for the exploitation of the peasants by the landlords. Besides the land of feudal-lords there were also the peasants. The peasant were used by the feudal lords in order to secure labour force for their land. The peasants working time was divided into necessary and surplus time. During the necessary time the peasant created the products necessary for his own existence and that of his

family. During the surplus time he created the surplus product which was appropriated by feudal lords in the form of ground rent (labour-rent in kind, and money rent). The exploitation of peasants by the feudal lords in the form of ground rent has been the main feature of feudalism among all peoples. Craftsmen were exploited by the feudal-lords.

Why did feudalism collapse ? Under feudalism the productive forces reached a higher stage than those of the slave owning system. Production techniques were improved.

There were improvements in agriculture as well as in livestock husbandry. But, the feudal system, in which new productive forces had already developed, acted as a brake on their future development. The production forces clashed with the narrow framework of feudal production relation. The peasantry, under the yoke of feudal exploitation was in no position to increase the output of agriculture produce, in towns the increasing labour productivity of the craftsmen encountered obstacles set up by guild statutes and rules. All this required the 'abolition of old' production relations and indicated the need to establish new production relations free from fetters of feudalism. Capitalist relations of production began to appear within the feudal system. It made the abolition of feudalism a historic necessity. Peasant-revolts shook the foundations of the feudal system and led to its final collapse. The bourgeoisie (capitalist) headed the anti-feudal struggle and used the revolts of the serfs against the feudal-lords in order to seize power and became the ruling class.

4. **Capitalist System:** The socio-economic formation based on capitalist production relations is found today in most of the countries; England, U.S.A., Japan and France furnish an example of capitalist system. Capitalist system may be defined as a mode of production in which the means of production are owned by private individuals, the productive forces are highly developed and with the help of hired labour the production is made for the market to get maximum profit. According to Marx, the basic feature of capitalism is that under the system the labour-power, too, becomes a commodity of exchange like other commodities and is bought and sold in the market. In the capitalist market the capitalist, owner of the means of production acts as the buyer of labour-power, the workers are the seller. This is due to the concentration of the means of production as the private property in hands of the capitalists and absence of means of production among the majority. The majority devoid of the ownership of the means of production have to sell their labour to earn their living. Under capitalism the workers enjoy freedom to work or not to work through bargaining in the free market can succeed in getting a due return

in exchange of his labour-power. But it is not so in reality, the workers, who are deprived of the means of production, must sell their labour-power to the capitalist or slave owners. Hence, the monopoly ownership of the means of productive vested in capitalist to workers to sell their labour-power and enables the capitalists to exploit the working class.

How did capitalism emerge ? Capitalism emerged as a result of the decline and collapse of feudal mode of production. In the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism not only the institution of private property developed but the private property also came to be concentrated in a few hands. The emergence of capitalism was also accompanied by the loss of craftsmen's rights in their means of production. As a result they were let to sell their labour-power to the capitalists to get their living. Thus, the exploitation of peasants by feudal lords was replaced by the exploitation of workers by the capitalist. Hence, capitalism came into existence. Capitalism passed through the stage namely simply capitalist co-operation, large-scale manufacturing and the factory system.

What were the production relations under capitalism? Marx began his analysis of capitalism with capitalist form of commodity production. His analysis of commodity production enabled him to explain the production relations under capitalism. Commodity production means the production of goods not for personal use, but for sale, for exchange in the market. Under capitalist-production of goods by using hired workers is meant for sale in the market and the production relations took the form of commodity relation. The fundamental production relation, in capitalist society is the exploitation of proletariat by bourgeoisie. According to Marx, in a capitalist society the worker produces commodities more than what he requires for the living of his family It means 'surplus' product over and above the minimum subsistence output is expropriated by the capitalists represents the 'exploitation of labour'. Hence production relations are antagonistic under capitalist mode of production.

Will capitalism also collapse? According to Marx, capitalism contains inner contradictions which could ultimately lead to its collapse. In a capitalist society, there is a clash of interests between two classes namely bourgeoisie and proletariat. This leads to class struggle. The increasing exploitation of proletariat will prompt them to revolt against the capitalist system and ultimately overthrow it through revolution. Marx also predicted the collapse of capitalism on the basis of economic crisis to be developed owing to lack of demand for goods. It is argued that in order to increase the surplus value, the capitalists introduce new machines presenting higher technology. This leads to mounting unemployment of labour. The

capitalists will also keep the wages at the subsistence level. The low level of wages and unemployment will result into low purchasing power which causes culmination into under-consumption. The under-consumption will set in depression or economic crisis.

5. **Socialist System:** Marx discovered the law of origin, development and downfall of capitalism. Socialist system comes after capitalist system in the historical process of social development. Karl Marx regarded socialism as the first phase of communism. Lenin stressed that only scientific distinction between socialism and communism is that the former implies the first stage of the new society arising out of Capitalism, while the latter implies the next higher stage. The development of Socialism, leads to the second, higher phase-communism. The Socialist mode of production is that under which the means of production are the property of whole society. Social ownership of the means is no doubt an important element of Socialist mode of production, but Socialism implies many other things besides it. The Socialist society work to maximise social benefits.

How does socialist society emerge ? Marx held the view that Socialism cannot be achieved without revolution. The bourgeoisie system can only be ended through proletarian revolution. Revolution is required to abolish private ownership of the means of production. In other words, revolution is required to wrench all the basic means of production from the hands of capitalists and transfer to the people as a whole, to establish Socialist ownership. The revolutionary transition from Capitalism to Socialism is brought about by two methods-peaceful and non-peaceful. The victory of the great October Socialist Revolution in 1917 in Russia showed that Capitalism is transitory and the capitalist relations of production is brake on the development of the production forces.

The production relations in a socialists society are founded in equality and economic justice. There is no place for exploitation of man by man in a socialist society.

#### Exploitation of Surplus Product and Class-Division

The existence of class-division of the society was discovered by bourgeois scholars, Adam Smith and David Ricardo before Karl Marx came on the scene. But they did not see any antagonistic contradiction between the classes. Therefore, they were unable to show the basis from which class division sprang. They however, formulated the distribution theory to show the existence of class division of society, but failed to show the basis of class division. It was Marx, who discovered the basis of class-division of the society. According to Marx, the existence of class division is only



bound up with particular historical phase in the development of production. It means the mode of production and corresponding to it the relations of production define the character of society's class structure. According to Marx, there is class-structure in every society, except the final classless society. Private property in the means of production is the economic basis on which society is split up into classes. It is the basis for the social antagonism between the classes. In a society, where every one has equal status with respect to the property in means of production, there is no exploitation of man by man and so no class divisions.

How class division of capitalist society manifest exploitation of labour ? Marx discovered the exploitation of labour in terms of exploitation of surplus product. The capitalist society is divided into two classes, one, which is called capitalists owns the means of production, while the other called workers possess nothing but their labour power. According to Marx labour power, which the capitalist purchases in market, possesses the unique feature of production more than its own value. The excess product, created by labour power is the surplus product that a capitalist gains. This leads to the point in the capitalist enterprise the workers labour is divided into necessary labour and surplus labour. The labour which is called necessary labour, whereas the labour expended on the production of surplus product is called surplus labour. Let us suppose that the worker's necessary labour is four hours but, he is asked to work for twelve hours, then it suggests that he expends eight hours surplus labour. The output production during eight hours is appropriated by the capitalist as a 'surplus product. Thus, surplus product is the result of the exploitation of working by the capitalists.

#### Self check exercise-2

Q.1. Describe the process of social development through different historical social formations such as primitive-communal, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist, and socialist systems.

Ans.....  
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Q.2. Explain the concept of labor and its role in the production of material wealth.

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What are the two factors that constitute any means of production?

Ans.....  
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#### **1.4.3.3. Class Struggle, State and Social Revolution**

The oppressed classes and the class of oppressors are inevitably impelled to struggle with each other because their interests are

antagonistic. That is why the class struggle is only a social mechanism to reflect the conflict of the productive forces with the relations of production. In the class struggle there are always two poles; the reactionary and the revolutionary. The ruling classes (capitalists) manage to maintain their dominant position in the struggle against the oppressed classes (workers) so long as the material conditions for the establishment of the new social system have not matured. The revolutionary forces win out when corresponding material prerequisites for their victory mature. The struggle of revolutionary or revolutionary classes in the historically necessary form of social practice. Which leads beyond the frame work of the obsolete socio-economic formation to new and higher stages in the social development. Thus the proletariat can emancipate itself only destroying

capitalist relation of production, emancipate the whole society from private property and exploitation do away with the absolute form of property in the means of production, eliminate the old relations of production and so pave the way for establishment of new production relation.

The discussion on class-struggle and social revolution bring out the following conclusions:

- (i) Social revolutions are not in any sense a disruption of the normal course of social development but are the necessary form of transition from one socio-economic formation to another as class society develops.
- (ii) Revolutions are not made at the whim of individual, group or classes but occur when the right material conditions for them have matured i.e., the conflict between the new productive forces and old relations of production have become sharp to an extreme.
- (iii) Every revolution has a definite socio-economic content.

If the tasks of a social revolution are to be fulfilled, there is need to overcome the resistance of the ruling classes of the old society. That is why the question of state power is the principal one in any revolution. In the proper sense of the word, 'revolution' is the transfer of the state power from one class to another. That is why Marx holds that the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat is a necessary outcome of proletarian class struggle in a bourgeois society.

### Self check exercise-3

Q.1. What is the concept of "mode of production" and how does it relate to the social arrangement of production in a society?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. Define the objects of labor and provide examples of such objects

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What are the means of labor, and why are they essential for the process of production?

Ans.....  
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#### 1.4.4. SUMMARY

1. The process of social development according to Marx is determined by mode of production'. Mode of production of wealth is the basis of different social formations like Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism.

2. The productive forces and production relations are the two constituents of the mode of production. Labour-power and means of production make up the productive forces. Production relations means relations among people during the process of production, distribution and exchange of material wealth. The production relations are antagonistic or harmonious depends on, who owns the means of production. Production relations influence, productive forces and they are influenced by them.
3. Primitive communal system, slave-owning system, Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism are the social formations which took place in the course of social development. The development of the productive forces and change in production relations explain the emergence of different social formations. A particular social

formation is defined by a particular dominant mode of production together with its superstructure (political, legal and social institutions). The decline of particular social formation and the emergence of the other takes place as a result of anti-thesis between productive forces and production relations and a new synthesis between the two. This is a 'dialectical' method of social development.

4. Mode of production and the corresponding relations define character of society's class structure. Private property in the means of production is the economic basis of class-division. Class division results in exploitation of labour in a capitalist society. The labour produces more than needed for his living and the excess output is appropriated by the capitalist. The appropriation of this surplus product by the capitalist reflects exploitation of labour.

Class struggle leads to social revolution by the proletariat class to do away with the old production relations and pave the way for Socialism.

#### 1.4.5. Key Concepts

**Historical Social Development:** Progression of societies through historical changes and advancements.

**Social Development:** Societal progress and improvement in various aspects of life.

**Relations of Production:** Connections between classes influencing economic organization.

**Class Struggle:** Ongoing conflict among social classes for power and resources.

#### 1.4.6. Long Questions

1. What were the production relations under the primitive communal system, and why did it eventually break down to give rise to slave-owning societies?
2. Analyze the production relations under capitalism, focusing on the exploitation of labor and the contradictions that could lead to its collapse.

#### 1.4.7. Short Questions

1. In the process of producing material wealth, how are people linked together, and what are these relations called?
2. Differentiate between production relations under capitalism and socialism

in terms of ownership of the means of production.

3. According to Marx, what determines the place and position of people in society under different modes of production?
4. How do the relations of production and productive forces influence each other in different social formations?

#### **1.4.8. Suggested Readings**

1. Maurice Cornforth : Dialectical Materialism, Vol. 1 & 2, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1976
2. V.I. Lenin : Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works. Vol. 38, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1983.
3. J. Stalin : Dialectical and Historical Materialism, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1968.
4. Tom Bottomore : A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Oxford & Others University Press, Delhi, 1983
5. K. Marx: The Poverty of Philosophy, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966.
6. J. Stalin: Economic Problems of Socialism in USSR, Peking, 1972.
7. Oscar Lange : Problems of Political Economy of Socialism, People's Publishing House, 1962.
8. Umberto Melotti : Marx and The Third World.
9. Ernest Mandel: The Formation of Economic Thought.

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## HISTORICAL SOCIAL FORMATIONS

### 1.5.1. Objective of this lesson

### 1.5.2. Introduction

### 1.5.3. MAIN FEATURES OF SOCIAL FORMATION

#### 1.5.3.1. Primitive Communism

#### 1.5.3.2. Slavery

#### 1.5.3.3. Feudalism

#### 1.5.3.4. Capitalism

### 1.5.4. Summary

### 1.5.5. Key Concepts

### 1.5.6. Long Questions

### 1.5.7. Short Questions

### 1.5.8. Suggested Readings

### 1.5.1. Objective of this lesson

The objective of this lesson is to understand the successive phases of human history based on material production processes, known as socio-economic formations, from primitive communal to socialism. It explores the impact of the materialist conception of history, the distinguishing features of each system, and the transition from one formation to another. Additionally, it highlights the achievements and contradictions of each socio-economic system, especially in the context of capitalism's global development.

### 1.5.2. Introduction

#### **Rise of Private Property, Classes and the State**

The word 'class' derives from the Latin, 'classic' a group called (resorted) to arms, division of the people. Subsequently, the word, 'class' was applied to large groups of people into which human society came to be divided.

But what is a class ? Some false definitions, about the concept of class which gained currency are that the division into classes rested on the difference in intellectual standards (the more gifted and active formed the ruling classes, the dull and stolid formed the oppressed classes); The class division can be explained by income and property (the rich and the poor) ; that classes are distinguished by their position in society (the privileged, the under privileged). But the question remains : what is a class ?

A very comprehensive and profound definition of the concept "class" was

provided by Lenin, "Classes are the large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in the historically determined system of social production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it."

Thus the main indication is the relation of a class to the means of production. The ownership of the means of production establishes a social group as the ruling or privileged class, and estrangement from the means of production turns a social group into a oppressed, destituted or ruled class. In an exploitative society, classes are: Groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in definite system of social economy," wrote Lenin.

How classes came about or class-division emerged in human society ? The first of class-division occurred with the disintegration of primitive-communal system, very long ago, and the emergence of class society was a lengthy process which did not occur simultaneously for everywhere. Earlier in the primitive society when the people provided the means of subsistence for themselves by common efforts and consumed the product also in common, there was no division of society into classes and thus subjection,



oppression, or exploitation was absent. Economically, the class division of society was based on the emergence of surplus product in the primitive Society which with the passage of time was turned into private property.

The disintegration of primitive communal and the tribal system society was associated with the progress in social division of labour which took place mainly in three forms: the separation of cattle-breeding (Pastoral) tribes, The separation of handicraft from agriculture and the separation of mental from manual work. There were the main causes and circumstances underlying the division of human society into large social groups of hostile classes. These classes were formed in two ways: First they emerged in the clan, an exploiting elite, initially consisting of the aristocracy and impoverished members of the clan, turned into slaves (for their debts). Secondly, the formation of class division was derived from the enslavement of war prisoners. In the subsequent period however, the community leaders, who had the power of control and disposition over the surplus product, began to enslave their fellow tribesmen by legal means which they devised. As a consequence of this process of class formation, slavery, the first form of class society based on exploitation emerged. Since then, from slavery through feudalism to capitalism, the human society got divided into classes of the exploited, the exploiters; the oppressed, the oppressors; the ruled and the ruling. The names and social position of classes changed but history of all antagonistic class formations (slavery, feudalism, capitalism) may undergo, society cannot go on without the classes of producers (of slaves, serfs, peasants, proletariat). As antagonistic class formation succeeded on another, the forms of exploitation were modified but the labouring classes every remained oppressed.

The class structure of slave-society was based on distinction between the masters and the slaves. apart from the class of farmers, cattle breeders, and artisans who become dependent on slave-owners. The crudest form of exploitation was practised under slavery. Here, slave was treated not better than a draught animal. The class structure of feudal society stems from the fact that the feudal economy was natural, tending to be self-sufficient. The means of exploitation were binding the peasants to the soil and the peasant was personally dependent on the lord. The feudal system rested on extra economic compulsions or coercion, in the form of peasant's legal dependence on the landlords and their under privileged position. The class structure of society under went a change under capitalism. The feudal Lord and the serfs were replaced by the capitalist and the worker. As compared with the slave or the under-privileged bonded serf peasant,

worker is legally free in a capitalist society. But his freedom is only nominal; he is deprived of the ownership of the means of production, and all he has is his labour power which he must sell in a capitalist society, and thus sell himself into bondage of the capitalist.

The principal or basic classes of the antagonistic class formation are slaves and slave owners (in a slaved society), serf peasants and landlords (in feudalism), workers and capitalist (in capitalism). But no 'pure' socio-economic formation ever existed, every formation included some elements of the previous as well of the future stages of social development and social formations. The non-basic classes, which are associated either with vestiges of earlier production relations or with those which are just beginning to join the class struggles by joining opposite basic classes. That the basic interest of the antagonistic class is witnessed by countless and incessant class battles, armed revolts and other sharp conflicts which abound in social history. Marx and Engels established that the class struggle pervades all respects to social life, that in all antagonistic class societies it develops along these lines, taking the class form of economic, political and ideological struggle and then in every antagonistic formation, the struggle is the driving force of social progress and is waged by different classes by different methods to protect and define their respective class interests.

The state has not always existed. It appeared when human society goes divided into classes into exploiters and exploited. The most important characteristic of a state is public or political power which include the army, the police, the courts and prisons, intelligence and counter-intelligence, education and information, propaganda, media, etc. The government which controls them is itself an organ of political power of the state. Like the state power itself, its tools or organs are unmistakably of a class nature. Every state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another. In fact the state is a product of society at a certain state of development and arises where, when and in so for a class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. The written "history of all hitherto existed society is the history of class struggles", wrote Marx and Engels. The society of class antagonism needed the state as an organization of the particular exploiting class for the maintenance of its external conditions of production and especially for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited class in the conditions of oppressions, determined by the given mode of production.

The primary function of the state is protection of given property relations

and the secondary function is an economic instrument within the frame work of given property relations. Without performing its primary function, the political instrument of class rules, the State cannot perform its secondary function that is, the economic instruments of social development. The state, therefore, is special institution capable and willing to use force to whatever degree is required as the guaranter of the maintenance of a given set of class property relations.

The abolition of classes, the class-division of society, class exploitation. class antagonism, class struggles and, therefore, the state is possible only after the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, the abolition of classes and of the state is a lengthy process which occupies a whole historical epoch following a proletarian revolution. In long period of transition from capitalism or any pre-socialist society to socialism, the material conditions are created for the final abolition of classes, class antagonism and state in a communist society.

Self check exercise-1

Q.1. How did the concept of "socio-economic formations" contribute to the understanding of human history, according to Marx and Engels?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. What are the successive phases of human history based on material production processes?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. Who introduced the concept of "socio-economic formations," and who elaborated and widely used it?

Ans.....  
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**1.5.3. MAIN FEATURES OF SOCIAL FORMATION**

The human history, based on the processes of material production, has gone through succession of phases, viz. the primitive communal, slavery, feudal and capitalist system and has now entered a socialist phase of development. These phases signifying stages in the progress of world history, are called socio-economic formations.

The concept of "socio-economic formations" was introduced by Marx and was elaborated and widely used by Engels and Lenin. Accordingly to Lenin, a socio-economic formation is as an integral social organism, which has its own skeleton, flesh and blood. The skeleton or economic basis of each formation consists of the social classes existing within it and of the social institution. The blood proper to each formation is the specific law of

material production. The relation between its economic basis (the predominant relations of production) and the social superstructure (the prominently ideas and institutions).

The discovery of the materialist conception of history by Marx and Engels was of truly epoch making signification? Based on it, the category of socio-economic formation has made it possible to (i) elucidate the functional structure of society at a certain stages (its development, the nature of changes inside it within the limits of the given structure); (ii) explain the variety of forms in which this or that formation occurred under the specific conditions of each country; (iii) understand the qualitative stages of the historical process as a whole and the basis for the scientific periodisation

of history. In fact, the conception of socio-economic formations, as a kind of focal point for the laws of the historical process, is central to the system of categories of historical materialism (mode of production, production forces, production relations, basis and superstructure), which coverage and combined in it.

It is only basing ourselves on the materialist conception of history, as developed by Marx and Engels and enriched by later Marxists, that we can describe the distinguishing features of different historical social formations (Primitive Communism, Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism (Communism) through the process of the emergence and decay of the social systems for formations.

#### **1.5.3.1. Primitive Communism**

It is the making of tools and the activity of production, shaping nature to serve man's needs and purposes, that distinguishes man from other animals. A million or more years ago there emerged a "tool-making" from ape called the first man of this period who lived in savage communities. In these communities the only division of labour was between the sexes, the men hunting and making their weapons, the women controlling the home, preparing food, making cloth, giving birth to children and nourishing them and so forth. In primitive communism this was the first beginning of the process of adapting nature to human needs, the production process undertaken by human beings living and working together.

After living in this stage of primitive savagery for some forty thousand years, in the course of time. some tribes of men developed new means of productions which were destined to cause great changes in the means of man's life and the relations of men to one another. Instead of killing they hunted and captured the beasts and kept them alive and also started breeding the animals to suit their needs. They learned also to grow food. In this way, primitive agriculture began to develop and with it man's way of life changed.

At some places, differentiation between the backward tribes without herds and the pastoral people of farmers began to develop. The pastoral people would regularly produce a surplus above their immediate needs and this surplus production could be exchanged with other communities. The discovery of new means and methods of production involved more organisation of human efforts, greater specialization and further division of labour between agriculture and handicraft. This development resulted in great increases in the supply of food in more and more being produced

especially for exchange. Because surplus was produced and commodity-exchange was developing, therefore, under these conditions, captives in wars could be used, as slaves to produce wealth for their captors. Further development of production and exchange and the new forms of property that came with it led also to the enslavement of men within the tribes. It provided in the subsequent periods the basis for the development of class division with the primitive society.

In primitive communism the personal rights only in weapons, utensils etc., were recognised, but hunting grounds, pastures land were held in common. Earlier there was no private land and property, it was the common property of the entire community. With the further development of agriculture, though the land was still deemed the common property of the tribes, its private tenure began to develop.

Still primitive society has no internal antagonisms and its social organisation was controlled by no cohesive power other than the public opinion. There were different forms of this formation among different tribes, but irrespective of that there was a complete similarity in the principal feature of this social organisation. All members of the community were working and no one lived on unearned income. Under primitive communism there was no state. There was no private property and the division of society into class.

Today's division of society into classes of exploiters and exploited is not at all an eternal and inevitable features of each and every social formations. On the contrary, human society existed for a very long period of time without knowing anything of private property, classes exploitation or the state. The appearance of classes is most closely connected with the entire process of social development. In his social practice of production, man improved his implements of labour and the development in productive forces resulted in further division of people of the same tribe, and of different tribes emerged, and the means of production in land, livestock, implements, etc., began to be owned by separate individuals or groups within a tribe or clan. In this way the basis of private property, division of society into classes, of exploitation and of the emergence of state was laid. This subsequently resulted in the dissolution of the society or primitive communism.

So we see that primitive-communal system was the very first socio economic system and it existed the longest period in human history. There were two stages in the development of productive forces under the system. The first consisted mainly in the appropriation of natural production and

the second marked the transition to a reproductive economy. The main contradiction in this system was that between Primitive man's vital needs and low level of productive forces. The basic production relation in primitive society were based on communal ownership of the means of production. The labour activity of men in this society was based on simple cooperation. The distribution of the products of labour was on the basis of equal shares of all. The absence of surplus production or private property or class division and of exploitation of man by man excluded the need of the state.

In primitive society, the emergence of the first social division of labour (separation of pastoral) tribes from the general mass of primitive tribes created favourable conditions for increasing production, for surplus production and for the evolution of regular exchange of products. In the new situation, the old production relations of the primitive society, (common ownership of means of production, collective labour, equal distribution etc.) began to cease with the new productive forces. Thus the first division of society into classes originated (into slave-owner & slaves). Exploitation of man by man appeared and the production relations of the society of primitive communism began to disintegrate: common property in means of production was replaced by private property, joint of collective labour by individual labour and the clan system by class, society and the state.

#### Self check exercise-2

Q.1. Describe the main characteristics of the Primitive Communism socio-economic formation. How did it differ from later socio-economic formations?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q.2. How did the discovery of the materialist conception of history impact our understanding of society's functional structure?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q. 3. According to Lenin, what are the three main components of a socio-economic formation?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

#### **1.5.3.2. Slavery**

The dissolution of primitive communism led to the transfer of various means of production (land, cattle, tools, etc.) from communal ownership to private ownership and with this the basis was laid for the division of ancient society into classes, growth of inequality and class exploitation. However, the forms of class exploitation which came into being with the

decay of primitive communism as well as its methods changed in different stage of development of human society upto capitalism. Because the classes differ in their position

within a definite system of social production (according to their relation of the means of production), therefore, each of three main forms of class society based on exploitation (slavery, feudalism/serfdom and capitalism), has its own individual features distinguished by its own-structure of social production and its production relations.

The slave-owning society, which was the first in human history to be founded on class antagonism passed through two stages. The first to appear was particular slavery emerging with the patriarchal clan with



included besides free members, also prisoners of wars, that is, the slaves. Later patriarchal slavery, in some places, developed into classical slavery (in ancient Greece and Rome). In general initially, slavery was of a patriarchal domestic nature and was still not basis of production.

Later, however, slaves, labour became the basis of the existence of society which was split into two in antagonistic classes, slaves and slave-owners. In addition, there were free small producers (artisans and peasants) and also merchants and usurers. The essence of the production relation of the slave society was the production of surplus product for the slave-owners by means of rapacious exploitation of masses of slaves. In a slave-society, non-economic compulsion to work was the sole means of combining slave and means of production. The slave belonged to his owner just as a house, land or cattle and in ancient Rome, he was called a talking tool, as distinguished from 'mute tools' and 'semi mute tools' (cattle). The slave labour performed under compulsion, under threat of punishment, has a low productivity. The life of the ruling classes under slavery was characterized by luxury and waste. As the growth of wealth was circumscribed within comparatively narrow limits; the technical improvement was very slow under conditions of slavery. Together class-division of society and the class dominance of slavemasters, the state came into being as an apparatus of coercion, compelling the majority to work for exploiting minority and to keep the slaves under control. Some slaves owning societies, particularly in ancient Greece and Rome, reached a high level of scientific and artistic development but it was a culture erected on the bones of countless masses of slaves.

Apart from agriculture and cattle-breeding, under slavery, crafts became a major economic branch and its progress resulted in the second major social division of labour when crafts were separated from agriculture, when handicrafts became an independent branch of production. This separation of crafts from agriculture was, decisive step in the origin of commodity production, thus of exchange. Yet commodity production was not the main form of production because under slavery the economy had a basically subsistence character. Gradually, however, the development of productive forces led to an increase in material wealth, production and exchange based on private ownership and economic inequality. As a result of the expansion of internal and external trade the third major social division of labour came about, that is, the rise of a class of merchants when crafts and trade became more separated from agriculture.

The potentates (King etc.) of the ancient world did not look to

improved methods of production as source of increased wealth but to conquest of new territories from which the supply of slaves was increased and taxes and duties were extracted. The 'free' peasantry was ruined by compulsory service in the army. In towns the use of slave-labour tended more and more to out the free craftsmen from their livelihood. During period of frequent wars the number of people who were slaves grew tremendously and the conditions of their life were altogether intolerable.

In comparison with the primitive communal system, the slave mode of production opened up broader possibilities for growth of productive forces. On the basis of slave labour, the ancient world achieved significant economic and cultural development. Its main achievements were the development of new branches of agriculture, the invention of new tools, the mastery of large-scale construction, the improvement of production skills, the development and expansion of new trades, and the development of science, architecture and arts. At the same time, the slave system was unable to create the necessary condition for any major technical progress, because the main attractive force was physical strengths of men and cattle. The slave society was inherent by a complex of contradictions which marked the historically limited nature of this society and its production mode. The most profound antagonistic contradiction in slave society was between the slave-owners and the slaves and it was expressed through the slave revolts against their masters.

The main causes of the dissolution of the slave society and the collapse of its mode of production were: first, production relations ceased to correspond to the character of productive forces; second, the ruin of the small producers who were the basis of the power of the state, third, mass uprisings of slaves which undermined the economic and political power of the state; and fourth, invasions foreign tribes which finally undermined the slave-owning system. In fact, the history of slavery was one of bloody struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. The frequent slave revolts shocked the slave society to its very foundations in the last period of existence. The Roman Empire was shaken by periodical slave revolts. It was also threatened over by the revolts of subject people and was ceaselessly torn by strife between different non-basis social classes. In this way, the civil war prepared the ground for its destruction. In place of slavery, a new form of the society.

called feudalism, which prevailed during the Middle Ages, appeared with a new form of class division in society and exploitation of man by man.

### **1.5.3.3. Feudalism**

Feudalism, the second socio-economic formation based on the exploitation of man by man, was a necessary stage in the development of society in many parts of the world. It emerged in Western Europe as a result of the fall of Roman - slave owning society and the disintegration of the clan system among the conquering tribes. The tribes that conquered the Roman Empire took possession of a large part of its land. The subsequent disintegration of the tribal clan system gave rise to a new class of land-owners who subordinated the peasant masses to their domain. The land granted to feudal lords were worked by the peasants under various obligations of dependence on the lords. The personal dependence of the peasants (and even of artisans) on the feudal lords, constituted the basis of production relation in the feudal system and it was based on non-economic coercion.

As a social formation, feudalism prevailed during the Middle Ages and its last stage of development was serfdom. Under feudalism, the tremendous mass of the peasantry was exploited by small group of feudal barons. So long natural economy prevailed, feudal exploitation was circumscribed by narrow limits. As the exchange of goods developed, the possibilities for increased exploitation of the peasantry by the feudal lords became greater. The growth of exchange destroyed the old patriarchal relations of dependence and led to the rise of serfdom, under which the peasants were attached to land and became partially the property of the landlord, represents a form of the severest kind of exploitation of the feudal landlords.

In the early stage of its development, the feudal economy, with agriculture as the main economy branch of production, was predominantly of subsistence character. However, feudalism saw the revival of handicraft which had fallen into decay during the disintegration of slavery. Later, with the development of agriculture and the growth of commodity relations, crafts production developed further and became increasingly separated from agriculture production.

Under feudalism technology was changing, but slowly, and handicraft and agriculture were mainly based on manual labour. But as compared with the slave society, significant progress was achieved in the development of productive forces. It was in the form of improvement in the technique of farming, stock raising, in craftman's tool and methods of processing raw materials, a new revolution in shipping and navigation and also development of culture. The growth of productive forces and the social division of labour led to the development of commodity production,

formation of internal market and increase in the external trade.

In general, there were two kinds of feudal ownership. The peasants had no land and they were granted land by the lord in return for various obligations to him. The feudal lord's ownership of land was the economic basis for the exploitation of the peasant. Simultaneously, there existed peasants and artisans ownership on some means of production based on producer on work. Under these conditions apart from economic dependence, non economic compulsion was required to exploit the peasants. This non-economic compulsion was based on the peasant's personal dependence on feudal lords, the nature and extent of which differed from country to country as well as from one stage of feudal development to another.

The basic economic law of feudalism consisted in the production of surplus product by the dependent and exploited peasants(also artisans) and its appropriation by the feudal lords as feudal land rent. In many countries different forms of feudal rent existed simultaneously. Initially, land rent took the form of labour rent, cover of feudal labour services. But a more advanced form of land rent was rent in kind. It provided some incentive for the peasants to make their labour efficient by it at the same time gave birth to economic inequality among the peasants. The last form of feudal rent was the money rent which emerged in the period of decay of feudalism when commodity-money relations an advanced level of development, Money rent greatly accelerated property differentiation among the peasantry and helped in the emergence of capitalist commodity relation.

With the further development of agriculture, handicraft and exchange, feudal relations of production became an obstacle to the development of the productive forces. As, on the one hand, feudal seclusion and exploitation hampered the social division of labour and exchange and on the other, the personal dependence of exploited producers on feudal lord's obstructed free migration of labour force. This contradiction between the forces and relations of production served to heighten and antagonism between the peasants and artisans on the one hand, and the feudal lords, on the other, between town and country: between mental and manual labour and between the feudal subsistence economy and the growing commodity production. It was due to these antagonism (expressed, sometimes, through bloody uprising of peasant) relations that feudalism fell to decay and the capitalist mode of production emerged forth the womb of feudal society.

An important role in shaking the foundation of feudalism and in speeding up its replacement was played by peasant uprising. The exploitation of the peasants or serfs evoked the bitterest struggles of the peasants against their land-lords. These revolts were frequent and development at times into wider spread rebellion. The struggles of the peasant against landlords were utilized by the rising bourgeoisie in order to hasten the fall of feudalism and to substitute capitalist exploitation for self of feudal exploitation. In particular, in the countries of Western Europe, the transition from feudalism to capitalism took place through bloody bourgeoisie revolutions (for instance, French Revolution of 1789). The rising bourgeoisie, as a progressive historical force at the time, headed the struggle of the peasants and urban poor against feudal exploitation and oppression and after seizing political power, it substituted capitalist exploitation in place of feudal exploitation.

#### **1.5.5.4. Capitalism**

The contradictions in the society of feudal social formation and antagonisms in feudal mode of production necessitated the establishment of new production relations of the capital nature. The process of transition from feudalism to capitalism came into being during the epoch of feudalism itself.

It was because of development of commodity production, increasing exchange of agriculture produce and urban craft products formation of national markets and of world market. This greatly accelerated stratification of petty craft producers and the transition of large-scale capitalist production based on the exploitation of hired wage labour. A similar process of disintegration of feudal production relations and development of capitalist production relations speeded up the differentiation of the peasantry into various social groups. The overwhelming majority was impoverished and ruined but a minority emerged as kulaks or rich peasants. In this way, capitalist production relations took shape in the womb of the feudal system.

Capitalist production at first developed slowly within the feudal society. Its early forms were restricted and encumbered by the old order. Once, however, capitalism has won its political power and there with economic freedom, it revealed with startling speed undreamed of forces of the production that lay hidden in social labour. The advance from manufacture to full flooded industrial capitalism could not have taken place if the capitalist class had been able to free itself from the shackles of feudalism, "up to a certain point

capitalism was able to develop within the old feudal society but in order to realise the full potentialities, the capitalist class sought of employ the power of the state, the concentrated and organized force of society to hasten in hot house fashion the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode and to shorten the transition", wrote Marx.

Three main features which give capitalism its essential character, are: (a) Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few people (the capitalist class, who own the means of production, raw materials, factories, machines etc.) as well as wealth in money form; (b) Large masses of the people have no means of getting a living except by selling their power to work for wages (the proletariat) ; (c) Virtually all production is not for the personal use of the producer, but for exchange, for sale in the market. These feature of Capitalism developed within pre capitalist society over long period of time.

Capitalism as a world social formation, differ from all previous economic systems, production is carried out at large-scale by employing great mass of the wage-workers, industry predominates over agriculture, specialization and social division of labour (both within and among productive units) and application of science in production takes place; the whole of the world is linked by commercial and economic ties and, dependence on markets etc. The development of Capitalism, has brought in its train an unprecedented increase in production and wealth. It has brought also mass poverty for the workers, exploitation of colonial and new colonial nature, devastating economic and imperialist war affecting the whole world.

Note: (1) For more details on 'Capitalism', students should consult Lesson Nos. 11, 12 and 16

(2) For understanding the main features of Socialism/ Communism, as social formation, students should consult Lesson Nos. 22, 23 and 24.

Self check exercise-3

Q.1. How did the transition from Primitive Communism to Slavery come about? What were the key factors that led to the emergence of slavery as a socio-economic formation?

Ans.....  
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Q.2. What led to the emergence of the first social division of labor in primitive society?

Ans.....  
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Q. 3. What were the distinguishing features of the primitive-communal system, and how long did it exist in human history?

Ans.....  
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#### 1.5.4. Summary

The main features of different social formations in human history are presented in this text. These formations include primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. The concept of "socio-economic formations" was introduced by Marx and elaborated by Engels and Lenin. Each formation has its economic basis, social classes, and specific laws of material production. The materialist conception of history by Marx and Engels helped elucidate the functional structure of society, explain historical changes, and understand the stages of historical development. Primitive communism marked the beginning of human adaptation of nature to meet their needs. Slavery emerged with the exploitation of slaves for surplus production. Feudalism saw the rise of feudal lords and serfs, and capitalism introduced large-scale production, wage labor, and wealth concentration among capitalists.

#### 1.5.5. Key Concepts

**Social Formation:** Arrangement of society and its structural characteristics.

**Primitive Communism:** Early communal society with shared resources and labor.

**Slavery:** Social system where individuals are owned as property.

**Feudalism:** Medieval social system with land-based hierarchical relationships.

**Capitalism:** Economic system driven by private ownership and market competition.

**Private Property:** Exclusive ownership of resources or assets by individuals.

#### 1.5.6. Long Questions

2. In what ways did the Slavery socio-economic formation impact the development of productive forces and cultural achievements in the ancient world?
3. Explain the process of transition from Feudalism to Capitalism. What were the main features that distinguished Capitalism as a socio-economic formation from its predecessors?

#### 1.5.7. Short Questions

1. What were the main achievements of the slave-owning society (slavery) in economic and cultural development?
2. How did feudalism emerge, and what were the basic economic laws of the feudal system?
3. How did the transition from feudalism to capitalism take place?
4. What are some of the consequences of capitalism's development on a global scale?

#### 1.5.8. Suggested Readings

1. Maurice Cornforth : Dialectical Materialism, Vol. 1 & 2, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1976
2. V.I. Lenin : Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works. Vol. 38, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1983.
3. J. Stalin : Dialectical and Historical Materialism, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1968.
4. Tom Bottomore : A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Oxford & Others University Press, Delhi, 1983
5. K. Marx: The Poverty of Philosophy, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966.
6. J. Stalin: Economic Problems of Socialism in USSR, Peking, 1972.
7. Oscar Lange : Problems of Political Economy of Socialism, People's Publishing House, 1962.
8. Umberto Melotti : Marx and The Third World.
9. Ernest Mandel: The Formation of Economic Thought.



## ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

- 1.6.1. Objective of this lesson**
- 1.6.2. Introduction**
- 1.6.3. Characteristics of Asiatic Mode of Production**
- 1.6.4. Summary**
- 1.6.5. Key Concepts**
- 1.6.6. Long Questions**
- 1.6.7. Short Questions**
- 1.6.8. Suggested Readings**

### **1.6.1. Objective of this lesson**

To understand Marx and Engels' theory of the Asiatic mode of production, influenced by various currents of thought, its distinct features, and its role in the historical evolution of societies in Asia and beyond.

### **1.6.2. Introduction**

Marx and Engels worked out their theory of the Asiatic mode of production under the influence of three currents of thought. First, like John Stuart Mill and Richard Jones, who employed similar expressions, then accounts of travels, memories and monographs devoted to Eastern countries, finally, special studies they made of village communities in other parts of the world which led them to recognise the importance of this type of community in the countries of the East. All of these studies were at bottom by product of a constant and minute analysis. Marx and Engels were making study of Britain's foreign trade and economic situation. The markets of the East were becoming increasingly important outlets for British industry. The expansion of British exports was causing profound upheavals in Oriental society and Marx and Engels set themselves to study and structure of the societies that were being shaken. This was how they came to formulate the working hypothesis of an 'Asiatic mode of production.'

It is an established fact that Marx held to the idea of an Asiatic mode of production to the end of his life.

Engels, however, eliminated it from the succession of stages passed through by mankind, as set out in his *The Origin of the Family, Private*

*property and the State*, though he upheld the idea earlier in his *Anti Duhring*. This is what aroused the controversy among the Marxists.

In Western Europe not much use was made of the Asiatic mode of production. Plekhanov rejected its relevance to Russia, but Lenin took it up first in a considerably modified form of 'Asiaticism and then in 1914 as one of the four major socio-economic formations. Soon after the Russian Revolution in 1917, Ryazanov Eugene Varge and Madyar drew attention once again, to the importance of the Asiatic mode of production. However, the concept of the Asiatic mode of production was denounced in the Leningrad discussions of February 1931 in the erstwhile Soviet Union. For two decades thereafter, the category of the

Asiatic mode of production was deemed first in the Soviet Union and then in the people's democracies and in China, to increase obscurity. In the West, however, the discussion on the concept resurfaced notably in Britain and France and a German named Kari August Wittfogel had meanwhile, devoted a monumental work on the Asiatic mode of production. After Stalin's period, the idea was used to break out of the mechanistic straitjacket of the 'four stages' which all mankind was supposed to have necessarily passed through, primitive communism, slave owning society, Feudalism and Capitalism. The revised discussion on the Asiatic mode of production facilitated the abandonment of the dogma of the 'four universal stages which earlier, compelled the writer to assemble under the heading' feudal society, as most variegated collection of socio-economic formations, and hastened the re-emergence of the concept of the Asiatic mode of production.

In his preface to *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx wrote: "In broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of society." This shows that Marx attached no less importance to the Asiatic mode of production than to the other modes of production. While enumerating the succession of historical epochs of mankind, Marx spoke of the Asiatic ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois epochs. He placed the Asiatic mode of production before the slave-owning period.

Marx repeatedly stressed that the Asiatic mode of production differs fundamentally from all other modes of production. The problem of the specific features of the Asiatic society, had interested him (and also Engels) ever since he began his scientific activities and his interest in the problem did not loose right up to his death. The term 'Asiatic mode of production' is a component part of his economic teachings, though he alternates the terms 'Asiatic' and oriental depending on the context.

Marx wrote : "Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of desert, extending from the Sahara through Arabia, Persia, India, Tartary to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, constituted artificial irrigation by canals and water-works, the basis of Oriental agriculture. This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water necessitated the interference of the centralising power of government. Hence an economic function devoted up to all Asiatic governments, the function of providing public works.

From these remarks it follow that: (1) the term Asiatic mode of production

should not be interpreted in a geographical sense; (2) Marx did not extend the concept 'Asiatic mode of production' to the whole of Asia, but only those regions where the rain fall was insufficient for agriculture production.

During the years Marx was working on Capital and Engels on Anti Duhring, they returned to the problems of the specific features of Asiatic Economy. Marx wrote in the third Volume of Capital : "The direct producer is to found here in possession of his own means of production. He conducts his agriculture activity and the rural home industries connected with it independently. Under such conditions the surplus labour for the nominal owner of the land can only be expected from them by other than economic pressure, whatever the form assumed may be, should the direct producers not be confronted by a private landowner, but rather as in Asia, under direct subordination to a state which stands over them and their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign, then rent and taxes coincide, or rather, there exists nothing which differ from this form of ground rent. The state is then the supreme lord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale. But, on the other hand, no private ownership of land exists. Although there is both private and common possession and use of land." Marx made a detailed study of conditions in Asia analysing labour rent and laying special emphasis on non-economic coercion in India. Engels wrote in Anti Duhring, "However great the number of despotism which rose and fell in Persia and India, each was fully aware that above it was the entrepreneur responsible for the collective maintenance of irrigation through the river valleys, without which no agriculture was possible there."

Engels categorically denied the existence of the feudal mode of production in ancient Asia.

Some writers, such as Maurier Godelier, Jean Chesneaux, Jean Suret-Canale and P.Boitean, have made attempts to reduce the Asiatic mode of production to a socio-economic formation making the transition from classless society to class society. By expanding the scope of the Asiatic mode of production these writers take risk of losing altogether the specific meaning of the idea. What they are doing, in fact, are gradually reducing the characteristic of the Asiatic mode of production to those that makes every first manifestation of the state and ruling classes in a society still essentially based on the village community. The excessive extension of the ideas of the Asiatic mode of all societies in transition from classless society

to class society, does not enable as to account for an important aspect of this idea as Marx described it. Ernest Mandel noted that "in the writings of Marx and Engels the idea of an Asiatic mode of production is related not just to some primitive Indian or Chinese society, lost in the mists of the past but to Indian and Chinese society as they were when European industrial capital encountered them in the eighteenth century, on the eve of the conquest (India) or the massive penetration (China) of these countries by this capital." The function originally intended for this idea by Marx and Engels was that of explaining the peculiarities of the historical development of India, China, Egypt, and the world, as compared with the historical development of Western Europe.

Self check exercise-1

Q.1. How did Marx and Engels arrive at their theory of the Asiatic mode of production, and what were the three main currents of thought that influenced their understanding of this mode of production?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q.2. What were the three currents of thought that influenced Marx and Engels in formulating their theory of the Asiatic mode of production?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q. 3. Why did Marx and Engels study village communities in other parts of the world when formulating the concept of the Asiatic mode of production?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

**1.6.3. Characterstics Of the Asiatic Mode of production**

The fundamental characteristic of the Asiatic mode of production can be summarised in Ernest Mandel's views as :

- (i) What is the above all characteristic of the Asiatic mode is the absence of private ownership of land.
- (ii) As a result, the village community retains as essential cohesive force which has withstood the bloodiest of conquest through the ages.
- (iii) This internal cohesion of the ancient village community is further increased by the close union of agriculture and craft industry that exists in it.
- (iv) For geographical and climatic reasons, the prosperity of agriculture in these regions requires impressive hydraulic works.

Artificial irrigation, as a first condition of agriculture requires nearly everywhere a central authority to regulate it and to undertake large scale work.

(v) For this reason, the state succeeds in concentrating the greater strata maintained by this social surplus product in its own hand, which cause the appearance of social strata maintained by this surplus and constituting the dominant power in society [where in the expressions 'Oriental despotism']. The internal logic of a society of this kind works in favour of a very great degree of stability in basis of production relation. The cohesion and the extremely marked tendency to stability and regeneration are characteristics of this mode of production.

We find all these characteristics mentioned in Marx's Grundrisse, including the importance of hydraulic works. At the same time, we find a number of national ideas which enables us to define more exactly what

Marx and Engels meant by the Asiatic mode of production. In the first place, this quite is accidental and secondary development to the town in Eastern countries, and their stick subordination to the heads of their steps are stressed several time. This meant that production remained almost exclusively production of use values. Now it is development of the production of exchange values in the towns that make possible preparation for the predominance of capital. When the power of money becomes predominant in non-industrial societies, it leads to the domination of the country over the town. In other words, the distinctive structure of the Asiatic mode of production, subordination of the towns both to agriculture and to the central authority, implied that capital could not fully develop. That meant not stagnation of the productive forces but retarded development, which in the end proved fatal to the nations based on this mode of production.

The dissolving effect which the development of trade and a money economy had on the Asiatic mode of production is shown in numerous examples from the history of ancient Mesopotamia, China, and India. It is undesirable that under the Ming dynasty, China experienced, like India at the height of the Mughal period, an expansion of luxury production and private trade that brought the country to the threshold of manufacturing and commercial Capitalism. But it is the peculiar structure of the Asiatic mode of production that enable us to explain why this threshold was not crossed.

In the society of the Asiatic mode of production, trade, sometime creates conditions for the accumulation of capital but more often, it is destined to satisfy the needs of the aristocrats and the sovereign, who control the social surplus product. Under this mode, the towns appear as parasitic growth, living at the expense of the rural world and giving it hardly anything in return; they provide only a narrow basis for the development of urban trade and craft production. The financier works about all for the benefit of the 'despot'. The trader and the financier find themselves in setting which is from many points of view economic, sociological, political, cultural, unfavourable to individual initiative of a new type.

Undoubtedly, elements of 'feudalism' (That is large-scale landed property existing defacto if not dejure, cultivated by means of labour services, or imposing payment of rent upon peasants (farmers) exists under the Asiatic mode of production. But the feudal class never became the ruling class, its advances were always regarded as

encroachments on the power of the state and the rights of the peasants. And when these encroachments went too far, they periodically caused an economic and political crises, which usually ended in overthrow of reigning dynasty by way of a peasant's war, the appearance of a new dynasty which brought the landowners to heel.

One specific feature of the society of the Asiatic mode of production was its dependence on the existence of hydraulic works on such a scale that the communes or communities were incapable of undertaking them.

From this arose the objective necessity, the functional role, of a strong central authority, which also made possible the fairly rapid development of large scale manufacture, much sooner than in Europe, but without engendering a free bourgeoisie, even in the medieval sense of the world. The state was too strong, it imposed too strong system upon the accumulation of money capital ; it subjected to thoroughly all intellectual scientific life to the requirements of agriculture, to allow for the possibility of a process equivalent to that to the primitive accumulation of capital and the formation of a modern industry with a free proletariat which was in Western Europe.

Such a society of the Asiatic mode of production is not at all a primitive one in the sense that there are no clearly defined or constituted social classes. On the contrary, alongside the peasant, there are not only public functionaries but also landowner (illegally appropriating ownership of the land) and merchant and bankers, of ten enormous rich. What determines the specific positions of these classes, in the Asiatic mode of production, however, is that confronted with the hypertrophy of the state authority they can never acquire the social and political power, which in other countries gave rise first to feudalism and then to modern capitalism. This is what the concept of the Asiatic mode of production explains. In a sense it is possible to speak of the appearance of a ruling class under the Asiatic mode of production, a class which appropriated the social surplus product. Alongside the ruling classes the Asiatic mode include other social classes different from those of the peasants, and the lords, in particular a comparatively well developed merchants class of urban craftsmen working exclusively in the service of lords.

The concept of the Asiatic mode of production and its specific feature especially as regards societies like India and China, as outlined by Marx in the *Grundrisse* are summed up by Maxma Robinson, also "Essentially, Marx sees the capitalist development in relations to capitalism. What made



interested him was the appearance in preceding formation of the condition which made possible the emergence of capitalist society. Pre-capitalist history is not a succession of universal stages of economic-social formations ruled by implacable law which carry them to capitalism and thereby towards socialism. It starts from a primitive community with a structure imposed essentially by the conditions of existence of archaic humanity by which nevertheless present a variety of type. Some of these types carry on evolutionary potential within their particular structure because of their internal contradictions. It is in the course of this evolution over thousands of years that phenomena are produced, which, converging in a given place (Europe), in given time (the sixteenth century), in a given juncture, bring forth capitalist society. Between the point of departure and the point of arrival, there are other phenomena such as slavery and serfdom. Particular modes of production (rather than economic social formations in the strict sense) in which here and there, socio-economic relations of domination are crystalized. Thus, in this context, Marx's purpose was to contrast the line of evolution followed by Europe to which issued from the Asiatic mode of production.

In his *Grundrisse*, Marx also takes up to the specific difference between a society based on the production of use values, that is, in the last analysis based on agriculture (whether in the Asiatic mode of production or in the antique slave owning mode of production, or even in pure Feudalism), and a society based on the production of exchange value or commodity production. The appearance of merchant capital (buying in order to sell) "can occur within peoples for whom exchange value has not at all their become the condition of production. The movement appropriates only the surplus of production aimed at immediate consumption, and takes place only as its frontier (that is marginally)". And again, "Money as the fortune of merchants as it appears in the most diverse forms of society at the most different stages of development of social productive forces is only the movement of an intermediary between extremes which it does not dominate and between condition which it does not create. In the first stage of bourgeois society trade dominates industry: in modern society the opposite in the case. Trade will obviously react, subject production more or less to exchange value it will push immediate use value further and further into the background, in proportion as it makes subsistence depend more upon selling them for immediate utilization of product. It disintegrates old established relationship. It thereby increases the

circulation of money. It first of all seizes hold of the surplus of production, then increasingly takes over production itself.

But its disintegrating action depends to great extent on the nature of the productive communities between which it (trade) is carried on. Thus, it hardly disturbed the ancient communities of India, or Asiatic conditions in general.

In this way, Marx, has shown the resistance that the Asiatic mode of production offered to the disintegrating effect of exchange. For Marx, the entire progressive evolution of the modes of production is based on a dialectic of the social surplus product, which is merely a dialectic of 'necessary time' and 'surplus labour. Following the dialectical method, Marx took up case of the 'pre-capitalist forms of production' in order to show up, negatively the factors which in Europe have led, positively to the flowering of capital and Capitalism. In this connection Marx brings out the need for labour to become really, free; not only in the juridical sense but also and particularly in the economic sense, that is, free from all ties with the means of subsistence of with the means of labour. This means above all that the worker must be separated from the land, which functions as his natural laboratory." This means the dissolution both of free, petty land ownership and of communal landed property based on the Oriental Communal Ownership. In fact, the rise of Capitalism is impossible as long as there is skill free access to (relative) plentiful land. It means, furthermore, the separation of the producer from his traditional means of labour (for example, in case of the independent crafts men) and from the consumption fund which he possessed before he even began to produce.

From 1930 onwards, by many scholars, the existence of the Asiatic mode of production was denied and it was transformed into an, "Asiatic variety of feudalism". It was said, "the development of the Asian countries has, throughout history been highly individualistic. In a certain sense, this peculiarity has created a special structure of feudalism which may be called the asiatic mode of production But the fact is that this denial of the existence of an Asiatic mode of production as an independent mode, differing from all other modes of production, is not well-founded. If we were to examine the Asiatic (oriental) mode of production as it was depicted by Marx, and classical feudalism as it existed in Western Europe, as scientific abstraction and he compared the two, it would become quite clear that we are dealing with two entirely different modes of production, having different super structures.

(i) Under the Asiatic mode of production the land, the most important means of production, was state property. Under classical feudalism" was the property of the feudal lords.

(ii) According to Marx, the Asiatic mode of production existed in desert areas, where rain fall was scarce and the population concentrated on small irrigated strips of land. There was no shortage of labour. Irrigated land was very expensive. Under classical feudalism there was plenty of land but not enough labour to work on it. For this reason, feudal lords attacked neighbouring regions, captured peasants and cattle and moved them to their own lands.

(iii) Under the Asiatic mode of production the state is the only primary owner of the surplus product created by the direct producer, that is of the ground rent in the form of taxes. All the exploiting layers received their unearned income through the state. Under feudalism the land owner is the direct exploiter, appropriating both the labour rent and land rent in kind. The state has nothing or very little to do with it.

(iv) Under the Asiatic mode of production that state fulfils functions vitally important for the population: it builds and controls irrigation system. This gave rise to a strong centralisation of state power which often assumes the form of an Asiatic tyranny in which officials are appointed for definite periods. Under classical feudalism the feudal lord himself fulfilled most state functions and the state has no economic role to play. The feudal lord was the concentrated embodiment of all forms of exploitation: he ruled the peasants with the help of his armed soldiers, presided over them in court, could fine them, imprison them, condemn them to death and execute. Moreover, the feudal state did not have any economic, administrative or legislative functions. These were fulfilled by individual feudal lords.

Thus, the nature of the Asiatic mode of production differs fundamentally from that of the feudal mode of production. Therefore, there is no reason to reject Marx's classification and to characterise Asiatic mode of production as a variety of feudalism.

In the primitive communities, man is closely integrated into natural conditions of existence and into the community whose property he is himself up to a certain point. The level of development of the productive forces allows no other social organisation. It is only the development that

transcends the stage of the primitive community, the productive force becomes the product of man much more than the product of nature: that the individual separated himself from the primitive communities: "Man is only individualized through the process of history." Exchange is one of the chief instruments of this individualization. At the same time it brings about the alienation of man, but it also creates of conditions needed for his complete flowering as an individual with all the "universality of needs, capacities, enjoyment, productive power etc., of individuals", which is absent in the primitive communities and redressed in bourgeois society. If Marx attached such a great importance to the development of the productive forces, he was to a certain degree "in love with technical progress" without even understanding the dangers of fragmentation and alienation of labour that result from it; the reason is precisely, because he understood that this development of productive forces could create the necessary conditions for an ever greater individualization of man, which will be ultimately achieved in socialist society.

Self check exercise-2

Q.1. What was the significance of the Asiatic mode of production in Marx's economic teachings, and how did he distinguish it from other modes of production, such as feudalism and capitalism?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q.2. What was Engels' stance on the Asiatic mode of production, and how did it differ from Marx's view?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

Q. 3. Why did the markets of the East become increasingly important outlets for British industry during Marx and Engels' time?

Ans.....  
 .....  
 .....

**1.6.4. Summary**

Marx and Engels developed their theory of the Asiatic mode of production based on three influences: expressions used by thinkers like John Stuart Mill and Richard Jones, accounts of travels and monographs on Eastern countries, and their own studies of village communities around the world. They formulated the hypothesis of an "Asiatic mode of production" to understand societies in the East experiencing upheavals due to British exports. Marx maintained this idea throughout his life, but Engels later eliminated it from their succession of stages in human history. Lenin and other scholars debated its relevance, with some denouncing it in the Soviet Union. However, in the West, interest in the concept resurfaced in academic discussions. The characteristics of the Asiatic mode of production include the

absence of private land ownership, the cohesion of village communities, and the crucial role of hydraulic works and a strong central authority. The Asiatic mode of production is distinguished from classical feudalism, as the state is the primary owner of the surplus product and fulfills vital functions for the population. Marx saw this mode as essential in explaining the historical development of Eastern countries compared to Western Europe's history.

### 1.6.5. Key Concepts

**Asiatic Mode of Production:** Historical economic system with collective agricultural control.

**Relations of Production:** Social interactions determining economic organization and ownership.

**Economic Laws:** Principles governing production, distribution, and consumption in societies.

**Class Struggle:** Ongoing conflict among social classes for power and resources.

### 1.6.6. Long Questions

2. Why did Engels eliminate the idea of the Asiatic mode of production from the stages of historical development, and how did this decision spark controversy among Marxists?
3. How did Lenin modify and incorporate the concept of the Asiatic mode of production into his understanding of socio-economic formations, and why did the idea resurface in discussions in the West and Russia after the Russian Revolution?
4. What are the fundamental characteristics of the Asiatic mode of production, and how does it differ from classical feudalism? How did the presence of hydraulic works and the role of the state contribute to its unique nature?

### 4.6.4. Short Questions

5. How did Lenin modify and incorporate the concept of the Asiatic mode of production in his socio-economic formations theory?
6. Why did the concept of the Asiatic mode of production face criticism and denouncement in the Soviet Union during the 1930s?
7. According to Marx, how did the Asiatic mode of production differ fundamentally from other modes of production?
8. What specific characteristics define the Asiatic mode of production according to Ernest Mandel's views?
9. How did the Asiatic mode of production resist the disintegrating effects of exchange and capitalist development?
10. How does the Asiatic mode of production differ from classical feudalism in

terms of land ownership, state role, and economic structure?

#### 10.6.4. Suggested Readings

#### UNIT NO. I

#### SUGGESTED BOOKS

1. Maurice Cornforth : *Dialectical Materialism*, Vol. 1 & 2, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1976
2. V.I. Lenin : *Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works*. Vol. 38, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1983.
3. J. Stalin : *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1968.
4. Tom Bottomore : *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Oxford & Others University Press, Delhi, 1983
5. K. Marx : *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966.
6. J. Stalin : *Economic Problems of Socialism in USSR*, Peking, 1972.
7. Oscar Lange : *Problems of Political Economy of Socialism*, People's Publishing House, 1962.
8. Umberto Melotti : *Marx and The Third World*.
9. Ernest Mandel : *The Formation of Economic Thought*.

**SUGGESTED QUESTIONS**

1. Write a detailed note on 'scientific socialist world outlook'.
2. Explain the laws of Marxist Dialectics.
3. Write a detailed note on dialectical and historical materialism.
4. What is mode of production ? How it acts as a basis for the analysis of social development ?
5. Explain the Asiatic Mode of Production.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

1. World outlook
2. Metaphysics
3. Dialectics
4. Idealism
5. Materialism
6. Historical materialism
7. Contradictions
8. Base
9. Superstructure
10. Mode of Production
11. Relations of production
12. Economic laws
13. Mechanistic materialism
14. Categories of Marxian Philosophy
15. Socio-economic formation
16. Feudalism
17. Communist formation
18. Forces of production
19. Universality of contradictions
20. Patriarchal Slavery





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