MARX'S VIEWS ON INDIA:

A CRITIQUE OF THE

ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis examines Marx's views on the pre-colonial Indian social formation which he developed in his writings during the years 1853-1867.* The main issue which I seek to resolve is this: How far and to what extent can Marx's thesis on the Asiatic Mode of Production be accepted theoretically and empirically on the basis of the data provided by historical evidence from the Indian social formation since its remotest antiquity to the first consolidation of the British rule in India in 1757? Naturally, the main burden of my thesis is to critically evaluate the thesis of the Asiatic Mode of Production which, in its turn, consists of the following ingredients: a) the absence of private property in land; b) the existence of the self-sufficient village communities characterized by a unity of agriculture and craft industry; c) the historic stagnation of the Indian social formation; and d) the Oriental despotism and the role of the Indian state. As far as my own findings are concerned it must be stated that, in view of the immense historical data now available, the validity of the Asiatic Mode of Production has become extremely limited for explaining the pre-colonial social formation of India in terms of the postulates of

* We exclude from our study his post-Capital researches on Indian society and history, especially his work on Phear and Maine.

historical materialism and class struggle. The sources on which Marx depended in his formulations were not only scanty but also unreliable. Further, the thesis of the Asiatic Mode of Production was very marginal to Marx's main concern. As a result, Marx's thesis could not be anything but theoretically contradictory and empirically inadequate. In fact, the Aristotelian conceptual innovation of "Oriental Despotism" found fervent favor among successive generations of European scholars. It became, with certain necessary modifications, the so-called "Asiatic Mode of Production" in the skilful and competent hands of Marx.

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sacrifices. Without his patience, understanding and support, I would have never been able to pursue my work. Needless to say, I am alone responsible for any shortcomings in this work.

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INTRODUCTION

The basic objective of this dissertation work is to critically assess Marx's views on the Indian social formation, especially his views which can be summed up in his thesis of the Asiatic Mode of Production.[1] This thesis was developed by Marx in the decade of the 1850s. But even today, it continues to cause heated discussion and controversy among both non- and neo-Marxists. Further, "As opposed to his analysis of the capitalist mode of production and his brief formulations on the feudal mode, Marx nowhere constructs the concept of the Asiatic mode in terms of the theory of modes of production he develops in Capital."[2] In any case, the debate around the thesis of the AMP, its theoretical validity and empirical relevance, does not show any sign of abatement. A good deal of literature has in fact developed in this area. A characteristic feature of this new proliferation of the literature concerns the growing opposition to the thesis of the AMP from both theoretical and empirical standpoints. Many have rejected the whole thesis on the ground that the socioeconomic formation of India, i.e. the pre-capitalist social and economic structure of India, did not differ sufficiently from that of Europe to warrant a special designation.[3] Others have associated the thesis of the AMP with the existence of centralized bureau-

cracies providing vital irrigation works in arid regions, and maintaining full control over "hydraulic societies."[4] A fairly good assessment has been made by a famous Marxist economic historian in the following words:

> Of the various stages of historical development listed by Marx in the Preface to The Critique of Political Economy--the 'Asiatic, ancient, the feudal and the modern bourgeois' modes of production, the feudal and the capitalist have been accepted without serious question, while the existence, or the universality of the other two has been queried or denied.[5]

In general, the recent debates on the thesis of the AMP centres between total rejection and qualified acceptance. In this context, I like to point out one major deficiency in the recent controversy over the thesis of the AMP. This concerns the fact that it remains distressingly true that no serious examination or full-scale study of Marx's thesis has ever been undertaken in relation to the social formation in India.[6] It is somewhat surprising to note that, while Marx focussed mainly and substantially on the Indian social formation, no systematic study has ever been undertaken to test the basic propositions of Marx's thesis both theoretically and especially empirically in terms of the data that are now immensely available. The proposed study aims at remedying this deficiency and thus seeks to critically assess Marx's views on India.

In brief my own issue which I seek to resolve is this: How far or to what extent can Marx's thesis on the Indian social formation be justified theoretically and

empirically on the basis of the data provided by historical evidence from the Indian social formation since her earliest times down to the first consolidation of the British rule in India in 1757?

THE SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION

The main burden of the first chapter is to focus on the different ingredients of Marx's thesis on India. These ingredients, which are linked to each other, are as follows:

(1) The absence of private property in land;

(2) The existence of the self-sufficient village communities characterized by an unity of agriculture and craft industry;

(3) The historic stagnation of the Indian social formation; and

(4) The Oriental despotism and the role of the Indian State.[7]

A parallel task in this chapter consists in revealing briefly how Marx, in formulating above-mentioned dimensions of his thesis, continues to pursue substantially the same European version of the Indian social formation.

In the second chapter I take the issue of the private property in land. It is not clear whether Marx referred specifically to the ancient or medieval period of the Indian social formation.[8] In any case, it seems evident, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, that he referred in all probability to the pre-colonial or pre-capitalist Indian

social formation from her remotest antiquity. Therefore, on the basis of this assumption, I intend to focus on the issue of the private landed property since India's remotest antiquity. In this context I would also focus the nature of the feudal mode of production as it developed in India.

In the third chapter, "The Village Economy and the Stagnation of the Indian Social Formation", I review critically the village community system as it developed and disintegrated in course of historical movements of the Indian social formation. While pursuing this theme, I also intend to point to the dynamism of the Indian social formation and her history contrary to what Marx knew and said. An attempt will be made to locate the origin of the dominant social classes, the existence of the antagonistic class interests and the division of labour including the growing opposition between town and country in India.

Finally, the purpose of the last chapter, "The State in the Indian Social Formation", is to prove that Marx's ideas on the nature and role of the state in India are both inadequate and simplistic. On the basis of the data available it can be shown that from her earliest times India's political and ideological institutions were far more complex, elaborate and developed, which cannot be covered in the assumptions of the despotic role of the state, of the royal ownership of the private property, or of the state's role as provider of public works. A secondary task will consist in situating the complex political system vis a vis the

formation of social classes and antagonism between them.

The conclusion will emphasize the above-mentioned issues, as made out to be the scope of the different chapters in this dissertation. To anticipate my own conclusion, which follows as a result of my investigation, it can be said that Marx's thesis on the AMP is both theoretically and empirically insufficient and misleading as a means of explaining the pre-capitalist social formation of India.

A NOTE ON THE INTERPRETATIONS OF PRE-BRITISH INDIAN HISTORY: A SURVEY OF TRENDS

The dominant interpretation regarding the Indian social formation and her history to the world in the 18th and 19th centuries was produced by the European scholars. Their particular historical writings were in general agreement with the dominant ideological attitudes that prevailed in Europe at that time. It is no doubt substantially different from any account of the indegeneous scholars who undertook extensive and intensive research in the twentieth century.[9] The first beginning of a different interpretation of the Indian social formation and her history could be traced back to the decades of the 1920s and 1930s. The first intellectual rebellion occurred within the discipline of History, as of course could be expected. Historians like R.C. Mazumdar, K.P. Jayaswal, H.C. Raychaundhuri, B.K. Sarkar, U.N. Ghosal etc. strongly contested the notions of Oriental despotism,

stagnating India, absence of private property in land etc.[10] This group of historians took a fresh look at the sources and raised serious controversies about many familiar notions including those already mentioned. Some of the conclusions that emerged from these studies may briefly be indicated here.

(1) A thorough investigation of the original Hindu literature, the law books and different inscriptions has led the investigators to conclude that the concept of despotic monarchy does not at all provide a satisfactory account of the actual sociohistorical reality of the Indian social formation. On the point of the concept of despotism the following statement is an indication of the trend of contemporary investigation:

> It is already clear, at any rate, that the nineteenth century generalization about the Orient as the land exclusively of despotism, and as the only home of despotism, must be abandoned by students of political science and sociology. It is high time, therefore, that comparative politics, so far as the parallel study of Asian and Eur.-American institutions and theories is considered, should be rescued from the elementary and, in many instances, unfair notions prevalent since the days of Maine and Max Muller, first, by a more intensive study of the Orient, and secondly, by a more honest presentation of occidental laws and constitutions, from Lycurgus and Solon to Frederick the Great and the successors of Louis XIV, that is, by a reform in the comparative method itself.[11]

(2) As far as the existence of the private property is concerned, the investigators were in general agreement that privately owned land was very much in existence in the pre-British Indian social formation.

(3) Studies were also undertaken for detailed study

of different regions and dynasties. In other words, the research focus became microsociological, concentrating intensively on a delimited objective. As a result, this helped to unfold the similarities and dissimilarities between different regions and dynasties at different times in the Indian social formation. The broad-based general conclusion of these studies is that the history of the Indian social formation was certainly dynamic and not stagnant.

But, at the same time, it remains true that the first generation of Indian social scientists did not provide any account of the class struggles or class contradictions in the pre-British Indian society. The first systematic study, remaining still unsurpassed and unrivalled, was provided by D.D. Kosambi in 1956. Needless to add, Kosambi's approach to revealing India's social reality was class theoretical. It was Kosambi who, in his attempt to provide for a Marxist basis of analysis for studying India, defined history as "the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production."[12] As far as the thesis of the AMP is concerned, Kosambi had the following to say:

> The adoption of Marx's thesis does not mean blind repetition of all his conclusions (and even less, those of the official, party-line Marxists) at all times. ... The really vexed question is what is meant by the Asiatic mode of production, never clearly defined by Marx. ... What Marx himself said about India cannot be taken as it stands.[13]

Kosambi, on his part, provided an excellent account of the development of class society in the pre-British or pre-

capitalist Indian society. His accounts have provided us with an invaluable critique of Marx's concept of self-sufficient village economy in India. His writings, in fact, gave the necessary impetus to study Indian society and history from a new perspective. It is only after late 1950s that serious studies on the economic and social history of India began. A detailed description of the results of these studies is inappropriate here although I have tried to utilize and incorporate those in my work at relevant places. It is, however, needless to mention many recent studies, especially the doctoral dissertations, have yet to be published. But those already published and available indicate adequately the main trends of research on the economic and social history of the Indian social formation. These trends indicating the leading focus of the recent researches can be summarized as follows:

(1) Assessment of the economic history of the pre-British Indian social formation including the analysis of the existence of private property and precise nature of land rights in different historical phases of Indian society.[14]

(2) Assessment of the nature of feudalism in India including analysis of the causes, development and decay of the specific type of feudal mode of production in India.[15]

(3) Assessment of the origin, nature, development and disintegration of the economies of Indian villages.[16]

(4) Formulations of the theories of Kingship, nature and obligations etc; analysis of the relations of the

king with the feudal lords, army and bureaucracy etc.[17]

(5) Descriptions of the existence of the different social classes and class contradictions in pre-British Indian social formation.[18]

Although all these studies generally cover the issues in the thesis of the AMP, the majority of them do not deal with it (i.e. AMP) directly. Again, no one has so far provided any full-scale re-evaluation of the AMP on the basis of the recent data. Further, none of the works that have so far appeared covers the pre-British Indian social formation in her entire historical continuity. The focus of all these writings is fragmentary in the sense that each of the works focuses on a specific region or on specific time period. In this context, the focus of my own study is on the pre-British or pre-capitalist Indian social formation in its totality. Naturally, in my work I have tried to incorporate and integrate the results of the recent studies. It must, however, be pointed out that most of the recent studies do not confirm Marx's views on India. The basic trend of these recent studies can be indicated in the following words of Habib:

> During the sixties we have witnessed the curious phenomenon that in spite of the general inability of Asian Marxist scholars to recognize the existence of Oriental Despotism, the Asiatic Mode of production, etc., certain Marxists of West European countries have been insisting that they know better and have 'reopened' the debate on the subject among themselves.[19]

LIMITATIONS OF THE WORK

In delineating the contours and the content of Marx's thesis of the Asiatic Mode of Production I have chosen to cover Marx up to Capital (1867). In the last years of his life (i.e. 1880-1883) Marx critically reviewed the works of Morgan, Maine, Phear and Lubbock and renewed his interest in the AMP. These studies, especially those of Maine and Phear, contained valuable analyses on Oriental societies including India. But I have excluded Marx's ethnological notes from the scope of my thesis. My decision, involving some amount of personal preference and understanding, is based on the following reasons:

(1) Although both Maine and Phear had some information regarding the pre-British Indian social formation, there main emphasis was on British India. As Krader informs us:

> Phear was well informed on rural India during the nineteenth century particularly in regard to deltaic Bengal, but save for a few ancient documents which he had interpreted for him he was not well informed about India prior to the Muslim conquest...[20]

As far as Maine's writings are concerned, it should be noted that he, like Marx, received important information from the British administrators employed by the British government in India.[21]

(2) As already indicated, it is extremely difficult to get any specific idea as to the specific or exact time period on which Marx focussed. This difficulty appears also

in his ethnological notes where he gave a somewhat different picture of the Indian social formation. The constraints of time and money involved in detailed investigations of Marx's ethnological writings so that I can have a more considered judgement has led me to keep aside those ethnological writings from the purview of this dissertation.

Last but not least, I must point out that my work remains far from being a complete and definitive study by itself. My own focus has been on the empirical (i.e. concrete) aspects of the Indian social formation. Recent theoretical controversies on the AMP have not been covered. Further, the data for this work have been mainly collected through available library sources. Because of time and money constraints I have not been able to collect many other important materials which might have otherwise influenced my investigation. I urge my readers to consider this dissertation as a necessary preliminary work which I want to pursue more intensively in the near future.

NOTES

1. Hereafter, the Asiatic mode of production will be abbreviated as AMP.

2. John G. Taylor, From Modernization to Modes of Production (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 179.

3. For the important debate between Marx and Kovalevsky regarding the existence of the feudal mode in India see, L. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1975), pp. 190-213; see also E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 57-9.

4. Cf. K.A. Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

5. E. Hobsbawm, "From Feudalism to Capitalism", R. Hilton et al (eds.), The Transition From Feudalism to Capitalism (London: Verso, 1978), p. 159.

6. Although a good number of studies exist and also cover certain aspects of the AMP, there has been so far no work that deals with the empirical validity of the AMP in the pre-British Indian social formation.

7. These four ingredients of the AMP are presented not in any order of preference. In terms of any analysis of the AMP, each of them is as important as any other of them.

8. According to the historians, the Indian History is generally periodized into the following time-scales: Ancient period--c. 3000 B.C. - c. 600 A.D. and Medieval period--c. 601 A.D. - c. 1600 A.D.

9. For detailed discussion of the writings of the European scholars on the AMP, see Romila Thaper, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", History and Theory, Vol. 7 (1968), pp. 318-35; Marian Sawer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 4-39; and Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 19-79.

10. See B. K. Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, The Sacred Book of the Hindus, Vol. XXV, Book II (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1974); R. C. Majumdar, Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banrasidass, 1964); U. N. Ghosal, The Agrarian System

of Ancient India (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1930) and Contributions to the Hindu Revenue System (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1972); K. P. Jayaswal, Hindu Polity (Bangalore city: Bangalore Printing & Publishing, 1967).

11. Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, p. 62.

12. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (Bombay: Popular Prakasan, 1956), p. 1.

13. Ibid., p. 10.

14. See Ghosal, The Agrarian System of Ancient India; Jayaswal, Hindu Polity; Pran Nath, A Study of the Economic Condition of Ancient India (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1929); D.C. Sircar (ed.), Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966); B.R. Grover, "The Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1963), pp. 1-23; S. Nurul Hasan, "The Position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1964), pp. 107-19; I. Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963); and N. A. Siddiqi, Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1970).

15. R. S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism c. 300 - 1200 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965) and "The Origins of Feudalism in India", Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 1. Part III, n.d., pp. 297-328; K.K. Gopal, "Feudal Composition of the Army in Early Medieval India", Journal of Andhra Research Society, Vol. 28, Parts 3 & 4 (1962-63), pp. 30-49; Sircar (ed.), Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India; R. C. Choudhary, "Visti in Ancient India", Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. 38 (1962), pp. 44-59.

16. D. D. Kosambi, Ancient India: A History of its Culture and Civilization (New York: Pantheon, 1965) and An Introduction to the Study of Indian History; R. S. Sharma, Sudras in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1958); G. L. Adhya, Early Indian Economics (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966); K. M. Ashraf, Life and Conditions of the People of Hindostan (New Delhi: Munshiram Monoharlal, 1970); S. Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India during the Seventeenth Century", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 3 (1966), pp. 321-31; I. Habib, Usury in Medieval India", Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 6 (1963), pp. 393-419 and "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal

India", Journal of Economic History, Vol. 29 (1967), pp. 32-78; D. C. Sircar (ed.), Early Indian Trade and Industry (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1972).

17. K. P. Jayaswal, Manu and Yajnavalkya (Calcutta: Butterworth, 1930); Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology; K. M. Panikkar, Origin and Evolution of Kingship in India (Baroda: Baroda State Press, 1938); B. A. Saletore, Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963); P. Saran, The Provincial Government of the Mughals 1526-1658 (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973); Beni Prasad, The State in Ancient India (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1974); R. S. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1968).

18. A. S. Altekar, State and Government in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1962); S. C. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1978); P.C. Jain, Labour in Ancient India (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1971); Shireen Moosvi, "The Zamindar's Share in the Peasant Surplus in the Mughal Empire--Evidence of the Ain-i-Akbari Statistics", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 15 (1978), pp. 359-74; W.C. Smith, "Lower Class Uprisings in the Mughal Empire", Islamic Culture, Vol. 20 (1946), pp. 21-39 and "The Mughal Empire and the Middle Class", in ibid., Vol. 18 (1944), pp. 349-63.

19. I. Habib, "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", in M. Kurian (ed.), Indian--State and Society (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1975), p. 23.

20. Krader, The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1972), p. 32.

21. The information Marx received from British administrators and other officers were, says rightly Thaper, "not only scanty but also not altogether reliable, since many of the administrators had preconceived ideas about the Indian past based on the writings of James Mill, Richard Jones, and others which were prescribed texts at Haileybury College and other such institutions where these administrators were trained". See R. Thaper, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", p. 323. In this connexion it is worthwhile to take note of some important theorists who were in one way or another connected with the British rule in India. Generally all the British civil servants were thoroughly under the impact of Adam Smith's economic ideas. At one time, Smith

was about to be sent (Smith being willing to go) to India to investigate certain administrative malpractices. Ricardo was a shareholder of the East India Company. Malthus and Jones were in the employment of the Company to teach civil servants at Haileybury College. James Mill and John Stuart Mill were examiner and chief examiner respectively in employment of the Company. These examples could be multiplied. For well documented description, see S. Ambirajan, Classical Political Economy and British Policy in India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 2-5.

CHAPTER ONE

Marx and the Asiatic Mode of Production

The genesis of the AMP, which received most articulate crystallization in the hands of Marx, can be traced to the earliest surviving accounts of India in Western literature. As a matter of fact it may very well be argued that the AMP is only a sophisticated version of what European philosophers, political scientists, economists, travellers and missionaries already said of India earlier.[1] Their accounts, by skillful formulation in the master hands of Marx, became what we call the Asiatic mode of production.

Like his predecessors, Marx centered his discussion around the following features of Oriental societies including India. These are the generalized propositions of the AMP.

(1) The Indian social formation is characterized by the absence of private property in land;

(2) The Indian social formation consists of self-sustaining village communities whose internal cohesion is maintained by a unity of agriculture and craft industry;

(3) This unity of agriculture and manufacture provided the conditions for production and reproduction within the village itself. In turn, this provided great stability and also became a negative factor for causing stagnation of the Indian social formation. This was

said to be true in spite of numerous invasions from outside of India in different centuries;

(4) Finally, because of the absence of the private landed property in India the revenue collectors, unlike the landlords in European feudal societies, were not co-sharers of political power of the state. This altogether with the self-sufficiency of the village communities, based on a system of economic production on the basis of unity of agriculture and manufacture, laid solid foundation for Oriental Despotism.[2]

Before I take up the specific propositions into which the thesis of the AMP can be broken down, as already indicated in the above, another point must be mentioned. Originally, Marx expressed his views on India as a journalist. Many of his writings were published in the New York Daily Tribune. However, he took up the thesis in his theoretical works such as Grundrisse and Capital. The point which needs attention, I think, is that Marx substantially and basically struck to thesis of the AMP as he originally formulated it. What I intend to emphasise is the fact that, despite certain occasional changes in emphasis on certain aspects of the thesis, Marx remained significantly loyal to his basic propositions (up to Capital). His forst pronouncement on the existence of the AMP was made in the Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859). Here he specifies in a very clear and unambiguous language the different stages of the productive development of social formations.

> In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society.[3]

With this let me pass on to the specific arguments in each of the propositions that as a whole define the Asiatic mode of production in the Marxist literature.

THE ABSENCE OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

Marx was convinced by, among others, Bernier's (1620-1685/88?) account of the uniqueness of the Indian society. This uniqueness consists in the absence of private property or individual's proprietary right over land. In his book Travels in the Mogul Empire, Bernier mentions the practice of the occasional land grants by the king who is designated as "proprietor" of the land and who does not surrender his proprietary rights over the lands granted by him. The relevant passages are cited:

> It should also be borne in mind, that the Great Mogol constitutes himself heir of all the Omrahs, or lords, and likewise of the Mansabdars, or inferior lords, who are in his pay; and what is the utmost importance, that he is proprietor of every acre of land in the kingdom, excepting, perhaps, some houses and gardens which he sometimes permits his subjects to buy and sell, and otherwise dispose of, among themselves. ... the king, as proprietor of the land, makes over a certain quantity to military men, as an equivalent for their pay; and this grant is called jah-gir, or, as in Turkey, timar; the word jah-gir signifying the spot from which to draw, or the place of salary. Similar grants are made to governors, in lieu of their salary; and also for the support of their troops, on condition that they pay a certain sum annually to the king out of any surplus revenue that the land may yield. The lands not so granted are retained by the king as peculiar domains of his house, and are seldom, if ever, given in the way

> of jah-gir; and upon these domains he keeps contractors, who are also bound to pay him an annual rent.[4]

Marx himself acknowledges, in a letter dated June 2, 1853, that the description of Bernier provides a key to the land tenure system in India. Another point is that Bernier was referring to the Mogul period (1526-1757) only, without mentioning the land system of pre-mughal era. Thus Marx wrote,

> Bernier correctly discovers the basic form of all phenomena in the East - he refers to Turkey, Persia, Hindostan - to be the absence of private property in land. This is the real key even to the Oriental heaven.5

Elsewhere Marx also refers, again in a letter in 1858, to the pre-Mughal, particularly to the Hindu period in somewhat descriptive manner.

> A more thorough study of the institutions of Hindostan, together with the inconveniences, both social and political, resulting from the Bengal settlement, has given currency to the opinion that by the original Hindoo institutions, the property of the land was in the village corporations, in which resided the power of alloting it out to individuals for cultivation while the Zamindars and talookdars were in their origin nothing but officers of the Government, appointed to look after, to collect, and to pay over to the prince the assessment due from the village.[6]

As a matter of fact, by 1858 Marx developed the AMP model of the Indian social formation.

For example, the same thesis continues to pervade his most widely read texts such as Grundrisse and Capital. In the Grundrisse he says whenever property exists in the Oriental form it exists "only as communal property, there the individual member is as much only possessor of a parti-

cular part, hereditary or not, since any fraction of the property belongs to no member for himself, but to him only as immediate member of the commune, i.e. as in direct unity with it, not in distinction to it. This individual is thus only a possessor. What exists is only communal property, and only private possession."[7]

As now evident, the question of difference between ownership and possession takes on an importance and has become a very crucial issue. This distinction between ownership i.e. proprietorship, and possession i.e. occupancy, was already well developed in Jones' An Introductory Lecture on Political Economy. As Krader reports, it found its place in Hegel as well as in Marx.[8] Ownership implies, generally in a comprehensive sense, a relation between a person and a right vested in him. Ownership is the expression of the right over a thing but not the relation between person and the thing itself. When an individual owns a piece of land, in truth he owns a particular kind of right or what may be called proprietary right with respect to that land. The concept of property, it is to be noted, is a right but not "a thing; a right in the sense of an enforceable claim to some use or benefit of something."[9] Now a person owns his right over a land actually possessing it, or there can be ownership without possession which may be vested in another. As far as Marx is concerned, the state is the owner of all lands, while the individual or the family is only the possessor. The state is the real and legal owner of all

lands in the sense that it could control and regulate land to given uses and so dispose of the products obtained therefrom. That is to say, it gives the state the power to receive from direct producers the produce of their surplus labour. Similarly, the individuals are only possessors who, by virtue of their occupation of the land, have the capacity to put the land into use or cultivation. Naturally, the individual could not, because of his lack of ownership or proprietary right, transfer his land by any means in any form, i.e. gift, purchase, sale or mortgage, nor is he able to appropriate to himself his portion of the product which he produces in common with others. Further, as Marx thinks, the soil was not a prized object, in India, for the individual as was the case in Europe.[10]

In Capital Marx in an unambiguous manner attributes ownership to the state. He points out that,

> The state is then the supreme lord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a natural scale. But, on the other hand, no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land.[11]

Therefore, the state is regarded by Marx as a higher unity and stands to the direct cultivators as their landowner and sovereign. This is why rent and tax coincide.[12]

The notion that in the Orient there is no private property rights had long been implicit in Western thinking about the Oriental societies. The acceptance of this idea of non-existence of private property was in vogue "since

classical Greece, for example, in the Greeks' description of the claims of the Persian kings to absolute lordship over land and water."[13] With the exception of one part of India, the hill-country south of Crishna, where property in land seems to have existed, Marx goes on to echo the same theme of non-ownership by writing that "in any case it seems to have been the Mohammedans who first established the principle of "no property in land" throughout the whole of Asia."[14] From the days of Aristotle and Herodotus onwards, the theme of absence of private property remained a set fashion among most Western sholars, although it is now certain that it was Megasthenes who first specifically pointed to the non-existence of private property in India. In this context, let me quote from Richard Jones, who remains one of the bearers of the influences of the British political economy on Marx.

> Throughout Asia, the sovereigns have never been in the possession of an exclusive title to the soil of their dominions, and they have preserved that title in a state of singular and inauspicious integrity, undivided, as well as unimpaired. The people are there universally the tenants of the sovereign, who is the sole proprietor; usurpations of his officers alone occasionally break the links of the chain of dependence for a time. It is thus universal dependence on the throne for the means of supporting life, which is the real foundation of the unbroken despotism of the Eastern world, as it is of the revenue of the sovereigns, and of the form which society assumes beneath their feet.[15]

While the absence of private property in land is responsible, among other reasons, for the AMP and a consequent stagnation of the Indian society, European societies

passed through three successive stages - ancient, feudal and bourgeois of productive development. But the question is, in the words of Engels, "how does it come about that the Orientals did not arrive at landed property, even in its feudal form?"[16] Engels' answer is as follows:

> I think it is mainly due to the climate, taken in connection with the nature of the soil, especially with the great stretches of the desert which extend from the Sahara straight across Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary up to the highest Asiatic plateau. Artificial irrigation is here the first condition of agriculture and this a matter either for the communes, the province or the central government.[17]

As far as Marx is concerned, he also mentions the point of irrigation works undertaken by the state in India. The absence of private or voluntary associations in India and, at the same time, the necessity of an economical and common use of water involved the central government in the function of providing public works.[18] Elsewhere, in the Grundrisse, he again mentions the importance of the role of the irrigation works by the state. As he says, "The communal conditions of real appropriation through labour, aqueducts, very important among the Asiatic peoples, means of communication etc. then appear as the work of the higher unity - of the despotic regime hovering over the little communes."[19] In this connection, it should be remembered that Marx in his latter years, especially in Capital, showed a declining interest in the role of the state in irrigation works. Finally, he concludes that private property, the great desideratum of

Asiatic society, was only introduced by the British.[20] This only confirms that prior to the British intervention, in India private property - legal or otherwise - was non-existent.

THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY

An important correlate proposition of the AMP, which goes along with the non-existence of private property, depicts the Indian social formation as consisting of numerous village communities. They constitute the social basis of what has been called Oriental despotism.

The nature of economic production is dependent upon what individuals produced in these village communities. That is to say, the nature of economic production carried out by the members of the village communities reflects the nature of the economic production in the Indian social formation. In turn, it provides a clue to the stagnation or dynamism of the Indian social formation. The village communities are characterised by, for Marx and many others, a viable and inextricable unity of agriculture and handicrafts. This unique combination of agriculture and handicrafts provides the village communities with self-sufficiency, necessary for all conditions of reproduction and surplus production. They are locked within their independent organisation and distinct life.

A few words may be said with regard to the industry i.e. handicrafts, in the village communities. Here, one

finds a simple division of labour rather than, as in a capitalist mode or production, the manufacturing division of labour or division of labour in detail. In a manufacturing division of labour, the process involved in making a product are broken down into several operations and these operations are performed by several workers. In a capitalist social formation, the division of labour is geared to high levels of skill and specialisation in work operations. They are detailed according to the needs of the capitalist production. In contrast, the social division of labour, the one that existed in the village communities of India, presents a different picture. In the social division of labour, the individuals may remain connected in the making of certain products, but this does not involve separate operations in making each product. This kind of division of labour divides the social formation into several operations but does not stand in the way of the development of human capabilities. This social division of labour derives from the specific character of human work. "The spider weaves, the bear fishes, the beaver builds dams and houses, but the human is simultaneously weaver, fisherman, buikder, and a thousand other things combined in a manner which, because this takes place in, and is probably only through, society, soon compels a social division according to craft."[21]

Marx describes most brilliantly the features of these village communities as also the particular types of economic production in them. To quote from Capital

> Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which continued to this day, are based on possession in common of the land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on an unalterable division of labour, which serves, whenever a new community is started, as a plan and scheme ready cut and dried. Occupying areas of from 100 up to several thousand acres, each forms a compact whole producing all it requires. The chief part of the products is destined for direct use by the community itself, and does not take the form of a commodity. Hence, production here is independent of that division of labour brought about, in Indian society as a whole, by means of the exchange of commodities, and a portion of even that, not until it has reached the hands of the State, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of these products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind.[22]

These village communities, of course, vary from place to place in India. But, in the simplest of them, the land is tilled in common and the produce divided, probably equally, among the members. The village community is characterised by a distinct social division of labour. Along with this common tillage of land and equitable distribution of the produce,

> ...spinning and weaving are carried on in each family as subsidiary industries. Side by side with the masses thus occupied with one and the same work, we find the "chief inhabitant", who is judge, police, and tax-gatherer in one; the book-keeper, who keeps the accounts of the tillage and registers everything relating thereto; another official, who prosecutes criminals, protects strangers travelling through and escorts them to the next village; ... the Brahmin who conducts the religious services; ... a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair all the agricultural implements; the potter, who makes all the pottery of the village; ... The whole mechanism discloses a systematic division of labour; but a division like that

> in manufacture is impossible, ... The law that regulates the division of labour in the community acts with the irresistible authority of a law of Nature, at the same time that each individual artificer, the smith, the carpenter, and so on, conducts in his workshop all the operations of his handicraft in the traditional way, but independently, without recognising any authority by over him.[23]

Such, as in the above, was the social division of labour in the economic formation of the Indian society.

In his own account of India Marx was influenced by the Official Report (5th) of the British House of Commons on Indian Affairs, as he was by many others including Henry Maine and John Budd Phear.[24] In this context, another point can be made concerning the question of ownership and possession in relation to the state and village communities. While the individual is never a proprietor or owner of the land, the community is the hereditary owner and the state, as a higher unity, the proprietor. The state appears as a "comprehensive unity" standing above the little village communities. The comprehensive unity which characterises the state and thus separates it from the real village communities is the unity of higher or sole proprietor over all lands. This unity is realized in the form of the despot,[25] and also entitles the state to any surplus produce beyond what is necessary for reproduction of the village communities and their corresponding economic formations.

> The surplus product - which is, incidentally, determined by law in the consequence of the real appropriation through labour - thereby automatically belongs to this highest unity.

> Amidst oriental despotism and propertyleness which seems legally to exist there, this clan or communal property exists in fact as the foundation, created mostly by a combination of manufactures and agriculture within the small commune, which thus becomes altogether self-sustaining, and contains all the conditions of reproduction and surplus production within itself. A part of their surplus labour belongs to the higher community, which exists ultimately as a person, and this surplus labour takes the form of tribute etc., as well as of common labour for the exaltation of the unity, partly of the real despot, partly of the imagined clan-being, the god.[26]

THE STAGNATION OF INDIAN SOCIAL FORMATION AND ITS HISTORY

The third proposition that the Indian social formation and its history was stagnant, logically derives, I think, form the picture Marx portrays of the village communities in India. More specifically, the self-sufficiency, rooted in the unity of agriculture and handicrafts, of the village communities created static conditions. India's basic economic structure remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity, until the first decade of the nineteenth century.[27]

Let me now go into some details of the cause of the stagnation. In the first place, Marx states that in India the village communites were so cut off from each other and the outside world that prospect of change or progress was remote. The British introduced the railways, which, among other things, provided factually a boost in the further development of productive forces, accelerated industrialization, and helped develop Coal industry, engineering firms

(e.g. Jessop, Burn etc.) or Steel industry (e.g. Tatas) in India. But until then,

> The village isolation produced the absence of roads in India, and the absence of roads perpetuated the village isolation. On this plan a community existed with a given scale of low conveniences, almost without intercourse with other villages, without the desires and efforts indispensable to social advance. The British have broken up this self-sufficient inertia of the villages, railways will provide the new want of communication and intercourse.[28]

These village communities, which provide impetus to the continuation of stagnation and despotism in the Indian social formation, may be offensive in their appearance. But they have "restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies."[29]

A far more important factor of the stationariness in the Indian social formation lies in the mode (manner) of production in the economy of these village communities - the unity of agriculture and crafts. The lack of private property together with the existence of a centralised political superstructure - the state - in India are all related to the unity of agriculture and manufacturing crafts - the foundation of the village economy.

> The Asiatic form necessarily hangs on most tenaciously and for the longest time. This is due to its presupposition that the individual does not become independent vis-a-vis the commune; that there is a self-sustaining circle of production, unity of agriculture and manufactures, etc.[30]

The manner of production being essentially a simple reproduction of the village communities and based on an impenetrable unity of agriculture and crafts the village communities with their inherent self-sufficiency survives stubbornly. Beneath the veneer of apparent dissolutions and reconstructions of Asiatic states, or unceasing changes of dynasties, one confronts a social formation that remains after all stagnant.

> The simplicity of the organisation for production in these self-sufficing communities that constantly reproduce themselves in the same form, and when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the spot and with the same name - this simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic states, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic states, and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure of the economic elements of remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky.[31]

The unbreakable unity of agriculture and handicrafts, providing the solid foundation of a typical mode of production and resting on a limited social division of labour, proved to be the most insurmountable barrier in the way of further evolution of the Indian economic formation. The stagnation that ensued as a result was further consolidated, in the third place, by a unique combination of a lack of exchange of commodities with the limited social division of labour in India. As a result of this unique combination, the opposition between city and country in India could not develop. Marx notes the basic opposition in this way: "The

foundation of every division of labour that is well developed, and brought about by the exchange of commodities, is the separation between town and country."[32] Thus the lack of antagonism between towns or cities on the one hand and the villages, on the other hand, signifies a further cause of stagnation in the Indian economic formation. In the Grundrisse, he writes:

> The history of classical antiquity is the history of cities, but of cities founded on landed property and on agriculture; Asiatic history is a kind of indifferent unity of town and countryside (the real large cities must be regarded here merely royal camps, as works of artifice ... erected over the economic construction proper); the Middle Ages (Germanic period) begins with land as the seat of history, whose further development then moves forward in the contradiction between town and countryside; the modern (age) is the urbanization of the countryside, not ruralization of the city as in antiquity.[33]

The main points which Marx seems to have emphasised are that in India antagonism between cities and villages was absent, that the cities were only royal camps or places of administration, that industries in the cities may have produced goods for the bureaucracy of the king and that the cities moved whenever the king moved. Further, in the cities in India there was less political struggle between the king and the so-called those subordinate royal officials with whom he moved.

The European cities present a contrast to those of India. The feudal princes encouraged the development of the cities because it was to their advantages. As their trade and business transaction grew, "the revenues from every

kind of toil and from the mints likewise flowed in increasing quantities into the lord's treasury."[34] In the course of time, the bourgeoisie emerged as great merchants in the towns. In the conflict between the king and the independent feudal lords, the bourgeoisie consolidated political power. The feudal lords grew weaker because of their loss of possessions in land and in serfs. In this process, the king became a strong ally of the towns.[35]

The cities in India presents a sharp contrast to those in the Occident. In India cities are less significant from the point of view of industrial production and industrial activity. Their existence was secondary to the importance of the village communities. A few cities arose mainly for the king and his household, the nobility, on the one hand, for the purpose of exporting on the other hand. The exports were confined to luxury items but were not of great quantity. The cities or the larger towns were sustained by the king, his army and court, while the prosperity and the population of these cities or the larger towns depended on those patrons, i.e. the king etc. In drawing this portrait of the cities in India Marx depended mainly on Bernier, who, in discussing the size of king's army, says the following:

> ... This will not deemed an extravagant computation, if we bear in mind the immense quantity of tents, kitchen, baggage, furniture, and even women, usually attendant on the army. For the conveyance of all these again required many elephants, camels, oxen, horses, and porters. Your Lordship will bear in mind that, from the nature and government of this country, where the king is sole proprietor of all the land in

> the empire, a capital city, such as Dehly or Agra, derives its chief support from the presence of the army, and that the population is reduced to the necessity of following the Mogol whenever he undertakes a journey of long continuance. Those cities resemble any place rather than Paris; they might more fitly be compared to a camp, if the lodgings and accomodations were not a little superior to those found in the tents of armies.[36]

Thus, while the unity of agriculture and handicrafts persisted in the village communities, the cities or towns of India had to offer little that is needed for further development of the economy and the division of labour in India. Rather the economic formation remained stationary from time immemorial. The individuals carried on the same way of life, followed the same trades, produced more or less the same goods, and maintained the same unity of agriculture and industry as their ancestors had done. The stagnation of the Indian social formation continued until

> ...English interference having placed the spinner in Lancashire and weaver in Bengal, or sweeping away both Hindoo spinner and weaver, dissolved these semi-barbarian, semi-civilised communities, by blowing up their economical basis, and thus produced the greatest, and, to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard in Asia.[37]

This social revolution consists in "the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia."[38]

Now, let me come to the final point in this section, that is, the absence of class contradictions and class struggles in the Indian social formation. It means that India has no history if the "the history of all hitherto

existing society is the history of class struggles."[39] This absence of class struggles and class contradictions in the Indian social formation would seem to follow generally when the economy and division of labour remained stagnant and when the contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production were absent.

> India ... could not escape the fate of being conquered, and the whole of her past history, if it be anything, is the history of the successive conquests she has undergone. Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society. The question, therefore, is not whether the English had a right to conquer India, but whether we are to prefer India conquered by the Turk, by the Persian, by the Russian, to India caonqured by the Briton.[40]

In neither Grundrisse nor Capital, does Marx make any reference to the existence or any possibility of existence of class struggles or class contradictions. All individuals in the village communities share the produce of their labour. The tribute, in the form of surplus, is the tribute for the king who represents a higher unity, the unity of the communities of all individuals. The state, personalized in the king or despot, is basically a state without having even arisen out of class antagonisms. The unity of the state above the self-sufficing village communities is a unity which is not characterised by any contradictions between classes. So, in brief, this state constitutes a variation, probably an extraordinary variation in the usual Marxist theory of the class state.

The state in the AMP is a state in which there are no antagonistic classes and, therefore, no politics.

The thesis of stagnation of the Indian social formation as a whole is, after all, not Marx's invention. In the Philosophy of History, Hegel articulates the theme of stagnation of the East.

> India, like China, is a phenomenon antique as well as modern; one which has remained stationary and fixed, and has received a most perfect home-sprung development. ... The spread of Indian culture is pre-historical, for History is limited to that which makes an essential epoch in the development of Spirit. On the whole, the diffusion of Indian culture is only a dumb, deedless expansion; that is, it presents no political action... the English, or rather the East India Company are the lords of the land; for it is necessary fate Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans; ...[41]

It is thus difficult to escape the conclusion that Marx, to borrow the words of Anderson, "remained substantially faithful to the classical European image of Asia which he had inherited from a long file of predecessors."[42]

ORIENTAL DESPOTISM AND THE STATE

The place which the political superstructure - the state - occupies in the thesis of the AMP is not very significant. By this, however, I do not imply that Marx did not realise the importance of the state in the Indian social formation. What is stressed is that the analysis of the state in the AMP does not occupy the same importance that it does in the capitalist social formation. From Marx's point of view, the comparative insignificance of the role of the

state in the Indian social formation is natural because the state, as I shall show later, has fewer functions to perform in view of the communal or republican way of life for the members in the village communities. Let me start with despotism.

The theme of so-called Oriental despotism is very old indeed. It has really a long history in the writings of European political scientists, economists, travellers or missionaries.[42] From list of readings that variously appear in Marx's notes and citations, it is only natural that the concept of Oriental despotism would certainly have influenced Marx. At the same time it is also apparent that this Oriental despotism which almost blinded many European thinkers definitely lost any remarkable significance in the mature Marx's writings.

In the formative period of Marx's intellectual formation, he harbored in his mind a picture of India (Asia) as ruled by a despot. In other words, he pictured a despotism in which the state was enslaved to the free will of the sovereign, in which there was a connection between secular and religious power and in which labour was expropriated by both secular and religious authorities.[43] This above conception of Indian (Asiatic) despotism is rooted dominantly in the writings of Herodotus, Montesquie and Hegel. In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the Law (1843), Marx's statement on Oriental despotism, in contrast to Western freedom, is as follows:

> Either the res publica is the actual private life and the actual content of the citizens, as was the case in Greece where the political state as such was the only true content of their life and will and a private man was a slave; or the political state is nothing but the private arbitrariness of a particular individual, as was in the case of Asiatic despotism, where the political slave like the material one, was a slave.[44]

In the background of this statement was the tradition, then dominant in Berlin especially of Marx's University days, of a conception that Europe was the center of democracy and Enlightenment.

It is only after 1850, when Marx arrived in London, that he began to study about the social formations of Asia. Prior to this, neither in The German Ideology nor in the Communist Manifesto was there any analysis on the Indian or other social formations of Asia. In all the sources which Marx read between 1850 and 1853,[45] the despotic character of the Indian state was mentioned.

The issue of despotism derives, among other things, principally from the lack of private ownership in India. Both Robert Patton in his The Principles of Asiatic Monarchies (1801) and Richard Jones in his An Essay on the Distribution of Wealth (1831) advanced the thesis that, because of the non-existence of a landed aristocracy as a political counterweight, the sovereign is absolutely unrestricted. To quote particularly from Jones:

> The proprietary rights of the sovereign, and his large and practically indefinite interests in the produce, prevent the formation of any really independent body on the land. ... There

> exists nothing therefore in the society beneath him, which can modify the power of a sovereign, who is the supreme proprietor of a territory cultivated by a population of ryot peasants. ... But the results of Asiatic despotism have never been the same: while it is strong it is delegated, and its power abused by its agents; when feeble and declining, the power is violently shared by its inferiors, and its stolen authority yet more abused.[46]

Although Marx, like Jones, no where makes any reference to factual abuse of political power by state officials, he with Jones and many others says that ownership belonged to the state and that, by implication therefrom, no privileged landed proprietors existed as contenders to political power in India. The result is despotism. Hence as Marx says, in the Grundrisse, that in the Indian social formation, in its Asiatic phase, "despotism and propertylessness" seems legally to exist; the foundation of this formation consisted of clan or communal property. In the relations of the direct producers to the natural conditions of labour i.e. land, the state as the higher community or ultimately existing as a despot intervenes. As such, it is entitled to a surplus product because the state is the owner of the land. Thus in the Asiatic or Indian social formation the state, i.e.

> ... the comprehensive unity standing above all these little communities appears as the higher proprietor or as the sole proprietor; the real communities ... hence only as hereditary possessors. Because the unity is the real proprietor and the real presupposition of communal property, it follows that this unity can appear as a particular entity above the many real particular communities ... a unity realized in the form of the despot, the father of many communities ...[47]

Leaving aside the Grundrisse, one can find that in Capital Marx does not explicity say, that the state is a higher community; possibly in later years Marx became aware of and also anticipated the breakdown of the self-sufficing village communities in India. The strong and centralized authority of the Mughal state attracted his attention. In Capital (vol. 1), he does of course refer to the village communities in describing their self-sufficiency as well as political and administrative functions. Regarding the state, he mentions that it receives, by virtue of customs from time immemorial, a portion of the surplus product in the shape of the rent in kind. He no longer mentions in Capital (vol. 1) that the real proprietor, proper, is the commune - hence property (exists) only as communal property in land", as he did in the Grundrisse.[48] Later on, in Capital (vol. 3), Marx directly states that the state is both the sovereign and the landlord or, what is the same thing to Marx, that in India sovereignty consists in landownership. Now, although it is impossible to exclude, in Marx's treatment of the AMP, the communal aspect of the state or the political organisation, it may nevertheless be contended that Marx's emphasis shifted directly from the community to the state itself. This means that Marx did attach much importance, contrary to any superficial reading, to the state and its crucial role as a legitimate authority in maintaining public order. But this importance is not the same as the capitalist state has in maintaining public order so that the social formation does not explode because of class contradictions. In any case,

instead of referring to real proprietorship of the community as in the Grundrisse, he says in Capital (vol. 3) that

> ... the state is then the supreme lord. Sovereignty here consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale ... no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land.[49]

The private individual producers in this more less natural production community, i.e. village community, are in no sense owners of land, or landlords. The state was the supreme lord to which the direct producers were in direct subordination. The state stood to the direct producers as their landlord. As the supreme lord, the sovereign, the state received taxes. As the landlord or owner of the land, it received the rent, the surplus product in the form of tribute. Rent and taxes coincided. The sovereignty or the state thus consisted in the landownership on a national scale. Whereas the private ownership in land existed side by side with the sovereignty of the pre-capitalist states in Europe, in India such phenomenon was non-existent.

What is the role of the state in the AMP. As already been pointed out, Marx at the beginning stressed the state's function in providing for public, mainly irrigation works.[50] He referred to the government department of public works, apart from departments of finance and plunder - all three encompassing the sphere of action of the government of the Indian state. The function of the state in providing for public works was important especially in view of its relation to the landlordship of the state. In the Grundrisse this

function of the state does not appear to be an all-exclusive treatment. But, even then, Marx continued to say that "aqueducts", along with the means of communication etc., were important functions of the state.[51] In Capital Marx did not refer to this at all. The role of the state in terms of its functions was reduced to nullity. He only stated that sovereignty coincided with landownership, the dpendence of the direct producers, the peasants, upon the state was not, or need not be, harsher politically or economically than that which entails common subjection to the state. It is thus perfectly clear in Marx's thesis of the AMP that the state was a weak political organisation. Its political authority was nothing more than that kind of legitimate, i.e. publicly recognised power, necessary to coerce all to its subjection. The state was far from a system of political domination of one class over another class. As such, it is evident, Marx seemed to emphasise the point of non-existence of class struggles and class contradictions which constitute the motive force of the development of social formations and their change.

My own analysis is based on Marx's emphasis on the political-administrative role of the village community in contradistinction to that of the state. To illustrate this, one can easily cite the Fifth Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, which inquired into East India Affairs in 1810, and the works of Campbell and James Mill. First of all, there is a very striking similarity between the Fifth

Report's description of the Indian village communities and Marx's exposition, if not complete endorsement, of that description in Capital (vol. 1). In the Fifth Report, the village community is defined as resembling "a corporation or township".[52] Marx seemed to endorse this in his article on "Land Tenure in India" (1958) in connection with his defense of state ownership of land.[53] The Fifth Report's description of the establishment of officers and servants in the village has a very striking parallel to Marx's description of the nature of social division of labour among the members of the village community in Capital.[54] The political and administrative functions of the self-sufficient and natural production communities are, among others, these: The Potail or chief inhabitant is judge, police and tax-gatherer. The Kurnum or the book-keeper keeps the account. The boundary man guards the limits of the village. All these figure in Marx's description of the social economy of the village community in Capital, strengthening the impression that the village community is politically and administratively the more important organisation than the state itself. However, by this I am not suggesting that the state was not a higher unity of all, the father of all communities.

Further, the following statement of Elphinstone in Campbell's Modern India, which Marx read, strengthens the assumption that the village community was more important for all practical purposes.

> Each township conducts its internal affairs. It levies on its members the revenue due to the state, and is collectively responsible for the payment in full amount. It manages its police, and is answerable for any property plundered within its limits. It administers justice to its own members, as far as punishing small offenses and deciding disputes in the first instance. It taxes itself to provide funds for its internal expenses, such as the repairs of the wall and temples, and the cost of public sacrifices and charities, as well as of some ceremonies and amusements on festivals.[55]

One further point is necessary to emphasise the above-mentioned description in Marx seems to pervade in all his references to the Indian social formation. There is no significant change in his schema except the point that the Zamindars and Talookdars (to be defined later) are officers of the government, appointed to collect revenue and to pay over to the prince the assessment due from the village.[56]

All this strengthens the point that village communities were more important politically and administratively than the state. This is also in conformity with the proposition of continued separation of the Indian social formation both politically and economically. It now remains to be seen how the elaborate and complicated state structure with huge establishments and thousands of officers overshadows the simple description of the village communities which were already in the process of disintegration in the Mughal period (1526 A.D. - 1757 A.D.).

NOTES

1. This point which definitely erodes much of Marx's originality in expounding the thesis of the AMP has been nicely illustrated by L. Krader in his The Asiatic Mode of Production (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1975), pp. 19-79; see especially his account of Hegel, R. Jones, Adam Smith and Bernier on Indian social formation.

2. See footnote No. 7 on page No. 12 in Introduction.

3. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 21.

4. F. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668. Revised edition by Archibald Constable (London: Archibald Constable, 1891), pp. 204, 224. Emphasis in original.

5. Karl Marx, "Marx to Engels" in S. Avineri (ed.), Marx on Colonialism & Modernization (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), p. 451. Emphasis in original.

6. Marx, "Land Tenure in India", June 7, 1858, in Ibid., p. 314.

7. Marx, Grundrisse, trans. with a foreward, Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vingage Books, 1973), p. 477. Emphasis in original.

8. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 70. It must be noted that as far as pre-capitalist social formations are concerned, Marx talks of ownership in a legal sense. Marx writes, "Oriental Despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property". See E. Hobsbawm, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 70. However, it may be pointed out that the distinction between real economic ownership and legal ownership is only relevant in the capitalist social formation.

9. C.B. Macpherson, "The Meaning of Property", in C.B. Macpherson (ed.), Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 3. For a succinct discussion of the concept of property see Ibid., pp. 1-13.

10. Cf. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 13-5, 202; also see Marx, Grundrisse, p. 477

11. Marx, Capital, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 791.

12. Ibid., p. 791; see also Marx, Grundrisse, p. 472.

13. M. Sawer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode Production (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), p. 6; see also A.T. Embree, "Oriental Despotism: A Note on the History of the Idea", Societas, vol. 1 (1971), pp. 255-69.

14. Marx, "Marx to Engels", in Avineri (ed.) op. cit., p. 457.

15. Richard Jones, An Essay on the Distribution of Wealth and the Sources of Taxation (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1964), pp. 7-8.

16. F. Engels, "Engels to Marx", in Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 451.

17. Ibid., pp. 451-2.

18. Marx, "The British Rule in India", in Ibid., p. 90.

19. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 473-4.

20. Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India", in Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 132.

21. H. Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), p. 72.

22. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 357.

23. Ibid., pp. 357-8.

24. For a readable summary of influences on Marx see particularly Norman Levine, "The Myth of Asiatic Restoration", Journal of Asiatic Studies, vol. 37 (1977), pp. 73-85; also see Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 62-7, 80-92.

25. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 473.

26. Ibid., p. 473. Emphasis in original.

27. Marx, "The British Rule in India", in Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 91.

28. Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule" in Ibid., p. 135. Emphasis in original.

29. Marx, "The British Rule in India", in Ibid., p. 94. Emphasis in original.

30. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 486.

31. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 358.

32. Ibid., p. 352.

33. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 479.

34. Henri Pierenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1937), p. 54.

35. Leo Huberman, Man's Worldly Goods (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), pp. 73-4.

36. F. Bernier, op. cit., p. 220. Emphasis in original. For Marx's acceptance of the same passage, see Marx, "Marx to Engels" in Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 450.

37. Marx, "The British Rule in India", in Ibid., p. 93. Emphasis in original.

38. Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India", in Ibid., p. 133.

39. Marx and Engels, The Marx and Engels Reader, ed. with an introduction by R. C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 335.

40. Marx, "The Future Results of British Rule in India", in S. Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 132.

41. G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), pp. 139, 142-3. For a critique of Hegel's views on India, see V.P. Varma, "Hegel's Philosophy of Indian History", Journal of Indian History, vol. 55 (1977), p. 71-79.

42. P. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State (London: NLB, 1977), p. 481.

42. For excellent discussion of the origin of the idea of Oriental Despotism, see particularly these following sources: Embree, op. cit., pp. 255-69; Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 19-79; Sawer, op. cit., pp. 4-30.

43. In this discussion, I depend mainly on N. Levine, op. cit., p. 74.

44. Marx, Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, eds. & trans. L. D. Easton and K.H. Guddat (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p. 177.

45. Levine reports that after 1853, there was a gap of 23 years before Marx again returns to the problem of Asia. See Levine, op. cit., p. 75.

46. Richard Jones, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

47. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 472-3. Emphasis in original.

48. Ibid., p. 484. Emphasis in original.

49. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 791.

50. Marx, "The British Rule in India", in S. Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 90.

51. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 474.

52. Quoted in James Mill, The History of British India, abridged edition by W. Thomas (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975), p. 126.

53. Marx, "Land Tenure in India", in S. Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 314.

54. See Marx, "The British Rule in India", in Ibid., pp. 357-8.

55. Quoted in G. Campbell, Modern India (London: John Murray, 1852), p. 85.

56. Marx, "Land Tenure in India", in S. Avineri (ed.), op. cit., p. 314.

A NOTE ON THE PERIODIZATION OF INDIAN HISTORY

So far, I have concentrated on the exposition of the four basic, but highly interrelated, propositions into which Marx's thesis of the AMP can be distinguished. As already stated, this has been done in order to assess the validity and adequacy of the AMP mainly in terms of available historical data so that a conclusion, at least tentative, can be formulated. However, before I proceed with the task of assessment, a few remarks are in order.

First, it has been already pointed out by the many writers such as Krader, Anderson, Hindess and Hirst, Levine, Thorner, Sawer and others that the theme of the AMP is saturated with the influence of the mainstream European intellectual perception of India. But there is also another side to the matter. For example, there is a tendency among many writers to sum up the social realities of the West in terms of the few shibboleths or catch words without taking into account many variations in the social formations of the West in various historical periods. Both approaches, I think, are obstacles to any social inquiry. In so far as the thesis of the AMP is concerned, it seems that it exposes a very generalised image of the economic, political and ideological institutions of the Indian social formation. For all practical purposes, he

takes the AMP to be continuing, until the British subjugation of India, since its remotest antiquity. The history of the Indian social formation is, as known to all, very complicated; most of the data, concerning India, became available only recently. Obviously, Marx had a handicap in the access to relevant data. Given this, I propose to examine the AMP in terms of certain historical phases of development of the Indian social formation. This serves two purposes. One, it helps to examine whether each of the propositions was valid in such phases. Two, when this is done, it enables us to assess whether the AMP thesis is generally valid.

I propose to focus mainly on the following historical phases.[1]

(1) The Vedic period: c. 3000 B.C. - c. 600 B.C.
   (a) The Early Vedic period: c. 3000 B.C. - c. 1000 B.C.
   (b) The Later Vedic period: c. 1000 B.C. - c. 600 B.C.
(2) Maurya and Post-Maurya period: c. 400 B.C. - c. 200 A.D.
(3) Gupta period: c. 300 A.D. - c. 600 A.D.
(4) Post-Gupta period: c. 600 A.D. - c. 1200 A.D.
(5) Sultanate period: c. 1200 A.D. - c. 1526 A.D.
(6) Mughal period: c. 1526 A.D. - c. 1757 A.D.

The first four periods are generally referred to as the Hindu period in most books on Indian history. The last two

periods covers Mohammedan rule in India. The purpose of this periodization is to relate the data to specific historical period in the Indian social formation. For example, when we refer to the feudal mode of production or feudalism in Europe, we generally refer to a particular mode of production or particular type of society in European history in the period broadly between c. 800 A.D. to c. 1400 A.D.

NOTES

1. The periodization is based on these sources: R.C. Majumder, Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1952); R.C. Majumder, H.C. Raychaudhuri, K. Datta, An Advanced History of India (London: Macmillan, 1960).

CHAPTER TWO

The Private Property in Land

The dispute around the private individual ownership of landed property is very old indeed. The issue is at bottom related to the particular understanding or perception of the political and ideological (religious) institutions of India by the Euro-centered political philosophers, economists, travellers, officials etc. This has led Sarkar to say that

> ... for all practical purposes, Manu Samhita is the only book in terms of which India was interpreted by the political philosophers, sociologists of the last century. Even the politics of the Mahabharata, although almost exhaustively studied by Hopkins as early as 1889, failed to produce any impression on the scholastic tradition. And uptil now the statement of Manu that the king is 'a god in human form' has been stock-in-trade of every Orientalists who has tried to envisage Hindu political attainments.[1]

The only purpose, indicating coincidence of sovereignty with ownership in land, that is often quoted actually refers to "protection" and not ownership. According to Jayaswal,

> "Buhler and others have given in the value of 'lordship' in utter disregard of the express text and the commentators' exposition. A correct appreciation of the Hindu theory of taxation would leave no room for doubt as to the impossibility of a theory of sovereign's proprietary right in land. The king gets a sixth and other shares of commodities not as 'royalty', not because it grows out of the land in the kingdom, but because it is produced under the protection offered by him. Manufactures and commodities brought from outside also give 'shares'.[2]

With these preliminary remarks, let me point out that

the dispute over the individual ownership of land goes back to the Vedic period.[3] The argument of those who dispute the private ownership of individuals may first be stated as follows:

This school, favoring royal ownership in some way or other, maintains that the sovereign is the absolute proprietor of the soil. The cultivator is obliged by law to pay whatever is demanded of him. Non-cultivators also do not own the land. The proponents of this school however concede that, notwithstanding the proprietary right in the soil possessed by the sovereign, the cultivators had and did enjoy certain privileges. R.K. Mukherjee states that tenure by a family was more frequent in the Vedic period. Even the responsibility for the payment of the state's revenue was not an individual responsibility but the collective responsibility of the community. "The fiscal system of the Mohammadan conquerors encouraged the original joint administration developed from undeveloped clan responsibility."[4] This school does not conceive the individual to be the owner of landed property. A notable feature of the argument of this school is that the sovereign or the king did not evict the individual producer from his land. The reason is that as absolute proprietor of the land, the king or the state had no such necessity as long as the producer continues to hand over the produce of his surplus labour.

Let me now concentrate on the historical data concerning individual ownership of land. Recent research proves

that the Vedic literature, when it says many things on many matters, does not contain any categorical statement which confers ownership on the king, the state or the community. Bandyopadhyaya states that "The Rig-Vedic evidence shows that as guardian of his people he (the king) could claim his tribute only ... from his subjects. Nothing more is said of his being the owner of the soil."[5] In order to pursue this issue, one needs to refer to the different Vedas and other books (viz. Smrties, Samhita, Mimamsa etc.) that prescribed rules of social life for all individuals including the sovereign or the king. The Samhita prescribes among the Indo-Aryans, the earliest people in India, that arable land was definitely owned by private individuals or by families whereas the communal ownership was confined to grass lands. In the Satpatha Brahmana, the king was able to deal with the public lands only by the sanction of the tribal assembly. In the Smrtis the distinction between ownership and possession was clearly developed. Both Brhaspati and Yajnavalkya opined that possession, backed by a legitimate title i.e. ownership, constitutes proprietary right. According to Narada, a man who enjoys property for a hundred years without title is a thief. An interesting point is that there were elaborate rules and regulations to settle disputes concerning land, claims over land or shares, boundaries etc. There was even the provision of prescriptive ownership, i.e. ripening of possession into ownership after a lapse of a certain period ranging from 10 to 60 years. In Smrtis and

Arthasastra one can find the sale, gift or mortgage of land (with restriction in some cases) in very clear terms.[6] In the Pali Cannonical works, reflecting the practice in Buddha's age (c. 567 B.C. - c. 487 B.C.), the peasant proprietors designated as Khettapati, Khettasamika or Vatthupati cultivated arable land. There is also reference to sale and mortgage of land.[7] The Rig-Veda does not mention commune holding in land. As Keith and Macdonell say, "There is no trace in Vedic literature of communal property in the sense of ownership by the community or any sort, nor is there any mention of communal cultivation."[8] The Buddhist texts mantion that cultivatable land of the village consisted of individual holdings, each family called Griha or Kula having holdings of its own. Regarding the position of the king, Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal states, "The king was the lord of all ... it does not appear, inspite of the statements of Greek writers to the contrary, that he ever had any right in the soil."[9] Jayaswal argues that it was a misconception on the part of those who assert that property in the soil was always vested in the Hindu sovereign. To quote him:

> Nothing is so distant from Hindu law as this theory. Numerous instances of gifts and sales of land by private individuals can be given ... from earliest literature. Law books give provisions for sale of land for acquirement of proprietary right ... by prescription. Inscriptions proving to be hilt private property in the soil are extant. Above all it is expressly and emphatically declared that the king has no property in the soil and this is declared in no less an authority than the very logic of Hindu law, the Mimamsa.[10]

Altekar, another noted expert on the political system in ancient India, thinks that before c. 600 B.C. there might have been communal ownership of land, as has been suggested by some. The communal ownership means that the transfer of land could be held valid only if ratified by the consent of the entire body of villagers, agnates and castemen. But, on the point of private ownership of land, Altekar goes on to say that

> There is conclusive and overwhelming evidence to show that at least from c. 600 B.C. the ownership of individuals in their arable land could not be affected by the action of the state, except when there is failure to pay the land tax. People could freely gift away, mortgage or sell their lands. ... We thus possess conclusive evidence to show that in the post-Buddhist period at any rate the ownership in cultivable lands was vested in private individuals; the state could not interfere with it except for the non-payment of the land tax. What is claimed from the average cultivator was thus not a land rent but a land tax.[11]

Attention may also be drawn to the Sukraniti composed approximately between 11th and 14th century A.D.[12] In the Sukraniti there is not the slightest hint that landed property is held in common ownership by the people in the village. Sarkar states that the Sukraniti clearly retains possession by private individuals as also those by the king. The ownership of all land does not belong to him or the state. All lands were not ager publicus i.e. state land or public property. The essential points in this regard may be put in the words of Sarkar:

> Land is a commodity saleable in the open market freely or with as much restrictions as any other wealth. It cannot, consequently, be a monopoly of the Government. The transactions which consummate the sales and purchases of lands are to be recorded in appropriate documents, says Sukra, with details as to measurements, values and witnesses. ... These papers are known as Kraya-Patra. And it is because proprietorship in the form of landed estates is a recognized item in an individual's inventory of sva-svatva or private values that Sukraniti admits immovables in the class of pawns or securities that may lawfully be pledged by a party for values received and detailed in the document known as sadi-patra.[13]

The firm conviction that there was royal ownership of land in the Maurya period stems from the accounts of Megasthenes, the Greek traveller in the court of Chandragupta Maurya. It seems that during his reign considerable tracts of land were owned by the king. There is little doubt that the Maurya dynasty tried to establish a strong centralized state. The Arthasastra (written by Kautilya, the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya) states that lands may be confiscated from those who do not cultivate them and given to others; they may be cultivated by village laborers or traders. When the cultivators pay their taxes regularly, they may be supplied with grains, cattle and money.[14]

But the point in relation to both Arthasastra and the actual state of affairs in the Maurya regime is that there existed both private and state ownership of land. As a matter of fact, Kautilya referred to the ownership of state lands. On the other hand, there is evidence to the effect that proprietary rights including owners' power of gift, mortgage,

purchase and sale of lands. When the state required a tract of land, the usual procedure was to purchase it from the owner but not to confiscate it.[15] It may be noted that the state held in ownership the unoccupied waste lands. Mines were held to be a state monopoly. So was buried treasures. The most important problem in the Maurya regime was to centralize the political power and thus build a strong government. The growth of a landed aristocracy--the independent Samantas (i.e. counterparts in India of European feudal lords)--already in progress. The avowed purpose of Kautilya was to subjugate the independent landed aristocracy and to reduce their political power and supremacy. The newly emerging landed aristocracy, posing threat to the political power of the Maurya state, constituted a class

> ... who claimed freedom from oppression of government servants and policemen. He wanted to reduce all powerful samantas into peaceful, loyal landowners, and, if possible, bring their property directly under the control of the king.[16]

Recently Bhattacharya also draws attention to the growth of this landed aristocracy. To quote him:

> There are some evidences of the growth of big farms and landlords which indicate a tendency towards the beginning of feudalism. Apart from the well known case of the Brahmana Kasi Bharadvaja working his field with five hundred ploughs manned by a gang of hired and slave laborers, the Buddhist literature frequently refers to owners of one thousands karisas of land and eight hundred millions (asitikotivibhavo). The custom of granting land to Brahmanas (brahmadeya), to certain categories of state officials, to Buddhist and Jain monasteries, and the state's possession of extensive farms directly operated by the state agencies, all tended towards the

> growth of some kind of landlordism and a consequent decline in the status of peasants. ... The hereditary village headman probably developed into petty village chief with extensive landed property.[17]

The emergence of a nascent landed aristocracy and the corresponding deterioration of the village peasants indicate an important phenomenon that has many implications for the negation of the AMP thesis; this matter will be left for treatment elsewhere.

Coming back again to the issue of private ownership of land, it may further be contended that the king's claim to confiscate the peasants' land or to throw them out of their lands in case of negligent cultivation is an incidence of king's being the sovereign within the domain. His claim to do all these is connected with his being in the position of the sovereign (i.e. supreme legal and political power), and not connected with his proprietary right.[18] As to the grants of lands by the king, it can be said that, "when the kings made donations of villages, it amounted only to a transfer of revenue payable to the state coffer to the donee and not change in ownership."[19] It has been strongly contended that agricultural land--the natural condition of labor--generally belonged to him who first cultivated it. At the present time several inscriptions go to prove ownership of individuals in India.[20] There are instances when the king granted small agricultural plots situated in different parts of the village or even in many villages. If the king is

the owner of all lands in a village, then it becomes difficult to explain why the king had to grant plots of land over a scattered area, one situated at a distance from another, because the grant would have been suitable for both the donor and the donee in the same village. There is no doubt, however, that the king entered in the relationship between the peasant and his land and the king received surplus from the peasant. But this surplus which the king received from the king was in lieu of the protection offered by the king. Therefore the control of the king, as a sovereign, does not amount to a proprietary right over the land.[21]

What was the land tenure system in the agrarian economy of India in post-Maurya period upto the rise of the Gypta Empire? Stated otherwise, what was the position of ownership between c. 200 A.D. and c. 400 A.D.? The answer is private ownership of land. Although the king's ownership over forests, mines etc. or the royal practice of the grant of villages continued, one does "no longer hear of state farms worked by slaves and hired laborers under the supervision of the superintendent of agriculture."[22] The individual is stated to be the owner of the land when he first clears the forest and brings it under cultivation. Thus the investment of physical labor in a plot of unclaimed and uncultivated land can be supposed to be the cause conferring proprietary title on the producer. As far as the

Southern part of India is concerned, the individual enjoyed ownership of land between c. 100 B.C. and c. 300 A.D. (i.e. the Satvahana period).[23]

The period beginning with the Gupta regime (c. 300 A.D. - c. 600 A.D.) is remarkable since during this period huge land grants were made. This period thus marks the beginning of feudalization of the land tenure system in India. A noteable fact is that since the beginning of this period all the Indian scholars trace feudalism in the Indian social formation. Of the other prominent non-Indian scholars only Weber[24] and Krader[25] found many similarities between (probably early) European feudalism and the above-mentioned developments of feudalism in India. But inspite of the similarities they found they did not designate India as a feudal social formation in the period concerned or even any subsequent period. Before, the nature of feudalism in India can be described, let me briefly state the features of the mode of production in a feudal society.[26]

In this mode of production, generalized on the basis of features found in European social formations, neither labor nor the products of labor were commodities. This mode was thus dominated by the land and a natural economy--an economy organized on the basis of natural condition of labor (i.e. land). The immediate producer, the peasant, was tied to the land in a specific social relationship. The producer did not own the land, the main means of production in the feudal era. He occupeid and tilled the land which was owned

by feudal lords. Since the producer was tied or bound to the land, he was unfree, a serf. He had juridically restricted mobility. The feudal lords extracted surplus through political and legal relations of compulsion. The political and legal relation of compulsion is the basis of extra-economic coercion which took the form of free labor services, rents in kind or other customary dues. This resulted in a juridical amalgamation of economic exploitation with political authority. The lord exercised his jurisdictional power over the peasant. Now, the property rights of the lord over his land were of degree only The degree of his rights over the land depends on how he was invested in his rights by a superior lord to whom he owed military service in time of war. The word "fief" stands for the estates of the lord. Thus the inferior lord, i.e. liege lord, is a vassal of the superior lord. In feudal society there woule be then a chain of feudal tenures, one dependent on the other, linked to the military service. At the top of the chains there is the king in whom all land in the kingdom would vest and so constitutes the eminent domain. The political powers of the king became decentralized and parcelled out in practice among the different lords. Having thus described the feudal mode of production, let me refer to Marx's observation on the situation in India. He points out that

> Kovalevsky forgets among other things serfdom, which is not of substantial importance in India.

> (Moreover, as for the individual role of feudal lords as protectors not only of unfree but of free peasants ... this is unimportant in India except for the wakuf (estates devoted to religious purposes).) Nor do we find that 'poetry of the soil' so characteristic of Romano-Germanic feudalism ... in India, any more than in Rome. In India the land is nowhere noble in such a way as to be, e.g., inalienable to non-members of the noble class.[27]

In the present section, it should be noted, I shall mainly concentrate on two items: First, I shall focus on the processes of feudalization and sub-infeudation. In this connextion I shall briefly discuss the erosion of the political power of the king, and also the nature of conflict between the king on the one hand and the Indian feudal lords on the other. Second, I shall focus on the existence of the serfs. Reference will also be made to the existence of what is called "Visti" or forced labor. In discussing these matters I shall be covering roughly the period between 300 A.D. and 1200 A.D.[28] In India feudal lords were variously known as Bhupala, Bhokta, Bhogi, Bhogijana, Mahabhogi, Raja, Rajarajanaka, Rajyanaka, Rajputra, Thakkura, Samanta, Mahasamanta, Mahasamantadhipati, Samantaka raja, Mandalika etc. It must also be noted that in the Mughal state the feudal structure in India continued at least in the relation between the king and the chief zamindars (i.e. more or less autonomous feudal lords) and between the chief zamindars and their vassals.

Let me first of all deal with the land grants in India. The first appearance of the land grants goes back to the first century A.D. Initially these were made to the

Brahamans. They were the highest caste in the caste hierarchy of India. As Risley defines it, caste is a collection of families. These families bear a common name usually signifying a mythical ancestor, human or divine. Generally the members of the families in a particular caste follow the same calling. As a whole the caste members form a single homogeneous community. The practice of land grants to the Brahamans in India may be compared to the practice of granting benefices to churches in Medieval Europe. However, whereas in Europe the church was more organized, in India the Brahamans were rarely so. In addition, it must be remembered that the terms of the land grants to the Brahamans varied widely from each other.

It is only with the rise of the Guptas (c. 300 A.D. - c. 600 A.D.) that one can find the development of a mode of production in which a propertied class more intensively appropriated surplus from the peasants by virtue of a superior proprietary claim over the land. The whole pattern that existed since the rise of the Guptas upto the time of the Mughals in Indian history can be best described in the words of Sharma, who is the only authority to have done most extensive work on Indian feudalism:

> Naturally never before were the peasants and craftsmen attached to the land subjected to such direct control of the priests, temples, chiefs, vassals and officials as in the five centries following the fall of the Gupta empire. Never before was the class of landed intermediaries so deeply entrenched both politically and economically as during this period. The pre-Muslim mediaeval period may be regarded

> as the classical age of feudalism in India, for the Muslims introduced large-scale cash payment which loosened the direct control of the landed intermediaries over the peasants. Thus the feudalism of our period was largely concerned with realizing the surplus from the peasants mainly in kind through superior rights in their land and through forced labor, which is not found on any considerable scale either before the early centuries of the christian era or after the Turkish conquest of India. The whole political structure was reared on land grants, so that both secular and religious beneficiaries developed a vested interest in the preservation of feudal principalities not only against similar rivals but also against the insurrection of the peasants.[30]

Sharma states that in the beginning, the land grants contained usufructurary rights. Later on, i.e. from 8th century, proprietary rights were awarded. In the case of the land grants which were made to temples and Brahamans in Bengal and in Madhya Pradesh, the grants on the donee was the right of enjoyment of revenue from land in perpetuity. But the terms of the grant did not authorize alienation of rents or land to others. Two grants in Northern and Eastern Bengal were results of transactions between individuals with the consent of the officers of royal authority. But the Central India grants were contracted between feudatories (i.e. feudal lords) who gave away the villages. While the Bengal grants were exempt from taxes and administrative controls. There were many other examples of land grants to the Brahamans in the Gupta period. In many cases of grant the feudatories did not require the consent of royal authority to effect the transactions. Further, in one case of an Indore grant, the grantee was authorized the enjoyment of cultivation of land under the conditions of brahmadeya

(indicating judicial and administrative rights) grant. This case thus leaves "clear scope for creating tenants on the donated land and provides perhaps the earliest epigraphic evidence of subinfeudation of the soil."[31]

From the several instances of land grants primarily to the religious organizations and particularly to the Brahamans, several points can be made. In other words, creation and rise of the Brahaman feudatories carry several implications.

The first notable point concerns the weakening of the central political authority in matters of taxation and police and administrative functions. Since the time of Pravarasena II Vakataka (5th century) onwards there was disintegration of sovereign and political authority of the state in the Indian social formation. The king relinquished his control over major sources of the state's revenue, such as patronage, charcoal, mines, and all hidden treasures and deposits. The royal ownership over the mines was a mark of sovereignty during the Maurya period. When this royal ownership over the mines was transferred to the Brahamans of the 4th and 5th century A.D., it clearly involved an erosion of sovereignty. It is also important to note that political power--administrative and judicial--of the sovereign was disintegrating. To recall Sharma again:

> The Gupta period furnishes at least half a dozen instances of grants of apparently settled villages made to the Brahananas by large feudatories in Central India, in which residents, including the cultivators and artisans, were expressly asked by

> their respective rulers not only to pay the customary taxes to the donees, but also to obey their commands. ... All this provides clear evidence of the surrender of administrative powers of the state. Nevertheless, the inscriptions of the 5th century A.D. show that the ruler generally retained the right to punish thieves, which was one of the main bases of state power. The process of disintegration reached its logical end when in later times the king made over to the brahamanas not only this right, but also his right to punish all offences against family, property, person, etc. ... Thus the widespread practice of making land grants in the Gupta period paved the way for the rise of brahamana feudatories, who performed administrative functions not under the authority of the royal officers but almost independently.[32]

Now, the main question is this: why were these grants made to the Brahamans, the highest caste, whose predominant function was religious in the Indian social formation? A related question is: did this practice of land grants symbolize the rise of a landed aristocracy?

The dominance of the Brahamans in the Indian social formation was already a fact before the feudalization of the land tenure system in the regime of the Gupta kings. In the period between the second century B.C. and fourth century A.D., following the break up of the Maurya regime, the Brahamans emerged as the occupants of the most privileged position. As Bhattacharya says, "Irrespective of his virtue, accomplishments or occupation a Brahamana is to be treated as a veritable God."[33] No longer were the Brahamanas devoted only to the religious pursuits or to a life of Spartan simplicity and discipline, as envisaged in the Smrtis of Manu and Yajnavalkya or in the Arthasastra of Kautilya and Santiparvan. Neither was the varied religious activity

sufficient to provide a livelihood for more than a few Brahamanas.[34] How could they remain satisfied without economic and political power?[35] On the one hand, they were recipients of numerous privileges such as gifts ranging from butter and cows to gold and land. On the other hand, they became a vital component of the state apparatus. The post of Purohita (i.e. the office of the Priest) was certainly not devoid of political power; in the Council of Ministers appointed by the king, the priests had substantial representation; and they were also an important influence on the consciousness of the entire community. The Brahamans, as a class, were no longer confined only to the priestly life, but spread into many gainful occupations. The main role of the Brahamans thus having changed, Sastras (i.e. rule books) were developed to legitimate their material acquisitions consistent with Dharma (i.e. religion).

> Such statements that property without a 'clear-and-pure' title was not property at all are also found. At the same time the importance of wealth even for performance of religious acts was also realized by the Smrtikaras. We have already referred to the keeness to sactify the property of the Brahamanas by our law givers while such claims have rarely been made for the property of other classes in these works.[36]

In addition, it is also known that between c. 443-444 A.D. and c. 533-534 A.D., the prices of the different qualities of land was more or less stable. The economy was in prosperity. But the Gupta inscriptions show that there was much demand for land. Most of the fertile and cultivated lands were owned by those "who were disinclined to part with it."[37] All this

is to say, in other words, that the Brahamana landed aristocracy was emerging as dominant, and that the reason behind grants of land to them was not only religious but also political.

In this light, let me pose this question: What is the material explanation behind so many land grants to the temples and Brahamans? The answer is that, as already indicated, it was not merely a religious purpose, but also a dominant political necessity, that motivated the grants of land to the Brahamana class. The political necessity is clearly manifest in terms of the transactions which clearly stipulated the enjoyment of land subject to the condition that they, the priests, would not commit treason against the state, etc. The priests did not supply soldiers, as bishops did in England. In India there was no such need, for most people can be persuaded, under the overwhelming impact of religious ideology, to acquiesce in the existing order and thus subjugated. In any case, the political reason i.e. neutralization of the opposition of the Brahamana class, stands out clearly.[38] By the fourth century A.D., many of the Brahmans were already big landholders. Many were already pursuing trades and occupations--medicine, wagon-driving, tax-collection, agriculture, hunting, etc.--beyond the scope of their Varna (i.e. Color, according to which castes could also be identified) duties. They were thus increasingly drawn into the secular activities. Thus Fick rightly says that "by these rich Brahamanas, big landholders or princely merchants are to be understood, for through presents

alone such enormous wealth could hardly be accumulated."[39] Whatever, therefore, might be the intention of the donors, such as Gupta emperors or other kings, the grants created a landed aristocracy--powerful intermediaries--wielding both economic and political power. The results of land grants was decentralization of political power and disintegration of the sovereign authority of the state. "The functions of collection of taxes, levy of forced labor, regulation of mines, agriculture etc., together with those of the maintenance of law and order, and defence, which were hitherto performed by the state officials, were now step by step abandoned, first to the priestly class, and later to the warrior class (Ksatriyas)."[40]

What is the position of the producing class, the peasants? The more one goes back into the history of the Indian social formation, the more scanty becomes the data as to the condition of the direct producer. It is true that at one time only a few peasants were without any land. But from the later-Vedic period (c. 1000 B.C. - c. 600 B.C.) there seems little doubt as to the growing number of landless peasant class.[41] In the period concerned, various references exist to confirm the presence of big landlords, of the moneyed farmers owning large holdings and making investments and getting returns, of independent and dependent peasants. In addition to the slaves who were servants in employment for 24 hours and no freedom, there were landless agricultural producers "lending their services to others, in return for daily wages, having status no better than serfs."[42]

Between c. 200 A.D. and c. 400 A.D. the position of the peasants also declined. They were in the same group as hired laborers, slaves and servants. Very little was known of their participation in the village affairs. Sometimes they had to render free labor to the state because they had not enough property to pay the tax.[43] When the land grants began to make their appearance, there was no denying the rise of a landed aristocracy. Some of the recipients of the Brahamans, the emerging landed aristocracy, might have been actual tillers. But in many cases the donees did not cultivate the land themselves, and had the land cultivated by hired laborers. The donees could therefore replace old peasants by new ones. The donees further collected the rents from the peasants and retained the whole amount without forwarding anything to the state. It only meant that, in many cases, the ties between the peasant and the state was reversed. The state only maintained connection with the independent peasant proprietors paying land tax direct to the state. However, it is needless to say their number was falling off.[44] It is also important to note that from the Gupta period onwards, the growing hereditary character of the divisional and district officers diluted central authority and feudalized the administration. Further, the village headmen were becoming, since this period onwards, semi-feudal officers.[45] However, it must be pointed out that we have no data as to the extent of land under the control of the landed aristocracy. But the land grants provided some kind of

economic basis for the rise of feudalism in the Indian social formation. At the same time, the pressure on the land was avoided by bringing new lands under fresh cultivation.

During the reign of Harsha (c. 610 A.D. - c. 646 A.D.) several monasteries or temples were recipients of lands. In this case the direct producers were to pay their rent direct to the landowners. But the important point is that these monasteries and temples became "semi-independent political pockets."[46]

Instances of sub-infeudation i.e. the creation of a chain of hierarchy of landlords, and of secular and religious grants of land became more remarkable in the post-Harsha (c. 650 A.D. onwards) era down to the c. 1200 A.D.

There are several instances of purely military grants involving sub-infeudation. A certain Raja (King) of Buwad (in 7th-8th century) distributed of his whole kingdom among his chiefs in 16 equal parts. In the 11th century, Rampala granted lands to win the support of the chiefs. In the inscription of Cahamanas of Sambhar in Rajputna (c. 973-74 A.D.) estates were seen to be held by the princes of royal blood, chiefs and officers.[47] A more typical example of the military aspect of feudalism can be found in the case of Rastrakuta polity. Here the vassals claimed military service from the sub-vassals just as the Rastrakuta rulers claimed military service from the vassals. This mililitary service consisted in giving aid to the overlord in times of war. Often the fiefs became hereditary, with the decline of royal power.

In the 11th century Bengal, the Kaivarta chiefs overthrew the king in Bengal.[48] From Sukraniti, it appears to have been a common practice to grant villages to military chiefs called Rajputras (i.e. feudal lords). They were required to maintain "a specific number of horses and soldiers, which they obviously had to supply to their lord whenever the necessity arose."[49] It is needless to emphasize that feudalization triumphed over the so-called ideas of united realm and over-royal authority in India. Practically India was transformed into territorial principalities affecting politics, administration and economy.[50] The process of feudalization was so acute that there were instances of the village headmen turning into petty chiefs. In Bengal, since 1200 A.D., the village headmen got transformed or were replaced by a class of petty chiefs. The Sukraniti has provided an example of a village headman protecting the villagers from royal officers. It is quite clear that the village communities declined as a result of feudalization of the social formation, either by royal grants placing villages under feudatory chiefs or by forceful occupation of the villages.[51]

Without referring to the elaborate coronation ceremonies of the kings, the participation of the feudatories in their coronation, or the conferral of the fiefs[52], let me refer to some other points. It is now also known that some feudatories ruled by their prowess, had some jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters, and awarded punishments according to their will.[53] There were also cases when the

name of the overlord was not mentioned in creating inferior lords or vassals. In the case of Kashmir, the succession to the fief needed the sanction of the overlord in normal times.[54]

Now, the issue is whether the direct producers in India are comparable to the serfs tied to the land owned by the lords in Europe. It must be remembered that Marx did not see the prevalence of serfs in the Indian social formation. And this was the reason of his adherence to the AMP thesis. In Europe, the relationship between the lord and the serf was one of mutual dependence. The serf was given the protection by the lord. In return the serf worked for the lord on the land which the serf did not own.

In general, we have not much data to show the number of serfs, as generally understood in European feudalism. Rather, in the European sense of serfs, one cannot find peasants originally tied to the land, and the lord and the peasant in mutual dependence as well. But it is very much possible to argue that, as Thaper says, the Indian peasants were "almost tied"[55] to the land. Sharma shows, serfs did exist in India. Originally, the serfdom was a feature of those lands which did not form part of the organized villages. It began in the peripheral areas and gradually spread to Northern India. He makes a distinction between serfs-ploughmen attached to the ground and semi-serfs i.e. tenants transferred along with the grant of lands or villages. He suggests that serfdom in India originated in mountainous or backward regions. With the passage of time serfdom in India

covered the peasants in the whole villages including agricultural lands. While the practice of serfdom became fairly common in the 8th century, it had its origin in the grant of villages to temples and monasteries. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the inhabitants including the peasants were bound to serve the beneficiaries along with the transfer of the village.[57]

In the feudal mode of production the peasants were tied to the soil owned by the lord. Sharma argues, I think rightly, that in India the condition of the peasants was not materially different in the case of grants of villages with cultivated or cultivable lands. This was true in cases of land grants by Palas (c. 770 A.D. - c. 960 A.D.), Pratihars (c. 783 A.D. - c. 910 A.D.) and Rastrakutas (c. 720 A.D. - c. 950 A.D.) of West and South India.[58] There were examples of grants under the Pratihars in Rajasthan where it appeared in one case that the vassals treated the peasants as attached to the soil, capable of being transferred along with the land. Under the Pratihars, it was possible for the vassals to transfer, without the permission of the overlord, land along with the peasants who worked on it. Further, the peasants could neither leave the land nor had any say in the transfer of land.[59] Commenting on the land grant practices in Orissa and elsewhere Sharma says:

> The fact that they (i.e. the peasants and artisans) were specifically made over to the donee shows that they were attached to the soil as artisans and husbandmen and in case of oppression could not seek shelter in

> another village or reclaim virgin land of which there was plenty in this region. A similar provision occurs in some 12th century Candella inscription, which transfer artisans, peasants and traders to the donees. But in Orissa this practice prevailed on a far wider scale and for a longer period of time. ... (But) such grants reduced the villagers to the condition of semi-serfs, producing surplus for the benefit of brahamana beneficiaries.[60]

Another important point is that the peasants had no security of tenure. Marx thought that the peasants, the direct producers, were possessors. Leaving aside the proprietary rights, it can be argued, on the basis of avilable evidence, that the peasants were uprooted from their fields. In many cases under the Rastrakutas and Pratihars, the grantees were authorized to get their lands cultivated by others. This clearly indicates peasants' eviction, and lack of security of tenure in the land.[61] That there must have been eviction of the peasants is beyond doubt. This was true in view of the fact that landless laborers, who could be hired, grew in number when the Indian social formation became divided into four Varna divisions. That landless laborers, sudras or slaves came to be employed in agriculture in the post-Vedic era was confirmed in the writings of Kautilya, Narada and Brahaspati.[62] Thus the picture that emerges is not one portrayed by Marx. In many cases the peasants were merely tenants at will of the landlords, and the peasants could be substituted by hired agricultural laborers. Further, the striking feature of the grants was that, while the donees had the discretion of retaining or evicting the peasants, it

did not contain any provision by which the peasants could redress their grievances against the donees. Between the 5th and 12th centuries A.D. land grants in Malawa, Gujrat, Rajasthan and Maharastra tended to reduce the peasants to the status of tenants at will.[63]

Further, Marx did not refer to the practice of "Visti" or what is called forced labor. The point is that the provision in the land grants of forced labor compelling the peasants to work without any remuneration and also tying them to the land worsened the condition of the peasants in India. The existence of visti or forced labor is very old, as apparent from the Maurya or post-Maurya literature and inscriptions. The practice of visti not only illustrated the oppression of all the villagers, sweepers, artisans, etc., but also provided an example of appropriation of surplus labor by the state and the ruling class i.e. landed aristocracy consisting of the Brahamans and the Kshtriyas. In the Maurya period, visti was one of the resources for the army. Visti indicated both "forced labor and unpaid feudal corvee."[64] It was sanctioned by Manu, Gautama, Vishnu, and Kautilya who regarded it as a lawful privilege of government servants and the landed aristocracy.[65] Choudhury has this to say:

> Visti marks the development of a definite stage of feudalism. Since a donee had the right to get his land cultivated by others, he could easily replace old peasants by new ones. ... If in the Maurya period it was limited to a certain section of the populace, it was widened in the succeeding periods and its scope was further widened in the Gupta period when the term visti

> included all sorts of free labor service and obligations in a full fledged feudal society. ... When the kingdoms became smaller and the class of feudal owners grew in numbers, power and importance of the intermediaries went up by leaps and bounds and then they formed the real class basis of the society. It was under such a state of affairs that the barons and the feudal elders could exact corvee labor either by consent or by force. ... The various land grants, hitherto discovered go to show that in a number of cases the peasants were completely subservient to the donee. Since there was no limit the recipients were at liberty to exact any amount of forced labor from the peasants.[66]

As a matter of fact there are instances of imposition of visti attached to several grants of land viz., grants of Dharasena (c. 575 A.D.), of Siladitya I (c. 605 A.D.), of Dhruvasena III (c. 653 A.D.), and of Sendrdaka chief Allasakati (c. 656 A.D.). Between c. 750 A.D. and c. 1000 A.D. forced labor was extensively prevalent in Gujrat and Maharastra under the Pratihars and Rastrakutas. It was also prevalent in Bengal and Bihar.[67] There were also cases of excessive taxation on the independent peasant proprietors. All in all, the position of the direct producers deteriorated. The system of land grants, both religious and secular, was accompanied by subinfeudation and subleasing, insecurity of tenancy rights, eviction, forced labor, levy of additional taxes, forcible attachment to the land, parcelling of land into smaller units, etc. were all causes of agrarian tragedy for India's direct producers. They became solely dependent on the mercy of the landed aristocracy.[68] The subjection of the peasants to the landed aristocracy in India was no less than that of their counterparts in Europe. They did not confront the state as their

direct landlord, as Marx thought, but in many cases several intermediaries.

> Perhaps they fared worse under secular grantees, who had to meet certain obligations out of the villages granted to them. But in every case the peasant was not so much of a free, sturdy peasant-proprietor as a semi-serf ministering to the needs of the grantees. ... Thus the transfer to the beneficiaries of the agrarian rights enjoyed by the village to the grantees tended to dispossess the peasantry and created new property relations.[69]

The nature of proprietory rights in land in the Mughal period (c. 1526 A.D. - c. 1757 A.D.) has also been a matter of controversy and misinterpretation. The discussion can be opened with the following remark of Grover:

> The view upheld by the European visitors in the 16th and 17th centuries that all land was owned by the state was based on their gross ignorance of the working of the Jagir system. Though both in theory and practice, the state was the proprietor of all the jungles and unreclaimed land for agrarian purposes, it did not possess any proprietary rights in the absolute sense over the vast cultivable lands already in hereditary possession of the various classes of Riaya. ... The state claimed a share in the produce of the land rather than title to its proprietorship. In its chapter on 'Rowai Rozi' (the means of subsistence), the Ain-i-Akbari categorically recognizes the proprietary title to the land in the various classes of cultivators.[70]

The point is that in India the private property in land did exist, in the Hindu period as well as in the Muslim period. In the Hindu theory, the taxes (shares) that were due to the king were his wages or remuneration for protection he extended to individuals living in the kingdom. The king so entrusted to external and internal protection could not claim right of ownership over objects that were placed under his trust and guard.[71] The same was true of Mughal India. Abul

Fazal, the historian in Akbar's (c. 1556 A.D. - c. 1605 A.D.) court, justified imposition of taxes as the remuneration of sovereignty, paid in return for the protection that the king secured for his subjects.[72] As a matter of fact, there is no historical source suggesting that "land-revenue was in the nature of rent that the peasant had to pay for making use of royal property."[73] When Akbar came to power India was divided into large principalities held by autonomous and semi-autonomous chiefs. The Muslim rulers of India realized very well that they could not wipe out numerous Hindu chiefs scattered all over India. The Sultans of India, who preceded the Mughals, recognized many of them when they acknowledged the suzerainty of Delhi. When Akbar came to power, his objective was to make the whole country acknowledge his suzerainty. Neither Akbar nor any other succeeding Mughal emperor, therefore, tried to abolish the principalities ruled by the old hereditary chiefs. A very considerable part of the Mughal dominions remained under the rule of these hereditary chiefs.[74]

In order to see the existence of private property of the individual over his land, it is necessary to examine different types of Zamindars. The ward "Zamin" means land; Zamindar means landlord. The term zamindar gained currency during the Mughal period to denote various types of hereditary interests starting from powerful, independent and autonomous chieftains to petty revenue collectors and various intermediaries at the village level. "No term in the Mughal administrative system is perhaps more ambiguous and confusing than the term 'Zamindar'."[75] It must be remembered, therefore

that the term zamindar has a tendency to be misinterpreted. Factually, the term zamindar included both landed aristocracy and revenue collectors in the Mughal state. Because Marx failed to see the distinction among the various types of zamindars he completely ignored not only the existence of private proprietary rights in land but also the importance of the landed interests in the state. Marx, it must be added, concentrated only on zamindars who were purely revenue collectors, and he was thus misled accordingly.

The Zamindars in the Mughal period can be broadly classified into three categories: (1) The autonomous chiefs known as Rajas, Maharanas, Ranas, Raos etc.; (2) The primary or hereditary zamindars, and (3) The intermediary or appointed zamindars.[76] Let me detail some of the features of each category of the zamindars.

(1) The autonomous chiefs were independent rulers of their zamindaries. In Hasan's words, they enjoyed "practically sovereign powers". Like the Sultans (i.e. the rulers preceding the Mughals between c. 1210 A.D. and c. 1526 A.D.), the Mughals only claimed the acknowledgement of their lordship from the chiefs. The chiefs were, in recognition of the overlordship of the Mughal Imperial authority, to pay regular tribute and render military assistance. When the Imperial authority was strong, it tried to compell the chieftains into the recognition of the overlordship of the Mughal emperors. Sometimes, the chieftains were altogether overthrown

or their territories greatly reduced. When the Imperial authority was weak, the chieftains assumed independence or extended their territories. This continual rivalry between the chieftain zamindars and the Imperial authority is a pointer to the fact that the state was not the owner of all lands in the Indian social formation. In other words, these chieftains were not merely revenue collectors without any proprietary right in land. These chieftains were absorbed in the governing nobility of the Mughal state at the time of Akbar and other emperors.[77] They were awarded the highest Mansabs (i.e. positions or ranks; a mansabdar was the holder of a rank or position in the hierarchy of the Mughal governing class nobility), important governorships and military commands. Some of the chiefs were given mansabs, while others were not. But both categories were required to provide military service. A third category of chief was Peshkashi or tribal chiefs. They had no obligation to provide military service but were exacted to pay tributes varying from jewellery to animals. Sometimes the chiefs holding mansabs were awarded jagirs, in addition to their hereditary domains in different areas of the Mughal state. Most of the Mughal territory consisted of jagir lands. The revenue of these jagir lands was assigned to mansabdars in lieu of salaries as per their ranks or positions. The assignees were entitled to collect the revenue of the jagirs and were thus called jagirdars. For those mansabdars who did not receive remuneration in cash received jagirs as remuneration. The point to be

noted is that while a mansabdar can have a jagir, there could be jagirdars (i.e. holders of jagir lands) who were not mansabdars. There was no doubt that the Mughals beginning with Akbar wanted to widen their base of the Empire by liberally granting mansabs to the chiefs of different regions. At the same time, the number of available jagirs were decreasing. Because the jagirs were transferrable, there developed competition among various claimants, excluding the chiefs, for its assignments. The whole system only accentuated the exploitation of the peasantry.[78] Although it is not possible to demonstrate the value of any jagirs granted to the chiefs holding mansabs, and compare them with the jama (i.e. assessed revenue) of their hereditary domains, it appears that "in the case of the chiefs holding high mansabs, jagirs granted to them were richer in resources and extensive in area than their hereditary domains."[79] In any case, in Bengal during the regimes of Akbar and Jahangir (c. 1605 A.D. - c. 1626 A.D.),

> ... the Zamindars and the Rajas did constitute an independent aristocracy for all practical purposes. Even those chiefs who had become mansabdar-jagirdar of the empire, suffered little change so far as their position vis a vis their own estates were concerned.[80]

In Orissa, the Mughals succeeded in establishing only a nominal suzerainty over the chief zamindars, and this the Mughals established through the presence of paramount military posts in Orissa.[81]

(2) The Primary Zamindars were for all practical purposes the holders of proprietary rights over agricultural and

habitational lands. To this category belonged not only the peasant proprietors who carried on cultivation by themselves or by hired laborers but also the proprietors of one or several villages. "All agricultural lands in the empire belonged to one or the other type of primary zamindars. The rights held by primary zamindars were hereditary and alienable. Numerous sale-deeds of such zamindars dating back to the 16th century are still available. The Mughal state considered it its duty to protect the rights of these zamindars, and encouraged the registration of transfer-deeds at the court of qazi (i.e. judges) so that a proper record of claims could be maintained."[82] In addition to these primary zamindars, i.e. those enjoying proprietary rights for generations or by virtue of purchase from others, there was another category of primary zamindars. They arose out of the bestowal of zamindary rights by the Mughals on certain people to increase the revenue by bringing forests and waste lands under cultivation. The zamindars, but not peasant proprietors specifically, could give their lands in hereditary lease to their tenants through patta (i.e. agreement) subject to payment of land revenue regularly. It should also be noted that these zamindars could retain the peasants in their lands and were able to compell the peasants to cultivate all arable lands held by them.[83]

> From the evidence that where the primary zamindars did not pay the land revenue, it was collected directly from the peasants, leaving ten percent as proprietary share (malikana) of the zamindars, it may be inferred that this percentage represents

> the normal share of the zamindars. In addition to their share in land-revenue the zamindars were also entitled to a large variety of cesses though a considerable portion of the income from such cesses had to be surrendered by the zamindars along with the land revenue.[84]

(3) The Intermediary Zamindars were really and for all practical purposes the revenue collectors in the revenue administration of the Mughal state. Among this broad category of zamindars come Chaudhuris, Desmukhs, Desais, Despandes, certain types of Muquaddams, Quanungos, Jagirdars, and Taalluqdars. This category of zamindars collected revenues from primary zamindars and paid it to (a) jagirdars, or (b) to the Imperial treasury, or (c) to the chieftains, or (d) in certain cases kept it themselves. In addition to the usual function of revenue collection, these intermediaries zamindars were expected to prepare the details of the revenue assessment, to help in the realization of the land revenue, to encourage extension of cultivation, and to assist the Imperial officers in the maintenance of law and order. These zamindars were entitled in lieu of their service to commissions, deductions, revenue-free lands (i.e. nankar or banth lands), cesses etc. Their shares thus ranged from two and a half percent to ten percent of the collection. A zamindar's jurisdiction varied from numerous villages in a pargana (i.e. the lowest official unit of administration consisting of 5 to 100 villages) to a single village. Most of them possessed hereditary rights over their zamindary, but

at times they were appointed on a contractual basis. In case of Imperial displeasure, they could be dismissed or transferred.[85]

From the preceding discussion, it follows that all zamindars were not mere revenue collectors on behalf of the Mughal state. Their proprietary rights over the land varied extensively. This leaves us with the single conclusion that "in the Mughal age, the state never claimed the absolute and exclusive ownership of the agrarian land and definitely recognized the existence of private property in it."[86] Further, neither is there any evidence of commune or land held in common.[87]

A further point. There is no question of the class character of the Mughal state. Regardless of the degrees of proprietary rights that different categories of zamindars enjoyed, it can be said that they formed broadly the landed aristocracy which constituted the basis of the Mughal state. On the one hand, the creation of the landed aristocracy including the nobility (i.e. highest mansabdars and/or jagirdars) was more or less a deliberate state policy. Without the collaboration of the landed aristocracy, the Mughal state could not have been what it was-- the strong centralized state. The surplus was shared between the emperor, the chieftains and other types of zamindars. On the other hand, there was a conflict of interest between the state (with a huge bureaucracy some of whose members were landowners) and the

zamindars themselves over the share of the surplus. Thus the state was involved in irreconcilable contradictions that ultimately corroded the steel fabric of the Mughal empire even before the Western powers were ready to take over.[88]

NOTES

1. B. K. Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, The Sacred Book of the Hindus, Vol. XXV, Book II, (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1974), p. 10.

2. K.P. Jayaswal, Manu and Yajnavalkya (Calcutta: Butterworth, 1930), p. 105. Emphasis in original.

3. In the present paper I am omitting the discussion of the land-tenure system of Indus Valley civilisation, which seems to be a society divided between producers and consumers. The data on this civilisation, which was discovered from 1922 onwards, are still forthcoming, and are not yet conclusive on the point under discussion. Incidentally, it may be pointed out that the Indus Valley civilisation, started to have existed from about c. 3100 B.C., is more or less coeval with other first civilisations of the world, such as Sumerian (Tigris-Euphrates, c. 3200 B.C.), Egyptian (Nile, c. 3100 B.C.) and the Chinese (Hwang-ho, c. 2500 B.C.) civilisations. For details, see Bridget and Raymond Allchin, The Birth of Indian Civilisation (Maryland: Penguin, 1968); O.K. Ghosh, The Changing Indian Civilisation (Columbia: South Asia Book, 1976); R. C. Majumder, Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1952).

4. R.K. Mukherjee, Democracies of the East (London: King & Son Ltd., 1923), p. xxiii.

5. N. Bandyopadhyaya, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, Vol. 1, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1945), p. 118; L. Gopal points out certain evidence, such as procedures for measuring fields, that confirms the existence of private ownership of cultivated land in vedic India, See L. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", Journal of Bihar Research Society Vol. 46 (1960), p. 27.

6. See U.N. Ghosal, The Agrarian System of Ancient India (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1930), p. 87.

7. Cf. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", p. 28.

8. B.N. Datta, Studies in Indian Social Polity (Calcutta: Purabi Publishers, 1944), p. 387.

9. Ibid., pp. 388-9.

10. K.P. Jayaswal, Hindu Polity (Bangalore City: Bangalore Printing and Publishing, 1967), p. 330.

11. A.S. Altekar, State and Government in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1962), pp. 275-77.

12. Ibid., p. 20.

13. Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, p. 83. Emphasis in original.

14. See Kautilya, Kautilya's Arthasatra, trans. R. Shamasastry (Mysore: Mysore Printing & Publishing, 1967), p. 46.

15. Cf. D.R. Das, Economic History of Deccan (Delhi: Munshiram Monoharlal, 1969), p. 20; S.C. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Pvt Ltd., 1978), pp. 110-11.

16. Pran Nath, A Study of the Economic Condition of Ancient India (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1929), p. 133.

17. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society, pp. 11-2.

18. Ghosal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, p. 96.

19. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society, p. 10.

20. Ibid., see also Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", p. 37.

21. Cf. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", pp. 43-4.

22. R. S. Sharma, "A Survey of Land System in India from c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 650", Journal of Bihar Research Society, Vol. 44 (1958), p. 225.

23. Ibid., see also D. R. Das, Economic History of Deccan, pp. 19-20.

24. See M. Weber, The Religion of India, trans. & eds. H. Gerth & D. Martindale (New York: Free Press, 1958), pp. 63-76.

25. See L. Krader, A Treatise of Social Labour (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1979), p. 310.

26. For this purpose I am following Anderson. See P. Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism (London: NLB, 1974) pp. 147-53.

27. Quoted by E. Hobsbawm in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations (New York: International Publishers, 1975) p. 58. Emphasis in original.

28. The most important source of the following discussion is R.S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300 - 1200 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965). I shall also use his other writings.

29. Datta, Studies in Indian Social Polity, pp. 391-418. The author is more inclined to support royal ownership and authority over lands in the kingdom.

30. Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300 - 1200, pp. 272-3.

31. Ibid., p. 6.

32. Sharma, "The Origin of feudalism in India", Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 1, Part III, (n.d.), pp. 298-99.

33. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society, p. 37.

34. See A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India (New York: Taplinger, 1968), p. 141.

35. Cf. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society, p. 39.

36. Ibid., p. 41. Emphasis in original.

37. S.K. Maity, Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1970), p. 72.

38. See Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300 - 1200, p. 7.

39. Quoted in Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society, p. 63.

40. Sharma, "The Origins of Feudalism in India", p. 300.

41. For excellent detail, see K. Saran, Labour in Ancient India (Bombay: Vara & Co., 1957), pp. 35-43.

42. Cf. Ibid., p. 37; P.C. Jain, Labour in Ancient India (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1971), pp. 44-5, 99.

43. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society, pp. 12-3.

44. Cf. Sharma, "A Survey of Land System in India from c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 650", p. 231.

45. See, Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200, pp. 21, 23.

46. Sharma, "A Survey of Land System in India from c. 200 B.C. to A.D. 650", p. 233.

47. See, B.N.S. Yadava, "Secular Land Grants of the Post-Gupta period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal

Complex in Northern India", in D.C. Sircar (ed.), Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966), pp. 73-4.

48. Cf. Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200, p. 101; see also Yadava, "Secular Land Grants of the Post-Gupta period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal Complex in Northern India", in Ibid., pp. 82-3.

49. K.K. Gopal, "Feudal Composition of Army in Early Medieval India", Journal of Andhra Research Society, Vol. 28 (1962-3), p. 33.

50. Cf. B.P. Majumder, "Merchants and Landed Aristocracy in the Feudal Economy of Northern India", in D.C. Sircar (ed.), op. cit., p. 71.

51. See Yadava, "Secular Land Grants of the Post-Gupta period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal Complex in Northern India" in Sircar (ed.), op. cit., pp. 82-3.

52. See B. P. Majumder, Socio-Economic History of India, pp. 20-28.

53. Cf. Ibid., p. 24.

54. See Ibid., pp. 26-8.

55. R. Thaper, A History of India (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 242.

56. Cf. Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200, p. 57.

57. See Ibid., pp. 58-9.

58. For details, see Ibid., p. 118.

59. Cf. Ibid., pp. 120, 121, 266.

60. Ibid., p. 283.

61. See Ibid., pp. 118-9.

62. Saran, Labour in Ancient India, pp. 36-7.

63. Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200, pp. 48, 124, 266.

64. R.C. Choudhary, "Visti (Forced Labour) in Ancient India", Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. 38 (1962), p. 48.

65. Cf. Pran Nath, op. cit., p. 155.

66. Choudhary, "Visti (Forced Labour) in Ancient India", pp. 51-55.

67. Cf. Jain, Labour in Ancient India, p. 245; Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200, pp. 49, 122.

68. See Sharma, Ibid., pp. 123-24; Jain, Ibid., p. 245.

69. Sharma, Ibid., pp. 228, 267.

70. B.R. Grover, "Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1963), pp. 2-3. "The term Riaya or Raiyat would stand in general for all kinds of agriculturists owning land revenue to the state as tax on the cultivated lands under possession. As such, the term Riaya or Raiyat was also used in contrast to the recalcitrant cultivators (Mutmarid or Zor Talb) who refused to pay revenues to the state. Of the revenue paying class known popularly as Riaya, a still further technical distinction was made between the landowners with proprietary rights and the tenants (Muzarian) holding lands from the former. So strictly from the technical viewpoint, the term Riaya connecting the peasant-proprietors as well as such of the Zamindar families who owned personal lands subject to the payment of land revenue". Grover, Ibid., pp. 4-5. Emphasis in original. It must further be added that even Bernier saw the fact, ignored by Marx, that in certain cases i.e. the case of certain chiefs, the Mughal emperor was not the "absolute master" of his kingdom. "The empire of the Great Mogol comprehends several nations, over which he is not absolute master. Most of them still retain their own peculiar chiefs or sovereigns, who obey the Mogol or pay tribute only by compulsion. In many instances this tribute is of trifling amount; in others none is paid; ..." Bernier, op. cit., p. 205.

71. Cf. Jayaswal, Manu and Jajnavalkya, pp. 107-8.

72. See N.A. Siddiqui, "Land Revenue Administration Under the Mughals", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 2 (1965), p. 373.

73. I. Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), p. 111.

74. Cf. P. Saran, The Provincial Government of the Mughals: 1526-1658 (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973), pp. 102-3. Maity says, "The gradual accumulation of lands into the hands of the Brahamanas and others helped the growth of a class of landed aristocrats who were no other than the zamindars of the later period." See S.K. Maity, "Medieval European Feudalism and Manorialism versus Ancient Indian Landed Economy", in D.C. Sircar (ed.), op.cit., p. 117. It must be noted that in Mughal period landed aristocracy consisted numerically more Muslims than Hindus.

75. Grover, The Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", p. 10.

76. This classification, looking reliable to me, has been made on the basis of two articles concerned in the area of Mughal revenue. These are: S.N. Hasan, "The Position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1964), pp. 109-114; and Grover, "The Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", pp. 1-23.

77. A.R. Khan, Chieftains in the Mughal Empire (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977), p. 207.

78. See N.A. Siddiqui, Land Revenue Administration under the Mughals (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1970), pp. 134-43.

79. Khan, op. cit., p. 209.

80. T. Raychauhduri, Bengal Under Akbar and Jahangir (Delhi: Munshiram Monoharlal, 1969), p. 192. For Zamindars' position during Auranzeb's rule, see A. Chatterjee, Bengal in the Reign of Aurangzeb (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers, 1967), pp. 250-65.

81. Cf. Khan, op. cit., p. 200.

82. Hasan, "The Position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", p. 116.

83. Ibid., p. 117.

84. Ibid. Emphasis added.

85. Ibid., pp. 114-5.

86. Grover, "The Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", p. 15.

87. Cf. I. Habib, "The Structure of Agrarian Society in Mughal India", in B.N. Ganguli (ed.), Readings in Indian Economic History (London: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 41.

88. See Hasan, "The Position of Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", pp. 107-8.

CHAPTER THREE

The Village Economy and the Stagnation of the Indian Social Formation

In this chapter my focus is the village system as it developed and disintegrated in the course of the historical movements of the Indian social formation. It is needless to point out that the theme of stagnation of the village economy in India dominates most of Marx's writings on India.

Villages are the cells of the Indian social formation. They are communities insofar as they focus on social life, the common living of individuals with varying occupations. Till date the villages--somewhat delimited territories inhabited by a collection of families with varying occupations--constitute the structural foundations of the Indian social formation. Inspite of many changes due to forces of modernization and industrialization the villages still provide "the material foundation for Indian cultura and civilization."[1]

In understanding the significance of the villages many questions could be raised. Were the villages really unchanging or static? Were their economies formed instantly when they came into existence? Were the village communities free from exploitation based on extraction of surplus from

producing members by non-producing members? There are many other questions that can be raised in the critique of Marx's assumptions about the village communities in India, i.e. unchangeableness of Asiatic society. Even to-day village life in many ways remains similar; the people still cultivate their lands almost in the same way. But the point is that neither self-sufficient villages existed from the time immemorial nor were they always independent republics. At some point in time, the villages might have been little republics. But throughout the historical development of the Indian social formation, the village communities were subordinate to and part of larger political units, the state. The village communities were neither equilitarian nor democratic. The village communities were only self-governing.[2] Similarly, the self-sufficient village community, based on the unity of agriculture and crafts, did not exist from time-immemorial. It came into existence much later.

> The advance of plough-using agrarian village economy over tribal India is a great historical achievement by itself. Secondly, even when the size of the village unit remains unchanged, the density of these units plays a most important role; the same region with two villages, or two hundred, or twenty thousand cannot bear the same form of superstructure, nor be exploited by the same type of state mechanism. Conversely, the progressive weight of this superstructure changes landownership within the village.[3]

In this light let me examine the origins of and changes in the village economy over time in the Indian social formation.

The most important development in the Indian social formation occured when the Aryans--patriarchal, nomadic and pastoral people of Indo-Iranian origins--began pouring into India from the start of the second millenium B.C. Whereas the Indus people failed to adopt superior tools and methods of food production, the Aryans, with their superior technology, created the pre-conditions for the emergence of a new social formation. The contribution of the Aryans was in their brutal demolition of the barriers that separated small farming units and decaying tribal communities. Superior technology prevailed over archaic tools and beliefs. In due course Aryans and pre-Aryans merged into new communities. Many people who remained previously separated from each other were now "involved by force in new types of social organization. The basis was a new availability to all skills, tools, production units that had local secrets till then. This meant flexibility in adoption, versatility of improvisation. It meant new barter, hence new commodity production."[4] They remained wandering tribes without permanent settlement until land could be cleared by the use of iron implements and fire. When this was done they were no longer simple tribes wandering here and there. The simple unit of settlement, the lowest unit, was the "grama" later to mean village. The standard Aryan settlement, the village, did not denote any idea of permanence; it may even have meant an "overnight encampment". The dasas, the conquered tribes who might have provided the surplus for the Indian

cities, were available for surplus labor for the Aryans. The caste society, having origin in the tribes, emerged. This was comparatively a stage of fixed settlements.

In the Yajurveda we find four castes--Brahamana (priest), Kshtriya (warrior and ruler), Vaisya (commoner practising agriculture and cattle breeding) and Sudra (laborer)--to have clearly emerged.[5] A class structure i.e., a network of social relations, emerged from these four castes having reached "advanced forms of property-holding and indulged in trade exchange on a sufficiently large scale."[6] It implied an urban revival, long after Indus cities were destroyed. Kosambi calls it an "urban renewal". New cities were built, now with heavier stress on agriculture than in a pastoral economy. In this transition from pastoral-raider to agrarian society, it was not a common system of language and rituals but a whole aggregate of common needs satisfied by reciprocal exchange that played the most important part. But in overcoming the tribal phase--not of course entirely--some thing more was wanting. It is the development of a superstructure--religion (not ritual) and philosophy-- that finally blended all together.[7] With the small farming and closed tribal communities receding in the background, new tendencies began developing from approximately c. 500 B.C. onwards.

In the Indian social formation additional labor power i.e. capacity to work, was then available. Without that labor power it was impossible to clear land for pasture

and cultivation. Further, castes became increasingly transformed into caste-classes. That is to say, the rigid stratification of all people into four distinct tiers according to Varna (color) and functions was gradually disappearing. For example, Brahamanas--originally with the privilege of teaching, performing sacrifices or receiving gifts--were switching to trades and other professions and were increasingly engaging slaves and laborers to work in their fields. In the Rigveda and Arthasastra we find an army composed not only of Kshtriyas--supposed to be the warriors--but also of other castes. The Kshtriyas were growing into landowners or landed aristocrats. Vaisyas--commoners supposed to live from the land, commerce, grazing and usury--were also found to be holding large lands and employing hired laborers.[8] And so on. That is why it can be said that caste was developing into caste class, and the caste society into caste-class society, although it must be noted that the impact of casteism did not disappear.

The tendency towards the formation of a state which is powerful and strong to hold all the caste-classes and which would be the same time free from tribal restrictions was emerging.

> The implication is that a new class of people, who now engaged in trade, the production of commodities, or of surplus grain on family holdings--in a word, the creation of private property--needed their immunity from tribal obstruction and from tribal sharing of the profit. To them, it was most important to have a king who could ensure safety on the road and new rights of property.[9]

The stage was thus being set, for the first time in the history of the Indian social formation, for a state which would exercise its sovereignty--the supreme legal and political power--over most parts of India. The teachings of Buddhist philosophy provided the ideology needed for movement towards "a universal government for all society."[10]

Before I further discuss briefly the urban foundations of the first Indian state, let me state the following. It can be said now that here, in the Mauryan kingdom, the self-sufficient village--with an economy based on the unity of agriculture and handicrafts--first sprouted and later spread to the whole of India.[11] The point to be noted is this: The self-sufficient village economy did not exist from remotest antiquity but came into existence only when the unit of production (i.e. handicrafts)--not commodity production for exchange--moved into the village. That is, it came into existence when artisans moved into the village when state monopolies disappeared, when there was no need to have a large bureaucracy or universal espionage, or when the supply of labour, which could be provided with the means of production by the state, increased. The village could become self-sufficient when it could supply its own demand for food and other indispensable manufactures.[12] This is to suggest that the self sufficient village economy, which was stronger in certain times than others, developed only after its material foundations were laid by the strong Maurya state.

In the first universal state of the Mauryas, one finds a state "engaged in commodity production on a large scale."[13] The stage has been set, as indicated earlier, for commodity production--production not for immediate producers --which Marx could not see, I think, due to poor availability of data. There was complete development of an urban economy, after a lapse of 1000 years. Nearly 60 towns or big cities emerged. The names of some of them were Campa, Rajagraha, Kausambi, Banaras and Kusinara. Pataliputra came later as the capital of the Maurya state. Industry and trade were headed by merchants (i.e. sethis). These merchants lived in towns. Traders did not belong to any tribe or janapada (i.e. a territorial unit). Systems of coinage, weights and measures were developed. The villagers produced several kinds of grains. They supplied the surplus grains to the artisans, merchants and others living in the towns. Artisans, at least a great number, were either self-employed or working at the houses of customers. There was a cash economy--punch marked coins--that promoted trade. This time, India was neither caste ridden nor an aggregate of stagnating villages. Side by side, the need to guarantee peace and order in the social formation required organization of an army whose recruitment and action were to be free from fetters of tribal loyalties and rulers. This also came gradually into existence.[14] All these coalesced into the political formation, the powerful state of the Mauryas.

What are the material foundations--the economy--of the state? Without dobut, it can be said that it was a state with a completely developed cash economy and cash based commodity production. Its growth covers a large period of the Indian social formation, definitely from c. 600 B.C. to c. 200 A.D.[15] From then onwards i.e. after c. 200 A.D. a self sufficient village economy became possible because artisans of the towns moved into the villages. The self-sufficient villages would increasingly dominate until the period of the Mughals when one would again discover a complete cash economy and commodity production.

The most brilliant feature of the Maurya state (c. 322 B.C. - c. 200 B.C.) was a nearly all pervading control of agriculture, industry and trade. It levied all variety of taxws on the people. The main material basis of the state's control was mining and metallurgy. It is interesting to note that Arthasastra, the main source of information for the economy of the Maurya state, did not describe "a state of the commodity producers."[16] The reason is that the state was the greatest exploiter of surplus and it converted substantial parts of that surplus into commodities in order to pay the army and bureaucracy. Therefore, this state was

> ...itself the greatest trader, the supreme monopolist. While it liquidated all tribal customs that had become hindrances to commodity production, it looked upon the private trader with utmost suspicion. The merchant is, along with the artisan, guild-actor, beggar, and sleight-of-hand juggler, listed among

> the 'thieves that are not called by the name of the thief' (Arth. 4.1), and treated accordingly.[17]

The sources of state revenue were many: (1) Sita land taxes, i.e. taxes from lands settled as well as farm directly under state supervision; (2) Rashtra taxes, i.e. taxes from lands inhabited by free settlers insofar as their freedom did not cause fiscal loss on the part of the state; (3) Customs on commodities for internal and external commerce; and (4) Profits derived from the state's supervision of many handicraft industries.[18] When agricultural produce, having undergone a complicated process of production from husking to storing, reached the last stage, then

> ...the final product was sold. A great deal went to other (i.e. other than those meant for state store houses) branches of the state service, such as the army; but it was transferred by sale with full accounting. The state paid its soldiers very well, but as much of the pay was to be gathered back as possible during a campaign by salaried state agents disguised as merchants selling their goods at army camps at double prices and returning the difference to the treasury. Every state servant was paid in cash; the scale of salaries, given in fullest detail, makes impressive reading. The highest pay was 48,000 panas year each for the king's chief priest, high counsellor, chief queen, queen mother, crown prince and commander-in-chief. The lowest was 60 per year for the menial and drudge labor needed on such a large scale in camp and on state works; this was called vishti, and there was an element of press-gang compulsion in it, but it was paid for, whereas the same word under feudalism meant the forced unpaid corvee labor which peasants and artisans had to give in lieu of or in addition to taxes as required by the king or local baron, ostensably for public good. ... The trader and merchant could purchase whatever was available from the state,

> or from any other source. Every peasant was free to sell his surplus, if any, to any purchaser or to barter it against any article of use.[19]

Without pointing out the nature of trade between distant country parts or of trade within local areas, allow me to quote another author to describe the economy existing up to the rise of the Maurya empire. This is in order to point out that self-sufficient economy was impossible earlier than the fall of the Maurya state.

> For local sale both retail and wholesale, there existed shops in the cities. These shops were mostly owned by single merchants. Of merchants some specialized in the trade of single commodities. Of such Panini refers to salt merchants, and spice-merchants. In addition to these, there were retail shop-keepers, who had their shops in villages or towns and sold various articles of every day use, and also retail traders and hawkers who moved with their goods on carts or donkeys. As to the shops, we hear of some for the sale of the textile fabrics, groceries, and sellers of flowers, grains, and other articles. Hotels and taverns too existed. Slaughter houses, ale-houses, and hotels for the sale of cooked meat and rice existed. As regards these last, we have repeated mention in the Arthasastra and some early Buddhist works. ... Sellers of vegetables and other minor commodities brought their goods and halted at the city-gate and hawked thence for sale. So also hunters and fishermen brought meat and fish from outside to the markets in the town or carried from door to door.[20]

Further, it must be said that there is other strong evidence to establish the existence of money economy in the Maurya state. This is reflected in the table fines in the Arthasastra. To give a few examples: The Brahamana priests were largely found to perform rituals; the ascetic who could not pay a fine for a minor transgression was assessed in terms of the

number of his prayers for the king. Prostitution was not crime, but a state enterprise. After retirement a prostitute could become a superintending Madam herself in the state service. When a person stole, the fine was to be twelve times the value of the stolen article. Here is the table of fines, prepared by Pran Nath from Arthasastra:[21]

TABLE OF FINES

Value of Stolen Articles Panas (i.e. monetary Units) (1)	Fines Panas (2)	Proportion between the figures in columns 1 and 2 (3)
1/4	3	1:12
1/2	6	1:12
3/4	9	1:12
1	12	1:12
2	24	1:12
3-4	36	1:12
4-5	48	1:12

Thus it is impossible to deny that a cash economy did not penetrate into "every corner of civic life."[22] In the Maurya state one can find a complete repudiation of Marx's thesis of the self-sufficient village as the economic unit of production in India.

But Marx was right too, in the sense that this self-sufficient village economy came into existence soon after the Maurya state fell into pieces. With many counter tendencies always at work, the self-sufficient villages would continue to exist until the Mughal period. But what is the reason for the development of this self-sufficient economy

as the unit of production in the Indian social formation?

As has been found, commodity production came, with some exceptions, to a halt. From c. 200 B.C. onwards villages with a basis in commodity production were giving place to villages which undertook to supply their internal demands for food and other indispensable manufactures. Religion became gradually dominant replacing the state mechanism of public force. The Arthasastra did not deliberately end commodity production, as Kosambi rightly points out. In spite of the progress of a money economy and thriving foreign trade with the Roman Empire in the post-Maurya period, we find a self-sufficient village economy was firmly entrenched on the soil of India. This grew in magnitude in the Gupta period when feudalism was beginning to develop. On the one hand, the rise of the self-sufficient village economy was somewhat due to the deliberate policy of the Maurya state. Although production was increasing considerably, it suffered as a whole because of freezing half of the collected tax by the policies of the Maurya state. In spite of great strides in agriculture and mining industry, money was not put to its further productive use. The growth of the Maurya economy also suffered because of the state policy to impose many customs duties levied on different varieties of commodities.

On the other hand, new village settlements arose with the rise of population. In this private enterprise took the initiative because of the lack of state supervision

and control. Traders profited from rising production just as the state did from increased revenue. The artisans were organizing into guilds under headmen. Guilds covered silk weavers to silkmen. But the guilds in the towns generally failed to supply essentials needed in the villages. The problem of transportation became acute. The gradual decline in silver coins and the rise of gold coins point to the flourishing trade in luxury articles. In other words, the coins in circulation fell in far short of keeping commodity production in conformity to the increased population and growth of new village settlements. This is evident, as has been shown elsewhere, in the rise of land grants as a means of payment. Later a feudal economy developed. Therefore, the problem of making the village self sustained was solved in the only way that remained open. The village began to have its own group of artisans--blacksmiths, carpenters, potters, priests, skinners of dead cattle, tanners, barbers, etc. Each of them was assigned a plot of land which he could cultivate if he needed. Guilds declined naturally. The artisans became part and parcel of the village system. As soon as self-sufficiency came to the village economy, the vices of casteism began to have its effect and provide for immobility. The cities began declining too. Patna, which was at one time a great city of the world, became a village by c. 600 A.D.[23]

The point is now clear that the village economy as the usual unit of the Indian social formation did not exist

from remotest times, as many might presume before and after Marx. On the other hand, that the village economies constituted the economy of India are also clear. Further, as a factor of stagnation in economic production the village economies themselves were important. But this was true only in a relative sense, for the economic progress of India in foreign trade up to the rise of the British in India illustrated significant strides made by artisans in the industrial sector of the economy. Again, there were other exceptions to the theme of stagnating village economy. For example, Kosambi points out that

> ... from Sanci down south, there was not the closed village economy, nor the anonymity that went with it. It must be remembered that though a great deal of the work at all these places came from donations too small to be recorded, they were cash donations nevertheless. There was considerable commodity production and exchange that enabled many sorts of artisans to accumulate money--artisans who would have nothing to donate in the ordinary self-contained village. ... The southern economy had (in places) reached a high level of cash transactions, and was based upon commodity production, mostly by guilds in which simple individuals at all levels could participate, down to ploughmen farmers (halakiya).[24]

As a matter of fact, the Indian social formation showed uniqueness in terms of an unequal development of the productive forces--technical implements, labor skills, fertility of the soil, methods of organization and raw materials. This uniqueness is extremely important to keep in mind in view of India's vast territory and population.

Marx's thesis on the AMP in respect of the self-

sufficient village holds good in a large part but not to a full extent for the entire period of feudalism (i.e. 300 A.D. - 1200 A.D.) in India.

As far as the main features of the feudal economy in India were concerned, it can be said that the dominant trend was localization of the economy as consisting of numerous units of localized production.[25] The tendency towards the development of a landed aristocracy has been stressed elsewhere from the beginning of c. 200 B.C. While that explains the appropriation of surplus or exaction of revenue in cash or kind, the unit of production remained the self-sufficient village economy. The different examples of transferring artisans and peasants along with the grants of land--secular or religious--illustrated this simple fact. The use of forced labor, I think, further enabled strengthening the village economy. Instances of the feudalization of the economy can be found under the rule of Palas and Pratihars. In these cases, markets attached to the villages were transferred since local needs were locally satisfied, and economic production for larger markets was not possible. But it may be noted that the Pratihar economy was not as closed as the Pala economy, since in the former there were indications of mobility and economic intercourse. This, however, did not substantially affect the rural economy under the Pratihars. Often monasteries and temples formed larger economic units based on the self-sufficient economy of the villages that

were transferred to those monasteries and temples. In many cases, such as land grants to temples in Rajasthan, Malawa and Gujrat, a part of the income in cash that was received by the state as levy on various goods was transferred back to the grantees (i.e. temples). In Orissa, a town inhabited by shopkeepers, oilmen, goldsmiths, bazaars ets. was transferred along with the grant of land. This demonstrated how traders and artisans were bound to a closed natural economy. The localization of the economy based on self-sufficient villages was strong in view of lesser usage of coins or transfers of towns, traders, peasants or artisans, and of conversion of revenues from trade and industry into grants. While this was the general pattern in Western and Northern India, there were also counter tendencies working at the same time against the localization of the economy. This, therefore, proves the futility of stretching any argument for a completely self-sufficient village economy existing all the time in India.

In Assam (a part of Eastern India) the village as an economic unit based on production by peasants and artisans did not exist. It appears by virtue of the fact that grants to Brahamanas consisted of big plots of land in forest and hill areas which were not conducive to the formation of any regular village settlement. Under the Maitrakas of Valabhi, the Rastrakutas, the Gurjara-Pratihars, the employment of visti or forced labor in land was a practice. But it was not so in the case of the Pramaras, the Chalukyas,

the Cahamanas. There were other cases symbolizing the weakening of the feudal order. Further, in many cases forced laborers were receiving exemptions by monetary payment. The greater use of coins illustrates this. Again, outside villages there were towns in Western India and the peasants could flee to avoid subjection. Usually they worked as artisans and craftsmen in these towns. Sometimes, as in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere, grants of land were too large. In these cases villages so granted were not isolated from each other sufficiently to give rise to any possibility of self-sufficiency for the villages. The reason is that the type of agricultural production in the villages varied according to the recommendation of the beneficiary on whom the grantee depended for management. Again it also depended on the needs of the grantee himself. In both cases the nature of production changed without any regard to the self-sufficiency of the villages. In Western India there were many towns. The needs of the towns involved a great deal of internal trade between them and the villagers--counter to the stagnation of the economy of the latter. Internal trades in many places of Rajasthan, Gujrat and Utter Pradesh also went against the continuation of stagnant economy of the villages. As a matter of fact, in the 11th and 12th centuries, Northern India had a commercial expansion. This also happened in the case of Western India, pointing to the weakening of the closed feudal economy. Although self-sufficiency seemed to be stronger in the Eastern rather than

in the Northern and Western India, it may be said that generally there was a revival of cash transactions by means of different types of coins.[26]

The picture that emerges is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, there was the tendency of a feudal economy based on self-sufficient villages becoming pervasive. On the other hand, there were counter tendencies at work, particularly after the 10th century. The conclusion is obvious. The closed economy became sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker in different regions. It proves that it is a gross mistake to assume that the Indian social formation was thoroughly stagnant. Even when the closed economy prevailed the counter tendencies were not completely absent.

Ashraf has described the condition of the village communities in the time of Turkish and Afgan rulers (c. 1200 A.D. - c. 1526 A.D.). He noted that at this time the village community was a self-sufficient unit with an organic and well-developed economic structure. Its major feature was a harmonious co-ordination of specialized function of its various component groups of workers. For the period under review he goes on to say that

> ... the village community was a working institution in full vigor and determined the outlook of the vast majority of the population of Hindostan. Its leading economic feature was production mainly for purposes of local consumption.[27]

In this period, like the early period of feudalization of the Indian economy, we find the village communities having an impact on the economy as a whole. The ratio of the rural population to the urban population stood at 89.8 to

10.2.

Even then, in this period there were counter tendencies in operation. Apart from a rise in production in Bengal and Gujrat, mainly of textile goods, one can point to a good deal of internal trade, which meant commodity production. There was also a revival of the cash economy. Trade and production in general were not on the decline. On the whole, "the state left the manufacture and distribution of all manufactured goods free from state control."[28] Inland trade and commerce could flourish because, among other factors, "the problem of carriage and transport was solved fairly well for merchants and carriers of goods. For communication on land, there were a number of roads and pathways running all over the country which were kept in good condition by the state for its administrative requirements, especially for the movement of big armies with their heavy baggage trains. The traders were also allowed to make use of all these facilities on land."[29] It is also known that industrial goods were usually made or manufactured particularly for sale in a suitable market.[30] There was also an organized group of brokers who successfully raised the prices of commodities by charging commission from both sellers and buyers. By the time of Sultan Firuz Tughlag (c. 1351 A.D. - c. 1388 A.D.), "the business rules and practice of brokers were sufficiently important to find a place in the legal compendium of the reign."[31]

In the period under review, Sultan Muhammed Tughlag (c. 1325 - c. 1351 A.D.) tried to introduce "token currency" but he failed. Otherwise the usual feature of the coins was their "monetary and not token value". The state tried to maintain the purity and weight of the coins. Jital was a copper coin. Silver tanka was another type of coin. It may be noted that this tanka was succeeded by Rupia of Sher Shah and Akbar, and by the Rupee of the modern times.[32] It appears that the Sultans (i.e. Emperors) paid the nobility in cash (i.e. in coins). That some form of cash economy was existent might be evident from the following table of the prices of some commodities.[33] The point is that people did not simply produce things which they immediately consumed.

TABLE OF PRICES DURING THE REIGNS OF

Commodities	Ala-ud-din	Muhammad Tughlag	Firuz Tughlag
	Prices in Jitals per Maund (28.78 lbs avoirdupois)		
1. Wheat	7 1/2	12	8
2. Barley	4	8	4
3. Paddy	5	14	-
4. Pulses	5	-	4
5. Lentis	3	4	4
6. Sugar (white)	100	80	-
7. Sugar (soft)	60	64	120, 140
8. Sheep (mutton)	10	64	-
9. Ghi (clarified butter)	16	-	100

Therefore, it is not entirely true to say the Indian social formation was completely under the domination of a closed, self-sufficient village economy. This is the reason why Chandra said: "It is necessary to emphasize that before the establishment of Mughal rule and the arrival in strength of European traders in India, the Indian economy was by no means a simple natural subsistence economy."[34] It can be said without controversy that merchant capitalism became stronger with the passage of time until India was taken over the the Britishers.[35]

The concept of a self-sufficient village economy seemed to have lesser or no significance in the reign of the Mughals (c. 1526 A.D. - c. 1757). There is no doubt that in the Mughal period there occured what Mukherjee calls "the expropriation of village communities."[36] As far as Marx's assumptions on the self-sufficient village economy are concerned, they are practically without any validitiy in the Mughal period. However, this must not be taken to mean that in India there remained no self-sufficiency of the villages at all. What is stressed is that the Indian economy was becoming more and more a money economy with heavier emphasis on commodity production. The villages remained self-sufficient to the extent that they were able to provide for certain needs. In terms of recent data, it is no longer possible to accept any argument that the pre-British Indian

> ... economy was based primarily on production for use, and not exchange, and that commodity production and money economy are entirely a gift of British rule. There are in fact strong grounds for supposing that cash nexus was established in the central parts of the Delhi Empire as early as the beginning of the 14th century; and there is overwhelming evidence at hand to suggest that over large parts of the Mughal Empire (16th and 17th centuries), the land revenue, which comprised the bulk of the peasant's surplus produce, was collected in money and not in kind.[37]

The Mughal economy was characterized by a separation, though not complete, of the rural from the urban economy.[38] The main trend in the collection of the revenues under the Mughals was in cash and not in kind.[39] Even when collections were made in kind, it was neither for immediate consumption nor for storage. Collections in kind were sold for cash. The rural economy was affected by the drainage of wealth, for in the process of collection some amount remained in the hands of those associated with collection. The mechanism of collection of revenues created conditions for the rise of the rural markets. As Habib says:

> When the land revenue was collected in cash, the revenue payer was compelled to sell his produce in order to get money to pay for it, but when it was collected in kind, then too, as we have noted, the revenue authorities preferred to sell it. In either case, most of the surplus was put on the market, and therefore, a very large portion of agricultural production would not be directly 'for use', but would be commodity production, properly speaking. The market mechanism once established must have reacted on the mode of agricultural production. It not merely introduced money relations into a system of 'natural economy', but also engendered a shift to high-grade crops and cash crops (e.g., from coarser

grains to wheat; and to cotton, sugarcane, indigo, poppy, tobacco, etc.).[40]

The plight and compulsion of the peasants had made it clear how the village economy was affected. The peasant could not very often reach the market; he was compelled to sell his produce to the merchants or village money-lenders. Many grain dealers-cum-merchants (i.e. banias), who arose because of the practice of collecting land revenue in cash, were acting as Mahajans (i.e. money-lenders) and shroffs (i.e. money-changers). The result, in all likelihood, was that the peasant received less than the market price of his commodities. Further, there also developed problems for the peasants because of the rise of local monopoly and malpractices in the market.[41]

It is also to be noted that the peasant did not sell his produce in the market only in order to pay land revenue or additional tax-levies. On occasions he borrowed money, and thus fell into debt, because he had to meet the expenses incurred in replacing draught cattle, in observing rites of marriage and bereavement or in litigations with others. He had to repay the loan in cash. When repaid in kind, the usurer could enhance his grains 'by fixing the rate of commutation and under-weighing the corn received'. In brief, the peasant had to enter into cash transactions in many ways. But there is little dispute that at least the peasants or sometimes a village community of peasants, had to borrow money to pay land revenue.[42]

Sometimes the peasants in the village communities

were affected by the rise of the system of cash crops i.e. the system of growing these crops which will, being more marketable, bring immediate cash returns. Many villages in the Mughal period resorted to cash crops with a view to receiving immediate returns. Such villages would obviously be in need of foodgrains. Trade became a necessity in such commodities as indigo, cotton, salt, gur, oil or butter in which most villages were rarely self-sufficient.[43] This gave rise to rural markets under the pressure of a money economy when land revenues were mostly collected in cash. In such circumstances, it is difficult to say that all villages retained self-sufficiency.

An important cause of erosion of the role of the village communities is that in the Mughal period the towns were provided with grains and other raw materials by villages. As it will be discussed later, in the towns population increased--from the rich mansabdars and jagirdars to petty traders and shopkeepers. In the words of Habib:

> The towns had not only to be fed by the country-side but to be supplied also with raw materials for their manufactures. It may be noted, however, that since there is no evidence that the villages depended in any way upon urban industry, the raw materials brought into the towns were probably confined only to those required for the luxury trades or for the ultimate use of the urban population. All the same, these together with the provisions needed for such large numbers could not but have comprised a fairly large proportion of the total agricultural production, and few villages could have been left unaffected by the pull of the urban market.[44]

The most important cause affecting the self-sufficiency of the villages and the peasants was the rise and consolidation of a variety of landed aristocrats from autonomous chiefs to petty revenue collectors like Muqaddams, Qanungos, and Jagirdars. By virtue of their interests, varying in quality and quantity, they steadily intensified the pressure of revenue collection on the peasants. The Mughal practice of paying its officers cash further tightened the pressure. More scrambles for acquiring Jagirs worsened the situation to a great extent. At the same time, it is notable that in the revenue collection system of the Mughals there was "no effective mechanism whereby restraint could have been put" against the increasing pressure for greater revenue regardless of the revenue paying capacity of any particular area or peasants.[45] The disintegration of the village communities was anything but obvious. The peasant found himself in the middle between the king and several intermediaries.

> Village communities fast disintegrated causing the obliteration of many cherished customary rights and privileges of the ryots. The cultivators gradually lost their customary rights and privileges, while as new classes intervened between the actual tillers of the soil and the state, the profits of agriculture could not go back to them but were intercepted by the increasing group of intermediaries. A class, not altogether new to India, the landless proletariat comprising of serfs and farm hands, also multiplied and was soon to come to great prominence in the economic life of the country.[46]

As a matter of fact the presence of a large mass of rural proletariat can hardly be denied in the Mughal state. The Indian social formation was not an aggregate of self-

sufficient village communities where peasants and artisans simply performed their jobs, and where nothing was a commodity other than the tribute handed over to the state, as Marx thought. Rather,the existence of a combination of a powerful money economy, large scale commodity production and a growing class of merchant capitalist in the Indian social formation present altogether a different picture. In particular the growth of a merchant class was aided by the policy of the Mughal emperors. Many royal persons including Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, Prince Dara, Princess Jahanara and many nobles like Ashaf Khan, Safi Khan, Mirzumla and others were merchant capitalists involved in foreign trade.[47] In fact merchant capitalism made much headway.[48] It can be argued that the creation of a huge rural proletariat was the result of money economy, commodity production, growth of various landed interests and a class of merchants.[49]

I have described, in broad outline, the role of the village communities in India, particularly with regard to the point of their self-sufficiency. In the following, a few words are appropriate about the towns and the division of labor.

Marx's accounts of towns (and villages) and the condition of division of labor, very often do not portray the actual situation that existed in the Indian social formation in various phases of its historical development. In his accounts, it appears that villages and cities were coterminous or that towns and big cities were merely military camps. When the king and his army moved, the entire city

population moved. Similarly, Marx did not note changes affecting the dividion of labor in India. Let me point out, in brief, that in India towns were not extensions of the villages; rather towns were trading centres. Again, there was a remarkable degree of specialization in the skills of the Indian artisans.

It is generally said that the modern Indian cities owe their position to the foreigners, but actually, to state the truth, "there were cities in India long before the machine age and before the feudal period."[50] Regarding the first beginning of the towns in India c. 2600 B.C. - c. 1500 B.C. it is instructive to note this: "It is without doubt that thickly populated and congested nuclei of houses, which can be rightly designated as towns, were populated by rulers (possibly priests), traders and craftsmen, who lived on the surplus produced by the peasant communities inhabiting the villages situated in the suburbs."[51]

In the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, one can find vivid description of the towns and their distinctness.[52] Cities or towns were described as surrounded by wide ditches and high walls. There existed fortifications, gates and towers in the towns. There lived moneyed men of all professions and merchants from different regions. There were stocks of all kinds of commodities for everyday use. Towns seemed to have been not only centres of cultural life but also for the distribution of goods and services. These towns or cities could be likened to "the small city states which

existed elsewhere in the world. ... Villages remained, as before productive areas. The ordinary agriculturists, the masses dwelt in the villages."[53] Immediately before the strong Maurya stare came into existence, there developed a strong urban economy on whose basis in fact the Maurya state, described elsewhere, could emerge.[54] The division of labor in early India also never remained static. As time passed, it became more complicated. In the post-Vedic age "various professions and avocations went through a process of specialization. It was hardly possible for a person to follow many professions simultaneously with efficiency."[55] In describing the ornament industry in India between the 6th century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D. Chauhan refers, among other things, to "strict vigilance" of the superintendent over the manufacture of skilled workers in respect of "quality and quantity" of the ornament industry.[56] Specialization of the Indian artisan was remarkable for much of India's foreign trade between c. 200 B.C. and c. 300 A.D.[57]

From the period of the Guptas onwards, one finds the development of the guilds in the towns--separated from the villages--with much autonomy. The hostile attitude of the Gupta administration affected the peasants in the villages, whereas it benefited the people living in the cities. The city people were exempt from many taxes.[58] From Kautilya, the author of Athasastra, it is known that towns were mainly industrial and were inhabited by artisans of different crafts

and merchants organized into guilds.[59] Describing guilds in Southern India, Verma states that the

> ... guilds maintained their own militia and had complete freedom to do whatever they liked in recovering the dues from their clientele, with all connivance of feudal lords.[60]

In the peak period of feudalism (c. 1000 A.D. - c. 1200 A.D.) in India, the towns acted as the counterforce against the self-sufficiency of the villages. The number of the towns--distinct from the villages--in this period was not inconsiderable. These towns, which were "thickly populated", were fed by villages. There are examples too when the peasants oppressed by visti (i.e. forced labor) escaped to the towns where they worked as artisans and craftsmen.[61] During the period of Turkish and Afgan Sultans (i.e. Emperors) in India, the cities inhabited by nobles, common people, traders and others, were mobile. The quarters of king and nobles, and dwellings of others were quite well designed. Towns (assuming smaller than cities) were well protected by walls. In times of peace these were centres of distribution of industrial goods and agricultural produce.[62] The development of enormous industries proves further specialization of the Indian artisans.[63]

In the Mughal period, the condition of the towns was different than the one portrayed by Marx. The main foundation of the Mughal empire was based on a distinct urban economy. Towns and cities were very much in Marx's mind, consisted of several thousand permanent people engaged in

various activities ranging from revenue collection to petty trades.[64] During the 17th century numerous major cities--Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Surat, Burhanpur, Patna, Cambay, and Dacca--and several major towns --Sarhind, Sonargaon, Shahzadpur, Somnath etc.--were important urban centres of trade.[65] In Akbar's empire, there were 120 big cities and 3,200 townships (qasbas) each having 100 to 1000 villages around them.[66] It is now known that there was a significant rise in the urban population. In the beginning of the 17th century largest towns of the Mughal India are reported to have been more populous than the largest European towns.[67] The following is a table showing the population of some towns.[68]

TABLE SHOWING THE POPULATION

OF THE INDIAN CITIES

Name	Year	Population
Agra	1609	500,000
	1629-1643	660,000
Patna	1671	200,000
Masulipatam	1672	200,000
Surat	1663	100,000
	1700	200,000

TABLE SHOWING THE POPULATION OF

SOME EUROPEAN CITIES

Name	Year	Population
Naples	1600	250,000
	1700	215,000
Rome	1600	110,000
	1700	135,000
Venice	1600	150,000
	1700	140,000
Frankfurt	1600	25,000
	1700	25,000
Lyon	1550	70,000
	1700	90,000
Paris	1600	300,000
	1700	500,000
Amsterdam	1600	100,000
	1700	180,000
London	1600	250,000
	1700	600,000
Sevilla	1600	150,000
	1650	125,000

Inspite of the resistance of the village communities to the growth of 100 percent money economy in India it may be said that the growing money economy drew the peasants and artisans from the developed areas into the vortex of a world market.[69]

> The enormous revenues of the ruling class and the drainage of a large part of the agricultural produce to the towns through the channels of commerce also helped to create and maintain a large non-agricultural population consisting of various classes such as artisans and laborers, petty traders and merchants, and the nobility

> and its hangers-on. Naturally, they were far more immersed in pure monetary relationship than the rural population.[70]

The urban artisans, besides the wage earners in the pay roll of the king or nobility, manufactured goods out of materials which they procured themselves. They sold the finished products directly to customers. There were other urban artisans who carried on production not in their own but on behalf of the merchants, more probably enganged in long-distance trades. Manrique (1629-1643) writes that at the town Patna there were merely 600 brokers and middlemen most of whom were wealthy.[71] As far as the specialization of the skill of the Indian artisans is concerned, it seems that it might have reached an extremely high level. Pelsaert attests to the existence of hundred crafts among goldsmiths, painters, embroiders, builders etc. in Agra. He says that "for a job which one man would do in Holland here passes through four men's hands before it is finished."[72] Finally, let me conclude with the following words of Mukherjee:

> During the Mughal period there was in India a considerable variety of crafts and handicrafts which, indeed, exhibited a more advanced economic and financial organization than the crafts in contemporary Europe. In the first place, in several handicrafts the specialization of the tasks advanced to the extent that particular groups of artisans came to undertake distinct processes in the chain of production. Such integration and co-ordination of production were hardly reached in European handicrafts. Secondly, there were whole villages and <u>muhallas</u> of cities and towns which devoted themselves to production of specialized products, whether cotton or silk fabric, gold, silver and

brass manufacture, bidri work, or ivory, to mention only a few that commanded both Indian as well as foreign markets.73

NOTES

1. D.D. Kosmabi, Ancient India: A History of its Culture and Civilisation (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), p. 17.

2. Cf. A.S. Altekar, "Teachings of History", in A.R. Desai (ed.), Rural Sociology in India (Bombay: Popular Prakasan, 1969), pp. 169-70. A distinction between 'community' and 'state' can be made. A community has no rigid territorial limits and is a matter of degree, i.e., a network of social relations, here dense and there thinner. A state has rigid territorial limits and may contain many communities. The state is a product of class conflict, whereas village communities are not so. In case of village communities in India, we find that from their very existence, one class rested on the surplus produced by other classes.

3. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (Hereafter this book will be abbreviated as Introduction), (Bombay: Popular Prakasan, 2nd ed., 1975), p. 11.

4. Ibid., p. 85.

5. For the position and functions of the Sudras and their relation to dasas (servants), in detail, see R.S. Sharma, Sudras in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1958).

6. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 86. The concept class can be defined as follows: In so far a number of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes, and put them in hostility to the latter, they form a class. See Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), p. 106.

7. For details see Kosambi, An Introduction, pp. 80-141; also his Ancient India, pp. 84-120.

8. For a succinct discussion, see S. C. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society (Calcutta: Firma KLM Ltd., 1978), especially pp. 39, 62-3, 70, 71, 78, 91, 117.

9. Kosambi, An Introduction, p. 159.

10. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 120.

11. Cf. Kosambi, An Introduction, p. 120.

12. Cf. Ibid., pp. 185-239.

13. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 152; see also his, An Introduction, p. 216.

14. For interesting details, see Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 124-6; G.L. Adhya, Early Indian Economics (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966), p. 82; R.S. Sharma, Light on Early Indian Society and Economy (Bombay: Manaltalas, 1966), pp. 60-3.

15. Sharma, Light on Early Indian Society and Economy, pp. 65-78. For different tables indicating units of weights, measures, coinage, rates of interest and also prices of articles of consumption and luxury, see Pran Nath, A Study in the Economic Condition of Ancient India (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1929), pp. 71-113. In the tables cited, the historical periods have been indicated. From the tables it also appears that some form of payment in cash or commodity production weight have existed, of course, with major breaks.

16. Kosambi, An Introduction, p. 216.

17. Ibid.

18. See Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 148-9; Sharma, Light on Early Indian Society and Economy, pp. 65-70.

19. Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 153-55.

20. N. Bandopadhyay, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 86.

21. Pran Nath, A Study in the Economic Condition of Ancient India, p. 86.

22. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 157.

23. For details, see Ibid., pp. 194-98.

24. Kosambi, An Introduction, pp. 272, 275.

25. The following discussion is based on Sharma's Indian Feudalism c. 300 - 1200 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), pp. 110-34, 210-62.

26. For elaboration of the forces working at weakening the self-sufficient village economy, see Ibid., pp. 242-62.

27. K.M. Asraf, Life and Conditions of the People of Hindostan (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970), pp. 115-6.

28. Ibid., p. 125.

29. Ibid., p. 136.

30. Cf. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 139. For other details about bankers, petty business men etc. see Ibid., pp. 136-42; for foreign trade see Ibid., pp. 142-48.

32. For details, see Ibid., pp. 287-89. This book also describes weights and measures prevalent in this period.

33. Ibid., pp. 100, 290. Care must be taken to note that the contents of the table are tentative.

34. S. Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India During the Seventeenth Century", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 3, (1966), p. 322.

35. For detail, see Ibid., pp. 321-31; see I. Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", Journal of Economic History, Vol. 29 (1969), pp. 32-78.

36. Radhakamal Mukherjee, The Economic History of India, 1600-1800 (Allahabad: kitab Mahal, 1967), p. 81.

37. Habib, "Usury in Medieval India", Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 6 (1963-4), p. 393.

38. I shall refer to the position of towns later in this section.

39. Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India During the Seventeenth Century", p. 326; see also N. Hasan, "The Position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire," Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1964), No. 4, p. 112.

40. Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", p. 41.

41. Cf. Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707 (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 78-80.

42. Cf. Habib, "Usury in Medieval India", pp. 394-5.

43. Cf. Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, pp. 58-9, 77.

44. Ibid., p. 77.

45. Cf. Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", pp. 40-1; Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India During the Seventeenth Century", pp. 326-7.

46. R. Mukherjee, The Economic History of India, 1600-1800, p. 85.

47. See Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India During the Seventeenth Century", pp. 323-24; also see Hasan, "The Positions of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", p. 112.

48. Cf. Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", p. 71.

49. Cf. Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, pp. 120-22.

50. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 53. For the urban foundation of Indian civilization, see Ibid., 53-71.

51. Sharma, "Economic Life and Organisation in Ancient India", in G.S. Metraux, and F. Crouzet, Studies in the Cultural History of India (Agra: Published under the auspices of UNESCO, S.L. Agarwala, 1965), p. 26.

52. There is controversy about the exact time of the composition of these epics. Roughly speaking they were composed between c. 400 B.C. and c. 200 B.C.

53. Bandyopadhyay, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, p. 328.

54. See Sharma, Light on Early Indian Society and Economy, pp. 60-78; Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 88-91.

55. P.C. Jain, Labour in Ancient India (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1971), p. 37.

56. R.P. Chauhan, "Ornament Industry in Ancient India", in D.C. Sircar (ed.), Early Indian Trade and Industry (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1972), pp. 46-7.

57. Cf. Adya, Early Indian Economics, pp. 46-78.

58. See Jain, Labour in Ancient India, pp. 59-60.

59. B. Lahiri, "Guilds in Ancient India and the Evidence of Coins", in D.C. Sircar (ed.), Early Indian Trade and Industry, p. 69.

60. O.P. Verma, "Organisation and Functions of South Indian Guilds", in Ibid., p. 76.

61. Cf. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, pp. 243-46.

62. Asharf, Life and Conditions of the People of Hindostan, pp. 116, 199, 209.

63. Ibid., pp. 124-35.

64. For interesting calculation of the population of these two big cities, see S. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Economy and Society", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 9 (1972), pp. 398-402.

65. For more details see I. Prakash, "Organisation of Industrial Production in Urban Centres in India During the Seventeenth Century with Special Reference to Textile", in B.N. Ganguli (ed.), Readings in Indian Economic History (London: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 45.

66. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Economy and Society", pp. 408-9.

67. Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", p. 61.

68. Ibid., Please note that the estimates may not be fully reliable. But it certainly gives an indication of the number of population in those towns, see also Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India During the Seventeenth Century", pp. 322-23. For table concerning the European cities, see Carlo M. Cipolla, Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), pp. 281-3.

69. See Chandra, "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India During the Seventeenth Century", p. 326.

70. Habih, "Usury in Medieval India", p. 398.

71. Habih, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", pp. 66-8; R. Mukherjee, The Economic History of India, p. 83.

72. F. Pelsaert, Jahangir's India, W. H. Moreland and P. Geyl (trans.), (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1925), p. 60. For interesting use of tools and other technical implements see Habib, "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India, pp. 62-5.

73. Mukherjee, The Economic History of India, p. 87.

CHAPTER FOUR

The State in Indian Social Formation

It has to be admitted that Marx's analysis of the role of the state in the Indian social formation is far from satisfactory. It is extremely inadequate. When his analysis of the state is stretched to cover all phases--from remotest antiquity down to the Mughal era--of the historical development of the Indian social formation, it sounds plainly absurd as I intend to show in this chapter. The role assigned to the state in the AMP is in sharp contrast to the one assigned to the European pre-capitalist societies. It is curious that in the whole thesis of the AMP, the state is simply treated as "a higher unity" standing above any kind of class antagonisms or class struggles. The very thesis of the AMP is disturbingly silent even to recognise any potential source of future class contradictions in the Indian social formation. It is my understanding that as a whole Marx's analysis of the state in India is both insufficient and simplistic. In this chapter, I shall outline that, in India, the state always served class interests; that despotism was alien to the Hindu theory of kingship; that the state was always in the middle between landed aristocracy or merchant class and peasantry; and that there were cases of peasants' rebellion against the ruling classes whose interest the state always served in varying degrees.

THE CONCEPT OF KINGSHIP IN HINDU AND MUSLIM LITERATURE

To begin, it is inappropriate and completely misleading to regard the king as a despot if one takes note of the Hindu theory of kingship. Neither it is true to say, as has been demonstrated in chapter two, that in India there was no private property in land. The existence of private property is clear also in terms of the concept of kingship in India. Therefore, it seems that few words should be said in order to clarify the position of the king in India so that the word 'despotism' is not unnecessarily applied in order to explain the role and function of the state in the Indian social formation.

Despotism is generally defined as a form of authority with the following characteristics: (a) absence of customary or legal institutions on the scope of the authority; (b) an arbitrary manner of exercising it. Negatively, despotism is synonymous with tyranny, autocracy and authoritarianism. Sometimes a distinction is made between despotism and benevolent/enlightened despotism.[1] Given this understanding, it appears wrong to view the Indian kings as despot. Neither is there any absence of checks - religious, customary or otherwise - on the exercise of the power and authority of the king.

From the earliest times the king has been regarded as a "servant of the people" and his title "rests on a contract between him and the subjects, he agreeing to protect them and to secure them the prosperity and to receive in return taxes

as wages of government."[2] Sukraniti stated that the king who follows his own will becomes the cause of miseries. He would then become stranged from his kingdom and alienated from his subjects.[3] Further, "the king who does not listen to the counsels of ministers about things good and bad to him, is a thief in the form of a ruler, an exploiter of the people's wealth."[4] Kautilya, in his Arthasastra, advised the king to seek counsel from ministers who were born of high family and who possessed wisdom, bravery or purity of purpose.[5] In the whole range of history or literature there existed no cause where the kingship involved unlimited or unchecked power; neither it symbolised any divinity in the person of the king. In other words, the concept of kingship did not involve what is known as the claim of Divine Right.[6] In India, all sources indicate that the king was dasa or servant. Especially, the king's allegiance to Dharma (law and social ethics) was a central theme of Hindu political philosophy. The kingship had never been allowed to be considered the "king's managership of his private domain but was always to be regarded as a public trust. ... Manu repeatedly emphasised that the highest duty of the king was to maintain the righteous social system which was the basis of social justice or dharma ..."[7] In fact, in Hindu concept of kingship Danda (i.e. coercion or sanction) and Dharma were the basic principles by which the kings were guided. Danda acted almost like a two-edged sword and cut both ways. It was a corrective of social ills and a terror to the people. It was a purifying instrument as far as the king's

duties were concerned. By the doctrine of danda

> ... the state is conceived as a pedagogic institution or moral laboratory, so to speak, not necessarily a Lycurgan barrack, of course. It is an organization in and through which men's natural vices are purged, and it thereby becomes an effective means to the general uplifting of mankind.[8]

The maintenance of dharma was the precious prescription of all Hindu literature for all kings. As "Dharma is the creation of the state, as such has the sanction of danda. ... dharma appears as matsyanyaya (disorder) disappears, and dharma ceases to exist with the extinction of the state."[9] Therefore, the king as any other public servant should rule according to the scruples of danda and dharma. The rights and interests of the people, according to Mahabharata and Arthasatra were also safeguarded by the council of ministers. They constituted the sole prop of the state.[10] In fact, arbitrary monarchy had no place in Hindu literature as legitimate. Essentially for all practical purposes

> The Hindu Kingship never developed into autocracy. The Hindu king was merely one limb of the body politic which consisted ... of the king, the Council (i.e. the government), the durga, the fort (the Army), the people, the treasury, (i.e. economic prosperity and public finance), and the territory ... The most powerful king could not make himself the combination of all powers because such an idea was not only against the Rajdharma (the duty of the king), but against the prevailing conception of the people.[11]

The concept of despotism was also unknown to Muslim law and literature. The emperor was generally considered there as protector and servant of the people. His bravery and courage

should be dedicated to maintaining the well-being of the poor, weak and believers of God.[12] Abul Fazal, in his Ain-i-Akbari suggested that the king should possess all the noble qualities. Further, he should be above any religious differences.

> The ideal king or just monarch is a wise, enlightened, just and God fearing - a lover of all people, cherisher of all sects and religions, shepherd of his subjects, iron fortress and celestical armour of the weak. ... under the rule of a true king, sincerity, health, chastity, justice, polite manners, faithfulness, truth ... are the result.[13]

The traces of a responsible monarchy are also found in Koran (the Religious Book of the Muslims). The Quranic law suggests that "the sovereign is only the commander of the true believers (amirul-mumnin) and is responsible to the general body (jamait) of the Muslims for the proper discharge of his duties."[14]

The afore-mentioned discussion of the concept of kingship points to the fact that theoretically despotism was out of the question in the pre-capitalist Indian social formation. But this should not be taken to mean that the king or the state in India performed what the Hindu and Muslim religious or law books prescribed. As for myself, I rather look at the state, rather than the king as personification of the state. The concept of state is thus the starting point of my analysis. Further, in this perspective, the state is a class state. A related principle is that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.[15] But before I go into the analysis of class origins or class functions of the state in the Indian social formation let me review very briefly

the nature of the political and administrative system that existed in pre-British India.

DIFFERENT FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE

In different times different forms of state such as republics, oligarchies, diarchies or monarchies prevailed. Early Indian literature very often mentioned republican (i.e. a political system in which public offices are not hereditary but are filled on the basis of election) types of system, usually referred as Sabha (meeting together), Samiti or Sangha. Some of them ruled over small city states while the territories of others were fairly big. In fact, the early Vedic period (c. 3000 B.C. - c. 1000 B.C.) was often considered an age of communal institutions. These institutions such as the Gana, the Sabha, the Samiti were mainly tribal in character.[16] Very little is known about the functioning of these communal institutions definitively. Sabha and Samiti were two popular bodies which used to assist the king in the administrative affairs. Sometimes the representatives of these two assemblies elected the king on people's behalf. The king considered the advice of these assemblies of supreme importance and could not possibly conduct administration without their support. The judicial character of these popular bodies were emphasized as the upholder of dharma (i.e. law and social ethics). The Sabha was called 'trouble'

and 'vehemence' signifying that it brought trouble and punishment for the mischiefs and culprits.[17] Both Buddhist and Jain literature also offered some information about these assemblies. But the democratic character of these assemblies were seriously undermined when economic inequality developed and the king emerged as the principal figure in the political system. Eventually the major form of the government turned out to be monarchy. The character of the monarchy became hereditary in majority cases. There were also some aristocracies where the king was mainly one of among many Kshatriyas (warrior class). Starting from later Vedic period (c. 1000 B.C. - c. 600 B.C.)

> ... the power was vested not in the whole population, but in the members of a small privileged order, mostly consisting of kshatriyas and perhaps of the Brahamanas (the highest caste) also in a few cases. The Hindu polity worked in a society that had accepted the principle of the caste system, which laid down that government was primarily the functional duty of the Kshatriyas, assisted to some extent by the Brahamanas.[18]

Sharma, who traced the origins of the ancient Indian polity says this:

> From the Indian point of view, considerations of preserving family, property and varna system played the most vital part in the origin of the state. ... In post-Vedic times, from c. 600 B.C. onwards, varna or social class superseded tribal elements and emerged as an important factor in law and politics.[19]

In Kautilya's Arthasatra there were references of a few oligarchical forms of the state.[20] In fact, the state in

ancient India passed through several phases of tribal democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy and monarchy which was more than what could be conveyed only through the concept of Oriental despotism. Its political functions ranged from the maintenance of law and order to the conduct of war and foreign relations or from punishment of foreign offenders to the undertaking of spies.[21] Its economic functions were more than the collection of taxes or receipt of tribute from the village community or from the direct producers. Although these functions varied from time to time, they included several forms of taxes such as those on merchandise of exports and imports, on wines or liquors, or duties for owners of ships and carts etc. With further material developments, especially with the rise of the Mauryas (c. 200 B.C.) the state seemed to have exercised controls over forests, mines, prices, profits and wages.[22] There were the guilds or private agencies which flourished along with the consolidation of the political authority (c. 200 B.C. onwards). During c. 500 B.C. to c. 200 A.D. in general, the state in India was functionally an elaborate organisation consisting of four elements: (a) The king who was theoretically the supreme head of the executive, legislative and military branches of the political system; (b) the ministers who were men of character and who held various positions; (c) the Council which consisted of administrative and political advisors other than ministers; and (d) the bureaucracy, which consisted among others, of the following offices: the high

priest, the commander-in-chief, the chief judge, the door-keeper, the high treasurer and the collector general. In the feudal era, especially from 7th to 12th centuries the political and administrative systems of different regions of Indian social formation were fundamentally similar. Everywhere the feudal conditions of the supremacy and of vassalage were observed.[23]

The political and administrative systems of Mughals (c. 1525 A.D. - c. 1757 A.D.) no doubt was much more centralised than its predecessor in the feudal era. Mughal assignees and grantees (i.e. Mansabdars and jaigirdars) had much less power politically and administratively in comparison to their counterparts of the feudal days due to the urgent need on the part of the Mughal emperors to challenge the powers and authorities of the autonomous chiefs. But, in spite of all the efforts on their part (i.e. the Mughal emperors) "a very considerable part of the Mughal dominions remained under the rule of their old hereditary chiefs and was never directly administered by the Imperial government."[24] Therefore, the administrative system of the Mughals had to differ from province to province depending on the position of the local authority in relation to the sovereign in Delhi (the capital of Mughal emperors). Without going into the details of the administrative machinery of the Mughal empire some important points could be mentioned to give a fairly accurate picture.

The chief departments were the following in the Central government: (1) The Exchequer and the Revenue;

(2) The Imperial Households; (3) The Military Pay and Accounts office; (4) Common Law, both Civil and Criminal; (5) Religious Endowments and Charity office; (6) Censorship of Public Morals office; (7) The Artillery office; and (8) The Intelligence and Post office. The Prime-minister was generally called Wazior (i.e. chancellor), sometimes without any particular portfolios.[25] In general, the provincial administration of the Mughal empire was generally an exact miniature of the Central government. The titles of the officials were only different.

The officers of a Provincial (divided into cities and districts) administration in the Mughal Empire: (1) Subadar, the regulator of the province, who maintained law and order, helped in smooth collection of revenue and executed royal decrees and regulations sent to him; (2) The Diwan, the chancellor of the Exchequer, a rival of the subadar. The subadar and diwan kept watch on each other on all the administrative policies; (3) Faujdar, the assistant of the subadar in maintaining peace and order and in discharging other executive functions; (4) Kotwal, the chief of city police and the peace-keeper of the city. Besides these, there were news reporters, superintendents of courts, customs and inland transit duties, poor relief department, jewel market, hospitals, rent-collectors and corn market.[26]

This portrayal of Mughal administration certainly pointed to the obvious fact that it was impossible for the Mughal emperor to exercise his power without any restraint.

Another point, which I think, needs attention concerns the role of the state in Mughal India in public works. It is highly questionable whether the state became prominent due to its role in public works as Marx's thesis up to Grundrisse seemed to imply. It has now been shown beyond doubt that private enterprises also undertook public works. As Lord Ronaldshay attests to this:

> The indigenous irrigation system, consisted of tanks and channels which were built partly by individual benefactions and partly by communal enterprise.[27]

Let me now turn to the analysis of the class nature of the state in Indian social formation.

THE CLASS CHARACTER OF THE INDIAN STATE

If a class society can be defined as a society divided between a class of producers and non-producers, then there is no doubt that from earliest times of history, the Indian social formation was a class society. There is an interpretation of Harrappan culture which, along with Mahenjodaro, was the earliest social formation discovered in India:

> A large city like Harappa implies the existence of supporting territory which produced enough surplus food. The city normally becomes the seat of power. That is, the existence of one or more cities means the presence of a state. Some people had to produce a food surplus which was taken away by others who did not produce but who might plan, direct, or control operations. This merely says that no cities could exist in antiquity without class division and division of labour, based upon the rule of a few over many.[28]

It can be contended that the state in India was a class state in terms of a class division between producers and consumers. As in the ancient republics of Greece and Italy, political power in India was vested "not in the whole population but in the members of a small privileged order mostly consisting of Kshatriyas and perhaps of the Brahamanas."[29] It has already been pointed out that in the later Vedic period a class structure evolved within the four castes.[30] With certain exceptions, class divisions arose as soon as property-holding and trade exchange reached an advanced stage. The difference between Ancient Greek and Roman pre-capitalist social formations, and later Vedic Indian social cannot be over-emphasised. "That the Sudra (lowest caste) was not bought and sold as in ancient Greece and Rome was due to no kindness on the part of the Indo-Aryans. It was simply that commodity and private property had not developed far enough."[31] The exploitation of the Aryan peasant (vaisya) and non-Aryan helot (sudra) by the Brahamanas and Kshatriyas remained the characteristic of later Vedic Indian social formation.[32] Actually those who held cows, horses and chariots formed the ruling class over the dispossessed and impoverished lower castes who were never members of Sabha.

> Considerations of varna apparently influenced the various organs of the state such as the king ministers or high functionaries, the parisad, the paura, the janapada and army. ... As a social order the vaisyas or the sudras never acquired any dominant role in politics.[33]

In India the first state which was free from tribal restrictions and able to hold all caste-classes together, was the Maurya state. In this connection, before the class character of the state in the Indian social formation can be revealed, it is necessary to indicate the rise of the dominant c classes who were in charge of the state in India.

I have already described in the chapter on private property that in India private ownership of land existed in addition to the royal ownership of public property (i.e. mines, forests, wastes lands, etc.) This is not of course, to suggest that direct producers, the peasants, were owners of land; probably it is true to suggest that most of the peasants - vaisyas and sudras were landless. This trend was evident from the later Vedic era. On the other hand, a powerful landed aristocracy consisting mainly of the Brahamanas grew up prior to the rise of the strong Maurya state. After the Gupta period the practice of giving away lands to the priests became the order of the day from c. 300 A.D. onwards. The creation and gradual emergence of a class of landed aristocrats had enormous implication in relation to the different states in different times. In other words, this is to suggest that most often the state was dominated by the landed aristocracy consisting of the Brahamanas, especially, and of the Kshtriyas to a certain extent. This is however not to suggest that all Brahamanas or Kshtriyas were landed aristocrats. In any case, the political and economic domination of the landed aristocracy was a pattern that continued up to the time of the Mughal state when it came increasing to be under the domination of the merchant interests.

Let me cite some examples of the relationship between the landed aristocracy and the state. In Arthasastra Kautilya refers to several states such as Licchavis, Vrjis, Madrakas, Kukurs, Kurus and Panchala ruled by persons with the title raja (i.e. king). It seems quite likely that the members of the ruling councils, in these states were all men of considerable property in the shape of estates, and each of these members had his own small army and senapati and bhandagarika, elephants, etc.[35] A typical example is provided by Nath:

> As far as the janapada of Vaisali was concerned, it was entirely under the control of noble-families (raja-kulas) of Licchavis. Its political conditions was very much the same as that of England after the Norman conquest. The population of Vaisali janapada was about 168,000, and, the number of rajas (estate-owners) about 7,707. The government officers, presidents, vice-presidents, chancellors of the exchequer, courtiers, etc., were selected from these rajas.[36]

It has already been pointed out that the Maurya state was a highly centralised state. It was the policy of Kautilya to resist the landed aristocracy from seizing the political power.[37] The Maurya state, particularly at Kautilya's time, was itself "by far the greatest landowner, the principal owner of heavy industry and even the greatest producer of the commodities. The ruling class was, if not virtually created by and for the state, at least greatly augmented as part of the administration; the higher and lower bureaucracies, the enormous standing army of a half a million men (by c. 300 B.C.) with its officers of all castes and diverse origins; as important as either, a second but hidden army of spies and secret agents--these were the main supports of the new state."[38] However, the state was

not free from class character or possibilities of manipulation. The reason is that the Maurya state did pay salaries to the top officials in the form of land grants, and hence indirectly promoted the cause of landed interests. Further, the top officials, i.e. ministers, bureaucrats, as well as military, were drawn from the Brahamanas and Kshtriyas--those constituting the landed aristocracy.[39]

What was the position of those oppressed most? There is no reliable data on the basis of which one can make out a case for the existence of resistance by the exploited class--mainly the peasants. For the purpose of this section, I would call it "class struggle" by the peasants and others. In general, it is reasonable to say that "the relation between landowners (employers) and the tillers of the soil (agricultural workers) appeared to have been harmonious enough in ancient India."[40] This may be due to the fact that agricultural production was ample, in spite of occasional famines.[41] In a sense resistance was impossible in view of the use of repressive power of the state machinary. For example, we find that king and his officials used to come to the village to collect revenues. "More often, on such occasions, the armies of kings trampled and destroyed the ripe crops of the farmers who complained against the conduct of government officials and atrocities commited by soldires on them."[42] But there is some evidence to the effect that ordinary people including peasants provided some resistance. The friction between them and the ruling class resulted only in the transfer of power from one faction to the

other of the ruling class.[43]

In the feudal period, the landed aristocracy further consolidated its hold on the polity and economy of India. In this period of large scale political decentralisation, the feudatories became practically political chiefs of their respective estates. Particularly, in later times (second half of the feudal period) the Indian state was based "upon a powerful landowning class that collected taxes, supplied cavalry and officers for the army, and was held together by a strong chain of direct personal loyalties that bound retainer to baron, vassal to lord, noble to king."[44] As a whole, the economy was also dominated by landed aristocracy. Describing the political and economic role of the landed aristocracy between 8th and 12th centuries Majumdar says:

> ... land becomes the dominant form of wealth and the chief instrument of economic power. Kings and feudatories were not unmindful of the fact that land and its product should not go beyond their control. ... In a large number of (other) cases, kings made their sons, brothers, nephews and close relatives their fief holders. ... The formation of territorial principalities had great impact on politics, administration and economy of this country. Landed aristocrats held many of the superior posts and became members of the governing body. Of course, enfeofment did not bring the concession of an office. The feudatories also directed the rural and urban economy. With the exception of Gujrat, they gained control over production and distribution. As some merchants became more interested in transforming them as feudatories, landed aristocrats gained a measure of control of the investment-capital.[45]

The oppression of the ruling class, i.e. landed aristocracy and the condition of peasants have been already discussed elsewhere. But in this period too, we possess very little

data directly bearing on the resistance of class struggle by the peasants. Sharma argues that peasants' resistance usually took two forms. In the first form, the peasants preferred to leave their villages for towns where they could start living as artisans, hired labourers, etc. Often, it was impossible in view of their being tied to the land. In the second form the peasants rose in revolt. There was a revolt of the Kaivartas against the Pala king in Eastern Bengal. The rising was "so formidable and resistance was so strong that Rampala had to mobilize not only his own resources but also those of all his feudal lords to put down their revolt. It was probably a peasant uprising directed against the Palas, who made a common cause with their vassals against the Kaivarttas."[46]

The Mughal state, strong and centralised as it was at certain point of time, created favourable conditions for the growth of trade and commerce. By its policies it enabled the rise of industries and manufactures thus leading to conditions conducive to the growth of money economy and also merchant class. If this be considered a positive contribution of the Mughal state, it had its negative role too, the exploitation of the peasantry especially.

> The surplus agricultural production, appropriated from the peasants, was shared between the Emperor, his nobles and zamindars; the power exercised by the zamindars over the economic life of the country--over agricultural production, handicrafts and trade--was tremendous. In spite of the constant struggle between the Imperial government and the zamindars to secure a greater share of

> the produce, the latter became partners of the former in the process of economic exploitation. Politically there was a clash of interest between the Mughal government and the zamindars, and yet simultaneously the zamindars as a class became the mainstay of the empire.[47]

The plight of the common people including the peasantry has been attested by both Pelsaert and Bernier. The former clearly pointed to the utter subjection and poverty of the common people.[48] "Villages which owing to some shortage of produce, are unable to pay the full amount of the revenue-farm, are made prize, so to speak, by their masters and governors, and wives and children sold on the pretext of a charge of a rebellion."[49] Bernier also drew attention, in a very clear way, to the despair of the peasantry. The general picture of the oppression of the labour can be best described in the words, ignored by Marx, of Bernier:

> Of the vast tracts of country constituting the empire of Hindoustan, many are little more than sand, or barren mountains, badly cultivated, and thinly peopled; and even a considerable portion of the good land remains untilled from want of labourers; many of whom perish in consequence of the bad treatment they experience from the Governors. These poor people, when incapable of discharging the demands of their rapacious lords, are not only often deprived of the means of subsistence, but are bereft of their children, who are carried away as slaves. Thus it happens that many of the peasantry, driven to despair by so execrable a tyranny, abandon the country, and seek a more tolerable mode of existence, either in the towns, or camps; as bearers of burdens, carriers of water, or servants to horsemen. Sometimes they fly to the territories of a Raja, because there the find less oppression, and are allowed a greater degree of comfort.[50]

The amount of resistances or class struggles, by the peasants against the state and the ruling classes are many. As a matter of fact there were several violent uprisings during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, Shahajahan and Aurangzeb. As Smith says any conception that peasants parted with their produce voluntarily is sheer romanticism. No matter whether the peasant rebellions or class struggles failed in the last instance, the peasants carried on some struggles against the state, the landed aristocracy (the dominant class as a whole) and the nobility (mansabdars or the ruling class some of whose members were also landed aristocrats). Two uprisings took place near Delhi and in Patna in 1610 during the reign of Jahangir. There was another uprising of the villagers in Agra in 1618. During the reign of Aurangzeb, lower class uprisings took formidable proportions, those of Jats in Mathura district in 1669, 1681 and 1t86, and of the Satnamis in Narnwal. Let me quote the description of one rebellion.

> In the Jat revolt, 1669, thousands of peasants, under the leadership of one Gokla (a small-land holder), rose and over powered the local military policy, killing the commander and routing his forces. They then began to 'loot the neighbourhood'--which presumably means to loot the landlords and upper-class rich, not the peasants, since the latter sided with them more and more. The peasantry in neighbouring areas also rose in revolt against their exploiters; the villagers threw off the governmental yoke, and remained in control of the situation for almost a year (which is a considerable time). Aurangzeb, of course, sent big forces against them; but they resisted long and bitterly. The final result is obvious: the upper class won; but only after a bloody struggle. These peasants had been able

> to master a revolutionary army of 20,000, and their class spirit was so intense that the imperialist armies of the Mughal upper class, for all their artillery, training, and almost unlimited resources, could defeat them only with the utmost difficulty. And the havoc wrought on both sides was terrifying. The peasants lost five thousands dead and seven thousands captured; the rulers, four thousands dead. These figures become more impressive when we compare this encounter with, for instance, the second battle of Panipat.[51]

Before finishing this section a last point should be mentioned. I have shown that for a long time, from the pre-Maurya period, the landed aristocracy remained the main foundation--both the dominant and ruling class--of the state in India. But as soon as the Mansabdary system was created it seems that the Mansabdars became the ruling class, immediately in the positions of political and economic power.[52] This is not to suggest that the king became powerless; on the contrary, the Mansabdary nobility itself was the deliberate creation of the Mughal kings. The selection of the Mansabdars was restricted mainly to the persons of high birth and large estates. It is an irony that this class (Mansabdars) "which had been created to serve and support the state became an enormous and unprofitable burden and later usurped the right of the state. The inherent contradictions in Mansabdari system was fully revealed; it served to destroy the state which had created the system."[53]

NOTES

1. See J. Gould & W. L. Kobbs (eds.), A Dictionary of Social Sciences (London: Tavistock, 1959), p. 194; R.R. Davis, Lexicon of Historical and Political Terms (New York: Simmon Schuster, 1973), p. 38.

2. K.P. Jayaswal, Manu and Yajnavalkya (Calcutta: Butterworth & Co. Ltd., 1930), p. 96.

3. B.K. Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, The Sacred Book of the Hindus, Vol. XXV, Book II, (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1974), p. 44.

4. Ibid.

5. Cf. Kautilya, Arthasatra, trans. R. Shamsastry (Mysore: Mysore Printing & Publishing, 1967), pp. 12-3.

6. See for further analysis, K.M. Panikkar, Origin and Evolution of Kingship in India (Baroda: Baroda State Press, 1938), pp. 68-9.

7. K.P. Mukherjee, Ancient Political Experiences (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena & Co. Ltd., 1961), pp 315-6.

8. B.K. Sarkar, The Political Institutions and Theories of the Hindus (Leipzog: Verlagvanmarkert, 1922), p. 203.

9. Ibid., pp. 206-7.

10. See Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, pp. 40-44.

11. Panikkar, op. cit., pp. 105-6.

12. I. Hasan, The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1976), p. 57.

13. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 58-9.

14. J.N. Sarkar, Mughal Administration (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), p. 10.

15. For the definition of class see footnote no.6 on p. 127.

16. See B. Prasad, The State in Ancient India (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1974), pp. 14-8.

17. For details, see K.P. Jayaswal, Hindu Polity (Bangalore City: Bangalore Printing & Publishing, 1967), pp. 12-20.

18. A.S. Altekar, State and Government in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1962), p. 377.

19. R.S. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1968), pp. 305-307.

20. Cf. B.A. Saletore, Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 95-103.

21. See B. Prasad, The Theory of Government in Ancient India (Allahabad: Central Book Deot., 1926), pp. 35-7.

22. See N.C. Bandopadhyay, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1945), pp. 306-13; Altekar, op. cit., p. 384.

23. Cf. Prasad, The State in Ancient India, pp. 294-98.

24. P. Saran, The Provincial Government of the Mughals: 1526-1658 (London: Asia Publishing House, 1973), p. 103.

25. This division has been taken from J. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 15.

26. For details, see Ibid., pp. 37-50; and Saran, op. cit., pp. 144-230.

27. Quoted in Saran, op. cit., p. 392.

28. D.D. Kosambi, Ancient India: A History of its Culture and Civilisation (New York: Pantheon, 1965), p. 54.

29. Altekar, op. cit., p. 377. Here I am only confining my analysis to periods when the state was more or less a class state.

30. See page 93 of this thesis.

31. Kosambi, Ancient India: A History of its Culture and Civilisation, p. 86.

32. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History (Bombay: Popular Prakasan, 2nd ed., 1975), p. 110. This book will be called from now on as An Introduction.

33. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 305. Emphasis in original.

34. This background of the formation of this state has been discussed from page 94 to 98 of this **thesis.** For a summary of the underdeveloped states see Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 26-132.

35. See S.C. Bhattacharya, Some Aspects of Indian Society (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Pvt. Ltd., 1978), pp. 84-90.

36. Pran Nath, A Study of the Economic Condition of Ancient India (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1929), p. 129.

37. See pp. 57-59 of this thesis.

38. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 143.

39. Cf. Bhattacharya, op. cit., pp. 84-90.

40. K.M. Saran, Labour in Ancient India (Bombay: Vora & Co., 1957), p. 38.

41. Cf. Bandopadhyay, op. cit., p. 302.

42. P.C. Jain, Labour in Ancient India (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1971), p. 60.

43. Cf. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 177; see also his Sudras in Ancient India (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1958), pp. 252-3.

44. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 143.

45. B.P. Mazumder, "Merchants and Landed Aristocracy in Feudal Economy of Northern India", in D.C. Sircar (ed.), Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966), pp. 65, 71.

46. Sharma, Indian Feudalism: c. 300 - 1200 (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965), p. 268.

47. N. Hasan, "The Position of Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1964), p. 107.

48. F. Pelsaert, Jahangir's India, trans. W.H. Moreland and P. Geyl (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1925), p. 60.

49. Ibid., p. 47.

50. F. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1668, Revised edition by A. Constable (London: A. Constable, 1891), p. 205.

51. W. C. Smith, "Lower-Class Uprisings in the Mughal Empire", Islamic Culture, Vol. 20 (1946), p. 28.

52. Cf. W.C. Smith, "The Mughal Empire and the Middle Class: A Hypothesis", in Ibid., Vol. 18 (1944), p. 354.

53. N.A. Siddiqui, Land Revenue Administration Under the Mughals (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1970), p. 121.

CONCLUSION

Having completed the main burden of the dissertation, there remains two more tasks to be fulfilled. First, I intend to review briefly the findings of my investigation. Second, I would like to make a brief assessment of the sources on which Marx seemed to rely for his Asiatic Mode of Production.

The Summary of the Findings

In general, Marx's thesis of the AMP is extremely weak in terms of the empirical findings presented in this work. Especially in view of the immense historical data that are now available, the validity of the AMP has become extremely limited for explaining the pre-capitalist social formation of India in terms of the postulates of historical materialism and class struggle. The major findings of the study can be summarized as in the following way:

(1) On the question of the ownership of land, it can be said with definite certitude that the ownership of all land did not belong to the state. From the 6th century B.C. one can clearly trace two types of property in the Indian social formation: (A) The privately owned arable lands, and (B) The state owned lands viz., waste lands, mines, forests etc. According to some authorities, the right of the land administration, before the 6th century B.C., was vested in the village assembly, which implies the communal ownership of land.[1] But

as far as the nature and extent of the communal ownership of land is concerned, it is still a matter of further investigation. The data on communal ownership are few and far between. This is why I have been compelled to exclude any analysis of the communal ownership of land from the purview of my work. But as far as the privately owned lands are concerned, the king as the sovereign, the highest authority of the state, received taxes including the land revenue as wages for the protection he afforded to the people. The state's tax collecting power never amounted to a proprietary right over land. It is clearly found in Sukraniti that

> ... the ruler has been made by Brahma (i.e. the highest God) but a servant of the people, getting his revenue as remuneration. His sovereignty, however, is only for the protection of the people.[2]

From the 3rd century A.D., with the feudalization of the land system, the feudal property began to rise. In fact, since the 6th century A.D., the number of allodial property declined considerably with the extensive increase of land grants. The Mughal period (c. 1526 A.D. - c. 1757 A.D.) had been marked by a gradual erosion of feudal property. The efforts on the part of the Mughal state to reduce the power and property of the feudal chiefs were extensive and enormous. The deliberate creation of mansabdars and jagirdars and other types of zamindars certainly altered to a great extent the previous feudal land system. But the state of Mughal India never claimed proprietorship of all lands of the kingdom. Further, the concept of zamindar, which was made equivalent to revenue

collector by Marx, was introduced in fact by the Mughals. This implies that the concept of zamindar could not be applied to the determination of the existence of private property in land before the pre-Muslim rule. Again, the concept of zamindar cannot be arbitrarily used without any reference to the specific category of several types that usually go under the name of zamindar.[3]

In the light of the evidence presented in my work, it is possible to suggest that the Indian social formation developed a feudal mode of production beginning from 3rd century A.D. The feudal mode of production was largely evident in terms of the process of realizing the surplus from the peasants through forced labor by a class of "lords" who in all practical purposes controlled the agrarian property. This was possible due to the existence of weak political authority at the centre.

(2) There is no doubt that still today the village in India gives an impression of grim poverty and forms the material base of the Indian social formation. But this does not imply that the villages have remained unchanged throughout the centuries. As has been shown, the civilization of India was originally urban based and did not start with self-sufficient village communities. The localization of the economy, consisting of the units of localized production, developed only with the process of feudalization in the 3rd century A.D. After 10th century A.D., these self-sufficient villages started to break with the gradual development of

towns, widespread use of cash transactions, and commodity production. Especially under the Great Mughals, from Akbar to Aurangzeb (c. 1556 A.D. - c. 1707 A.D.), the villages supplied manpower, raw materials or food grains for town dwellers and urban manufacture. In return the direct producers in the villages received cash payment.[4] The breakdown of localized village economies was also makred by the growing opposition between the towns and the countryside, and above all, by the rise of a merchant class. Naqvi writes that, in addition to their own maintenance through manufactures,

> ... (these) towns had sizable residue for export. With the passage of peaceful time the volume of surplus goods perhaps rose so high that the operations of the existing traders proved inadequate, the Mughals then permitted European elements in the towns of Hindustan to carry on lucrative business on these terms.[5]

The historical development of the Indian social formation was, it must be concluded with emphasis, far from being static. It is quite difficult, in view of the evidence reviewed in this work, to accept the AMP thesis of an everlasting stagnant and unchanging social formation. It is at the same time worthy of mention that all pre-capitalist modes of production give an appearance of some kind of stagnation when they are compared to the capitalist mode of production. In fact,

> ... the combination of handicrafts and agriculture within the unit of production and the separation of the units from one another (i.e. the absence of a social division of labor between them)--are in no way confined to India or to the Orient as a whole; they are in no way circumscribed

> by the notion of the AMP. These conditions apply equally in the case of feudal mode of production, in the case of independent peasant proprietorship, etc. There is nothing specifically "Asiatic" about these conditions; ... These conditions could equally well explain the "statis" of feudal mode of production as they do the persistence of the Indian village system. These conditions are common to several forms of pre-capitalist production.[6]

Therefore, it is quite wrong to single out the factor of stagnation of the village economy of India as of any importance to characterize India's social formation in contradistinction to any West European social formation in the pre-capitalist period.

(3) As far as the component of Oriental despotism in the AMP thesis is concerned, my own conclusion can be best put in words of Krader:

> The European writers who advocated the notion of the Oriental despotism were mistaken in their judgement of the oriental power, misinterpreting the appearance and external show thereof for actual application of power. These usages are characteristics of a Eurocentric historiography that is as outmoded as it is false.[7]

Both in theory and practice, I find no trace of despotic monarchy in the pre-British India. Generally speaking, hereditary monarchy became the type of monarchy prevalent in the pre-capitalist Indian social formation since the later Vedic time (c. 600 B.C.).

It has also been evident undeniably that the state in India always served the ruling class (first, the landed aristocracy, and then the rising merchant class many of whose members were of course landed aristocrats). Unfortunate-

ly, however, there is an inadequacy of intensive and serious work on the issues of class struggle in the pre-British India. Habib has rightly pointed out this:

> What Marxist historians should first and foremost concentrate on is surely the study of class struggle. The 17th century, for example, contains extensive evidence of peasant revolts and it is of utmost importance to analyze the basic factor which gave rise to them (e.g. the revenue demand, to study the role of the zamindars played in inciting or suppressing them, and to trace their course and further development (where these were successful).[8]

At the same time I must mention that studies on the class struggles of the peasants are already in progress. The publication of Desai's book on Peasant Struggles in India (1979) is an effort toward this direction.[9]

EPILOGUE

The basic problem of Marx's theory of the Asiatic Mode of Production derives from inadequacy of the data which Marx seemed to have utilized as his source. As already mentioned, the genesis of the theme of the AMP can be traced back to the very concept of Oriental despotism. This concept took its birth in Aristotle's reference to the conflict between Persia and Greece. From the Greek's description of the absolute claim of the Persian kings over land and water, there followed the "historic" linkage of the absence of private property. Further, the Western perception of the Islamic law has reinforced the notion that in Islamic countries the title to all lands was vested in the king.[10] This

Aristotelian conceptual innovation found fervent favor among the successive generation of European scholars. It is indeed unique to observe how this "model" of the Persian king continued in the writings of the theorists, lingered as somewhat anachronistically up to the 19th century and became the only framework of analysis for all the Oriental societies. In the latter part of the 16th century the account of the various merchants, missionaries and travellers began to accumulate, all pointing simultaneously to the conclusion that in Asia the kings were despots as well as owners of all lands. These findings, though unfounded, continued to appear and dominate the writings of Machiavelli, Bodin, Montesquieu, Hegel, Jones and many others. But the basic problem with all the above-mentioned information is this:

> It is not the picture that comes out of present-day researches into that era, for it was idealized; it was based on a narrow range of observations, which, once published, were searched out again by the next traveller, who reported what he had been led to expect to find by his predecessor, in his turn, and this was taken by their readers as independent corroboration. But in fact it is not independent, it is subjectively influenced.[11]

The main point I am trying to make here is that

> Marx developed the category of the Asiatic Mode of Production on a narrow material base. When compared with the immense body of materials that serves as the foundation of the critique of capitalist production ... then the materials that have gone into the theory of the Asiatic mode of production appear to be the opposite of wide and deep.[12]

Therefore, the limitations of the AMP thesis in explaining the nature of the precapitalist Indian social formation can be understood, at least on one score, by suggesting that the

most of the recent data were inaccessible to Marx. But for those who still adhere to this theoretically inadequate and empirically unbacked thesis, formulated on the basis of the impresionistic writings of Euro-centred travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators or political economists, the following statement of Habib would serve as a warning:

> The essential purpose in the attempted restoration of the Asiatic Mode is to deny the role of class contradictions and class struggles in Asian societies and to emphasize the existence of the authoritarian and anti-individualistic traditions in Asia, so as to establish that the entire past history of social progress belongs to Europe alone, and thereby to belittle the revolutionary lessons to be drawn from the recent history of Asia.[13]

Finally, I must point out that my purpose for undertaking this study was not to draw superficial European parallels in the understanding of the Indian social formation and her development. Rather, my purpose has always been to suggest a guideline for the study of the Indian social formation from the point of view of a detached observer on the basis of conceptual analysis and concrete data. To conclude, therefore, with the following inspiring words of Anderson:

> ... Marx and Engels themselves can never be taken simply at their word: the errors of their writings on the past should not be evaded or ignored, but identified and criticized. To do so is not to depart from historical materialism, but to rejoin it. There is no place for any fideism in rational knowledge, which is necessarily cumulative; and the greatness of the founders of new sciences has never been proof against misjudgements or myths, any more than it has been impaired by

them. To take 'liberties' with the signature of Marx is in this sense merely to enter into the freedom of Marxism.[14]

NOTES

1. For details see R.K. Mukherjee, Democracies of the East (London: King & Son, 1923); and B.N. Datta, Studies in Indian Social Polity (Calcutta: Purabi Publishers, 1944).

2. Quoted in B.K. Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology, The Sacred Book of the Hindus Vol. XXV, Book II (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1974), p. 43.

3. Cf. S. Nurul Hasan, "The Position of the Zamindars in the Mughal Empire", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1964), pp. 107-19; and B.R. Grover, "The Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 1 (1963), pp. 1-23.

4. For details, see H.K. Naqvi, Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803 (London: Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 268.

5. Ibid., p. 269.

6. B. Hindess and P.Q. Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 202. See also L. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1975), p. 185.

7. L. Krader, A Treatise of Social Labor (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1979), p. 319.

8. I. Habib, "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", in Kurian (ed.), India: State and Society (Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1975), p. 30.

9. A.R. Desai (ed.), Peasant Struggles in India (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1979).

10. Cf. M. Sawer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), pp. 6-7.

11. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 79.

12. Ibid., p. 176.

13. Habib, "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", p. 24.

14. P. Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism (London: Verso edition, 1978).

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