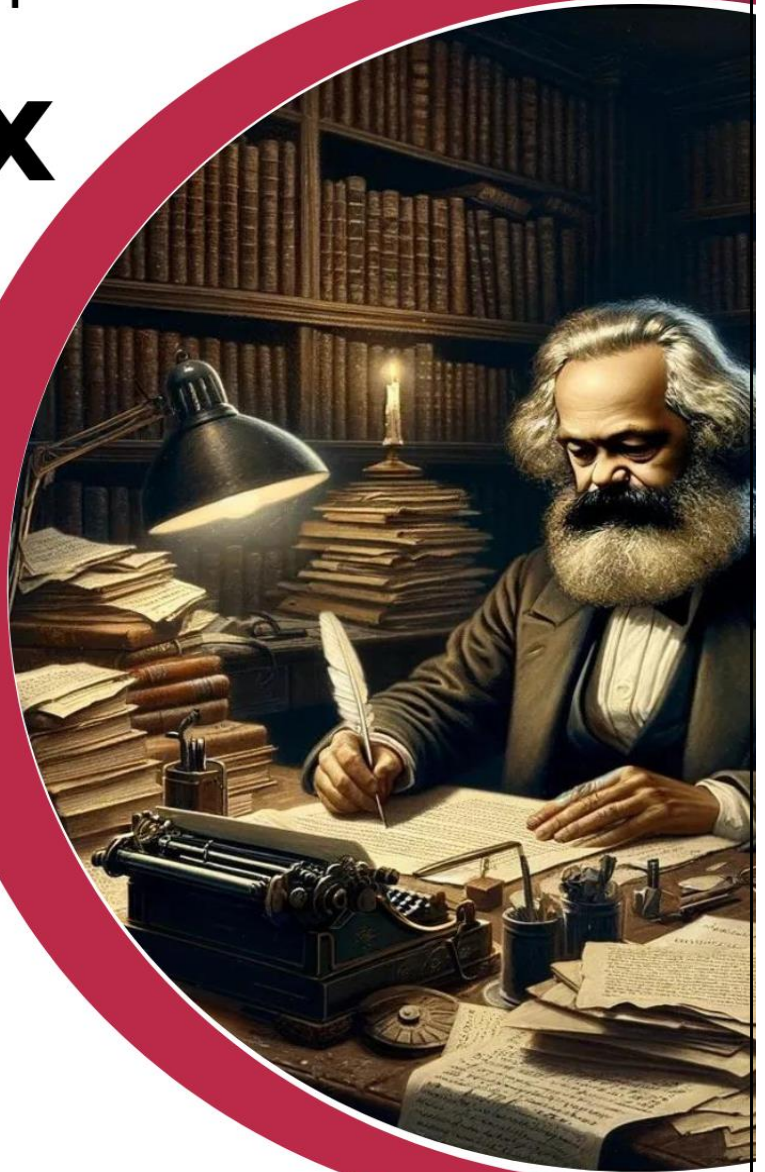


UPSC CSE SOCIOLOGY
PAPER I
KARL MARX

Authored by
SHILPA BHATTI
UPSC CSE RANK HOLDER



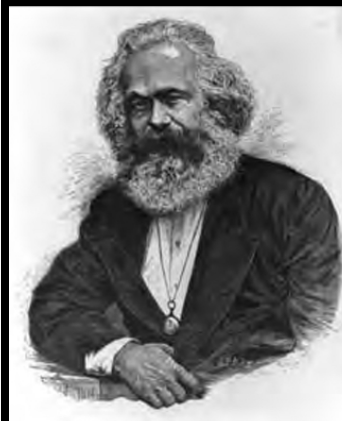
@ACESOCIOLOGYWITH
SHILPA

INDEX

S.NO	TOPIC	PAGE NUMBER
1.	Karl Marx - Biography	3
2.	Dialectics	4
3.	Theory of historical materialism	10
3.1.	Modes of production	12
3.2.	Class Struggle	26
4.	Theory of Alienation	40
5.	Commodity Fetishism	44
6.	Marx - Critical Analysis	50

SHILPA BHATTI

KARL MARX - BIOGRAPHY



KARL MARX

A Biographical Sketch

Karl Marx was born in Trier, Prussia, on May 5, 1818 (Beilharz, 2005e). His father, a lawyer, provided the family with a fairly typical middle-class existence. Both parents were from rabbinical families, but for business reasons the father had converted to Lutheranism when

Karl was very young. In 1841 Marx received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Berlin, a school heavily influenced by Hegel and the Young Hegelians, supportive, yet critical, of their master. Marx's doctorate was a dry philosophical treatise, but it did anticipate many of his later ideas. After graduation he became a writer for a liberal-radical newspaper and within ten months had become its editor in chief. However, because of its political positions, the paper was closed shortly thereafter by the government. The early essays published in this period began to reflect a number of the positions that would guide Marx throughout his life. They were liberally sprinkled with democratic principles, humanism, and youthful idealism. He rejected the abstractness of Hegelian philosophy, the naive dreaming of utopian communists, and those activists who were urging what he considered to be premature political action. In rejecting these activists, Marx laid the groundwork for his own life's work:

Practical attempts, even by the masses, can be answered with a cannon as soon as they become dangerous, but ideas that have overcome our intellect and conquered our conviction, ideas to which reason has riveted our conscience, are chains from which one cannot break loose without breaking one's heart; they are demons that one can only overcome by submitting to them.

(Marx, 1842/1977:20)

DIALECTICS

Origin

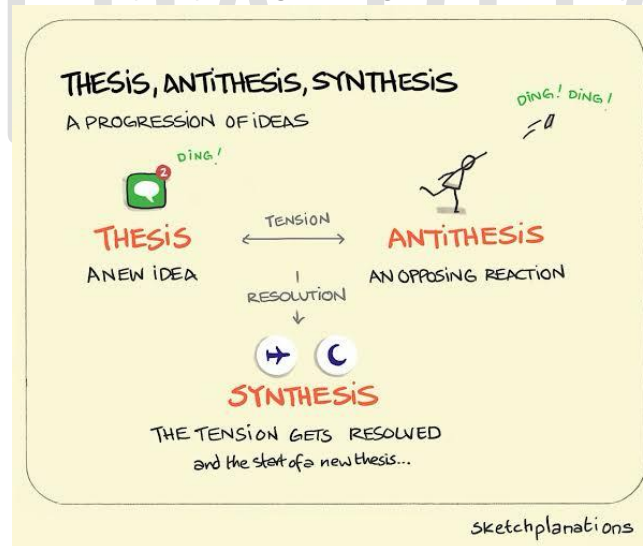
Dialectic , also known as the dialectical method, refers originally to dialogue between people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to arrive at the truth through reasoned argumentation. Dialectic resembles debate. It has its origins in ancient philosophy and continued to be developed in the Middle Ages.

The Hegelian dialectic

The Dialectic , Vladimir Lenin (1972) said that *no one can fully understand Marx's work without a prior understanding of the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel.*

Hegelian dialectics describes changes in the forms of thought through their own internal contradictions into concrete forms that overcome previous oppositions.

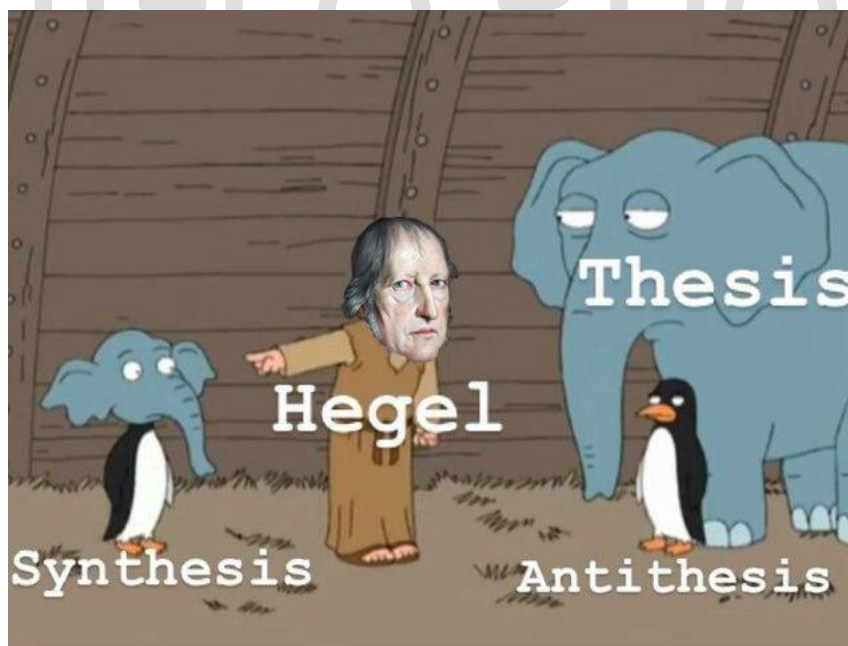
It is a way of thinking about how ideas change and develop. It says that when two ideas or beliefs clash (contradict each other), they create a new idea that combines parts of both, overcoming the original conflict. This process keeps repeating, leading to new ideas and progress. A contradiction in



relationship which serves the purpose of generating higher level of truth.

Thesis	Antithesis	Synthesis
Thesis is (for example) the currently perceived truth	Antithesis is (then) an opposing point of view.	When <i>thought</i> tries to reconcile Thesis with Antithesis , what survives is Synthesis .
<p><i>The Synthesis is, in effect, the new Thesis, and it all begins again. It ends when we attain perfection, i.e., never!</i></p>		

Let's take **example** of the idea of freedom. In the past, people might have thought that freedom meant being able to do whatever you want without any rules (thesis). But then they realized that this could lead to chaos and harm (antithesis). So, they developed a new idea of freedom that includes having some rules and laws to protect everyone's freedom (synthesis).

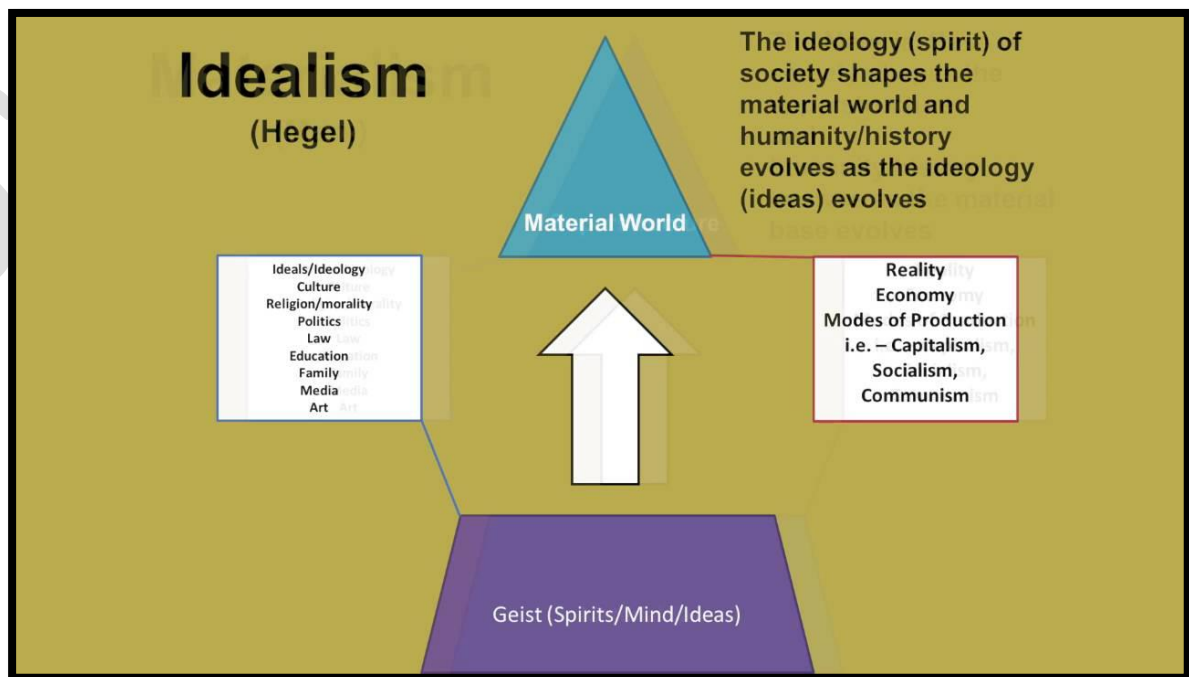


1. **Reality is mental or spiritual:** This means that according to Hegel, the most important parts of reality are thoughts, ideas, and spiritual concepts, rather than physical things like rocks or

trees. Hegel's view that reality is mental or spiritual doesn't mean that physical things like rocks or trees don't exist or aren't important. Instead, he believed that the way we understand and interpret the world is through our thoughts and ideas.

For example, when you see a tree, you don't just see a physical object; you also have thoughts and ideas about what a tree is, its purpose, how it fits into the natural world, etc. Hegel believed that these thoughts and ideas are crucial to understanding the true nature of reality.

2. **Dialectical process unfolds in the realm of ideas:** The "dialectical process" is a way of thinking about how ideas change and develop over time. Hegel believed that ideas evolve through a series of stages, where each stage (or idea) contains within it the seeds of its own contradiction or opposite.
3. **Leading to the Absolute Idea or Spirit:** Hegel believed that this process of ideas evolving and changing eventually leads to the "Absolute Idea" or "Absolute Spirit," which is the highest, most complete form of knowledge or understanding.



MARX DIALECTICS

Marx adopted Hegel's dialectical method but inverted it from idealism to materialism. He retained the idea of contradictions driving historical change but applied it to the material world.

- Marx accepted the centrality of contradictions to historical change. We see this in such well-known formulations as the “contradictions of capitalism” and “class contradictions.”
- However, unlike Hegel, Marx did not believe that these contradictions could be worked out in our understanding, that is, in our minds. Instead, for Marx these are real, existing contradictions .
- For Marx, such contradictions are resolved not by the philosopher sitting in an armchair but by a life-and-death struggle that changes the social world. This was a crucial transformation because it allowed Marx to move the dialectic out of the realm of philosophy and into the realm of a study of social relations grounded in the material world.
- **Materialist View of Reality:** Marxists believe that the most important parts of reality are material things, like the economy, social structures, and the physical world. They see ideas and thoughts as reflections or products of material conditions, rather than the other way around. An example of the materialist view of reality in Marxism is the relationship between economic conditions and political ideologies. Marxists argue that the dominant ideas in society, such as political beliefs or cultural norms, are influenced by the material conditions of that society, particularly the economic system.

For instance, in a capitalist society where the means of production are privately owned, the dominant ideology might emphasize individualism, competition, and the importance of free markets. Marxists would argue that these ideas reflect the economic interests of the capitalist class, who benefit from such a system

ASPECT	HEGELIAN DIALECTICS	MARXIAN DIALECTICS
Nature of Reality	Idealist: Reality is fundamentally mental or spiritual. The dialectical process unfolds in the realm of ideas, leading to the Absolute Idea or Spirit.	Materialist: Reality is fundamentally material. The dialectical process unfolds in the material world, driven by economic and class relations.
Historical Progress	Progress is driven by the development of ideas and the realization of the Absolute Spirit through history.	Progress is driven by the development of productive forces and the resulting class struggle, leading to changes in the mode of production and social relations.
Role of Contradiction	Contradiction arises in the realm of ideas, leading to the development of higher forms of thought through the dialectical process.	Contradiction arises from the material conditions of society, particularly the conflict between the ruling class (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariat).

ASPECT	HEGELIAN DIALECTICS	MARXIAN DIALECTICS
End Goal	The dialectical process culminates in the Absolute Idea or Spirit, where all contradictions are resolved and the highest form of truth is realized.	The dialectical process culminates in communism, where class distinctions and exploitation are eliminated, and a classless, stateless society is achieved.
Methodology	Emphasizes the role of ideas, philosophy, and intellectual development in understanding history and society.	Emphasizes the role of material conditions, economics, and class struggle in shaping history and society.

SHILPA BHATTI



**R.C. REDDY
IAS STUDY CIRCLE**

45+ years experience in guiding civil services aspirants

SOCIOLOGY OPTIONAL

FREE ORIENTATION SESSION

UPSC CSE 2025



**Shilpa
Bhatti mam**
UPSC Rank Holder
Sociology Top Scorer
6+ years of teaching



Orientation Date

June 13th Thursday

@ 6:30 PM

MODE: LIVE - ONLINE/ OFFLINE

MISSION 310+

TOPICS COVERED IN ORIENTATION SESSION

- ◆ Why Sociology as an optional ?
- ◆ Overview of the course layout and timeline
- ◆ Detailed explanation of each module and its importance
- ◆ Introduction to novel teaching technique of integrating static part with current affairs to maximize marks



OFFLINE LOCATION: HIMAYATH NAGAR CAMPUS

Access for Online

Zoom ID : 928 7838 7161

Zoom Passcode : 155016



SCAN TO REGISTER



**WHATSAPP
QUERIES TO**

73961 41675

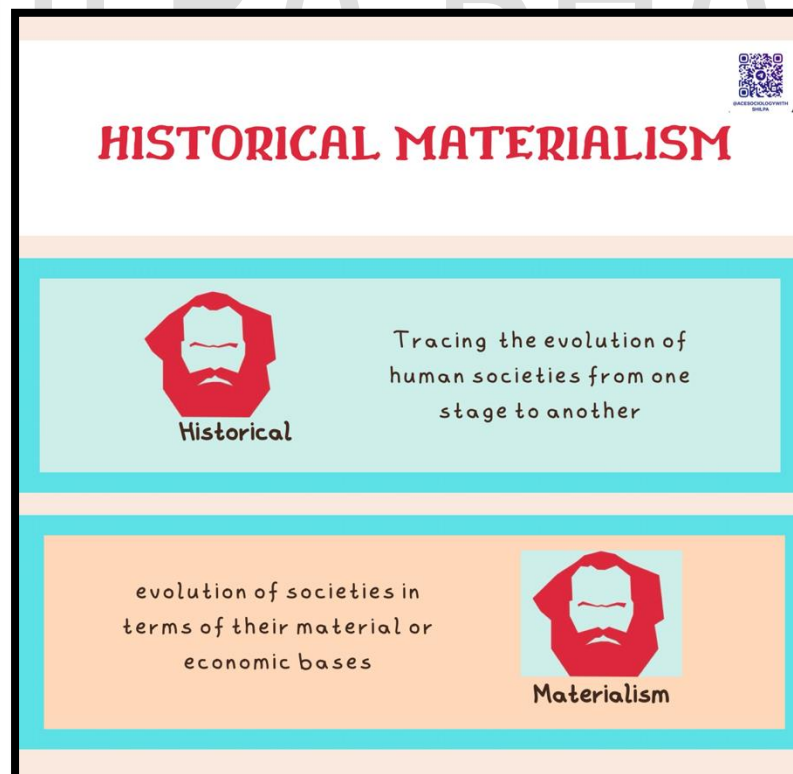
THEORY OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Clearer exposition of the theory of historical materialism is contained in Marx's 'Preface' to **A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)**. Here, he says that the actual basis of society is its economic structure.

Marx's general ideas about society are known as his theory of historical materialism. Materialism is the basis of his sociological thought because, for Marx, material conditions or economic factors affect the structure and development of society.

The earlier view, that of Hegel, was that ideas were the cause of change. Marx opposed this view and instead argued that ideas were a result of objective reality, i.e., matter and not vice versa.

Marx's theory of society, i.e., historical materialism is historical. It is historical because Marx has traced the evolution of human societies from one stage to another. **It is called materialistic** because Marx has interpreted the evolution of societies in terms of their material or economic bases. Materialism simply means that it is matter or material reality, which is the basis for any change.



FEATURES OF THEORY

1. MATERIAL BASIS OF SOCIAL LIFE

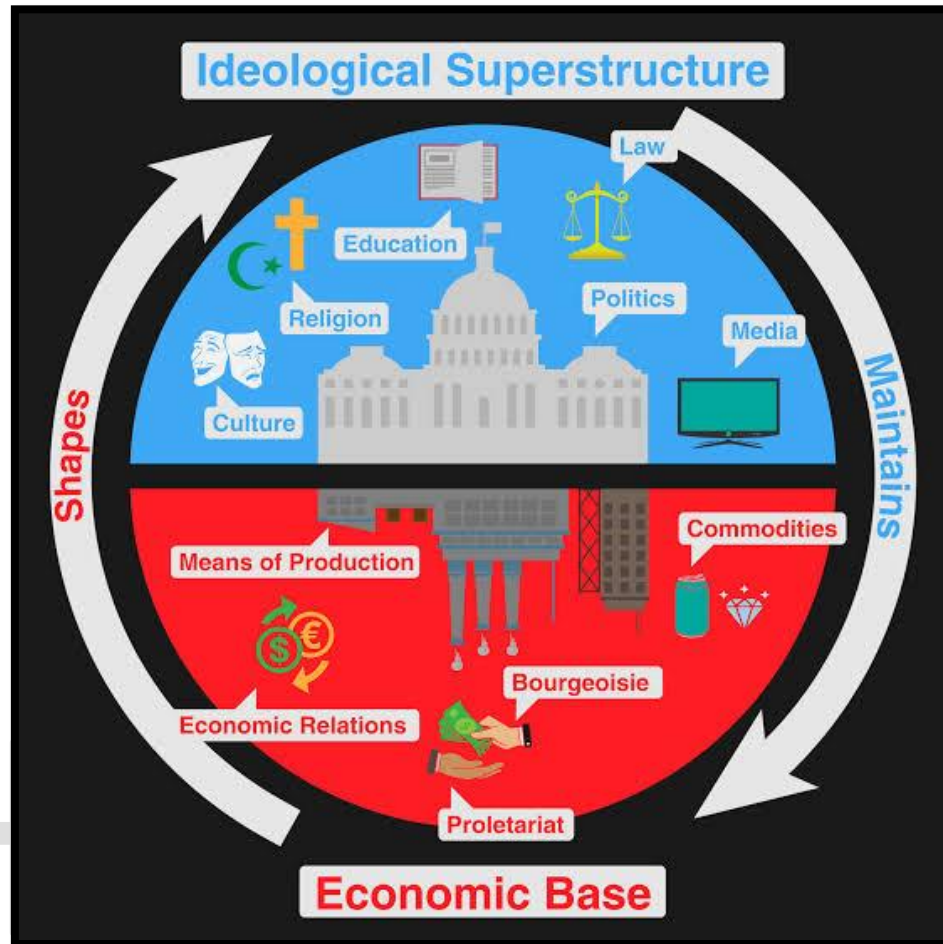
People need food, clothing, shelter and other necessities of life in order to survive. They cannot get all these things ready-made from nature. To survive, they produce material goods from objects found in nature. Material production has always been and still is the basis of human existence. For Karl Marx, the history of human societies is the story of how people relate to one another in their efforts to make a living. He said, “The first historical act is...the production of material life. This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history” (see Bottomore 1964: 60). According to Marx, economic production or production of material life is the starting point from which society as an inter-related whole is structured. He speaks of a reciprocity between economic factors and other aspects of historical development of mankind.

“The first historical act is, therefore, the production of material life.”

2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUPERSTRUCTURE

According to Marx, every society has its infrastructure and superstructure.

- Social relations are defined in terms of material conditions which he calls **infrastructure**. The economic base of a society forms its infrastructure. Any changes in material conditions also imply corresponding changes in social relations. Forces and relations of production come in the category of infrastructure.
- Within the superstructure figure the legal, educational and political institutions as well as values, cultural ways of thinking, religion, ideologies and philosophies.



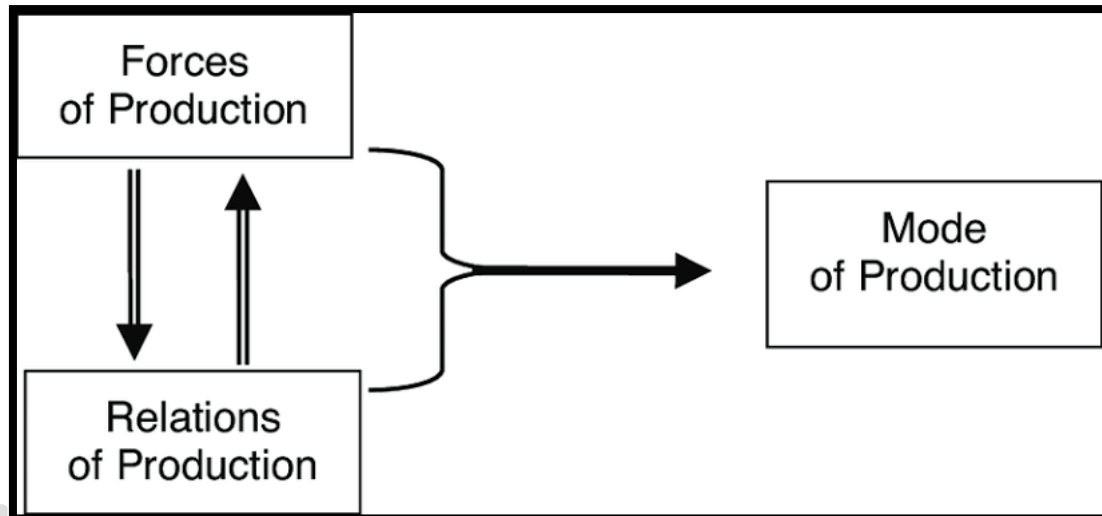
3. MODE OF PRODUCTION

According to Mam, the production of material wealth is the basis of human existence, and the mode of production of wealth is the determining factor of social development. Society as a distinct entity is a part of nature. It is inseparable from the rest of nature, and constantly interacts with it. People cannot exist without food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities of life. Nature, however, does not provide things readymade. Thus, people must work to produce these things. Labour, or productive activity, is, therefore, the basis of social life.

The mode of production, which determines the economic structure of society, has two aspects:

- **The forces of production**, according to Marx, appear to be the capacity of a society to produce. This capacity to produce is essentially a function of scientific and technical knowledge, technological equipment, and the organisation of labour.
- **The relations of production** arise out of the production process but essentially overlap with the relations in ownership of means of production. Marx says that as a general principle, the production of material requirements of life, which is a very basic necessity of all societies,

compels individuals to enter into definite social relations that are independent of their will.



FORCES OF PRODUCTION

▪ **What are forces of production?**

The forces of production express the degree to which human beings control nature. The more advanced the productive forces are, greater is their control over the nature and vice versa. The forces of production are the ways in which material goods are produced.

▪ **What all forces of production includes?**


The forces of production, according to Marx, include means of production and labour power

They include


- technological know-how
- the types of equipment in use and goods being produced for example, tools, machinery, labour and the levels of technology are all considered to be the forces of production.
- ***Labour power***, the skills, knowledge, experience, and other human faculties used in work

The development of machinery, changes in the labour process, the opening up of new sources of energy and the education of the workers are included in the forces of production. In this sense

science and the related skills can be seen as part of the productive forces. Some Marxists have even included geographical or ecological space as a productive force.




Labour Power



According to Marx, labour power is the capacity to perform useful work that increases the value of products.
Workers sell their labour power (the capacity to do work) to capitalists in exchange for a wage paid in cash.

Labour Power vs. Labour

- Labour power is the capacity to work.
- Labour is the actual exercise of this capacity, adding value to commodities.



RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

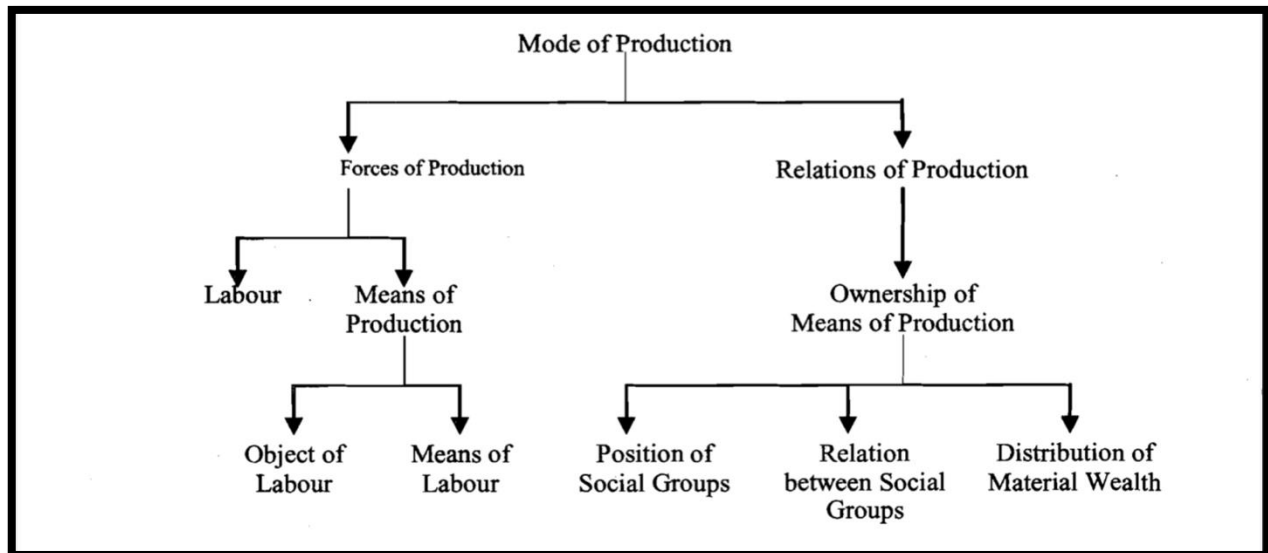
The forces of production are not the only factors in material production. People are able to produce jointly by organizing in a society. In this sense, labour is and always has been social in character.

According to Marx, in order to produce, people enter into definite relations with one another. Only within these social relations does production take place.

It refers to a particular set of property relations which determines the nature of society's class structure. The relations of production, or the economic relations between people, determine the relation between man and machine. **These relations are called production relations.** According to Marx, production relations are based on the form of ownership of means of production.

The form of ownership depends on :

- a) the position (dominating, or subordinate) of various social groups in production
- b) their relations (exploitative, or cooperative) in the production process
- c) the distribution of wealth, i.e., mutual exchange of their activity



Dialectics of the Mode of Production

Society develops in accordance with the dialectical principle inherent in its structure. This means that the mode of production has a logic of its own. The mode of production changes because of inherent necessity, and is not due to any external force. The working of the mode of production is governed by three laws:

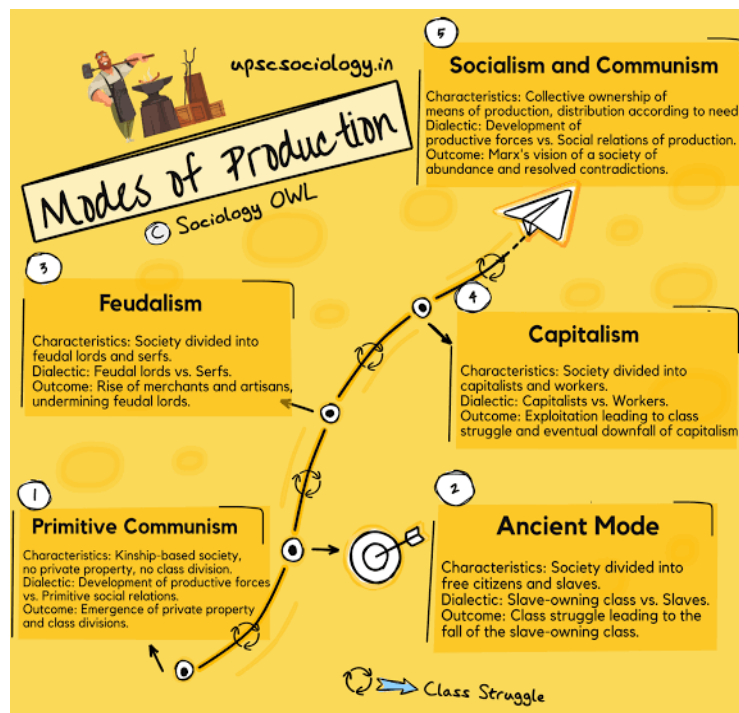
- **The Law of Unity**: This law states that the productive forces and the production relations, taken together, determine the mode of production of material wealth. They are linked by an inner unity, i.e., a specific level of productive forces requires specific production relations.
- **The Law of Correspondence**: This law states that production relations tend to correspond to productive forces. The changes in the productive forces induce adjustment in the production relations. The correspondence of production relations to productive forces operates only as an economic tendency. It imposes no rigid

mechanical dependence of the former on the latter. It is not a 'law of obligatory correspondence'.

- **The Law of Conflict:** This law states that conflict stems from the intrinsic nature of the two sides of the mode of production, i.e., the forces of production, and the relations of production. This conflict is not accidental. It is inherent in the mode of production. It brings development in the mode of production.

Historical Evolution of Society

According to Marx, the history of society consists of the history of the sequence of socioeconomic formations, or the replacement of one mode of production by another.



According to him there are five different stages of social evolution:

- Ancient Mode of Production / Primitive communism
- slavery
- feudalism
- capitalism
- socialism

ANCIENT MODE OF PRODUCTION / PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM

Features

- The primitive-communal system was the first and the lowest form of organisation of people and it existed for thousands of years.
- **Forces of Production** : Men and women started using primitive tools like sticks and stones for hunting and food-gathering. Gradually they improved these tools, and learned to make fire, cultivation and animal husbandry.

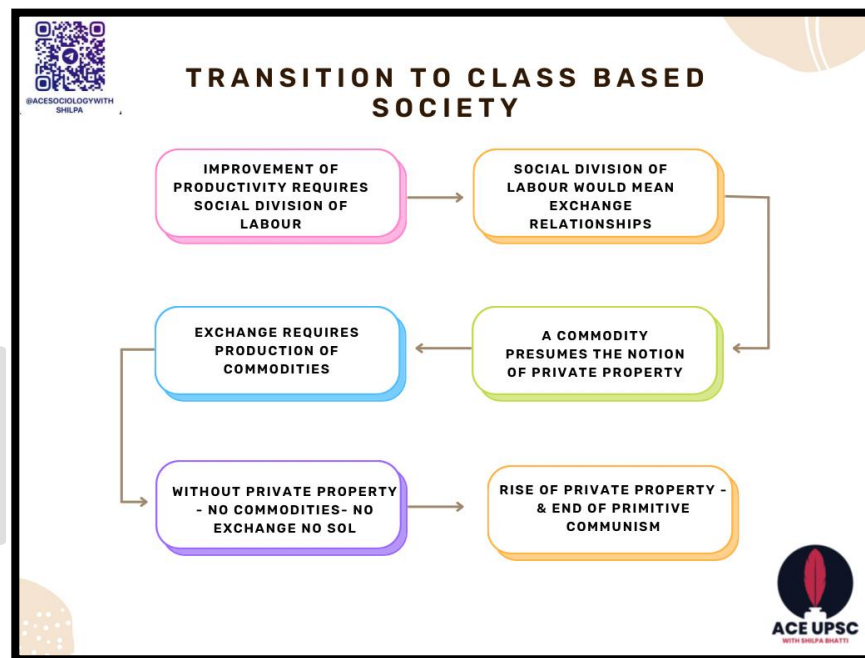


- **Relations of production** : relations of production were based on common ownership of the means of production. Therefore, these relations were based on mutual assistance and cooperation. These relations were conditioned by the fact that people with their primitive implements could only withstand the mighty forces of nature together, collectively.
- In such a situation, exploitation of humans by humans did not exist because of two reasons. **Firstly**, the tools used (namely, means of production) were so simple that they could be reproduced by anyone. These were implements like spear, stick, bow and arrow etc. Hence no person or group of people had the monopoly of ownership over the tools. **Secondly**, production was at a low-scale. The people existed more or less on a subsistence level. Their production was just sufficient to meet the needs of the people provided everybody worked.

Therefore, it was a situation of no master and no servant. All were equal. Gradually with time, people started perfecting their tools, their craft of producing and surplus production started taking place. This led to private property and primitive equality gave way to social inequality. Thus the first antagonistic classes, slaves and slave owners, appeared. This is how the development of the forces of production led to the replacement of primitive communal system by slavery.

FRIEDRICH ENGELS: 'THE ORIGIN OF FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND STATE'

- a) Labour played a crucial role in transformation of Anthropoid Ape into a Homosapien. It is through use of implements of labour that certain features like Evolution of Hand, Upright Gait, Refection of Sensory Organs and Language developed.
- b) There was no concept of PRIVATE PROPERTY as :
- Struggling with nature required cooperation.
 - There as no surplus production
 - Very low division of labour - No Exchange Relations.
- c) **TRANSITION TO CLASS - BASED SOCIETY.**



SLAVE MODE OF PRODUCTION

- **Forces of Production**
 - Technological advances in Agriculture
 - Mining and Metallurgy
 - Separation Of Crafts-from Agriculture
 - Greater domestication & Animals

The development of this type of forces of production also changed the relations of production.

Relations of Production

- based on the slave owner's absolute ownership of both the means of production and the slave and everything they produced.
- System of production the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of the slave's labour. The slave is not allowed to reproduce.
- The master's profit is constituted by the difference between what the slaves produce and what they consume. But what is usually forgotten is that beyond this, the slaves are deprived of their own means of reproduction.
- The owner left the slaves only with the bare minimum necessities to keep them from dying of starvation. In this system, the history of exploitation of humans by humans and the history of class struggle began. The development of productive forces went on and slavery became an impediment to the expansion of social production.
- **Limits in development of productive forces:**
 - Production demanded the constant improvement of implements, higher labour productivity, but the slaves had no interest in this as it would not improve their position.
 - To acquire Slaves - physical conquest of new areas was the only means. This led to progressive expansion of Territory Central State authority could be enforced only weakly in the farflung areas.
 - In order to avoid work, the Slave was prone to destroy the implements. Hence only very crude implements could be given. This compromised productivity.
 - The basic productive force of society, that is - **Slave Labour** was prone to systematic destruction - due to existence of inhuman conditions.

With the passage of time :

- The class conflict between the classes of slave- owners and the slaves became acute and it was manifested in slave revolts. These revolts, together with the raids from neighbouring tribes, undermined the foundations of slavery .
- Further development of productive forces hence required:
 - i. Human Labour Power replenished
 - ii. Tools preserved and Improved.
 - iii. Absence of Continuous Wars.
 - iv. Improvement in productivity & Land.

It is to bring about these improvements the Feudal Mode of Production emerged.

FEUDAL MODE OF PRODUCTION

Feudalism Is the third mode of production where by the major means of production was land. The fall of the Western Roman Empire returned most of Western Europe to subsistence

agriculture, dotted with ghost towns and obsolete trade-routes. Authority too was localised, in a world of poor roads and difficult farming conditions. The new social form which, by the ninth century, had emerged in place of the ties of family or clan, of sacred theocracy or legal citizenship was a relationship based on the personal tie of vassal to lord, cemented by the link to landholding in the guise of the fief.

- Forces of production :
 - The progressive development of the productive forces continued under feudalism.
 - People started using inanimate sources of energy, viz., water and wind, besides human labour.
 - The crafts advanced further, new implements and machines were invented and old ones were improved. The labour of craftspersons was specialised, raising productivity considerably.
- **Relations of production**
 - The development of forces of production led to emergence of feudal relations of production. These relations were based on the feudal lords' ownership of the serfs or landless peasants.
 - These relations were based on the feudal lords' ownership of the serfs or landless peasants. The production relations were relations of domination and subjection, exploitation of the serfs by the feudal lords.
 - Nevertheless, these relations were more progressive than in slavery system, because they made the labourers interested, to some extent, in their labour. The peasants and the artisans could own the implements or small parts of land.

LIMITS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTIVE FORCES

- Division of territories into numerous Estates - and imposition of toll and trade duties created a fragmented Market which obstructed trade.
- Guild based Artisanal Production was no longer able to Serve the demands of world Markets. The restrictions placed by guilds on the quality and quantity of production did not allow for free development of productive forces.
- The Complicated ownership pattern in land between KING - CHIEF - SERF was not conducive for further development of agriculture: Consolidated agricultural land based on clear private ownership was required.
- The forces of production underwent changes due to new discoveries, increasing demands for consumption caused by population increase and discovery of new markets through colonialism.

All this led to the need and growth of mass scale manufacture. This became possible due to advances in technology. This brought the unorganized labourers at one place i.e. the factory.

This sparked off already sharpened class conflict leading to peasant revolution against landowners. The new system of production demanded free labourer whereas the serf was tied to the land, therefore, the new forces of production also changed the relations of production culminating into a change in the mode of production from feudalism to capitalism.

PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION

A concept used by Marx in "The Capital" to describe the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in England.

The development of Capitalism requires two essential conditions :

(a) FREE LABOUR

(B) ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH FOR INVESTMENT IN COMMODITY PRODUCTION.

In the 17th Century a combination of feudal lords and rich peasants succeeded in driving away a large majority of independent peasant owners from their land & occupied them.

- This deprived a large population of the means of production and they transitioned into Urban wage - Labourers.
- The process resulted in emergence of capitalist agriculture - and the surplus generated from this was used as investment in capitalist manufacturing.

This process was achieved through the help of state support through legislations such as the enclosures act.

CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION

Capitalism refers to a mode of production in which capital is the dominant means of production. Capital can be in various forms. It can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labour power and materials of production. It can be money or credit for buying physical machinery.

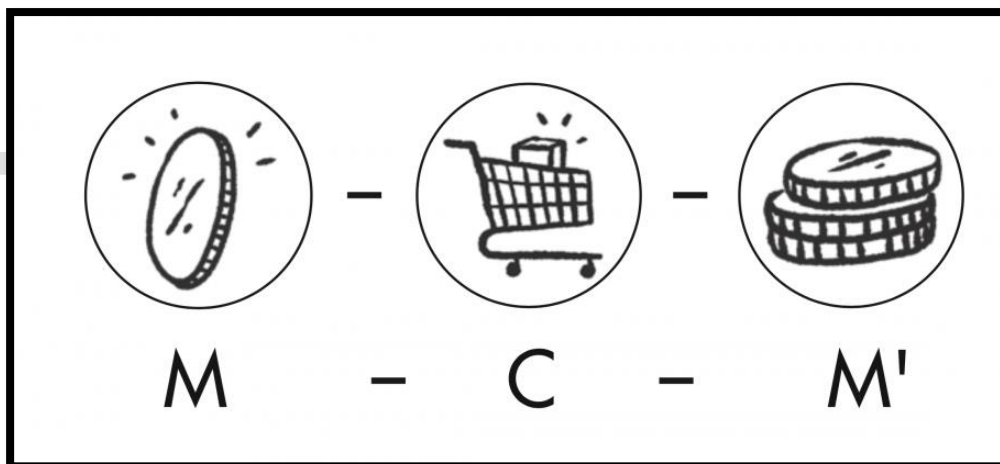
- In capitalist mode of production, the private ownership of capital in its various forms is in the hands of a class of capitalists. The ownership by capitalists is to the exclusion of the mass of the population.

As a mode of production, capitalism first emerged in Europe. The industrial revolution starting in England and spreading across different countries saw a rapid growth of technology and corresponding rise of capitalist economies. Marx viewed capitalism as a historical phase, to be eventually replaced by socialism.

The Capitalist Economic System

According to Marx, capitalism is an economic system with the following elements

- a capitalistic society is divided into two classes: the capitalists, and the workers. The capitalists own the means of production, while the workers do not. The workers sell their services, i.e., labour power, to the capitalists for wages. a commodity forms the unit of production in a capitalistic society.
- A commodity is defined as the carrier of use-value (utility) and exchange- value (with other commodities)
- the growth of capitalism is based on the exploitation of labour. Labour produces surplus value which is appropriated by the capitalist.
- All commodities are produced with a profit motive and the exchange equation is m-C-M. The capitalist purchases commodity, C, (labour power) with money, m, with an intention to sell it (after production) for profit, M.

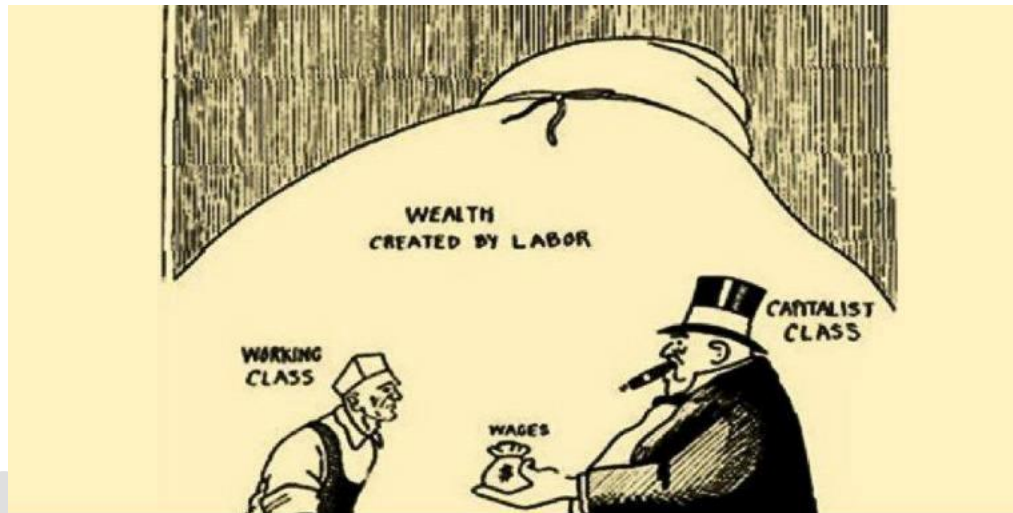


- The motive force behind capitalism is profit. The capitalist always reinvests the profit in his business to upgrade technology.
- Capitalists adopt labour saving machinery which creates a 'reserve army of the unemployed'. It results in growing the misery of the working class.

The Labour Theory of Value

- According to Marx, the **value of a commodity is determined by the quantity of labour required to produce it.**

- Marx was an advocate of the labour theory of value and believed that all production belongs to labour, because workers produce all value within society.
- According to Marx, labor is the source of all value in commodities, and the capitalist system exploits this by extracting surplus value from the laborers, leading to alienation and inequality.



The Theory of Surplus Value

Labour power has the unique characteristic of being capable of producing more than its own value when it is put to productive use.

The excess of value produced by labour power over its own value is called **surplus value**. The aim of the capitalist is to, always, increase this surplus value.

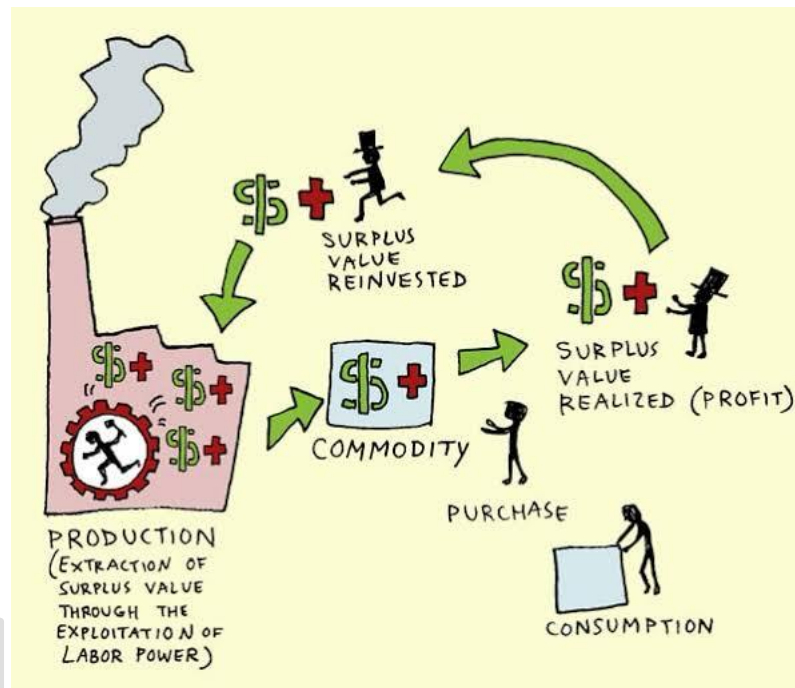
Surplus value refers to the extra labour of the worker, for which he receives nothing from the producer or employer. It is appropriated by the capitalist. This implies exploitation of labour. It is the only cause of class conflict, or class struggle.

According to Marx, surplus value is the value generated by labor in excess of the cost of labor power, which is appropriated by capitalists as profit.

Components

1. **Labour Power:** The capacity of workers to perform work that adds value to commodities.
2. **Labour:** The actual exercise of this capacity, which adds value to the products.

3. **Value of Labour Power:** The wage paid to workers for their labour power, which is typically less than the value their labour adds to the product.



Process

1. **Investment by Capitalists:** Capitalists invest money to purchase goods (raw materials, machinery, and labour power).
2. **Production:** Workers use their labour power to transform raw materials into finished products.
3. **Value Addition:** Through the process of labour, workers add value to these products, which is greater than the cost of their wages.
4. **Sale of Products:** Capitalists sell the finished products for a higher price than the total cost of production, including wages.

Creation of Surplus Value

- **Extraction of Labour:** Capitalists extract surplus labour from workers. The time workers spend producing value equivalent to their wages is called necessary labour time. The additional time they work beyond this is surplus labour time.
- **Surplus Labour Time:** During surplus labour time, workers produce surplus value, which is appropriated by capitalists.

Profit Generation

- **Wages vs. Value Added:** The value paid to workers (wages) is less than the value their labour adds to the commodity.
- **Surplus Value:** This difference constitutes surplus value, which is the source of profit in a capitalist system.

CLASS & CLASS STRUGGLE

CLASS

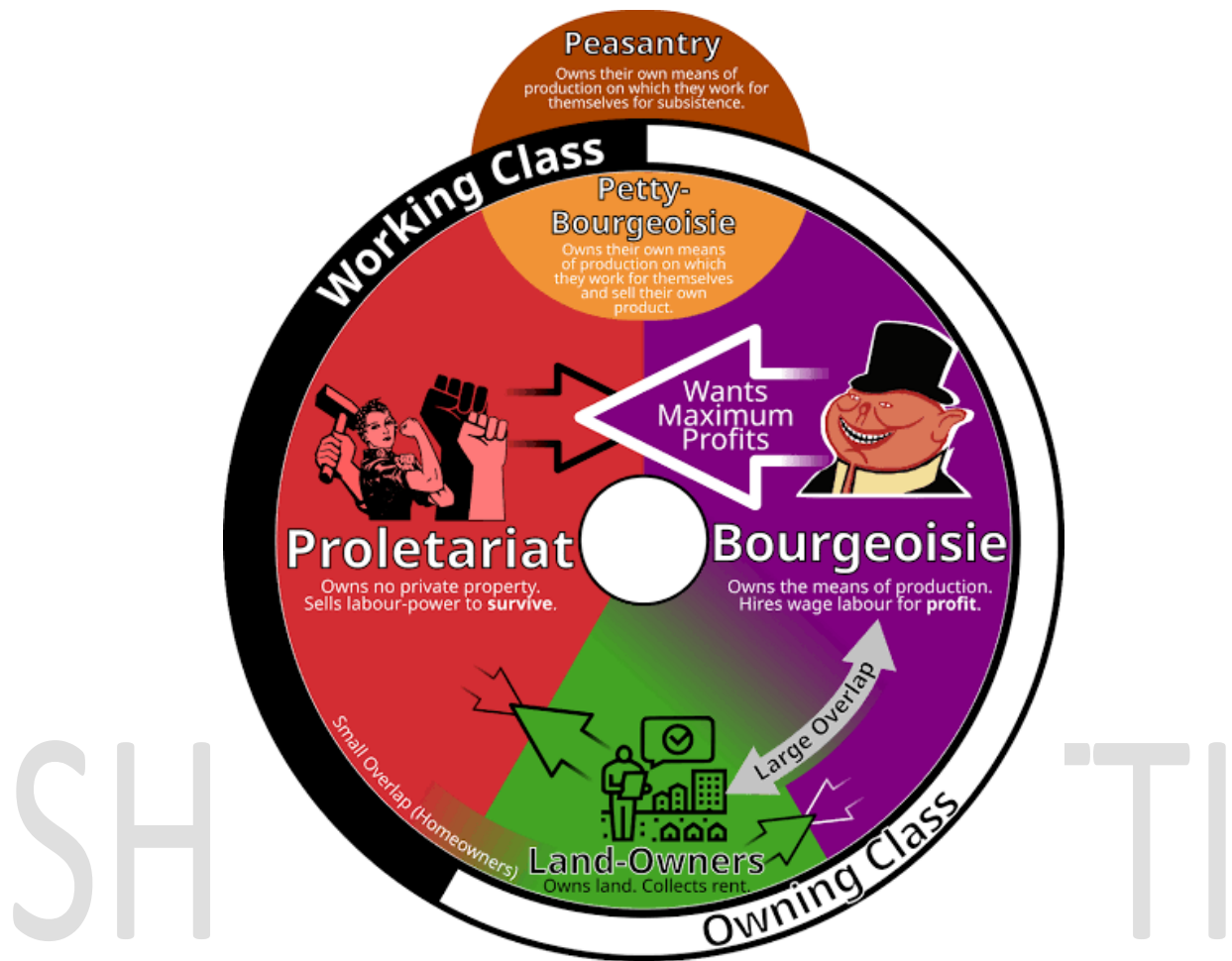
The word 'class' originated from the Latin term 'classis' which refers to a group called to arms, a division of the people. In the rule of legendary Roman king, Servius Tullius (678-534 B.C.), the Roman society was divided into five classes or orders according to their wealth. Subsequently, the word 'class' was applied to large groups of people into which human society came to be divided.

Marx recognised class as a unique feature of capitalist societies. This is one reason why he did not analyse the class structure and class relations in other forms of society. Marx has used the term social class throughout his works but explained it only in a fragmented form. The most clear passages on the concept of class structure can be found in the third volume of his famous work, Capital (1894).

Under the title of 'Social Classes' Marx distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income:

- owners of simple labour power or labourers whose main source of income is labour
- owners of capital or capitalists whose main source of income is profit or surplus value
- landowners whose main source of income is ground rent.

In this way the class structure of modern capitalist society is composed of three major classes viz., salaried labourers or workers, capitalists and landowners. At a broader level, society could be divided into two major classes i.e. the 'haves' (owners of land and / or capital) often called as bourgeoisie and the 'have-nots' (those who own nothing but their own labour power), often called as proletariat. Marx has tried to even give a concrete definition of social class. According to him 'a social class occupies a fixed place in the process of production'.



CRITERIA FOR DETERMINATION OF CLASS

In order to have a better understanding of the concept of class and class structure, one must be able to respond to the question – “What are the criteria for determination of class”?

A social class has two major criteria: (i) objective criteria (ii) subjective criteria.

- **Objective Criteria**

People sharing the same relationship to the means of production comprise a class.

Let us understand it through an example – all labourers have a similar relationship with the landowners. On the other hand all the landowners, as a class, have a similar relationship with the land and labourers. In this way, labourers on one hand and landowners on the other hand could be seen as classes.

*However, for Marx, this relationship alone is not sufficient to determine the class. According to him it is not sufficient for class to be ‘**class in itself**’ but it should also be ‘**class for itself**’*

What does this mean?

By 'class in itself' he means the objective criteria of any social class. Obviously, Marx is not simply satisfied with objective criteria above. Hence he equally emphasizes upon the other major criteria i.e., "**Class for itself**" or the **subjective criteria**.

- **Subjective Criteria**

Any collectivity or human grouping with a similar relationship would make a category, not a class, if subjective criteria are not included. The members of any one class not only have similar consciousness but they also share a similar consciousness of the fact that they belong to the same class. This similar consciousness of a class serves as the basis for uniting its members for organizing social action. Here this similar class **consciousness towards acting together for their common interests** is what Marx calls – "Class for itself". In this way, these two criteria together determine a class and class structure in any given society.

FROM CLASS IN ITSELF TO CLASS FOR ITSELF

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness."

Marx believed that workers would collectively develop class consciousness from their experience of the contradictions inherent within capitalist relations of production, i.e. the division of labour, ownership of private property by the Capitalists, & use of labour power of the workers for their profit & self-interest & the common feeling of alienation. These common experiences of the contradictions by the workers in the Capitalist world thus drive the Proletariats in their "struggle for class consciousness".

The Stages in which class in itself becomes class for itself can be summarized as under:

- **Accentuation of Capital** : the Essence of Capitalism is to proceed from Money to Money be way of Commodity (C-M-C to M-C-M) & end up with more Money than one had at the outset. Thus, the Capital gained , according to Marx is from the Capitalist Mode of Production results into a similar class position & consciousness which unites Proletariats to go for Revolution.
- **Importance of Property**- According to Marx, Classes are determined on the basis of individual's relation to the Means of production, which in Capitalist Society are owned by the Capitalists. Thus, "Property divisions are the crucial breaking lines in the class structure".

- **Identification of Economic & Political Power & Authority-** According to Marx, the political power of the Ruling class stems from the ownership & control of the forces of production (economic in nature). Thus, the political power & ideology seems to serve the same functions for the Capitalists that Class Consciousness serves for the Proletariats.
- **Polarisation of Classes-** In the Capitalist Society there exists 2 classes i.e. The Capitalists, who own the means of production & the Proletariats who own nothing but their own labour. Though Marx, had repeatedly referred to the intermediate state such as the “small capitalists”, the “petty bourgeoisie” & the “lumpen proletariat”, but he was of the firm belief that at the height of the conflict these would be drawn into the ranks of the Proletariat. RAYMOND ARON has termed this process as “Proletarianisation”.
- **The theory of Surplus Value-** According to Marx's theory, surplus value is equal to the new value created by workers in excess of their own labour-cost, which is appropriated by the capitalist as profit when products are sold. Thus , the creation of the Surplus of the workers is used by the Capitalists for their own use i.e more ‘profit’ & from here starts the exploitation & the main source of conflict between the “haves” & ‘have-nots”.
- **Pauperisation-**Exploitation of the Proletariats only add to their misery & poverty. But the same exploitation helps the rich to become richer. With this society gets divided into Rich & Poor.
- **Alienation-** it results from lack of sense of control over the social world, leaving them ‘alien’ (aloof) in the very environment that they have created. The workers get caught in the vicious circle of exploitation find no way to get out of it. Hence , they lose interest in their work , which now becomes an enforced activity than a satisfying or creative one. This , situation of the Alienation ripens the mood of the worker for a conflict.
- **Class Solidarity-** The resultant exploitation & alienation in the Capitalist Mode of Production makes the Proletariats more homogenous & they develop Class Solidarity among themselves & intensify the Class Struggle by forming Unions against the Capitalists & goes for riots & revolts.
- **Revolution-** when the class struggle reaches its height, a violent revolution breaks out which destroys the Capitalist Structure & calls for the Dictatorship of the Proletariats.
- **Classless Society-** after attaining success in the Proletarian Revolution, a new SOCIALIST SOCIETY will be established which will be Classless & free from all sorts of exploitation.

CLASS STRUGGLE

Development of forces of production

The *development of forces of production reflects the constant struggle of human beings to master nature through their labour.* The development of the forces of production is primary because it results from a factor, which is, in a sense, exogenous. The motive force lies outside the forces and relations of production and acts first upon the former. The motive force is the rational

and ever-present impulse of human beings to try to better their situation and overcome scarcity by developing the productive forces. Human beings are, above all, like animals producing society by acting upon nature through their labour. Productive forces transform nature into use values and exchange values. The productive forces compel the creation and destruction of successive systems of production relations between human beings.

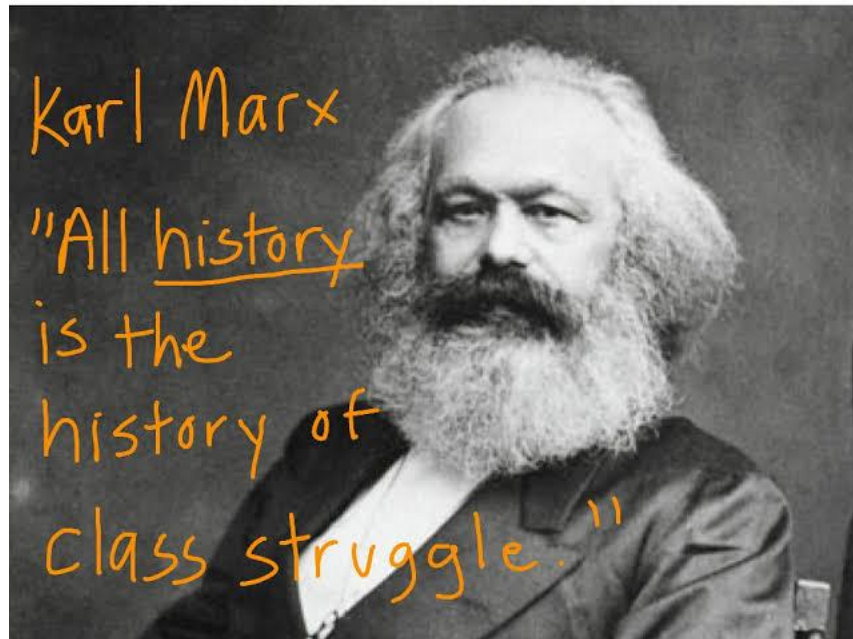
Productive forces and the production relations enter into conflict

- Productive forces have an intrinsic tendency to develop, as human beings' knowledge and mastery over nature increase. As these forces develop, successive social relations of production develop and consequently give way.
- At a particular point of development the productive forces and the production relations enter into conflict: the latter being unstable to contain the former.
- Any restructuring of relations of power, forms of domination and of social organisation has been mostly the outcome of struggles. The condition and character of the struggle are determined by changes in material life.

People become conscious of this by recognizing the existence of class struggle, **between those whose activity fits them for the new economic structure, and those who are guardians of the old.** Different socio-economic organisations of production, which have characterised human history, arise or fall as they enable or impede the expansion of society's productive capacity.



The growth of the productive forces thus explains the general course of human history. The productive forces, however, include, as we have already noted, not just the means of production (tools, machines, factories and so on), but. The productive forces represent the powers society has at its command in material production.



INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS & CLASS STRUGGLE

In primitive communal stage there was *no surplus production and hence it had no inequality* and exploitation caused by the private ownership of means of production. The means of production were common property of the community.

With the development and improvements in the forces of production there was increased productivity. This caused private ownership of means of production and change in the relations of production. This marked the end of primitive-communal system and thus began the long history of inequality, exploitation and class conflict, coinciding with the emergence of slave-owning society.

In the slave-owning society the class conflict between the slave owners and slaves reached a peak causing a change in the mode of production from slavery to feudalistic mode of production. Marx has said that the history of hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle. This means that the entire history of society is studded with different phases and periods of class struggle.

This history of class struggle begins in the slave-owning society and continues through **feudal society** where this class struggle is between classes of the feudal lords and the landless agricultural labourers or serfs. Due to change in mode of production and class struggle a new stage of society i.e., capitalism replaces the age-old feudal system.

In the capitalistic mode of production the class antagonism acquires most acute dimensions. The working class movement begins to concretize and reaches its peak. Through a class conflict between



Sidewalk Bubblegum ©1997 Clay Butler

the class of capitalists and the class of industrial labourers, the capitalist system is replaced by socialism. This violent change has been termed as revolution by Marx.

Marx said that the class antagonism and subsequently the class conflict in the capitalist system will usher in socialism in place of capitalism through a revolution. Here the question arises what is the basis of this antagonism?

Marx's answer is that the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production is the basis of this antagonism.

- The bourgeoisie is constantly creating more powerful means of production. But the relations of production that is, apparently, both the relations of ownership and the distribution of income are not transferred at the same rate.
- The capitalist mode of production is capable to produce in bulk, but despite this mass production and increase in wealth, majority of the population suffers from poverty and misery.

- On the other hand, there are a few families who have so much wealth that one could not even count or imagine. These stark and wide disparities create some tiny islands of prosperity in a vast ocean of poverty and misery.
- The onus of this disparity lies on the unequal, exploitative relations of production which distribute the produce in an unequal manner. This contradiction, according to Marx, will eventually produce a revolutionary crisis.
- The proletariat, which constitutes and will increasingly constitute the vast majority of the population, will become a class, that is, a social entity aspiring for the seizure of power and transformation of social relations.
- Marx asserted that the progress of society meant the succession of victories of one class over the other. He assigned his life to planning a victory for the proletariat. In a way, he became a commander, engaged in a campaign. With his solitary aim of defeating the enemy, Marx stressed on acquiring the knowledge of the history of society and the laws that regulate its organisation.

His monumental work, Das Kapital (Capital, 1861-1879), provided an analysis in which Marx was not concerned with arguments for a class-war. He treated the necessity for such arguments as an unnecessary task.

According to Marx, the bottom rung of the social stratification is the **proletariat**. Below it there is no class and therefore emancipation of the proletariat will, in fact, be the emancipation of mankind. Marx accepts the right of the bourgeoisie to fight the final war. But for the proletariat the battle is for its very survival and it has to win.

END RESULT

- This would mean that the private ownership of property will be abolished. The proletariat will jointly own means of production and distribute the produce according to the needs of the members of the society.
- **This stage is called the stage of dictatorship of proletariat.** This stage will later on convert into a stateless society where the communist system will finally be established in the society. This will also end all kinds of social classes and of all kinds of class conflicts for future. This will also mean de-alienation of the proletariat.

The revolutions of the proletariat will differ in kind from all past revolutions.

- All the revolutions of the past were accomplished by minorities for the benefit of minorities. The revolution of the proletariat will be accomplished by the vast majority for the benefit of

all. The proletarian revolution will, therefore, mark the end of classes and of the antagonistic character of capitalist society.

- Transformation is for the Self-Realisation of Human Nature and not merely the further development of Forces of Production.
- Factory-Based manufacturing remains the main system of production - but relations of production are transformed. That is, forces of Production remain unchanged - only relations of productions undergo transformation.
- In earlier forms of class-struggle economic change first occurred and was followed by political change. In Socialist revolution the working Class first ceases political power - and using this power transforms the economic relations.
- The future society differs from existing society in the 4 main ways:
 - 1) No Individual ownership of Means of Production.
 - 2) Reduction in the Necessary Labour Time.
 - 3) Non- Alienating work.
 - 4) The State withers away

Stages of History and Class Conflict at Each Stage

Stage	Oppressing Class	Oppressed Class
Primitive Communism	No classes = No Conflict	
Slavery	Slave Owners	Slaves
Feudalism	Landowners	Serfs
Capitalism	Bourgeoisie	Proletariat
Socialism	State Managers	Workers
Communism	No Classes = No Conflict	

SUMMARY

1. Historical materialism is a materialist interpretation of social, cultural and political phenomena. It propounds that social institutions and related values are determined by the mode of production processes rather than ideas in the explanation of history. However, the

word 'determined', in the Marxian sense, refers to determination in the last analysis and should not be taken in an absolute sense.

2. Historical materialism is a dialectical theory of human progress. It regards history as the development of human beings' efforts to master the forces of nature and, hence, of production. Since all production is carried out within social organisation, history is the succession of changes in social system, the development of human relations geared to productive activity (mode of production) in which the economic system forms the base and all other relationships, institutions, activities, and idea systems are "superstructural".
3. History is progress because human beings' ability to produce their "forces of production" continually increases. It is regression because in perfecting the forces of production they create more and more complex and oppressive social organisation

CONTRIBUTION OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

The theory of historical materialism played an essential part in the formation of modern sociology. Marx's ideas had been foreshadowed in the works of earlier thinkers as diverse in other respects as Hegel, Saint-Simon and Adam Ferguson. All of them greatly influenced Marx.

- Marx elaborated his conception of the nature of society, and of the appropriate means to study it. He did so in a more precise, and above all more empirical fashion than did his predecessors. He introduced an entirely new element to understand the structure of each society. It was derived from the relations between social classes. These relations were determined by the mode of production. It was this feature of historical materialism which was widely accepted by later sociologists as offering a more promising starting point for exact and realistic investigations of the causes of social change.
- Secondly, historical materialism introduced into sociology a new method of inquiry, new concepts, and a number of bold hypotheses to explain the rise, development, and decline of particular forms of society. All of these came to exercise, in the later decades of the nineteenth century, a profound and extensive influence upon the writings of sociologists.
- Thirdly, originality of historical materialism was in its immense effort to synthesize in a critical way, the entire legacy of social knowledge since Aristotle. Marx's purpose was to achieve a better understanding of the conditions of human development. With this understanding he tried to accelerate the actual process by which mankind was moving toward an association, in which the free development of each was the condition for the free development of all. The desired system would be based upon rational planning, cooperative production, and equality of distribution and most important, liberated from all forms of political and social exploitation.

- Lastly, historical materialism not only provides a method to understand the existing social reality; it is a method to understand the existence of other methods. It is a persistent critique of the aims and methods of social sciences.

CRITICISM

Mode of Production

- **Superstructure's Role**: Critics argue that historical materialism downplays the significance of the superstructure (ideology, culture, politics) in shaping historical developments. While Marx acknowledged the superstructure's role, critics believe it is not given enough weight in his theory.
- **Deterministic** - Historical Materialism does not allow for the possibility of human agency or free will. Often criticized for its deterministic view of history, suggesting that historical development follows a predetermined path leading inevitably towards socialism and communism. This teleological perspective ignores the contingencies and uncertainties of historical processes.
- **Eurocentric** - Critics argue that Historical Materialism is based on a Western view of history. It does not take into account the experiences of other cultures.
- **Outdated** - Critics argue that Historical Materialism is no longer relevant in the modern world, where capitalism has taken on new forms.
- **Reductionism**: Critics argue that historical materialism reduces all aspects of society, including culture, politics, and religion, to economic factors and class struggles. This reductionist approach overlooks the complexity of human societies and the influence of non-economic factors.
- **Oversimplification**: By focusing primarily on economic bases, historical materialism can oversimplify the intricate and multi-faceted nature of societal changes and developments.
- **Modern Complexity**: The modern world, with its intricate global interconnections, advanced technology, and diverse social movements, poses challenges to the applicability of historical materialism. Critics question whether the theory can adequately address contemporary issues such as environmental degradation, gender inequality, and cultural globalization.

Class , Class Antagonism & Class Struggle

- **J. Westergaard**, in his study of Britain society argues that though class inequalities are on the rise, yet there appears to be 'less class consciousnesses. This is so because political

parties responsible for articulating and mobilizing 'class interests' are riven with internal disputes.

- **Post-Modernists**, Pakulski and Waters in their book, 'The Death of Class' claim that not that social inequality is disappearing, but 'class based division' is losing its significance. New 'cleavages' that are appearing in post-class society, overshadow class differences. It therefore, implies that if people do not see class based issues as of special significance, they do not see class based issues of 'class-consciousness' as of any special significance.
- **V. Lenin**, workers left to them would create only a 'trade union consciousness,' seeking limited social and economic reforms, and not a true 'revolutionary awareness'. Also inequalities of wealth and income had been reduced, because of 'changes in the social structure' and because of 'measures taken by the state'. Social mobility has become more common, thereby affecting class-solidarity. Also because of the 'managerial revolution' managers rather than owners exercised daily control over the means of production. Thus, conflict was no longer based upon the ownership or non-ownership of wealth.
- **Max Weber** saw no evidence to support empirically the idea of the polarization of classes. According to him, 'capitalist enterprises' and the 'modern nation state' requires a 'rational' bureaucratic administration, which has led to the growth and expansion of the 'middle class'. He thus, saw a diversification of classes, rather than polarization. Weber further rejected the idea of 'inevitability' of the proletariat revolution'. According to him, individual manual workers who were dissatisfied with their 'class situation' would respond in a variety of ways. They may grumble, 'sabotage industrial machinery, or take strike action.'

RELEVANCE IN 21st CENTURY

- **Income Inequality:** The widening gap between the wealthy elite and the working class in many countries mirrors Marx's prediction of increasing class polarization under capitalism. The widening gap between the rich and the poor in many countries can be seen as a result of the capitalist mode of production, where the bourgeoisie accumulate wealth through the exploitation of the proletariat.

1%	The top 10% of the Indian population holds 77% of the total national wealth. 73% of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the richest 1%, while *670 million Indians who comprise the poorest half of the population saw only a 1% increase in their wealth.
70	There are 119 billionaires in India. Their number has increased from only 9 in 2000 to 101 in 2017. Between 2018 and 2022, India is estimated to produce 70 new millionaires every day.
10x	Billionaires' fortunes increased by almost 10 times over a decade and their total wealth is higher than the entire Union budget of India for the fiscal year 2018-19, which was at INR 24422 billion.
63 M	Many ordinary Indians are not able to access the health care they need. 63 million of them are pushed into poverty because of healthcare costs every year - almost two people every second.
941 yrs	It would take 941 years for a minimum wage worker in rural India to earn what the top paid executive at a leading Indian garment company earns in a year.

"The 'Billionaire Raj' headed by India's modern bourgeoisie is now more unequal than the British Raj headed by the colonialist forces," says a new study by the World Inequality Lab.

- **Technological Advancement:** Historical materialism can help explain how technological advancements, such as automation and artificial intelligence, are impacting society. These changes are not just about technological progress but also about the social relations they create, including issues like job displacement and economic inequality.
- **Gig Economy:** The rise of precarious and temporary work arrangements, such as freelance or gig work, highlights the vulnerability of workers and the potential for exploitation by capitalist interests.
- **Globalization:** The globalization of capital has led to the outsourcing of jobs to countries with lower labor costs, often at the expense of workers in more developed countries. . It reflects the interests of the capitalist class in expanding markets and increasing profits, often at the expense of workers in both developed and developing countries.
- **Corporate Power / Monopolisation / Cartelization:** The dominance of multinational corporations in shaping economic and political policies can be seen as a form of capitalist control over society, consistent with Marx's critique of the bourgeoisie's influence.
- **Social Movements:** The emergence of social movements advocating for workers' rights, such as the Fight for \$15 movement in the United States, demonstrates ongoing class struggles and the pursuit of economic justice.
- **Automation:** The increasing use of automation and artificial intelligence in production processes raises concerns about job displacement and further exacerbating inequalities between capital owners and workers.

- **Housing Crisis:** The housing affordability crisis in many urban areas reflects the commodification of housing and the impact of speculative real estate practices on working-class individuals and families.
- **Political Polarization:** The growing divide between left-wing and right-wing ideologies in many countries can be understood, in part, as a reflection of class interests and conflicts within society.
- **Environmental Crisis:** Marx's theory can also help analyze the environmental crisis, as it emphasizes the exploitation of natural resources for profit. The focus on endless growth and consumption in capitalist societies has led to environmental degradation and climate change.

These examples illustrate how Marx's theory of class continues to provide a framework for understanding contemporary social and economic issues related to inequality, exploitation, and class conflict.

SHILPA BHATTI

THEORY OF ALIENATION

The *course of human history involves a progressive development of the means of production - a steady increase in human control over nature, This is paralleled by a corresponding increase in human alienation, an increase that reaches its height in capitalist society.*

The alienated labour in **Karl Marx's Manuscripts** refers to forced and involuntary labour in which the worker finds no purpose, no pleasure or contentment, no needs fulfilment, no independence or power, no mental growth or physical development. This is a state in which a person feels isolated, humiliated, unworthy, and insignificant. It is an operation that belongs to someone else and it is not random and it simply is a way of meeting the needs of physical life. It is a pure wage-earning practice in the political economy.

The theoretical basis of alienation is that a worker invariably loses the ability to determine life and destiny when deprived of the

- right to think (conceive) of themselves as the director of their own actions
- to determine the character of these actions
- to define relationships with other people
- to own those items of value from goods and services, produced by their own labour

Although the worker is an autonomous, self-realized human being, as an economic entity this worker is directed to goals and diverted to activities that are dictated by the bourgeoisie—who own the means of production—in order to extract from the worker the maximum amount of surplus value in the course of business competition among industrialists

FEATURES OF ALIENATION

“We live in an age in which the dehumanization of man, that is to say the alienation between him and his own works, is growing to a climax which must end in a revolutionary upheaval; this will originate from the particular interest of the class which has suffered the most from dehumanisation, but its effect would be to restore humanity to all mankind”. -MARX

The fundamental novelty of capital consists in two points, which entail wholly different view of capitalist society from that of the classical economists:

- a) what the worker **sells is not his labour but labour power**, and that labour has two aspects – abstract and concrete. Exploitation consists in the worker selling his labour power and thus divesting himself of his own essence; the labour process and its results become hostile and alien, deprivation of humanity instead of fulfillment.
- b) Marx discovered that labor has two aspects: it creates goods that have a **practical use (use value) and can be traded for money (exchange value)**. In capitalism, the main goal of

production is to keep increasing exchange value, not to meet people's needs. As a result, people's activities become focused on creating exchange value, which is something they can't directly use. This makes the community feel dominated by its own creations, as these products become powerful and alien. This leads to a distorted consciousness and political structures.

SHILPA BHATTI

ASPECTS OF ALIENATION

In his **Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (EPM)** published in 1844, Marx analyses various aspects of alienation

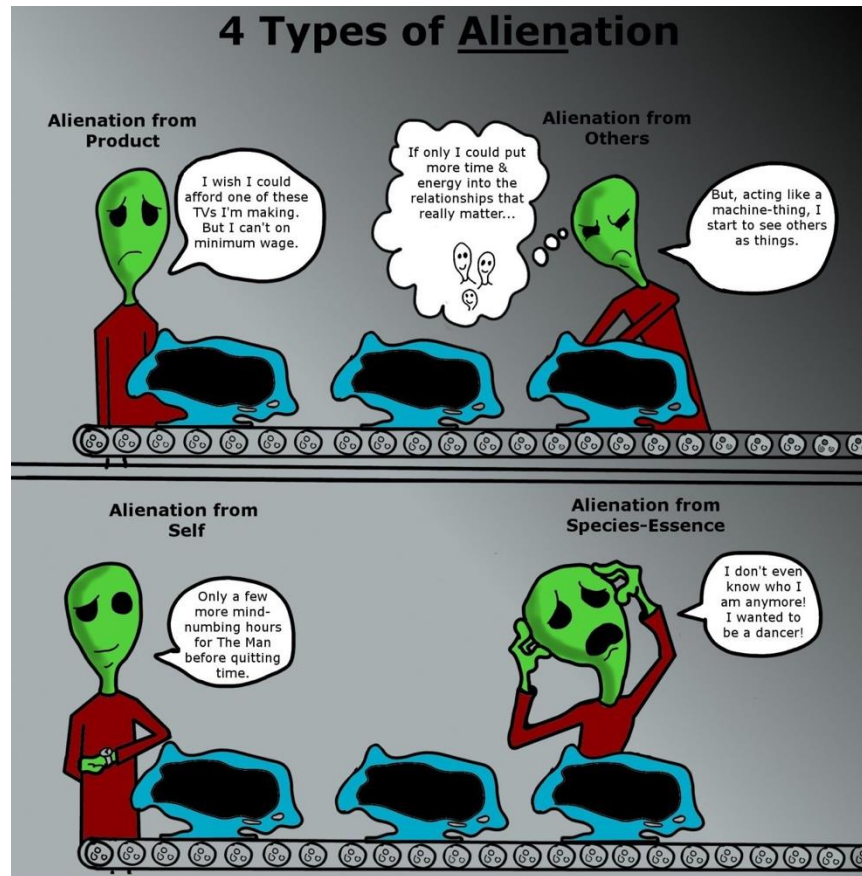
- **Alienation from the product of his labour**
 - The product in which he expresses and realizes himself does not belong to him. The design of the product and how it is produced are determined, not by the producers who make it (the workers), nor by the consumers of the product (the buyers), but by the capitalist class who besides accommodating the worker's manual labour also accommodate the intellectual labour of the engineer and the industrial designer who create the product in order to shape the taste of the consumer to buy the goods and services at a price that yields a maximal profit.
 - It is appropriated by the capitalists and sold on the market. With realization of surplus-value capital grows, and with capital the alien power which controls and dominates the life of the worker. The more he works, the better he produces, the stronger becomes this alien power of capital.

- **Alienation from production process**

- Workers are alienated from the act of production itself. They do not control the conditions under which they work, the tools they use, or the methods of production.
- In the capitalist mode of production, the generation of products (goods and services) is accomplished with an endless sequence of discrete, repetitive motions that offer the worker little psychological satisfaction for "a job well done."
- This makes work a means to an end (earning wages) rather than a fulfilling activity.

- **Alienation from Other Workers:** Workers are alienated from their fellow workers due to the competitive nature of capitalism. Instead of collaborating, workers often see each other as competitors for jobs and wages. This competition undermines social connections and solidarity among workers.

- **Alienation from 'Gattungswesen' (Species-Being) :**
 - This refers to the alienation from what Marx calls "species-being," or the essence of human nature.
 - Conceptually, in the term species-essence, the word species describes the intrinsic human mental essence that is characterized by a "plurality of interests" and "psychological dynamism," whereby every individual has the desire and the tendency to engage in the many activities that promote mutual human survival and psychological well-being, by means of emotional connections with other people, with society. The psychic value of a human consists in being able to conceive (think) of the ends of their actions as purposeful ideas, which are distinct from the actions required to realize a given idea.
 - Humans are naturally creative and productive beings, but in a capitalist society, this creativity is stifled because workers are forced to perform repetitive, monotonous tasks that do not allow for self-expression or personal fulfillment.



CAUSES OF ALIENATION

- **Private Property:** The ownership of the means of production by capitalists creates a division between those who own and those who work, leading to alienation.
- **Division of Labour:** Inherent to capitalism, it thwarted the human nature (Gattungswesen) of workers.
- **Mechanistic Role of Workers:** Workers became mere parts of the industrial system, losing their ability to define value through purposeful activity.
- **Exploitation by Bourgeoisie:** Near-total mechanization allowed the bourgeois capitalist class to exploit workers, diminishing their ability to materially survive.
- **Commodity Fetishism:** The social relations in a capitalist system are mediated by commodities, making social relations appear as relationships between things rather than people.
- **Exploitation:** The extraction of surplus value from workers by capitalists intensifies the alienation, as workers see their labour power commodified and exploited.

IMPACTS OF ALIENATION

- **Dehumanization:** Alienation leads to the dehumanization of workers, who are reduced to cogs in the capitalist machine.
- **Psychological Effects:** Alienation can result in feelings of powerlessness, dissatisfaction, and disconnection from work and society.
- **Social Fragmentation:** Alienation contributes to the fragmentation of society, as individuals become isolated and disconnected from communal life and collective action.

MARX'S VISION FOR OVERCOMING ALIENATION

- **Proletarian Revolution:** The working class, as a developed political force, would eventually revolutionize the relations of production.
- **Shift to Communist Production:** Transition from capitalist to communist mode of production.
- **Equality in Communist Society:** Fundamental relation of workers to the means of production would be equal and non-conflictual.
- **Respect for Humanity (Gattungswesen):** No artificial distinctions in the value of labor; respect for workers' humanity.
- **End of Alienation:** In a communist society, men and women would not become alienated.

COMMODITY FETISHISM

Commodity fetishism is a concept in Karl Marx's critique of political economy. It refers to the way in which commodities (goods or services) are imbued with social power and value, often obscuring the social relations and labor processes that underlie their production. Here are some examples of commodity fetishism in modern society:

- **Brand Loyalty:** Consumers often develop strong attachments to brands, believing that they hold special qualities or status. This can obscure the fact that these brands are produced through labor and are part of a system of capitalist production.
- **Luxury Goods:** Luxury items often carry high prices and are associated with prestige and social status. This can create a fetishistic relationship where the object itself becomes more important than the labor that went into producing it or the social relations it represents.
- **Advertising:** Advertising plays a significant role in creating fetishistic relationships with commodities by presenting them as essential to happiness, success, or identity. This can obscure the true nature of the products and the social relations involved in their production.
- **Global Trade:** The global trade in commodities often involves complex supply chains that obscure the labor and environmental costs of production. Consumers may not be aware of the conditions under which the goods they consume are produced.
- **Digital Goods:** In the digital age, commodities such as software, music, and movies are often treated as infinitely replicable and disposable, leading to a detachment from the labor and resources required to produce them.

Overall, commodity fetishism highlights how the social relations of capitalism can be obscured by the fetishistic focus on commodities themselves, leading to a distorted understanding of the true nature of production and consumption.

BIRKIN BAG & COMMODITY FETISHISM

The example of Birkin bags and luxury brands exemplifies Marx's theory of commodity fetishism. The emphasis on the high quality, symbolic value, and exclusivity of luxury goods can lead consumers to attribute almost magical qualities to these commodities, overlooking the labor that went into their production.

The high price, rarity, and unique aesthetics of Birkin bags contribute to their allure, creating a perception of value that is detached from the social relations and labor processes involved in their production. This phenomenon highlights how commodities can be fetishized, with their social and labor aspects obscured by their perceived value in the market.

Moreover, the idea that commodities appear to have an inherent value compared to all other commodities, as mentioned in "Removing the Veil," further underscores Marx's argument that the social relations of production are hidden behind the exchange value of commodities. This illustrates how capitalist societies can fetishize commodities, leading to a distortion of their true value and the labor embedded within them.

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY - RELEVANCE OF THEORY OF ALIENATION

- **Exploitation without Job Perks:** The rise of gig economy jobs and precarious work arrangements can lead to a sense of alienation, as workers may lack job security, benefits,

and a sense of belonging to a larger community of workers , echoing Marx's idea of workers being separated from the fruits of their labor and having no control over their work process.

- **Job insecurity** : Workers in such as Uber and Lyft drivers or informal sectors, arrangements often feel disconnected from stable employment, facing uncertain futures and vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Consumer Culture**: In consumer societies, individuals often seek fulfilment through the consumption of goods and services, leading to a sense of alienation from their true needs and desires, as well as from their social and natural environment. False needs - people find their soul in automobile shopping provide a highly motivated labour force & works to consume. Constant pursuit of material goods and commodification of social relationships can create a sense of detachment and meaninglessness, hindering genuine human connection.
- **Globalisation**: The global nature of modern capitalism can lead to a sense of alienation from local communities and cultures, as well as from the decisions that affect people's lives being made by distant corporations and governments. Globalisation has led to labor alienation in supply chains, where workers in low-wage countries lack influence over decision-making and are separated from the final products they create, mirroring Marx's concept of alienation.
- **Mental Health**: Alienation can contribute to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, as individuals may feel disconnected from themselves, others, and the world around them.
- **HERBERT MARCUSE (*One Dimensional Man*)** alienation in advanced industrial societies is to found move in (consumption of products) rather than process of production. ('False needs' people find their soul in automobile shopping) provide a highly motivated labour force & works to consume
- **C.W. MILLS** in a study of American middle class 'White collar workers' he finds that there is shift from skills with things to skill with persons'. He called this as PROSTITUTIZATION OF PERSONALITY which is alienated from true self. For example : a receptionist smiling day long while greeting anyone who enters office.
- **HARRY BARVERMEN** introduction of new technology led to reduction in creative human input leading to **DESKILLING OF WORKERS**.
- **ROBERT BLAUNER**
Robert Blauner, in his book "Alienation and Freedom," discusses the different dimensions or degrees of alienation experienced by workers in an industrial society. He identifies four main dimensions:
 - **Powerlessness**: The extent to which workers feel they lack control over their work activities and the outcomes of their labor.
 - **Meaninglessness**: The degree to which workers find their work activities to lack purpose or significance.
 - **Isolation**: The feeling of being socially isolated from others, including coworkers and the broader community.

- **Self-estrangement:** The extent to which workers feel disconnected from their own sense of self due to the nature of their work.

Type	Industry	Alienation
Craft	Printing	Alienation is low because craft industries require the use of uniquely human creative skills.
Assembly Line	Automobile	Alienation is high because there is high standardization of work. This leads to de-skilling, and workers perceive work as meaningless and repetitive.
Process	Chemical-Refining	Alienation is low because work involved high-skilled tasks. Workers felt valued, and there was more creative communication between them.

GIG ECONOMY & THEORY OF ALIENATION

Erosion of Collective Bargaining Power: The gig economy's individualised nature makes it difficult for workers to collectively organise, highlighting the importance of collective action and labor unions to protect workers' rights and well-being.

- **Social Isolation and Lack of Solidarity:** The gig economy can contribute to social isolation among workers, emphasising Marx's view on the importance of social connection and collective action to challenge oppressive labor conditions.
- **Fragmentation and Lack of Fulfilment:** The gig economy's focus on repetitive and specialized tasks can lead to monotony and a sense of alienation, limiting workers' ability to find fulfillment and utilize their full potential, as seen in platform-based freelancers.
- **Precarious Working Conditions:** Job insecurity in the gig economy results in unpredictable schedules, lack of security, and limited benefits, leading to heightened stress and financial insecurity for workers, as seen in food delivery workers.

WORK FROM HOME & THEORY OF ALIENATION

- **Separation from the Products of Labor:** In the IT sector, workers often create digital products or services that are intangible and may not have a direct connection to the physical world. This can lead to a sense of alienation, as workers may feel disconnected from the tangible outcomes of their labor.
- **Lack of Control over Work Process:** Despite the flexibility offered by remote work, IT workers may still experience a lack of control over their work processes. They may be subject to tight deadlines, micromanagement through digital surveillance tools, or changes in project requirements that they have little say in, leading to feelings of powerlessness.

- **Isolation and Lack of Solidarity:** Remote work can be isolating, with limited opportunities for social interaction and camaraderie with colleagues. This lack of social connection can contribute to feelings of alienation and a sense of being disconnected from the broader workplace community.
- **Fragmentation and Lack of Fulfillment:** IT work often involves specialized, technical tasks that can be repetitive or narrowly focused. This specialisation can lead to a sense of monotony and alienation, especially if workers feel that their skills are not being fully utilised or that their work lacks meaning.
- **Exploitation and Precariousness:** While remote work offers flexibility, it can also blur the boundaries between work and personal life, leading to longer working hours and increased stress. Additionally, remote workers may be more easily replaced or outsourced, leading to a sense of insecurity and vulnerability.

CRITICISM

- Marx understood Alienation merely in terms of production process whereas ignored alienating influences of other aspects of superstructure. Example according to **Ivan Illich** in book '*Deschooling society*' present education system smothers the creativity of child and may bring alienation.
- Marx failed to take into account the positive effects of alienation as force behind creativity. A number of scientists artists were considered alienated but created new things. Example **Karl Popper** considers alienation as a force behind creativity.
- Marx attributed alienation to production process in a very simplified way whereas different production process may have different degree of alienation. **ROBERT BLAUNER** in '**Alienation and Freedom**' talks about varying degree of alienation.
- Marx deals with work for capitalist seeing the roots of alienation only in exchange of labour on private property. Similar feelings and causes of alienation may be related to ethnicity race gender.
- The contemporary process of production, however differ from the capitalist mode of production, outlined by Karl Marx. When Marx outlined his views on alienated labor, workers in industry worked between 12-16 hours a day. However today, significant reduction in working hours and steady rise in 'living standards' of population.

- In a fast changing society, individuals tend to identify increasingly with a number of meaningful groups like religious, ethnic, local etc. **ALAS BAIR CLAYRE** — Marxian model of alienation tends to lump together 'diverse occupations' and create a simple model.
- Marx states economy solely driven by production but ignored the role of consumption which forms central role in modern economy which encourages some form of creativity and entrepreneurship. Example : Movie directors , Musicians
- Stress on human resources and resultant welfare schemes, also options like work from home . **'Social' need of workers as discussed by Elton Mayo** has replaced scientific management of work.
- The **'knowledge workers of contemporary knowledge economy'** in post industrial societies, have greater control over factors of production which is the creation and transmission of knowledge.
- Marx proposed alienation is at peak in capitalistic mode of production but the postmodern society indicate even higher levels of alienation. It is said nowadays man is alienated from superstructure which is indicated by high incidences of crime, drug addiction, mental health issues etc. Marx advocated a total change in society to address the problem of alienation in society but ignored the alternative remedies. For example **Durkheim** suggested a strict code of ethics for tackling the problem of alienation.

MARX - CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- **TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM**

It is the idea that social change happens mainly due to technological change. However there are empirical instances significant social change without any Technological change:

Example : Fascism in Germany , Authoritarian Capitalism in China.

At the same time there may be a development in technology but without social adoption of that technology no social change occurs. Marx ignored this complex relationship between Technology and Society.

- **UNI-DIRECTIONAL CAUSAL THEORY**

In Marx's account Social Super-Structure is determined by the Economic Base. The direction of causality is from the Base to Super-structure. Weber criticized this approach as Economic Reductionism.

NEO-MARXIST THEORISTS have proposed alterations to this Model:

- **GRAMSCI**: Argued that the direction of influence may be a two way process. The Super structure can also influence the economic base in some circumstances. **Example**- Industrialisation of Japan was the accomplishment of a conscious effort by state
- **LOUIS ALTHUSSER**: Pointed out that Superstructure has relative autonomy? Base determines super-structure only in the last instance.

- **MONO CAUSALITY**

In Marx's account Social changes are always caused by Economic factors: In reality, however, as Max Weber has Shown, Non-Economic factors like religion can also cause Social and economic changes.

- **IDEAS DETERMINE MATTER**

According to **ROTHBARD** Marx is wrong to consider that only Matter Causes/determines " ideas." With respect to Technology, in the ultimate analysis, it is Ideas which produce it. Marx tended to systematically under-emphasize the role of ideas in Society.

- **NO THEORY OF REVOLUTION**

According to **CRANE BRINTON** Marx only has a "notion of revolution" but not a "theory of revolution". Man's work does not tell us why revolutions are successful in some instances and unsuccessful in other instances.

- **MARX THE PROPHET:**

The history of last 100 Years has shown that Marx's predictions about Capitalist Society did not come true:

- Class Polarisation did not occur
- Middle-class expanded.
- Rates of Profit did not fall.
- Socialist revolutions occurred in Agrarian Societies - not modern capitalist societies.

- **PREDICTION OF PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION**

Marx predicted that capitalism would inevitably lead to a proletarian revolution. Critics point out that such revolutions have not occurred in most advanced capitalist societies, and where communist revolutions did occur, they often resulted in authoritarian regimes rather than the classless, stateless societies Marx envisioned.

- **LABOR THEORY OF VALUE**

Marx's labor theory of value, which posits that the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor time required to produce it, has been criticized as being outdated. Modern economists argue that value is more accurately determined by supply and demand dynamics in the market.

- **UTOPIAN VISION**

Critics argue that Marx's vision of a classless, stateless society is overly idealistic and utopian. They question the practicality of achieving and maintaining such a society, given human nature and historical precedents.

- **UNDERESTIMATION OF CAPITALISM'S ADAPTABILITY**

Marx underestimated capitalism's ability to adapt and reform. Capitalist economies have demonstrated considerable resilience and capacity for self-correction through mechanisms such as social welfare policies, labor rights, and regulatory frameworks.

- **NEGLECT OF INDIVIDUAL AGENCY**

Marx's focus on large-scale social and economic structures can be seen as downplaying the role of individual agency. Critics argue that individuals have more power to influence their circumstances than Marx's theory allows.

- **FAILURES OF COMMUNIST STATES**

The practical implementation of Marxist ideas in various countries, such as the Soviet Union and Maoist China, often resulted in authoritarian regimes with significant human rights abuses and economic inefficiencies. Critics argue that these failures discredit Marx's theories.

SHILPA BHATTI