

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF THE "ASIATIC" MODE OF PRODUCTION

**MARX'S VIEWS ON INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPRAISAL
OF THE "ASLATIC" MODE OF PRODUCTION**

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ABSTRACT

The current literature on the theory of the "Asiatic" mode of production, which summarizes Marx's views on the non-European social formations including India, is quite vast. Even then, to date there is no systematic study which focuses simultaneously on the methodological and theoretical problems and consequences immanent in the "Asiatic" mode, and on its empirical validity within the historical context of the Indian social experience. The present dissertation, thus, seeks to achieve two objectives. First, it attempts to examine how far and to what extent Marx's "Asiatic" mode of production can be justified and upheld methodologically and theoretically, on the one hand, and empirically, on the other, on the basis of the concrete experience of the Indian social formation from about the rise of the Indus civilization to the first consolidation of the Muslim rule. Second, it also demonstrates that not only is Marx's theory grounded upon Orientalism, but, what is even more important, it stands for and indeed represents what I call materialist Orientalism -- the doctrine that rationalizes and sanctifies the geographical divide between the East and West, and, hence, separates Them from Us by resorting to material or concrete explanatory factors.

From this standpoint, the present dissertation seeks to fill in a characteristic void in the contemporary literature for two reasons. First, the existing studies, which are largely unsystematic from a

methodological and theoretical point of view, invariably center around revising the "Asiatic" mode in such a way as to make it more acceptable than what would be the case in its original Marxian form. In contrast to this, it is argued that numerous methodological and theoretical problems are built into the very structure of Marx's theory, so much so that it is hardly amenable to any constructive modification or revision. By focusing on pre-Muslim India for the determination of the empirical validity of the AMP, the present dissertation purports to remedy a second deficiency. As yet there is no such systematic empirical assessment of Marx's theory, although Marx himself constructed his theory almost completely on the basis of the Indian historical experience. In sum, my findings indicate that Marx's theory is empirically inadequate in view of the existence of an overwhelming mass of historical data to the contrary.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<u>Acta Asiatica</u>
ABORI	<u>Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</u>
AH	<u>Agricultural History</u>
AO	<u>Archiv Orientální</u>
AQ	<u>Australian Quarterly</u>
ATS	<u>Asian Thought and Society</u>
BCAS	<u>Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars</u>
CA	<u>Critique of Anthropology</u>
CIS	<u>Contributions to Indian Sociology</u>
CSSH	<u>Comparative Studies in Society and History</u>
DA	<u>Dialectical Anthropology</u>
EPW	<u>Economic and Political Weekly</u>
ES	<u>Economy and Society</u>
EW	<u>Economic Weekly</u>
HIST	<u>History Today</u>
HT	<u>History and Theory</u>
IC	<u>Indian Culture</u>
IEJ	<u>Indian Economic Journal</u>
IESHR	<u>Indian Economic and Social History Review</u>
IHCP	<u>Indian History Congress Proceedings</u>
IHQ	<u>Indian Historical Quarterly</u>
IHR	<u>Indian Historical Review</u>

IS	<u>Insurgent Sociologist</u>
ISSJ	<u>International Social Science Journal</u>
JAAS	<u>Journal of Asian and African Studies</u>
JAHRS	<u>Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society</u>
JASB	<u>Journal of the Asiatic Society</u> , Bombay
JASC	<u>Journal of the Asiatic Society</u> , Calcutta
JBRS	<u>Journal of Bihar Research Society</u>
JCA	<u>Journal of Contemporary Asia</u>
JDS	<u>Journal of Development Studies</u>
JEH	<u>Journal of Economic History</u>
JESHO	<u>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</u>
JHI	<u>Journal of the History of Ideas</u>
JIH	<u>Journal of the Indian History</u>
JISCS	<u>Journal of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society</u>
JKU	<u>Journal of the Karnataka University</u>
JMH	<u>Journal of Modern History</u>
JPS	<u>Journal of Peasant Studies</u>
JRASGI	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</u> , Great Britian and Ireland
JUH	<u>Journal of Urban History</u>
JWCI	<u>Journal of the Warburg and Courtald Institute</u>
MAS	<u>Modern Asian Studies</u>
MR	<u>Monthly Review</u>
NLR	<u>New Left Review</u>
PA	<u>Pacific Affairs</u>
PP	<u>Past & Present</u>

PS	<u>Political Studies</u>
RMES	<u>Review of Middle East Studies</u>
RP	<u>Review of Politics</u>
RRPE	<u>Review of Radical Political Economics</u>
SA	<u>Sociological Analysis</u>
SAA	<u>Soviet Anthropology and Archaeology</u>
SC	<u>Society and Change</u>
SCO	<u>Social Compass</u>
SR	<u>Sociological Review</u>
SS	<u>Science and Societya</u>
SSH	<u>Soviet Studies in History</u>
SSP	<u>Social Science Probing</u>
TLS	<u>Times Literary Supplement</u>
TS	<u>Theory and Society</u>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

We attempt to categorise world history in Marxist terms, let us remember, not for the gratuitous acquisition of knowledge, and not, one hopes, in blind obedience to 'the devotional element in such categorisations', but, as Marx himself did, because 'we understand the world better by so doing, so that we can change it'. That, surely, is the bedrock upon which our analysis must rest.¹

I. Purpose of the Study

For more than two thousand years India, along with a constellation of ideas pertaining to it, has been part of what Embree calls "the intellectual tradition of the Western world."² Karl Marx (1818-1883), one of the grandmasters of Sociology, is certainly one of those who contributed to the growth of this intellectual tradition. From the 1850s he started writing on India with two objectives in mind: one, the assessment of the role of British imperialism in colonial India; second, and more importantly, the construction of an empirical and logical antecedent and direct opposite in India or, for that matter, the Orient/Asia of any or all of the modes of production (e.g. ancient, Germanic, feudal and capitalist) that originated in Europe (or synonymously the Occident/West). Thus, Marx compares and contrasts his "Asiatic" mode of production (hereafter AMP), which is based mainly on his views on India, not only with the capitalist mode of production, which was the chief object of his analysis, but also with the ancient

and feudal modes of production inasmuch as they were the empirical and logical antecedents of the capitalist mode of production (hereafter CMP).³

In any case, Marx's interest in the Indian social formation did not disappear later and this was evident in his continual discussions of and references to India in such works as the Grundrisse (1857-8) and Capital (1867) in particular. In the last few years of his life, mainly between 1879 and 1882, India and the AMP figured prominently again in his studies on Ethnology.⁴ As Levitt correctly points out: "The fact that he spent so much time during his last years researching matters related to the AMP is a good indication, however, that this topic continued to occupy his thoughts."⁵ Tokei goes so far as to say that without the theory of the AMP "it is difficult to imagine how Capital could have been written at all, particularly if we bear in mind Marx's scholarly care, which, it is well known, did not rest until all important loose ends were pursued to the end. The concept of the Asiatic mode of production is an organic part of the theory of Capital."⁶ That is as it may be, but it is worthwhile to explore the different dimensions of, and investigate manifold issues involved in, Marx's views on India - views on the basis of which in the main Marx formulated his theory of the AMP. Accordingly, the primary objective of this dissertation is to attempt a critical assessment as much of his views on India as of his theory of the AMP per se from his own methodological and theoretical point of view. What is at stake here is thus a judicious evaluation of the methodological, theoretical, and

empirical validity of the AMP. Stated in the terms of a problematic, the present work seeks to resolve this following central issue: How far and to what extent can Marx's theory of the AMP be justified and upheld methodologically and theoretically, on the one hand, and empirically, on the other, on the basis of the concrete experience of the Indian social formation from about the rise of the Indus civilization (2500/2300 B.C.-1750/1500 B.C.) to the first consolidation of the Muslim rule in 1206 A.D.?⁷ Before elaborating any further the objectives of this dissertation, let me briefly review the intellectual origins of Marx's theory of the AMP as well as the contemporary assessments thereon.⁸

II. The Geneology of Marx's Theory of the AMP: A Review of the Different Aspects of the Indian Social Formation and its Peoples

The origins of the theory of AMP can be traced to what was known as Oriental despotism in the West since the time of Herodotus(c.480 B.C.-425 B.C.). The three interrelated components comprising Oriental despotism and eventually Marx's AMP were these: the despotic character of the monarchy, the absence of private property in land, and the stationary nature of the social formations in the East. Of these the first one is the oldest, going back to the days of Herodotus, who saw "the struggle between Persia and Greece as a confrontation between East and West, between despotism and freedom, between the Asian spirit and the European spirit."⁹ Whether fortuitous or not, it is important to note that the concept of despotism, as opposed to liberty, was associated ab origine with the East or Orient.¹⁰ But it was Aristotle(384 B.C.-322 B.C.) who first systematized the distinction

between the political institutions of the Occident and Orient.

Barbarians, being more servile in character than Hellenes, and Asiatics than Europeans, do not rebel against a despotic government. Such royalties have the nature of tyrannies because the people are by nature slaves; but there is no danger of their being overthrown, for they are hereditary and legal.¹¹

This concept of a servile populace being ruled over by an arbitrary government became subsequently a commonplace category for characterizing the nature of both politics and the peoples in the Eastern social formations. Marx was doubtlessly one who uncritically accepted this primary Aristotelian characterization.¹²

Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador, came to the royal court of Chandragupta Maurya (c.320 B.C.-297 B.C.) at Pataliputra in about 302 B.C. He directly questioned the thesis of despotism of the Indian king and the accompanying servility of the (Indian) masses. In particular, he asserted that "no Indian was a slave."¹³ What is, however, more important is that Megasthenes was the first to suggest the absence of private property in India - an assertion that became the conditio sine qua non of Marx's AMP. But Megasthenes made this assertion "in an almost casual way", and he also claimed that in India "there was no private ownership of such royal beasts as elephants and horses."¹⁴ At any rate, these twin assumptions - Oriental despotism and the absence of private ownership of land - became an integral component of the first principles among successive generations of European scholars, who sought to specify and illustrate in one way or another the differential character of the Oriental social formations and their peoples.¹⁵ When Aristotle's Politics was translated into Latin in the 13th century, it

provided a necessary intellectual, if not ideological, support and incentive. Further in the 14th century, the idea of Oriental despotism became linked to the idea of the absence of private landed property in the Orient.¹⁶ Niccolo Machiavelli(1469-1527), while not directly dealing with the Aristotelian concept of Oriental despotism, developed a distinction between principalities with hereditary nobility and those with service nobility. The later category, where the Prince was the absolute master, was exemplified by the kingdoms in Persia and Turkey.¹⁷ Jean Bodin(1529/1530 - 1596) classified monarchies into three categories: royal, tyrannical, and despotic. The last one, which he then found existing in Asia, Ethiopia and such parts of Europe as ruled by the kings of Tartary and Muscovy, is characterized as follows:

Despotic monarchy is one in which the prince is lord and master of both the possessions and the persons of his subjects by right of conquest in a just war; he governs his subjects as absolutely as the head of a household governs his slaves. ... The reason why despotic monarchy is more lasting than the others is that it is the most authoritative. The lives, the goods, and the liberty of the subjects are at the absolute disposal of the prince who has conquered them in a just war. This greatly discourages unruliness in the subject. As with slaves, awareness of their condition makes them humble, timid, 'servile' as they say.¹⁸

The unrealistic derivation of despotism following from conquest, or resulting in the propertylessness of the subjects, was an idea to be echoed later by many of Bodin's successors including Marx. The tenets of Oriental despotism came to be almost uniformly confirmed and strengthened as various accounts, reports, memoirs, dispatches, etc. from the colonial officials, travellers, merchants, or missionaries

began to accumulate from the 17th century onwards in the wake of the rise, expansion and consolidation of European imperialism in the non-European regions of the world.

Sir Thomas Roe, an English ambassador to the court of the Mughal King Jahangir(1605-1627), stayed in India between 1615 and 1619. He claimed that all land within his realm belonged to the Mughal king.¹⁹ Niccolao Mannucci, a Venetian traveller who came to India in the 1650s, asserted the following in no uncertain terms:

The Hindu government is the most tyrannical and barbarous imaginable because, all the rajahs or kings being foreigners, they treat their subjects worse than if they were slaves. All land belongs to the Crown; no individual has as his own a field, or estate, or any property whatever, that he can bequeath to his children.²⁰

Jean Tavernier(1605-1689), a French merchant who visited India between the 1640s and 1660s, parroted the same theme. "The Great Mogul is certainly the most powerful and the richest monarch in Asia; all the kingdoms which he possesses are his domain, he being the absolute master of all the country, of which he receives the whole revenue."²¹ Francois Bernier(1620-1688), a French physician who served for eight years in the 1660s as a physician in Mughal India, was the most influential of all who directly influenced Marx in the formulation of his AMP. While more will be said later, suffice it to say here that Bernier basically stressed two points: the absolute ownership of the Mughal king over all lands within his kingdom, and the basically unstable character of Indian cities and towns.²²

All these ideas reappeared in the 18th century, as they did also in the 19th century. However, they did not reappear in the same fashion. The new development in their further popularization and publicity was that those ideas were now given a methodological and theoretical rigor that was absent earlier. Correspondingly they were methodologically and theoretically so elaborated as to constitute, and to pass off, what was conceived directly or indirectly as "scientific knowledge" concerning the Orient and its peoples. In the forefront of this intellectual movement was, among others, Montesquieu(1689-1755). He inherited, as Anderson aptly remarks, "from his predecessors the basic axioms that Asiatic states lacked stable private property or a hereditary nobility and were therefore arbitrary and tyrannical in character - views which he repeated with all the lapidary force peculiar to him."²³ Leaving details for treatment elsewhere, let me state here that it was Montesquieu who, for the first time, systematically utilized the geographical divide between the Occident and Orient to account for their differential sociopolitical developments. The role assigned to geographical determinism in Montesquieu was such that he practically heralded the tendency to transform the geographical entities (the Orient or Occident), as it were, into epistemological and ontological categories for purposes of their differential political characterization. Thus, Montesquieu asserted with overtones of definitiveness that "there reigns in Asia a servile spirit, which they have never been able to shake off."²⁴ Another point he drew attention to was the essential stability of Oriental social formations. This

theme of social stationariness became repeated and expanded, sometimes ad absurdum, by many others, including especially Hegel and Marx. All in all the enormous importance of Montesquieu consists in the fact that his viewpoint, although contested by a few, was "generally accepted by the age, and became a central legacy for political economy and philosophy thereafter."²⁵

Of the political economists who especially contributed to situating Oriental despotism on the solid foundations of economy and ultimately added distinctive economic dimensions to the developing geographical hiatus between the East and West, the three most important were Adam Smith(1723-1790), James Mill(1773-1836), and Richard Jones(1790-1885) - all of whom exercised varying degrees of influence in the making of Marx's AMP. Smith not only gave classical political economy its "distinct form" but also exercised a "formidable impact" on the analysis of Indian colonial economy and on the enforcement of particular economic policies in regard to it.²⁶ For him "there existed a distinctive Asiatic political economy."²⁷ Its differentiating feature consisted of the facts that the Oriental state was the owner of landed property, that it was the recipient of land tax or rent, and that it was obliged, as a natural corollary, to undertake hydraulic works for the development of agriculture in the Asiatic social formations.²⁸ Likewise, many of the basic postulates of Marx's AMP (e.g. the absence of private property in land, the despotic nature of the indigenous administration, etc.) may be discovered in James Mill's History of British India (1818). What is characteristic in Mill is that he displayed the most virulent

form of aggressive intolerance toward anything Indian, especially Hindu. "Wherever he turned his eye, Mill found Hindu society to be wanting."²⁹ Although the organizing categories of his economic analysis were claimed to have universal applicability, yet he began "from the premise that the civilization of India was radically different from (and indeed inferior to) that of Western Europe."³⁰

To Mill, the nature of the government of the Hindus was indisputably despotic. Their manners, institutions, and attainments remained stationary for ages.³¹ For him, obviously this subsumed the lack of development of feudal political institutions.

Among the Hindus, according to the Asiatic model, the government was monarchical, and with the usual exception of religion and its ministers, absolute. No idea of any system of rule, different from the will of a single person, appears to have entered the minds of them, or their legislators. ... Should we say that the civilization of the people of Hindustan, and that of the people of Europe, during the feudal ages, are not far from equal, we shall find upon a close inspection, that the Europeans were superior, in the first place, notwithstanding the vices of the papacy, in religion; and, notwithstanding the defects of the schoolmen, in philosophy. They were greatly superior, notwithstanding the defects in the feudal system, in the institutions of government and in laws.³²

Mill also incorporated in his History the same passage from the Fifth Report (1812) which was time and again quoted by others, including Marx. The passage concerned identifies India with only politically and economically self-sufficient villages that were at the same time alleged to have remained unchanged for all time.³³ However, it was Jones who advanced the argument of the unity of agriculture and industry in the village economy - an argument which Marx incorporated in his Capital.³⁴ This concept of the unity of agriculture and industry was regarded by

Marx as the causa sine qua non of the absence of private landed property or of the continued socioeconomic inertia in India. Jones's assertion that "the peasantry in India lived in a state of natural communism in small communities" bears striking resemblance to Marx's depiction of the AMP as reflecting "primitive communism" in his scheme of the stages of human social development.³⁵

In other essentials as well there remained a fundamental likeness in the views of Marx and Jones. Montesquieu drew on the data provided by, among others, Bernier. Jones, on his part, depended on both of them.³⁶ It was thus no surprise that Jones came to subscribe to the same age-old postulates of the absence of private property in land, the presence of despotism, or the instability of the cities and towns in India or, for that matter, Asia.³⁷

Throughout Asia, the sovereigns have ever 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 offices alone occasionally break the links of the chain of dependence for a time. It is this 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.³⁸

Finally, I should refer to G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) whose influence on Marx needs no emphasis.³⁹ While more will be said in this regard in chapters 6 and 8, it suffices here to mention that Hegel regarded India's despotism as "the most arbitrary, wicked, degrading despotism."⁴⁰ At the same time, according to him, India lacked any

mechanism of internal change and development. In such circumstances India remained "stationary" and perpetuated "a natural vegetative existence", at least up to the time of the rise of British colonial rule.⁴¹

It goes without saying that, besides those briefly reviewed here, there are many others, including a good number of British colonial officials, who contributed to the development of the literature on Oriental despotism and who also simultaneously influenced the Marxian formulation of the AMP. When necessary, a number of them will be recalled in relevant places of this dissertation in further illustration of the intellectual antecedents of the AMP.

III. From Oriental Despotism to the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Review of Contemporary Findings

The propositions that developed over the years as ingredients of Oriental despotism were conceptualized by Marx into what is known in the relevant literature as the Asiatic Mode of Production. This term (i.e. the "Asiatic Mode of Production") was used by Marx at least on two occasions, first in the 'Preface' to his A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) and then in his Capital (1867). In the latter he speaks of "the ancient Asiatic ... mode of production."⁴² In Marx's conceptualization the notions of the absence of private ownership of land, the stationary character of the socioeconomic formation, and the class-transcending despotic state were conjoined to, integrated with, or grounded on, a number of other elements such as the communal/state ownership of land, the unity of handicrafts industry and

agriculture within a nature-determined division of labour, the absence of commodity production and trade, the lack of antagonism between town and country, and so forth. Marx's theory of the AMP, whose major components are described below, took its form over "a period of thirty years, beginning with his newspaper articles of the 1850s, extending through his critiques of political economy, and culminating in his correspondence and ethnological research of the last years of his life."⁴³ Even then, it has been asserted by many that Marx never systematically expounded his theory of the AMP.⁴⁴ Taylor writes: "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."⁴⁵ However, this may not be considered in absolute terms. Tokei powerfully argues that "Marx's views on the Asiatic mode of production were not based on superficial hunches or occasional and unrelated attempts at formulations. These views were on the contrary well formulated and digested. They found their organic place within the Marxian political economy and theory of history."⁴⁶ Since the major constituents of the theory of the AMP continued to be espoused, or were not implicitly abandoned by him, Marx's "theory" remained complete and, as such, was not modified or changed even towards the end of his life.⁴⁷

As evident from the above, the researches and debates around the AMP in general or around its methodological and theoretical validity and empirical relevance in particular have fortunately shown no signs of

abatement.⁴⁸ The AMP has caused and is still continuing to cause lively and productive discussions in all major areas of social science, such as in Anthropology, Sociology, History, and Political Science. The debate on the AMP received special attention in view of the Russian (1917) and the Chinese (1949) Revolutions, on the one hand, and the rise of independent nation states especially in Asia and Africa after they gained independence from European colonial powers, on the other. Even in the Soviet Union, where the theory of the AMP was "authoritatively removed from the Soviet-Marxist theoretical cannon", the debates and discussions on it became quite considerable in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁹ In the same way Marx's AMP has continued to remain a focal point in the debates and discussions on socioeconomic development in the newly arisen nation states, constituting what is popularly known as the Third World. Specifically speaking, in the area of Sociology of Development the contemporary endeavours to understand and pinpoint the causes of underdevelopment of the Third World social formations at their economic, political, and other institutional levels have necessitated fresh reappraisals of Marx's own views on the over-all social conditions which existed in these social formations prior to their colonization.⁵⁰ Needless to point out, Marx's theory of the AMP has continued to provoke disagreements among the concerned scholars and is in fact, as Hindess and Hirst correctly point out, "the most controversial and contested of all the possible modes" outlined by Marx (and Engels).⁵¹ Bailey and Llobera recently observe the following:

The theoretical status of the concept of the AMP has never been too secure for three main reasons. First, the

formulations of the concept was precarious in the work of Marx. Second, within the Marxist scheme of evolution, the AMP was an anomaly and, as such, has been and still is considered anathema for those nostalgic for orthodoxy and eager to embrace a unilinear and mechanical conception of history. Third, the tremendous political potential of the concept has triggered off all sorts of ideological manipulations destined to suit short- or long-term national and/or party interests; this is especially clear in the characterization of certain societies as 'Asiatic' in different historical moments. From an 'orthodox' Marxist perspective, a society defined as 'Asiatic' (or 'feudal' for that matter) can not be transformed into a 'socialist' one before going through the purgatory of a 'capitalist' period.⁵²

Be that as it may, a remarkable feature of the new proliferation of the literature under review is the growing opposition to the AMP, as was originally proposed by Marx. A parallel tendency is one that suggests such convenient amendments to Marx's AMP as comply with the general Marxist methodological and theoretical requirements, on the one hand, and fit in with the empirical facts of the non-European social formations and their peoples, on the other. The ulterior motivation for this is, of course, to make the AMP more acceptable than what it is in Marx's original formulation. Only a few, finally, accept Marx's AMP without any modifications whatsoever. Generally speaking, the findings of the contemporary controversies and researches on the AMP vary between its total rejection and much qualified acceptance. Let me provide some illustrations.

Tokei belongs to the group of a few who adhere to the AMP as it was originally formulated by Marx. Tokei further argues that Marx did not modify his theory and, hence, counters the "allegation that Marx's theory on the Asiatic mode of production, which is claimed to have

evolved in the 1850s, underwent some modification in the wake of 'discovery' of the Russian and German village communities, and was substantially changed under the influence of Ancient Society by L. H. Morgan (1877)."⁵³ Elsewhere he argues that presumably Marx "had not dropped the concept of the Asiatic mode of production, and had not changed his views about it after becoming familiar with the ethnographic work of Lewis Morgan."⁵⁴ At the other extreme there are those who reject Marx's AMP in toto on grounds that are mainly theoretical in character. To Hindess and Hirst the theory of the AMP is ideological to begin with. Among other things, they rightly argue: "If a concept of a mode of production is formable which corresponds to any of the elements of the notion of an AMP, it cannot retain the ideological category of 'Asiaticness'. The very conception of an Asiatic mode of production is ideological in that it supposes a definite correspondence with certain real conditions which cannot be abstract and general."⁵⁵ Anderson argues to give the AMP "the decent burial that it deserves."⁵⁶ He calls for the total burial of the AMP on the ground that it is theoretically contradictory (e.g. the existence of a powerful state in face of Marx's assertion of pre-class or classless social structure) and empirically false (e.g. assumed stationariness or mythical self-sufficiency of the Indian villages).⁵⁷ Lubasz rejects the AMP by focussing on certain theoretical problems of the AMP, e.g. the inexplicable existence of the state in the condition of primitive communism, the representation of the state as a component of both structure and superstructure, the ideological motivation to counterpose the AMP as the antecedent of the

CMP etc.⁵⁸ He calls the AMP "a pseudo-concept", which is "empirically untenable and theoretically indefensible."⁵⁹

In between the two polar extremes there stand a good many scholars who neither accept nor reject the AMP completely. By suitably interpreting passages more or less arbitrarily selected from Marx's own writings they substantially modify Marx's AMP, the range of modifications varying from one particular scholar to another. The end product of their modification, while not without confounding problems, is often such that it bears little resemblance to the AMP which Marx had originally in mind. Let me cite some examples. Lawrence Krader, for one, belongs to those who neither totally reject nor quite accept in its entirety Marx's AMP but bring out its general relevance in the study of the stages of social evolution. He excludes from the AMP the element of Oriental despotism by treating it as "characteristic of a Europocentric historiography that is as outmoded as it is false."⁶⁰ Neither "civil society" nor "political economy" of the AMP was stagnant.⁶¹ Krader suggests that the AMP was "the earliest mode of production of society divided into opposed social classes, a class of immediate producers and a class of those maintained by the surplus labor and product of the immediate producers."⁶² A natural corollary of this approach is that the AMP, then, emerges not as a regional phenomenon but as a universal stage in the social development of mankind.

In the light of modern research into world history, we observe that the transition from a primitive-communal mode of production to the Asiatic mode of production has taken place not only in the countries of Asia, but also in the history of ancient Greece and Rome, during the Minoan Mycenaean age of the former, and during the Etruscan age of

the latter. It is a world-wide economic formation of society. ... Perhaps the term Asiatic is a misnomer, and will one day be changed.⁶³

Elsewhere Krader argues that Marx did not use the term "Asiatic" in his later writings and, hence, the term should be treated as "a figure of speech in reference to the place of the ancient and traditional societies and economies of India, Egypt, China, Peru, Greece, Rome, in the development of civilization, political society, the State, capitalism, colonialism."⁶⁴

Krader's views bear a striking resemblance to those of the French Marxists such as Maurice Godelier, Jean Suret-Canale and others, who treat the AMP as marking a universal stage of social transition from classless to class-divided social formation. They too exclude the elements of stagnation and despotism from the AMP.⁶⁵ A detailed critical evaluation of this approach is obviously outside the scope of this dissertation. Suffice it to say here that the theory of the AMP, as it was originally formulated by Marx, suffers inevitable devaluation when diverse social formations, separated by different levels of development of their productive forces or relations across intervening millennia, are artificially brought together under the same rubric (of the AMP).⁶⁶ No less important is the fact that those scholars (e.g. Godelier and others) come back again to the same unilinear schema of social development - a schema which they in the first place apparently eschewed by extending the AMP to the non-European social formations. As Mandel correctly points out:

By making the Asiatic mode of production a society that comes between clan communism and slave owning or feudal

society, one which `breaks up` into either slave owning or feudal society these critics once again suppress all that is specific in the history of the East, and return, after a short detour, to the good old rut of universal `slavery` or `feudalism` - after having previously deplored the excessive expansion of these ideas.⁶⁷

No wonder, Melotti regards the approach adopted by those French Marxists as an example of "muddled thinking."⁶⁸

On his part Melotti, while formally acknowledging the relevance of the AMP as an explanatory category for explaining the differential development only of the East, attempts to reconstruct Marx's AMP.⁶⁹ Among other things, Melotti speaks of "Asiatic society" as a "class society", divided between the "exploited class" consisting of almost all of the inhabitants of the village community, on the one hand, and the "privileged class" comprising state officials, mandarins, bureaucrats, and the military, on the other. He does not regard the AMP as a transitional social form between "primitive classless society and the first class-based society", as Godelier and others suggest.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Melotti is mindful of the variations among different "Asiatic" social formations.

Clearly, not all those countries came equally close to the Marxian generic model of Asiatic society. For our present purposes it is sufficient to stress that India differs from it chiefly on the political side, in its comparative lack of strongly centralized bureaucratic government, China in economic and legal aspects, it having been shown that at least in certain periods some private property existed, and Russia in its lack of hydraulic features, other factors having been responsible for its economic and political centralization.⁷¹

Like Melotti, Sawyer accepts the AMP as delineating the differential development of the East. For Sawyer, the AMP serves "to stimulate a new

heuristic approach to Marxism as a theory of world history, and to strengthen the view that history is to be regarded as prima facie open, and not as a closed and unitary process governed by immutable general laws determining its movement towards a simple goal."⁷² Apparently this multilinearity is championed in the form of differential developments only between the East and West, but not between different Western social formations. This is also the position of many others who, in one way or another, adhere to the AMP as if they were the greatest champions of multilinearity. Basically this position rests on what may be called neo-materialist Orientalism. In any case, Sawyer's acceptance of the AMP or, for that matter, of the multilinearity of societal development "does mean a rejection of Marx's Western European perspective, and a recognition that non-European forms of historical development may have their own dynamics."⁷³

Currie draws attention to certain built-in theoretical problems of the AMP. Among other things, she argues:

Essentially, the problematic status of the AMP in Marx results from his failure to: a) distinguish between the various descriptive categories, b) provide an adequate conceptualization, c) analytically explore the nature of relationship (if any) between the concept of the AMP and the descriptive categories, and d) analyse the conditions of genesis existence, re-production and transition of the mode, i.e. consider the issue of the dialectic.⁷⁴

Accordingly she suggests the dropping of the nomenclature of the AMP and calls for its substitution by "tributary" mode of production. In this mode "the tribute-raising state" appropriates the surplus product from the direct producer and stands in "the same objectively antagonistic relationship to that producer as does the slave-owner to the slave, the

feudal lord to the serf, and the capitalist to the wage labourer."⁷⁵ However, the most extreme adaptation of Marx's AMP or, to put it alternatively, the most sophisticated reformulation of the old principles of Oriental despotism on the basis of certain aspects of Marx's AMP can be found in Karl A. Wittfogel's work Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power (1957). Two central aspects of his work are "the attempt to establish the peculiarity of a non-Western semi-managerial system of despotic power and the interpretation of communist totalitarianism as a total, managerial, and much more despotic, variant of that system."⁷⁶ Though claiming a Marxist heritage, Wittfogel alleges that Marx mystifies, rather than clarifies, the character of the ruling class in the Orient. He further criticizes Marx for the latter's failure to illumine adequately the general role of the Oriental state as provider of large-scale agro hydraulic works.⁷⁷ On his part Wittfogel claims to have explained both. On the one hand, he draws attention to the presence of centralized bureaucracy as the ruling class that benefitted by the appropriation of the social surplus produced by the direct producers. On the other, this class arose and ruled not only because of the functional necessity of providing large-scale irrigation works, but also because of their control over the major means of production, land and water, in the Oriental social formations.⁷⁸ In the literature on the AMP the importance of Wittfogel's theory can hardly be under-rated. Indeed Bailey and Llobera go so far as to assert that "any reappraisal of the AMP controversy which does not critically assess the relevance and impact of the work of

Karl A. Wittfogel is not a serious enterprise."⁷⁹ Not unexpectedly, Wittfogel's work has been subjected to searching, and most often unfavourable, theoretical and empirical scrutinies.⁸⁰ His work has been branded as "politically oriented fact defying dogma"⁸¹ or as "vulgar charivari" which, "devoid of any historical sense, jumbles together pell-mell Imperial Rome, Tsarist Russia, Hopi Arizona, Sung China, Chaggan East Africa, Mamluck Egypt, Inca Peru, Ottoman Turkey, and Sumerian Mesopotamia - not to speak of Byzantium or Babylonia, Persia or Hawaii."⁸² Wittfogel himself has been called a "renegade Marxist whose axe-grinding can be heard afar."⁸³

Before pointing out the general limitations of the works reviewed here and providing the raison d'être that prompted me to undertake the present dissertation, let me pass on to a recapitulation of the main trends of the studies on the Indian social formation inasmuch as they, more than less, bear on or concern the AMP.⁸⁴

IV. Interpretations of the Pre-British Indian Social Formation: A Review of the Main Trends

If the modern search for the understanding and discovery of ancient India was in the main due to the efforts in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries of British imperial and colonial officials, then it was also they who set the contours of the dominant themes and questions to be raised and answered. In other words, while British officials deserve credit for having provided the initial historiographical base for the modern quest of ancient India, this does not mean that their methodology of dealing with the concrete data or their modes of analysis and

interpretation, were free from overt and covert biases of different types. Indeed, the dominant interpretations put on the ancient Indian historical facts, as Romila Thapar rightly suggests, "reflected, whether consciously or not, the political and ideological interests of Europe. The history of India became one of the means of propagating those interests."⁸⁵ More specifically, the pervasive ideological doctrine which was accepted as gospel truth by British writers was their abiding faith "in the unique superiority of the English and European cultural heritage and/or a belief in the inferiority of the Indian heritage."⁸⁶ The seriousness of the one-sidedness of the interpretations of Indian history and of how it continued to be propagated can aptly be illustrated here by pointing out that James Mill's History of British India remained a basic textbook for British Indian civil servants for more than a century after its publication in 1818.⁸⁷ In different places of this dissertation I show that Mill's work contains numerous factual errors and suffers from serious biases in the interpretation of Indian historical facts. In any case it was the Indian scholars who provided the main challenge to the "historical models" built by British writers.⁸⁸ The findings of many of the indigenous researchers were directly opposed to those of British authors. The first beginnings of such indigeneous intellectual rebellion were evident in the works of Dadabhai Naoroji, R. C. Dutt, K. P. Jayaswal, R. C. Majumdar, R. K. Mookerji, H. C. Raychaudhuri, U. N. Ghosal, B. K. Sarkar, and many others. They strongly contested various notions (e.g. the absence of private landed property, social stationariness, etc.) that were

associated with the theory of Oriental despotism or with Marx's AMP. They took a fresh look at the various types of indigenous data, questioned many of the notions concerning Oriental despotism, and attempted to reconstruct ancient Indian history in the light of their own reappraisals.⁸⁹ Even though many of them have been dubbed as "nationalist" historians,⁹⁰ most of their findings were based on meticulous research of concrete data and, as such, still retain validity.

For instance, a thorough investigation into different data sources pertaining to the Hindus led the researchers to conclude that the concept of despotic monarchy did not conform to and picture the actual state of affairs obtaining in ancient India. To put this finding in the words of Sarkar:

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 Fredrick the Great and the successors of Louis XIV, that is, by a reform in the comparative method itself.⁹¹

Insofar as the issue of the existence of private property in land is concerned, many indigenous scholars (e.g. U. N. Ghosal, K. P. Jayaswal, B. K. Sarkar, N. C. Bandyopadhyaya, and a number of others), along with a minority group of British officials (e.g. Mark Wilks etc.), proved on

the basis of concrete data from indigenous source materials that private property in land was very much in existence before the advent of British colonial rule in the 1750s.⁹² These same conclusions were later echoed by subsequent scholars. Thus, Thapar argues:

In the case of India the primary reason given for the rise of Oriental Despotism was the belief that there was no private property in land in pre-British India. This belief was based on a misunderstanding of the agrarian system of the Mughal empire by both Thomas Roe and Francois Bernier. ... It can now be said that not only is there evidence to prove the existence of private property in land but also that the rule of property changed significantly over the centuries. This disproves the basic premise of the argument in support of the theory of Oriental Despotism as applied to India. The major contribution in this area has been the study of land grants reconstructed from epigraphical sources, on the basis of which it has been suggested that a gradual change took place in the agrarian system from the fourth century A.D. onward, resulting in what has been called a feudal society by about the seventh to the eighth century A.D.⁹³

Likewise, the relevance of bureaucratic centralization in the state apparatus and the importance of the hydraulic role of the state - the elements most usually associated with Oriental despotism or Marx's AMP - have also been contested. "The bureaucratic system of early India was rarely centralized, except in the infrequent periods of empire. ... The hydraulic machinery played only a marginal role. Large-scale, state controlled irrigation was rare. In the main, irrigation aids consisted of wells and tanks, built and maintained either by wealthy landowners or through the cooperative effort of the village."⁹⁴

The indigenous studies and researches on ancient and medieval India in the post-independence era are characterized by a methodological and theoretical concern and consciousness, which is now greater than

what had existed before. Thus, although independence meant a radical change in the sociopolitical environment of India, it did not provide any disincentive to the continuation, if not strengthening, of the radical and critical tradition of unmasking any ideologically interested and motivated interpretation that in one way and another champions or legitimates the erstwhile role of imperialism and colonialism in India.⁹⁵ The most prominent of these anti-imperialist historians and social scientists are D. D. Kosambi, A. R. Desai, Irfan Habib, Bipan Chandra, and S. Nurul Hasan, to mention a few among a host of others.⁹⁶ In light of my own objectives in this dissertation two distinct tendencies of post-independence studies and researches with respect to ancient and medieval India can be noted here. First, there has grown in recent years an enormous and extensive literature concerning the rise and development of feudalism or the feudal mode of production (hereafter FMP) in pre-Muslim India.⁹⁷ However, this does not mean that there is no opposition to the tendency of categorizing India as feudal during a certain historical period, especially that between the 6th and 13th centuries of the Christian era. Indeed the appropriateness or inappropriateness of labelling India as feudal has caused and is still causing stimulating debates among different scholars working on ancient and medieval India.⁹⁸ Some of them (viz. D. C. Sircar, H. Mukhia, A. Rudra, B. Stein, and D. Thorner) vehemently oppose the characterization of early medieval India between the 6th and 13th centuries as feudal.⁹⁹ A few words may be said in this regard on the problems in the analyses of this school, reserving detailed treatment for different chapters of

this dissertation.¹⁰⁰ Sircar denies the existence of feudalism but, apparently in utter contradiction, continues to trace the prevalence of fief in India.¹⁰¹ Sircar's error is too obvious to be ignored, since feudalism is above all derived from the phenomenon called fief.¹⁰² In chapter 5 I intend to draw attention briefly to the problems of Mukhia, Rudra and Thorner.¹⁰³ I should particularly mention, however, that Mukhia's advocacy for the prevalence of free peasant production in order to deny the factual existence of feudalism is extremely misconceived. The reason is that Mukhia is completely "mistaken in assuming that 'a free peasantry' implies that India could not be described as 'feudal'."¹⁰⁴ At one and the same time it has to be pointed out that the predominant basis of production in European classical antiquity and feudalism almost invariably rested on small peasant agriculture (and independent handicrafts).¹⁰⁵

Insofar as Stein is concerned he is aware of certain, but not all, deficiencies in Marx's AMP, which he of course does not define. Stein argues: "The hydraulic argument and its presumed consequence - despotic government - has no historical validity, and Marx's companion notion about the Indian peasant village - 'small stereotype forms of social organism' - is even more distorted than the early nineteenth-century British view from which it is derived."¹⁰⁶ In spite of this Stein, whose methodological and theoretical points of departure and analysis are anything but dialectical and historical materialism, urges revision of Marx's AMP:

I believe that the concept of the Asiatic mode, as many of Marx's formulations, is based upon a profound perception

which ought not to be lost, or consigned to the dustbin of historiography. ... And yet a profound idea remains. Ancient Eurasian peoples (i.e. those of the fertile crescent, India and China - BB) cannot but have developed social formations very different from those of Europe, not a single, unchanging formation as presumed in the Asiatic mode, but perhaps a great number of different formations. ... Are we not entitled - indeed do we not have the responsibility - to attempt to transform Marx's grossly erroneous formulation of what was a profound insight into a useful concept?¹⁰⁷

It is interesting to note that many Marxist analysts of AMP (e.g. Godelier, Krader etc.) argue for its existence also in Europe, in which case, obviously, Eurasian peoples could not be different from Europeans. It appears that Stein implicitly accepts the geographical divide between Europe and non-Europe - the ideology of Orientalism which characterizes Marx's AMP a capite ad calcem and about which I shall say more later. In any event Stein's own analysis, which excludes the elements of despotism and hydraulic role of the state, confirms the presence in India of such elements (e.g. commodity production, trade etc.) which Marx, for his part, excluded from his AMP.¹⁰⁸ What Stein apparently shares with Marx is the latter's opposition to accepting the presence of feudalism in India. But Marx's list of criteria (e.g. feudal landed property, serfdom, soil as prized object, and patrimonial jurisdiction)¹⁰⁹ for asserting so is different from that of Stein, who enumerates three criteria: fief as the resource base for warrior power, personal loyalty or fealty, and a moral order supporting personal loyalty through oaths and estate honour.¹¹⁰ Stein's theory which focuses exclusively on south India, has been subjected to severe criticisms in recent years. Without repeating them let me state here

that Stein's elements of feudalism have also been specifically traced by a number of scholars working on south India.¹¹¹

Stein's contradictions and problems become visible when one analyses his concept of "segmentary state" - the "peasant state" that is visualized as an anthropological congeries of "local chieftainships" which, while ruling over small polities, were bound together "as a state through ritual forms."¹¹² The very appellation "peasant state" is ideologically motivated inasmuch as it implies that only south India had "peasant" states. Besides, the concept of peasant state implies inherent stagnation in the social formation, for it rests on the people who continue to remain perennially as "peasants". Stein's concept of this segmentary state is certainly not the AMP's state because it lacks, among other things, hydraulic and despotic role and functions:

They (i.e. segmentary states - BB) were monarchies which incorporated the chiefly polities of their realm without dissolving such polities; these states were primarily ideological manifestations of the pervasive and ambiguous conception of kingship which could be vested simultaneously in large number of chieftains, as well as in a single ruling house whose hegemonic claims were conceded by all. The prevailing conception of rajadharma permitted chieftains to assume the responsibilities and dignities of supporting brahmanas and gods and protecting them as well as the constituencies of peasant and non-peasant peoples of a chiefdom, just as kings did for the realm as a whole. To king and chief alike was conceded the right to deploy resources which they - as kings and chiefs everywhere - massed and redistributed and thereby gave expression to the idea of a moral unity.¹¹³

If anything, the above passage depicts a state which resembles, the feudal, rather than "Asiatic", state. In fact, Perlin has rightly argued that "early European feudalism, in which kingship was weak, was notably segmentary, tending to political fission along multiple,

vertical pyramids adjacent to one another. In this sense, feudal and segmentary may be thought of as synonymous, the former however infused with social, political and ideological meaning. In spite of the development of medieval kingship and of a ramifying state, feudal polity never lost this segmentary character."¹¹⁴

The other aspect of post-independence studies and researches with regard to ancient and (early) medieval India concerns those works which directly or indirectly bear on Marx's AMP. It should, however, be remembered that the genesis of the analysis of the Indian social formation in its differential aspects from a Marxist point of view can be traced to the pre-Independence era, and it was in fact an integral part of the struggle to liberate India by overturning British imperialism and colonialism. M. N. Roy, who wrote India in Transition during 1921-22, provided "the first comprehensive analysis of Indian society from a Marxist point of view."¹¹⁵ But he did not espouse Marx's AMP. On the contrary, he emphasized that "India was not an exception to the general laws of social evolution, though he recognizes certain modifications."¹¹⁶ In 1940 R. P. Dutt, in his India Today and in an Introduction to Karl Marx: Articles on India, "enthusiastically reproduced Marx's ideas on Asiatic society in general and Indian society in particular."¹¹⁷ After the end of the Second World War Dutt changed his position, apparently disapproving of Marx's AMP.¹¹⁸ In his book entitled Studies in Indian Social Polity (1944) B. N. Datta also indirectly rejects the AMP by suggesting the presence of class struggle in ancient India and by showing the development of feudalism in medieval

India.¹¹⁹ But the most vigorous indirect renunciation of the AMP came from S. A. Dange in his India: From Primitive Communism to Slavery (1949). His abjuration, however, took the form of showing the rise of slavery, though not necessarily in Graeco-Roman classical form, out of the stage of primitive communism in India. Among other things, he stated that "it would be a denial of Marxism itself if one were to say that during these two thousand years these (i.e. Indian village - BB) communities developed no inner contradictions, developed no antagonism and struggles within themselves or had no struggle with the feudal State that ruled over them."¹²⁰

The first systematic study of the Indian social formation from a class theoretical standpoint was provided by D. D. Kosambi. The importance of Kosambi's contribution prompted Dale Riepe to call him "the father of scientific Indian history."¹²¹ To be sure, "he raised a number of new ideas and revealed new questions."¹²² By providing a historical materialist paradigm for analyzing and explaining the facts of the Indian social formation and its history, Kosambi gave a direction to the study and research on ancient and (early) medieval India. This, in turn, provided necessary and much needed impetus to the growth of scientific studies and researches on ancient and medieval India. In so much as the AMP is concerned, Kosambi says the following in his An Introduction to the Study of Indian History:

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.¹²³

While Kosambi himself neither defines AMP in terms of its major constituents nor directly confronts them for explicit purpose of repudiation, he nevertheless analyses and interprets historical facts of the Indian social formation in such a way as to negate Marx's AMP to all intents and purposes. For example, he challenges Marx's statement that "Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history."¹²⁴ On his part, he defines history as "the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production,"¹²⁵ and applies it to India, thus negating Marx's assumptions of the lack of history or of socio-economic stupor in the AMP. Furthermore, Kosambi discovers the growth and prevalence of commodity production, trade, private landed property, and feudalism in India - elements that certainly negate Marx's thesis.¹²⁶

One of the earliest systematic attempts to test the empirical validity of Marx's AMP in the context of the Indian historical experience was made by Daniel Thorner in his article entitled "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production" (1966). Thorner does not focus specifically on the ancient and early medieval phases of Indian history. He is rather concerned with the state of affairs immediately preceding the rise of British imperialism in India. At any rate, Thorner found little in the AMP that he could approve of.

In point of fact, Marx's central thesis that the self-sufficient nature of the villages together with the need for large-scale centrally administered waterworks provided a basis for Asiatic despotism does not find much support in what we know today of Indian history. In India strong central governments have been rare and have not lasted long. Before the coming of the British there were only three great empires, the Mauryan, the Gupta and the Mughal. None of

these was powerful for more than 150 years. ... The descriptions of Indian villages sent home by British military men and administrators in the 18th and 19th centuries provide little evidence for Marx's picture of landholding by the entire village and even less for tilling in common.¹²⁷

Like Thorner, Naqvi and Chandra confront the AMP more or less directly and they reach the same conclusion, namely, the empirical invalidity of the AMP. Naqvi focuses strictly on the Mughal social formation and mentions the presence therein of many elements which directly contradict Marx's theory. They include the occurrence of private property in land, the rise and growth of numerous marketing towns or cities that were "economically active and viable", the presence of an affluent class of "merchants, shippers and moneylenders", the general absence of "centralized empires", and so on and so forth.¹²⁸ An important drawback of Marx and Engels, to which Naqvi points, is that they failed to utilize the available source materials that existed in plenty. "If Marx and Engels had only read the travel accounts of even a few of the scores of European travellers and merchants who had recorded their experiences, often ranging over several decades and covering large parts of the country, published in the early years of the 19th century by Purchas and others in England, they would have been able to roughly and more realistically reconstruct Indian social and economic conditions in different periods, from the 14th to the 18th centuries."¹²⁹

Chandra does not examine systematically the empirical validity of the AMP vis à vis "the development of Indian society and its different stages throughout the centuries", as I have done so far as the entire Hindu period is concerned. His general discussion, while

alluding at times to the Hindu period, particularly focuses on "the immediately precolonial society of the Mughal period."¹³⁰ Chandra brings to the fore a number of factors that negate Marx's AMP. They are the absence of the hydraulic role of the state, the emergence of private ownership of land since the sixth century B.C. and its further extension through the fresh expansion of agriculture and village settlements over waste lands, and the presence of commodity production, trade, and market towns and cities.¹³¹ His conclusion is quite unambiguous:

Historical research over the last 100 years or so, including the recent work of Marxist scholars, has shown that Marx's basic notions regarding Indian society were essentially incorrect. In particular, his view that Indian society had stagnated for millenia ever since its transition from primitive communism to class society and was therefore incapable of change from within is completely untenable and can no longer be maintained. ... Different modes of production arose and disintegrated. Only it did not develop (industrial - BB) Capitalism on its own - but why should that be considered the inherent and inevitable hallmark of a changing and developing society in the precapitalist period?¹³²

It should, however, be noted here that Chandra is completely wrong to suppose that Marx spoke about or implied India's "transition from primitive communism to class society". I will show especially in chapters 3, 6 and 8 that Marx neither spelled out nor even meant any such thing. Actually Chandra does not undertake any methodological and theoretical critique of the AMP. On his part, Irfan Habib asserts, rather than systematically demonstrates, the empirical invalidity of Marx's AMP.

During the sixties we have witnessed the curious phenomenon that in spite of the general inability of Asian Marxist scholars to recognise 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. ... 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.¹³³

Some of the elements, which abrogate Marx's AMP but mentioned by Habib in the course of his analysis of Mughal India and its potentialities for the transition to capitalism, are the existence of private ownership of land, the production of commodities for the market, the rise and development of cities and towns, the non-existence of communal ownership of land, the existence of "class" struggle in terms of "armed resistance" of the peasantry or of the Zamindars (i.e. landed interests) or of both vis à vis the Mughal ruling class of officials including the king.¹³⁴

While the overwhelming majority of scholars working on ancient and medieval India reject Marx's theory of the AMP in one form or another, there are a few who indeed accept it. But they vary in regard to their acceptance of and support for it. Some examples of this tendency as well as the insurmountable problems associated with this may be advantageously highlighted here. In his "theoretical exercise" Tapan Raychaudhuri proposes that Marx's AMP "strikes one as a valid label for India's precolonial economy,"¹³⁵ although he himself neither systematically defines the AMP in Marx's own terms nor applies it systematically to any specific period of pre-colonial India. He

espouses Godelier's version of the AMP by saying that it "has considerable explanatory value for the dynamics of social change in India in the long period."¹³⁶ But, apparently, he does not realize, or fails to understand, the differences between Godelier's own version and Marx's AMP, which, as I will show in chapter 6, is totally incapable of experiencing any sort of social change in terms of developing any other mode of production beyond one that is based on quiescent primitive communism. The absence of any "internal mechanisms of change" is one of the most vital components of Marx's AMP.¹³⁷ Without providing any evidence Raychaudhuri asserts that Marx later recognized the emergence of "property rights", presumably in land.¹³⁸ He erroneously identifies feudalism with serfdom.¹³⁹ He does not define ownership, nor does he seem to be aware of the historical specificities of ownership rights vis à vis the particular mode of production dominant in a given social formation.¹⁴⁰ Finally, he locates the AMP in India by asserting, for instance, the state's expropriation of the bulk of the surplus.¹⁴¹ This is an absolutely wrong approach, for any state (e.g. ancient, feudal, capitalist) expropriates a certain amount of surplus, whether bulk or not, produced in a given social formation. D. Banerjee, another analyst, seeks to trace, though in vain, the internal mechanisms of social change and development. He argues that Marx allowed private possession of land, which is assumed to be an improvement over common ownership of land.¹⁴² This is basically a misinterpretation of Marx. As I show in chapter 3, Marx's reference to private possession is not so much an indicator of the internal mechanism of change and development in

the AMP as it was a definite product of his imprecision and confusion with regard to the location of ownership and/or possession in the AMP.¹⁴³ Moreover, of one thing Marx was absolutely certain, which is the absence of individual ownership of land. For him, this was cause enough to make the AMP stand dead still in aeternum. That socioeconomic torpidity is built into the very structure of the AMP can be illustrated by mentioning that, while the AMP failed to evolve private landed property, all the other modes (e.g. ancient, feudal and capitalist) of production originating in Europe developed not only private landed property but also its different forms. There is no blinking the fact that the AMP is a dead end, which is precisely proved by Marx's own assertion that the individual in the Orient "does not become independent vis à vis the commune."¹⁴⁴

A. Guha, D. Gupta and K. Gough represent those who espouse both the AMP and the FMP in terms of India's empirical experience at different points of historical time. Guha's analysis is bedevilled by numerous methodological and conceptual difficulties. A few of them may be elucidated here. He grossly misunderstands Marx's AMP when he says that "the main characteristic of it was not absence of private property, but `the self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture' within the village."¹⁴⁵ Quite to the contrary, if anything strictly separates the AMP from any other modes of production in Marx's schema, it is most assuredly the absence of private landed property in the former.¹⁴⁶ As I shall show in chapters 6 and 8, the absence of private property in land is both the cause and effect of many other things that characterize the

AMP. They include the non-development of the social division of labour (beyond natural division of labour), of cities or towns (and commodity production and trade), and of class stratification as based on ownership or non-ownership of the means of production. Perhaps Guha is ideologically motivated in his exclusion of private landed property, because he himself traces its existence in India. At one and the same time he does not understand that the so-called unity of agriculture and manufacture is characteristic of all modes of production in Marx's schema, let alone the AMP. Again, his assertion that "from the 7th-8th century onwards, the Asiatic Mode of Production in India was undoubtedly exhibiting feudalistic tendencies"¹⁴⁷ is an example of his serious confusion of the methodological and theoretical (i.e. logical) with the empirical (i.e. concrete). The reason is that there is no, and could not be any, mechanism of internal change and development in the AMP in the form Marx formulated, with the result that the empirical feudal tendencies in India can not be stated to have emerged from the AMP in India. Again, it is hard to explain why Guha calls India feudal especially between 700 A.D. and 1700 A.D., when he argues simultaneously that "Marx's objections to Kovelevsky's view of Indian feudalism still remain basically valid."¹⁴⁸ Like others, he also commits the same mistake of identifying feudalism with serfdom.¹⁴⁹

Gupta suggests that "Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production" prevailed in India from the beginning of the Yajurvedic age (c.500 B.C.) to the fall of the Maurya empire (c.185 B.C.).¹⁵⁰ However, several serious conceptual and empirical problems mar Gupta's analysis. For

instance, he thinks that "general exploitation of the people directly by the superior community or the state is the crucial feature of the Asiatic mode of production."¹⁵¹ The truth of the matter is that any state, being the product of a class-divided social formation, is an organization of general exploitation of "the people". The latter is a useless category that is devoid of any class implications. Gupta does not discuss how such a state arises in the first place, nor does he deal with the methodological and theoretical problems in Marx's AMP. I will draw attention to all these aspects in chapter 8. Moreover, Gupta is completely wrong to suggest that after 1858 Marx "no longer considered despotism and stagnation to be the essential features of societies characterized by the Asiatic mode of production."¹⁵² The element of stagnation is built into the very conceptual structure of the AMP, which was unable to beget any other mode of production as such or any components (e.g. private ownership of land) thereof, that characterized the different modes of production originating in Europe. Inasmuch as despotism is concerned, Marx indeed held on to the concept to the very end of his life.¹⁵³ Finally, it is wrong to assume, as Gupta does, that "ownership and authority over land" remained with the Indian state in the period in which he thinks the AMP prevailed in India. As I show in chapters 4 and 5, there is enough historical evidence that bears testimony to the presence of private ownership of land in the period concerned.

Like Guha and Gupta, Kathleen Gough traces the existence of both the AMP and the FMP at different points of historical time. Unlike the

former two, Gough centers especially on the south Indian social formation.¹⁵⁴ She asserts that the AMP prevailed at Thanjavur (Tanjore) in Madras from the first to the fourteenth century, whereas a FMP existed in a number of small states in Kerala between the ninth and mid-nineteenth century.

Although conforming to Marx's model in fundamental respects, the AMP in Thanjavur permitted greater social change, social stratification, development of the productive forces, urbanization and commodity production than Marx's model allows for. In particular, it gave rise to varying grades of communal serfdom and slavery that are distinguishable both from the private slavery of classical Western Europe and the serfdom of feudal Europe, and also from the 'general slavery of the Orient' to which Marx refers as characteristic of the AMP. ... On the west coast periphery of the south Indian formations characterized by the AMP, namely in Kerala, a form of the feudal mode of production developed, independently of but in crucial respects comparable to Western Europe and Japan.¹⁵⁵

It is apparent in the above that Gough attempts to present and apply the AMP in ways that were completely far from Marx's mind. To illustrate, as I shall show in different places of this dissertation, Marx's AMP, once in existence, does not contain any internal mechanism of social change and development. Therefore, the question of "greater" social change or, for that matter, any other such thing does not arise at all. Accordingly, Marx's AMP precludes any class stratification based on ownership or non-ownership of the means of production (land) since the AMP represents a stationary primitive communism. In Marx's AMP the nature-determined primordial division of labour never grows into social division of labour. The outcome of such non-development presupposes, generally speaking, the non-development of commodity production and trade, individuation, individual private property in land, and cities

and towns. I draw attention to all these in chapters 6 and 8. Recently Guna has squarely challenged the findings of Gough and questioned the validity of the AMP as a category for explaining south Indian, especially Tamil, history. He regards Gough's modifications of Marx's AMP as "a myth."¹⁵⁶ More importantly, Gough's modifications of Marx's AMP are unwarranted because, in the final instance, Gough's version of the AMP turns out to be something which Marx's AMP was not. Marx's AMP is in itself an organic totality or whole of interdependent constituents (e.g. the absence of private property in land etc.). In this light the suggested modifications, whether of Gough or of others, inflict violence to the unity of the AMP as an organic whole, just as ancient, feudal, or capitalist modes of production are each individually an organic whole. What Gough and others, who suggest modifications or reformulate Marx's AMP, are trying to do can hardly be missed. The modifications or reformulations only signify that Marx's AMP, which cannot be defended in its original form as a totality, is "being sneaked in through the back door."¹⁵⁷ Then again, there is an exception to this. Anupam Sen, for one, accepts Marx's AMP in its entirety, including even Oriental despotism - a component which has been denounced and discarded by almost all scholars with the most prominent exception of Wittfogel.¹⁵⁸ Sen's acceptance is based on faith rather than on logic and/or evidence, for he is characteristically and bluntly insensitive to all criticisms that have so far been levelled by numerous scholars in respect of the methodological lapses and theoretical inconsistencies immanent in Marx's AMP. Apparently, he applies the AMP to the entire period of "pre-

British India" without ever considering the substantial ancient and medieval phases (i.e. Hindu period) of the Indian social formation. What is worse, he totally ignores an enormous volume of source materials including historical and legal data that, without any shade of doubt, rule out the applicability of Marx's AMP to the ancient and early medieval Indian social formation. Indeed, his distortion of the empirical reality of India is such that his Weltansicht is scarcely distinguishable from that of the European imperialists and colonialists in the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁵⁹

In light of works reviewed in the earlier section as well as in the present one, the rationale of my own undertaking hardly requires any extraordinary vindication. Western scholars, who conduct and carry on researches, debates and discussions predominantly of a theoretical nature, do not invariably test them against the empirical reality of the Indian social formation, even though the latter was the main basis on which Marx actually formulated his theory of the AMP.¹⁶⁰ Neither do they systematically confront and bring out the different methodological and theoretical problems and their consequences inherent in Marx's AMP. As noted earlier, most of them mainly concentrate on modifying the AMP plainly in order to make it generally acceptable to those who are reluctant to accept Marx's AMP in all its original essentials. It goes without saying that the range of modifications they suggest in regard to the AMP vary from one researcher to the other, depending on his own predilections or his reading of Marx. At the same time, the existing (mainly fragmentary) empirical studies especially on ancient and early

medieval India, produced invariably by Indian scholars, do not systematically and directly address themselves to the issue of Marx's AMP in terms of its essential constituents and thereby evaluate its empirical validity. In fact there exists, so far as my knowledge goes, no serious or full-scale study that has attempted to evaluate the validity (or invalidity) of Marx's theory within the context of the Indian social formation up to the 13th century. The existing piecemeal empirical studies bearing on the AMP, which I have discussed earlier, do not also systematically take into account and analyse different methodological and theoretical problems of the AMP and the consequences that follow from them.

In view of the limitations of the reviewed works, which deal with the AMP either theoretically or empirically in the context of India, my dissertation seeks to remedy the current deficiency, and simultaneously endeavours to fill out a longstanding void, in the relevant literature. From this point of view, the primary purpose of my dissertation is to undertake an assessment of the methodological, theoretical, and empirical validity of Marx's theory of the AMP. To reiterate, the central issue that my study seeks to resolve is this: How far or to what extent can Marx's theory of the AMP be justified and upheld methodologically and theoretically, on the one hand, and empirically, on the other, on the basis of the concrete experience of the Indian social formation from about the rise of the Indus civilization to the first consolidation of the Muslim rule? There is another purpose of my work. It concerns the Orientalist dimensions of

Marx's theory of the AMP in all its essential constituents. While more will be said later, suffice it to say here that the concept of Orientalism, as used here, implies a style of thought, a set of assumptions, or a system of representations which is based upon, and is expressive of, an essential epistemological and ontological distinction made between the Oriental (Eastern/Asian) social formations and their peoples, on the one hand, and the Occidental (Western/European) social formations and their peoples, on the other.¹⁶¹ It is important to note that Marx did not use the label "Asiatic" in the AMP frivolously or casually. This label is not a "type-label" or "generic designation" for primitive communism in any form occurring at any place, as Draper suggests. Neither was it "primarily an analytic model" applied indiscriminately by Marx to European social formations, as Melotti seems to imply at one point in his discussion.¹⁶² True, one may discover an isolated feature or two of the AMP in the primitive communism(s) originating in Europe. For instance, Marx himself stated in his letter of February 17, 1870 that all nations, whether of Europe or not, started from "communal property", a form which he identified as of Indian origin.¹⁶³ But this does not mean that the primitive communism of the AMP led to the development from within either of private property in land or of any other mode(s) of production in the Orient. In contrast, the primitive communism(s) of the Occident not only generated private property in land, but it did so in different forms in different modes (e.g. ancient, feudal and capitalist) of production. One can hardly dare to identify, without misrepresenting Marx, Oriental despotism or

stagnation with any of those modes of production originating in Europe. What this boils down to is that Marx, while consciously using the label "Asiatic", limited the applicability of the AMP only to the geographical configurations outside of Europe and, hence, maintained the essentiality of the geographical hiatus between the East and West.

This is, however, not any new revelation. A number of writers have already pointed out that Marx's AMP is, in a manner of speaking, an embodiment of the uniqueness of a particular development, or rather of social un- or non-development, concerning only the East. This includes identification of the East with communal property, collectivism, ruralism, and so forth.¹⁶⁴ Thus, in the course of his argument against the improper and unwarranted tendency of certain scholars (e.g. Godelier, Chesneaux, Suret-Canale etc.) to extend Marx's AMP to all social formations, Mandel says the following, which amply bears out the Orientalist character of the AMP:

If the idea of the Asiatic Mode of production is stripped of its specific meaning, it can no longer explain the special development of the East in comparison with Western and mediterranean Europe. It loses its chief usefulness as a tool for analyzing the societies for which Marx and Engels explicitly intended it. It can recover this usefulness only if we go back to the original formulations, and to the function originally intended for it by Marx and Engels - that of explaining the peculiarities of the historical development of India, China, Egypt and the Islamic world, as compared with the historical development of Western Europe.¹⁶⁵

Gellner stresses Marx's Orientalism in this way:

The idea of the AMP, if pushed further, as can be done most naturally, breaks up the unity of mankind and of human history; it suggests that the East or some parts of it are prone to a quite distinctive mode of social organization,

one absent from the West and one that is particularly tyrannical and inimical to human dignity, liberty and progress, and that is specially prone to indefinite self-perpetuation and stagnation. ... East is East and West is West. The AMP fuses Marx and Kipling - and there was indeed a distinct streak of Kipling in Marx, with his firmly-stated view of the beneficial effect of the British drill sergeant on India. It is as if there were one sociological law for the West and another for the East. On one hand, such a view is uncomfortably close to racism, or at best to Western ethnocentric self-congratulations; and at another level, such a view undermines the faith in progress as a universal expectation as of right - as a salvation that may at worst be delayed, but that is present at least as a germ in every (author's emphasis - BB) society.¹⁶⁶

Finally, I may refer to Avineri, who draws our attention to the same theme of Marx's Orientalism yet from another point of view: "With all his understanding of the non-European world, Marx remained a Europe-oriented thinker, and his insights into Indian and Chinese society could never be reconciled with his general philosophy of history, which remained - like Hegel's - determined by the European experience and the Western historical consciousness."¹⁶⁷

In light of the foregoing discussion the secondary purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that not only is Marx's AMP grounded upon Orientalism, but, what is even more important, it stands for and indeed represents what I call materialist Orientalism - the doctrine that rationalizes and sanctifies the geographical divide between the East and West, and, hence, separates Them from Us by resorting to material (or concrete) explanatory factors (e.g. the absence or presence of private property in land, the absence or presence of urbanism, etc.). To put it otherwise, I show that materialist Orientalism is written into the left, right and centre of Marx's AMP in terms of all its constituent

essentials.¹⁶⁸ This critical assessment will also fill in a characteristic void in the contemporary literature on the AMP since, so far as my knowledge goes, this has not been done by anyone to date.

Having reviewed the relevant literature and discussed my major objectives, let me outline briefly the scope and organization of the dissertation.

V. The Scope and Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, i.e. chapter 2, I summarize the essential ingredients of Marx's theory of the AMP. It is asserted that it consists of three logically inter-connected ingredients. First, by far the most notable feature of the AMP is the absence of private property in land and, correspondingly, the lack of any fundamental class division and antagonism between the landowners or landlords who own (and control) the means of production (i.e. land), on the one hand, and the landless who do not own (and control) such means of production, on the other. Second, the Oriental social formations are conceptualized and concretized in terms of numerous spatially isolated village communities. Their economic self-sufficiency and, ultimately, stagnation was brought about as much by the absence of class struggle as by a particular unity of agriculture and manufacture which, in turn, blocked the emergence of commodity production, trade, market, and cities and towns. Finally, the AMP is characterized by the presence of a class-transcending omnipotent state, which exercises despotic power by holding down the undifferentiated mass in general slavery as well as by extracting surplus labour from them. Neither limited by constraints of the social

classes in mutual antagonism and struggle nor tied to the mosaic of self-reproducing villages, this hypertrophied state originates in and rests upon hydraulic functions and/or force. In this rundown consideration of the AMP's essential ingredients, I propose to deal with Marx's writings more or less chronologically. In the formulation of the AMP Marx starts with concrete investigations (e.g. the articles on India published in the 1850s), then moves to a rather "more abstract logico-formal level" (e.g. the Grundrisse or Capital), and, finally, returns back again to "the concrete" in his ethnological researches. Attention will also be focused on the relevant European source materials on which Marx drew in his specification of the different ingredients of the AMP. In other words, an auxiliary purpose of this chapter is to show that Marx, while formulating the AMP, "remained substantially faithful to the classical European image of Asia which he had inherited from a long file of predecessors."¹⁶⁹

The methodological and theoretical assessment of the AMP is taken up in chapters 3, 6, and 8 on the basis of Marx's own (general) methodological standpoint, which has been summarized in the following section. A common underlying theme that becomes clear in the assessment is that innumerable methodological and theoretical absurdities, flaws, and contradictions are built into the very structure of the AMP in such a way that they metamorphose it into a sterile concept. The problems bedeviling the AMP are both complex and interrelated, and are in point of fact extremely serious, so much so that any attempt to reconstitute and revitalize Marx's AMP by modifying or removing one or a few of its

components would in all likelihood go up in smoke.¹⁷⁰ In any event the raison d'être of Marx's methodological and theoretical lapses in the AMP can hardly be accounted for unless one does so in accordance with what I have called materialist Orientalism. That is, in the course of his search for the direct antecedent and opposite of the ancient, Germanic, feudal, and capitalist modes of production, all of which originated in the Occident, Marx was inescapably led to transform the AMP into a conceptual scapegoat. Simultaneously he was also led to justify and accentuate the geographical divide between the Orient and Occident by means of concrete or material causative factors in such a way that either of the stated geographical categories (i.e. East or West) was mindlessly turned into an autonomous, coherent, homogeneous, and global entity. To all intents and purposes the geographical divide in the AMP became an epistemological and ontological point of departure for the production of "knowledge" of the social development of the East, as opposed to that of the West.

The methodological and theoretical questions that eat into the productive usefulness of the AMP as a theoretical category are without doubt of wide scope. They range from Marx's arbitrary selection or even suppression of the available data to the lack of causality, or from his particular mode of handling and interpretation of the subjectively chosen data to the lack of internal logical consistency in the substantiation of the AMP. In chapter 3, wherein I take stock of Marx's allegation of the absence of private landownership especially in India, all these become quite evident. Marx ignored, for instance, the data in

the Fifth Report (1812) which in several places affirms the existence of private landed property. He tended to interpret the private landed property of the members of the joint family (as portrayed in Mitāksarā) in such a way as though it were village communal property. At bottom he was plainly unable to explain why the process of individuation does not take place and, for that matter, why private property in land does not develop in the Orient. In chapter 6 I evaluate the methodological and theoretical validity of Marx's thesis of a non-dialectical Orient in all its ramifications. As in the case of his dogmatic assertion of the absence of private landed property, Marx was unable to provide any realistic rationale for his claim of the non-existence of an internal mechanism of social change and development in the Orient. The causative factors which he advanced ex facie were at bottom pseudo factors inasmuch as they were neither specific nor essential to any exclusive geographical configuration, whether Orient or not. And what is more, instead of being a productive scientific theory explaining the historical specificities of social change and development in the East, the AMP turned out to be an ideological, if not Marxist, apology legitimating imperialist interventions of the Abendland in order for liberating what Marx regarded basically as the vegetative East. One can hardly avoid reaching the same conclusion inasmuch as force and conquest appear to be championed by Marx in the course of his analysis of the rise, nature, and functions of the state and politics in the AMP. This aspect, along with many others, is taken up in chapter 8. I demonstrate that Marx's analysis of the state and politics in the AMP also lacked

causation. Once he denied the existence of private ownership of land in the Orient, Marx was unable to situate the state and politics within the terrain of class antagonism and struggle. Politics in Marx's AMP does not derive from, and rest upon, class antagonism and struggle, but merely stands for the linear relationship of despotism from above to the subjection of the mass below. Neither does the state derive from, and live on, class antagonism and struggle. Marx's causative factors (e.g. hydraulic functions and/or force) in this regard are ideological, rather than scientific. Sometimes Marx treats the state as part of the infrastructure /economy, but on other occasions he considers it a superstructure that is completely divorced from the infrastructure. What is even worse is that the AMP is pregnant with ominous implications. For instance, if the state can show up in the (classless) primitive communism of the AMP, what guarantee, if any, is there that it would expire or fade away in the future (classless) socialist or communist social formation?

All things considered, there is not any question that Marx's AMP is full of copious methodological and theoretical absurdities, flaws, and contradictions. But there is more to it than that. The AMP is also empirically invalid well and truly if it is weighed against the empirical reality of the pre-Muslim Indian social formation. This is shown in chapters 4, 5, 7 and 9. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to showing that Marx's repeated assertions of the absence of private property in land in India have no empirical validity whatsoever. There exist abundant hard facts, corroborated by an overpowering mass of

different types of data, which prove beyond any shadow of doubt not only the existence of such property but also its development in different forms, e.g. allodial (peasant proprietary) and feudal (hierarchical). Marx's refusal to integrate into his AMP such data (e.g. The Fifth Report 1812 , and works of certain colonial officials) as confirmed the existence of private ownership of land, strengthens the presumption of Marx's materialist Orientalism in regard to his treatment of the non-European social formations.

The same presupposition also arises in chapter 7 where I exemplify the empirical irrelevance of the AMP insofar as it alleges socioeconomic dormancy in the Indian social formation. The relevant data for the period under review make it crystal clear that Marx's AMP, when empirically checked up on, is thoroughly misrepresentative of the Indian social economy. As my inquiry exhibits, almost all of the generalizations - viz. the persistence ad infinitum of the simple or natural division of labour, the lack of commodity production and exchange, the absence of the class of traders and merchants, the lack of cities and towns, and so on - giving substance to the AMP are nullified by the empirical data at our disposal. The development of the productive forces and relations as well as interaction between them was such that the Indian social formation was never at any historical point in time totally based on the self-sufficiency of a peasant-dominated village economy, as Marx's AMP wants us to believe. And what is more, from about the 6th century A.D. the Indian social formation came to be dominated by a class of feudal lords (samantas) who exercised varying

degrees of state power and simultaneously controlled the use of the major means of production (land). If anything, this class-directed socioeconomic change and development is certainly an additional dimension that negates Marx's projection of the stagnant variant of primitive communism in his AMP. Put otherwise, the different facets of dynamism in the Indian social formation are best revealed when one locates them within the context of social classes, class practices (politics), and the state.

In chapter 9 I examine the origin, development, and functions of these contextual components of the Indian social formation in the course of my evaluation of the empirical validity of the (non-) class and political constituents of the AMP. It is needless to point out that the AMP, when empirically tested, falls to pieces. As my findings bespeak, India never experienced the primitive communism of the kind Marx had conceptualized in his AMP. Instead of being primarily composed of, and dominated by, occupant peasants since time immemorial, as Marx suggests, the Indian social formation displays the rise and development of a number of social classes or fractions thereof, such as peasant proprietors, landowners, slaves, traders and merchants, independent artisans, feudal landlords, forced labourers, serfs, etc. Neither is there any lack of evidence concerning the presence and persistence of antagonisms and struggles between relevant social classes (e.g. slaves and slaveowners, or feudal landowners and their dependent peasantry). Likewise, the empirical data do not corroborate Marx's supposition of the origin of the state either in conquest and force or in hydraulic

functions. In India the state arose only when the social formation became internally divided into opposed social classes at a certain point in its historical development. No less significant is the fact that the state in India can not be reduced to the person of the despot (and his aides). On the contrary, it was an organizational aggregate of different institutional structures of which the king was only one, even though he was an important one. And last, but by no means least, the state structure did not remain the same evermore, because it was fundamentally affected by feudal political relations in the wake of the development of feudalism from about the 6th century A.D. All in all, the AMP is not a productive theoretical category that reflects and reproduces in thought the real concrete either of the Indian social classes or of the Indian state in the period under investigation here.

Finally, I summarize the main findings of this dissertation in chapter 10. In this connection I emphasize the futility of the recent attempts at the restoration of Marx's AMP in a new guise and, hence, at its reintroduction through the back-door.

VI. Methodology, Types and Sources of Data and Limitations of the Dissertation

Before I comment on the types and sources of data and on the limitations of the dissertation, let me briefly outline the (Marxist) methodology, of which I make use in my assay of the methodological, theoretical, and empirical validity of Marx's AMP.

Methodology, as conceived here, is "the systematic and logical study of the principles guiding scientific investigation."¹⁷¹ Put

otherwise, it is the study of "the research process itself - the principles, procedures, and strategies for gathering information, analyzing it, and interpreting it."¹⁷² Methodology as such is different from and not identical with the construction of research techniques (e.g. participant observation etc.), the scope of the latter being considerably narrower than the former.¹⁷³ Likewise, methodology should be distinguished from theory even though both are organically connected with each other. Broadly speaking, theory designates a set of logically interconnected concepts that produce knowledge through the process of exploration, description, and explanation of a variety of facts (e.g. events, phenomena, relations etc.) pertaining to social reality. Williamson and others define social scientific "theory" as "a general explanation", while Shaw and Costanzo regard it as "a set of interrelated hypotheses or propositions concerning a phenomenon or a set of phenomena."¹⁷⁴ The meaning of the word "science" in this connection can be understood as "the active search for, and presentation of, truths and evidence for them, using arguments and data which related not simply to what could be touched or counted, but to what could be stated, in more general terms (including moral terms), to be the case with man and his world."¹⁷⁵ Since I use the Marxist methodology in all my analyses in the chapters to follow, it is necessary to highlight the main principles of this methodology.

The core of the Marxist methodology consists in the principle of historical materialism which defines man "as a practical subject to be explained by his process of real life" or which explains man

"rationally, by the necessity in which he is practically placed, to produce and reproduce his material conditions of existence in order to satisfy his needs."¹⁷⁶ That is to say, men as "real individuals" must, above all other things, produce and reproduce conditions of both their physical and social existence.¹⁷⁷ Production, entailing reproduction of life as well as social relations between persons, is "the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history."¹⁷⁸ To emphasize the importance of production, either in sustaining the living individuals or in involving them in a complex network of social relations, is to emphasize the importance of a mode of production, i.e. "the way in which men produce their means of subsistence"¹⁷⁹ in a given social formation (i.e. society).

The importance of the mode of production in a scientific study can be clarified in the sense that objects (i.e. facts, phenomena, events, relations, etc.) of investigation can be analysed and explained in terms of the mode of production in any given society. This is so because what men are, i.e. their nature, ideas, consciousness etc., is directly related to the mode of production in the social formation.¹⁸⁰ This means that the Marxist methodology emphasizes scientific investigation of facts not in terms of subjective (i.e. postulated or arbitrary) meanings individuals put on them but in terms of the objective (i.e. actual or real) conditions in the mode of production in a society. This observation should not be so interpreted as to imply crude economic determinism. That is, for example, the emphasis on the mode of production as the methodological point of departure should not

be so understood as to mean that ideas, once born on the basis of a mode of production, would not exercise "influence on human action and, in general, on the course of human affairs."¹⁸¹ What this implies is that the superstructure (viz. law, politics, religion etc.) are not "just reducible" to the base (i.e. infrastructure or economy) and that the latter "ultimately" determines the former and the totality as a whole.¹⁸² Levitt explains:

The motor of history is within the economic structure, even if the mode of appearance is characterized by religion or politics. In fact, the very appearance of one or the other of these superstructural spheres as dominant is itself to be explained by the existing relations of production. ... On the other hand, we must avoid a simple economic reductionism - reductionism which would relegate the superstructure to 'mere' ideology.¹⁸³

In other words, one should consider the appropriateness of political, religious, legal and other institutions as important forces in the concrete situations of the social formation.¹⁸⁴

Analytically, the concept of mode of production refers to a combination of the productive forces with the relations of production. There are three elements in any system of productive forces: a. the personal activity of man, i.e. the work itself; b. the subject of that work; and c. instruments of work. The subject of work and instruments necessary for work constitute the means of production.¹⁸⁵ These three elements (i.e. a, b and c) combine in what Marx calls the labour process. In the labor process "man's activity, with the help of the instruments of labour, effects an alteration, designed from the commencement, in the material worked upon. The process disappears in

the product; the latter is use-value."¹⁸⁶ In other words, the concept of productive forces or labour process, so to say, points to a relation of man to, and a manner of his appropriation of, nature.

In contrast, the concept of the relations of production refers not only to man's relation to other men in a particular way but also the manner in which (the economic) surplus is extracted. That is, the relations of production are relations that bind both workers and non-workers. In these relations non-workers, as proprietors or owners of the means of production (i.e. land in the case of feudal lords or factory establishment in the case of industrial capitalists), appropriate the surplus produced by the workers (i.e. serfs or bonded laborers in feudalism or wage laborers in industrial capitalism). The relations of production are thus basically class relations. More specifically, the concept of class will be understood here as designating a group of individuals in terms of whether or not they own (and control) the means of production.¹⁸⁷

With the emergence of the antagonistic classes (i.e. classes opposed to each other in terms of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production) comes also the state - an organization that not only maintains the conditions for the existence of the mode of production but also holds, while allowing appropriation of surplus by one class from another, the antagonistic classes in unison. It maintains and reproduces antagonistic class relations and, thus, secures the existence of a class divided social formation. There were, however, societies without the state because those were without classes. The

state is, in an important sense, "the excrescence of society."¹⁸⁸ The state is not an universal institution because of opposition of interests between classes. It is, says Krader, "the product of that society which is divided into social classes whose interests are opposed to each other by virtue of their different relations in and to social production."¹⁸⁹

Another postulate of the Marxist methodology is that concepts indispensable in any scientific investigation should be so formulated as to be historically specific. That is, concepts must reproduce reality in its appropriate historical contexts. If they do not, they are mere abstractions (i.e. contextless). Because of the changefulness of the social formation, i.e. "continual movement of growth in productive forces, of destruction in social relations, of formation in ideas", concepts are only "historical and transitory products" but not something "fixed, immutable, eternal."¹⁹⁰ Take, for instance, the concepts of class and property. To define class by its relation to the means of production is an abstraction. The concept of class, to be a useful analytical and explanatory tool, must reflect the reality of a historically specific society such as, for example, feudal or capitalist society.¹⁹¹ The concept of property can be defined as

a right in the sense of an enforceable claim to some use or benefit of something, whether it is a right to a share in some common resource or an individual right in some particular things. What distinguishes property from mere momentary possession is that property is a claim that will be enforced by society or the state, by custom or convention or law. If there were not this distinction there would be no need for a concept of property: no other concept than mere occupancy or momentary physical possession would be needed.¹⁹²

In any case, the concept of property or, synonymously, the right of ownership implies a relation between the proprietor, on the one hand, and other persons (i.e. non-proprietors or non-owners), on the other, with regard to certain things or objects (viz. lands, buildings, etc.). Defined in this way, the concept of property contains only a general but not a historically specific meaning. That is, the concept of property has not retained the same meaning in all stages of historical development of human society. As Marx says:

In each historical epoch, property has developed differently and with a set of entirely different social relations. Thus to define bourgeois property is nothing else than to give an exposition of all the social relations of bourgeois production. To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation, a category apart, an abstract and eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence.¹⁹³

In brief, the meanings of the term property have changed over time in relation to changes in the mode(s) of production in the social formation. While more will be said later, it suffices to state here that I shall utilize the above-mentioned concept of property in my discussion of the existence of private property in land in India.¹⁹⁴

Another important postulate of the Marxist methodology is this. Insofar as scientific investigation of facts is concerned, the Marxist methodology is also based on the principle that facts that are to be investigated are not to be treated as independent in themselves as if they were a "collection of dead facts."¹⁹⁵ That is, they should not be treated in isolation from each other. Rather, they should be regarded as mutually interlinked and also as interlinked aspects of a whole or totality. They exist in their contextual interdependence on each other,

and on the whole itself. One aspect of the whole cannot be reduced to the other(s). In brief, the Marxist methodology emphasizes both the holistic conception of reality and mutual interaction between different aspects of that reality.

The conclusion we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity. Production predominates not only over itself, in the antithetical definition of production, but over the other moments as well. The process always returns to production to begin anew. ... A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange as well as definite relations between these different moments. Admittedly, however, in its one-sided form, production is itself determined by the other moments. ... Mutual interaction takes place between the different moments. This is the case with every organic whole.¹⁹⁶

Having roughed out the major premises of the Marxist methodology, let me now turn to a brief discussion of the types and sources of data as well as the limitations of the present dissertation.

It is almost entirely based on published materials collected from different library sources. These materials are of diverse types and include the following: British Parliamentary Papers, official publications, writings of the British colonial officials, accounts of European travellers in Mughal India, original digests and commentaries on Hindu Law, historical and contemporary monographs upon different aspects of the ancient and early medieval Indian social formation, unpublished dissertations, and manuscripts, and publications in the periodicals. At the same time I should point out two limitations of the present work. First, it does not cover the entire pre-capitalist (or pre-British) historical period, but is only limited to what is

traditionally known in ordinary parlance as the Hindu period. I stop at 1206 A.D. when Muslim political power became consolidated, even though the Arabs conquered Sind in the 8th century and the Turks and Afghans subjugated Panjab towards the end of the 10th century. In any event, after the rise of the Muslims to political power there began a transition and transformation of the Indian social formation dominated till then by the Hindus. But from the 13th century, the Indian social formation gradually emerged as an ethnic mosaic of two dominant ethnic groups and their cultures: Hindus and Muslims. This evolving pluralism was indeed expressed in innumerable ways at different levels (e.g. economic, political, ideological, etc.) of the social formation. What all this boils down to is that from the 13th century onward the Indian social formation takes on altogether new dimensions that are in themselves worthy of separate and independent research. This warrants, therefore, the exclusion from the scope of my dissertation of any focus on all changes and developments in the Indian social formation subsequent to 1206 A.D. Considered in that light, the "Hindu" period, the period of my own study, does not mean apparently anything more than chronological space and time. In terms of the development of the productive forces and relations, however, the Hindu period can roughly be divided into two phases. The first one commences from about the rise of the Indus civilization (c.2500/2300 B.C.) and continues to about the 6th century A.D. This is the ancient phase, at the end of which commences the second phase. It is called the early medieval phase (c.550 A.D.-1200 A.D.), which is marked by the rise and development of a

number of feudal features in the Indian social formation.¹⁹⁷

A final limitation of the present dissertation consists in the fact that it focuses on the AMP as formulated, not by both Marx and Engels, but only by Marx. Needless to explain, this limitation is a "limitation" only to those who are accustomed to accord the same epistemological status to the works of both Marx and Engels. In contrast to this approach, my exclusion of the views of Engels is an act of deliberate choice. In this I have been motivated as much by an urge to focus simply on Marx as the original formulator of the AMP as by the raison d'être to maintain the originality of the views of each, even though both Marx and Engels saw, more often than not, eye to eye about the matters we are concerned with here.

Footnotes

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2. A. T. Embree, "Oriental Despotism: A Note on the History of the Idea", Societas, 1 (1971), p. 255.
3. See S. Avineri, "Introduction", in K. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization (New York: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 5-6; U. Melotti, Marx and the Third World (London: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 63-72; and F. Tokei, Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1979), p. 21.
4. See L. Krader, The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972), passim.
5. C. Levitt, "Karl Marx and Henry Sumner Maine: India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", SC, 3 (April-June 1983), p. 1.
6. Tokei, Essays on the Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 20-1.

7. In 1206 A.D. Qutb-ud-din Aybak proclaimed himself as the Sultan (1206 A.D.-1210 A.D.) of Delhi, thus, initiating altogether a new and stable phase of Muslim rule in India. See S. Wolpert, A New History of India (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 109; and S. Bhattacharya, A Dictionary of Indian History (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1967), p. 701.
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19. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 24.
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23. Anderson, op. cit., pp. 463-4.
24. Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), Bk. XVII, chap. 6(5), p. 279.
25. Anderson, op. cit., pp. 465-6.
26. See S. Ambirajan, Classical Political Economy and British Policy in India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 9; and W. J. Barber, British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 98.
27. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 29.
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29. Barber, op. cit., p. 129.
30. Ibid., p. 175.
31. J. Mill, The History of India (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1968), vol. 1, p. 118; and vol. 2, pp. 133 and 151.
32. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 141; and vol. 2, p. 148.
33. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 218-9.
34. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 54.
35. Ibid., p. 55; and K. Marx, Theories of Surplus-Value (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), part III, p. 422.
36. See Sawyer, op. cit., pp. 11 and 38; and Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, n. 19, p. 31.
37. R. Jones, An Essay on the Distribution of Wealth and on the Sources of Taxation (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1964), pp. 109-42.
38. Ibid., pp. 7-8. Emphases added.
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40. G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), p. 168.
41. Ibid., pp. 180 and 475.

42. See K. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 21; and Capital (New York: International Publishers, 1970), vol. 1, p. 79.
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101. Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphic Records, pp. 32-48; and Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", p. 327.

102. See chapter 5, p. 254; and chapter 9, p. 503.
103. Chapter 5, pp. 248-50.
104. F. Perlin, "Concepts of Order and Comparison, with a Diversion on Concrete Ideologies and Corporate Institutions in Late Pre-Colonial India", JPS, 12 (January/April 1985), pp. 109-10.
105. For details, see chapter 9, pp. 499-500.
106. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", p. 83.
107. Ibid.
108. See Byres, op. cit., p. 12.
109. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 202.
110. Stein, "The State and the Agrarian Order in the Medieval South India: A Historiographical Critique", p. 87.
111. See Nandi, op. cit., pp. 33-59; Jha, "Validity of the 'Brahmana Peasant Alliance' and the 'Segmentary State' in Early Medieval South India", pp. 270-96; and Guna, op. cit., pp. 142-96.
112. Stein, "Politics, Peasants and the Deconstruction of Feudalism in Medieval India", pp. 74 and 82.
113. Ibid., p. 80.
114. Perlin, op. cit., p. 126.
115. B. Wielenga, Marxist Views in Historical Perspective (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1976), p. 65.
116. Ibid.
117. Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, p. 409.
118. Ibid., footnote g, p. 409.
119. B. N. Datta, Studies in Indian Social Polity (Calcutta: Purabi Publishers, 1944), pp. 9-28 and 426-41.
120. S. A. Dange, India: From Primitive Communism to Slavery (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1961), p. XIX.
121. See D. Riepe, "D. D. Kosambi: Father of Scientific History", in R. S. Sharma, ed., Indian Society: Historical Probings in Memory of D.

- D. Kosambi (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974), pp. 34-44.
122. Thapar, "Interpretations of Ancient Indian History", p. 331.
123. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p. 10. Emphases added. Elsewhere, he accepts Marx's AMP in a qualified form. See his "Stages of Indian History" JISCS, 1 (1954), pp. 40-55.
124. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p. 10.
125. Ibid., p. 1. Emphases in original.
126. Ibid., pp. 139, 153, 159, 216, 257, 272, and pp. 295-405.
127. D. Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", CIS, 9 (December 1966), pp. 44 and 57.
128. See S. Naqvi, "Marx on India's Pre-Asiatic Society", in K. M. Kurian, ed., op. cit., pp. 75 and 78-9.
129. S. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Society and Economy", IESHR, 9 (1972), p. 407.
130. Chandra, "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule", p. 47. An example of the repudiation of the AMP in very general terms can be found in K. C. Raychaudhury, "Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production and the Evolution of the Indian Economy", IEJ, 22 (July-September 1974), pp. 20-35.
131. See Chandra, "Karl Marx, his Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule", pp. 47-55.
132. Ibid., pp. 47 and 55. Emphases added.
133. Habib, "Problems of Marxist Historical Analysis", pp. 23-4. The same dissatisfaction is also expressed by Thapar in view of the recent attempts to support the AMP in spite of its empirical invalidity in the Indian context. See R. Thapar, From Lineage to State (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 1.
134. Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, pp. 111-2, 75-81, 123, 154, 179 and 330-51. See also his "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India", passim. The existence of private ownership of land in Mughal India has now been clearly and precisely established. See B. R. Grover, "Nature of Land-Rights in Mughal India", IESHR, 1 (1963), pp. 1-23; and "Nature of Dehat-I-Taaluqa (Zamindari villages) and the Evolution of the Taaluqdari system during the Mughal Age", IESHR, 2 (1965), pp. 166-77 and 259-88; and Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals", passim;

and Thoughts on Agrarian Relations in Mughal India, passim.

135. T. Raychaudhuri, "The Asiatic Mode of Production and India's Foreign Trade in the 17th century: A Theoretical Exercise", in B. De, ed., Essays in Honour of Prof. S. C. Sarkar (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1976), pp. 839 and 843.
136. Ibid., p. 839.
137. Avineri, op. cit., p. 13.
138. Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p. 840.
139. Ibid., p. 843. For my own elaboration of the problems of identification of feudalism with serfdom or of defining serfdom, see chapter 5, p. 254 and chapter 9, pp. 503-6 and (n.88) 564-5.
140. Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p. 843. For my own discussion, see this chapter, p. 58-9 and chapters 3, 4 and 9.
141. Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p. 843.
142. See D. Banerjee, "Marx and the Transformability of 'Asiatic' Societies", in De, ed., op. cit., p. 861.
143. Chapter 3, pp. 166-8.
144. K. Marx, Grundrisse (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 486.
145. A. Guha, "Marxist Approach to Indian History: A Framework", in Kurian, ed., op. cit., p. 49.
146. Anderson, op. cit., p. 482; Melotti, op. cit., p. 72.
147. Guha, op. cit., p. 51.
148. Ibid., p. 48. Emphasis added.
149. Ibid.
150. D. Gupta, "From Varna to Jati: The Indian Caste System from the Asiatic to the Feudal Mode of Production", JCA, 10 (1980), p. 258.
151. Ibid., p. 250. Emphases in original.
152. Ibid., p. 251.
153. Anderson, op. cit., pp. 481-2. See also chapter 10, pp. 591-2.
154. See K. Gough, "Class and Agrarian Change: Some Comments on Peasant

Resistance and Revolution in India", PA, 42 (Fall 1969), pp. 360-8; "Dravidian Kinship and Modes of Production", CIS, 13 (1979), pp. 265-91; and "Modes of Production in Southern India", EPW, 15 (February 1980), pp. 337-64.

155. Gough, "Modes of Production in Southern India", p. 337.
156. Guna, op. cit., pp. 119-21.
157. Cf. Byres, op. cit., p. 14.
158. A. Sen, The State, Industrialization and Class Formations in India (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 14-45.
159. Sen's attempt to justify the prevalence of the AMP in Mughal India is also completely misguided and ideologically motivated. The relevant source materials rule out sans doute the applicability of the AMP to the Mughal social formation. For bibliographical references on this point, see footnotes 96 and 134.
160. Bailey and Llobera, "The AMP: Sources and the Formation of the Concept", p. 23.
161. This definition is based on E. W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 2-3 and 202-3. For different usages and details of Orientalism, see also A. Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis", Diogenes, 44 (Winter 1963), pp. 103-40; A. Laroui, "For a Methodology of Islamic Studies", Diogenes, 83 (1973), pp. 12-39; R. Coury, "Why Can't They Be Like Us", RMES, 1 (1975), pp. 113-33; and Turner, Marx and the End of Orientalism, passim; and "Orientalism, Islam and Capitalism", passim.
162. See Draper, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 541; and Melotti, op. cit., p. 77.
163. K. Marx, The Letters of Karl Marx (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979), p. 268.
164. See G. Lichtheim, "Marx and the Asiatic Mode of Production", in T. Bottomore, ed. Karl Marx (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 171; and Melotti, op. cit., pp. 49 and 72.
165. Mandel, op. cit., p. 128. Emphasis in original.
166. E. Gellner, "Soviets Against Wittfogel: Or, The Anthropological Preconditions of Mature Marxism", TS, 14 (May 1985), pp. 343-4. Emphases added.
167. Avineri, op. cit., p. 30. It may be noted here that at least one Indian scholar draws attention to problems consequent upon the use

- of the East-West dichotomy. Thus, Benoy K. Sarkar argues: "Western terminology for the newly unearthed Oriental phenomena, without specification as to which periods and phases of the institution or theory are being discussed, is a considerable handicap to the advance of scientific inquiry. In this regard, the tendency in Asia to sum up the `West` of all the ages in single shibboleths or catchwords, is only a natural nemesis to the corresponding fallacy of Europe and America consisting in the attempt to discover the entire `East` in isolated phrases or items of civic experience". See Sarkar, The Positive Background of Sociology: Book II Political, pp. 7-8. Emphases in original. Elsewhere he warns the "Asian" scholars: "The social thinkers of Asia also have fallen victim to the fallacious sociological methods and messages of the modern West, to which the postulate of an alleged distinction between the Orient and the Occident is the first principle of science". Sarkar, The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology: Introduction to Hindu Positivism, p. 19.
168. This is demonstrated in chapters 3, 6 and 8.
169. Anderson, op. cit., p. 481.
170. For such examples, see my conclusion in chapter 10, pp. 591-4.
171. B. Holzner, "Methodology", in J. Gould and W. L. Kolb, eds., A Dictionary of Social Sciences (London, Tavistock, 1964), p. 425.
172. J. B. Williamson, et. al., The Research Craft: An Introduction to Social Research Methods (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1982), p. 32.
173. D. Willer and J. Willer, Systematic Empiricism (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 13-4; and G. Therborn, Science, Class and Society (London: NLB, 1977), p. 42.
174. Williamson et. al., op. cit., p. 6; and quoted in H. W. Smith, Strategies of Social Research: The Methodological Imagination (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1981), p. 53. Emphases in original.
175. T. Carver, "Editor's Preface to Grundrisse Introduction", in K. Marx, Texts on Method (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p. 40.
176. M. Godelier, Rationality and Irrationality in Economics (London: NLB, 1972), p. 197.
177. K. Marx and F. Engels, The German Ideology (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 41 and 50.
178. Ibid., p. 48.

179. Ibid., p. 42. "Society does not consist of individuals but it represents the sum of relations, in which individuals stand to each other". K. Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution (New York: Charles Scribners, 1971), p. 103.
180. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 42.
181. Z. A. Jordon, "Introductory Essay", in Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution, p. 38.
182. Therborn, op. cit., pp. 399-400.
183. C. Levitt, Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence: An Examination of the Major Issues Raised in Marx's Excerpts from Henry Maine's Lectures on the Early History of Institutions, Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation (Berlin: Free University, 1975), p. 95. Hereafter this is abbreviated as Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence.
184. Ibid., pp. 95-6.
185. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 178 and 181.
186. Ibid., p. 180.
187. I must add that by adopting an economic definition of class, I do not mean that class cannot be defined by any other criteria in different contexts.
188. Quoted in Krader, A Treatise of Social Labor, p. 273.
189. Ibid., p. 244.
190. K. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (New York: International Publishers, 1963), pp. 104 and 110.
191. Since I pursue strictly class analysis in conformity to the requirements of the Marxist methodology my point of departure, accordingly, is not varna or, for that matter, caste category. From the standpoint adopted here, class may comprise members of any varna provided they comply with the definitional requirements of the concept of class. For instance, the propertied class may consist of anybody, regardless of his varna affiliation, who owns property, such as property in land or capital. However, as will be shown in different places and especially in chapters 7 and 9, class and varna categories intersect, indicating the uniqueness of the Indian social formation. Besides, the so-called varna system was never completely operational, nor could it ever be. The so-called four varna model is completely inapplicable to the south Indian social formation. It was subject to the over-determining material

- or concrete circumstances of everyday life. Thus, to exemplify, there are numerous references to the fact that the Brāhmanas pursued cultivation and trading in the ancient and mediæval periods. See D. Gupta, "Caste, Infrastructure and Superstructure: A Critique", EPW, 16 (December 19, 1981), pp. 2093-2104; P. C. Jain, Labour in Ancient India (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1971), p. 39; H. S. Kotiyāl, "Śūdra Rulers and Officials in Early Mediæval Times", IHCP, 34th session (Chandigarh, 1973), pp. 80-7; and Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, passim.
192. C. B. Macpherson, "Introduction", in C. B. Macpherson, ed., Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1978), p. 3. Emphases added. For more about the distinction between property and possession, see G. W. Paton, A Text-Book of Jurisprudence (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), pp. 466-72.
193. Quoted in Levitt, Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence, p. 94.
194. See especially chapter 3, pp. 169-76; chapter 4, pp. 200-3; and chapter 5, pp. 257-9.
195. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 48.
196. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 99-100. Emphases in original.
197. On the problems concerning the historical change to the early mediæval period (or feudalism) in India, see Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Mediæval in Indian History", passim; and Social Changes in Early Mediæval India, passim.

CHAPTER TWO

MARX AND THE ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

I. Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to explore the different dimensions, and analyse the main features, of Marx's theory of the "Asiatic" Mode of Production. Most of Marx's writings on the Indian and other Oriental social formations are scattered throughout his works.¹ Since Marx never expounded the theory systematically or explored it in one place, what he meant by the AMP is generally put together from a wide range of his writings. In this chapter, an attempt is made to focus on those ideas of Marx about India in particular. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the development of the theory of the AMP took place mainly on the basis of his understanding of Indian society although Marx did concern himself with other Oriental societies, viz. China, Persia, Turkey etc.² Another task of this chapter consists in demonstrating the point that Marx, in his formulation of the AMP, exclusively depended on 17th century European merchants/travellers and 18th and 19th century European writers and colonial administrators. At bottom the theory of the AMP, which received the most articulate crystallization in the hands of Marx, is a sophisticated version of the age-old classical European image of the Orient. Accordingly, I would particularly draw on those European writings that Marx specifically used

or referred to in his formulation of the theory of the AMP.³

Marx's characterization of the Oriental social formations centered mainly around three distinct components. These components, more than less connected with each other, are as follows. First, all the Oriental societies are characterized by the absence of private property in land and, consequently, there was never any class of landowners or landlords. Second, the foundation of the Oriental social formations is provided by self-sufficient village communities which, in turn, are characterized by a unity of agriculture and handicrafts, and also by an absence of commodity production and exchange. The socioeconomic stagnation in saecula saeculorum is due as much to the economic self-sufficiency of the cloistered village communities as to the absence of antagonistic social classes in the Oriental social formations. Finally, the state in these social formations is not a product of, and indeed does not live on, the schism between antithetical social classes which, in their turn, do not arise because of the general absence of private ownership of land. Rather, this class-transcending Oriental state originates in, and rests upon, hydraulic functions and/or force. It exercises despotic power by systematically holding down the undifferentiated masses in what Marx called general slavery.⁴

Before I take up the analysis and examination of each of these specific propositions, let me make this pertinent observation. Originally, during the early 1850s, Marx formulated his views on India as part of an attempt to assess the impact of metropolitan (British) capitalism on a "primitive" pre-capitalist social formation, viz. India.

Later, the theory of the AMP received its more precise theoretical foundation in such works as the Grundrisse (1857) and Capital (1867). In the last years of his life, mainly between 1879 and 1882, Marx returned to concrete investigations of pre-capitalist societies, especially India. The point which needs attention is that Marx remained basically and substantially loyal to the main features of the AMP as he originally formulated it. I also intend to emphasize the fact that, despite certain occasional changes in his emphasis on certain aspects of the theory, "it is fair to say that its basic elements were elaborated in the 1850s."⁵

The discussion of the Oriental societies as such did not appear in The German Ideology (1845-46). However, here Marx made an attempt to characterize and classify pre-capitalist forms of social formation and their corresponding forms of property ownership. His central focus during this period was clearly on Europe, especially on classical and feudal forms of property associated with respective phases of European history.⁶ In 1847 Marx gave a series of lectures before the German Workingmen's Club of Brussels where he distinguished three main forms of society, each of which denoted a particular or definite stage of development in the history of mankind. These are: ancient society, feudal society, and bourgeois society.⁷ There is no mention of the Oriental societies or the Asiatic phase. Again, Oriental social formations had no place in The Communist Manifesto (1848) where Marx, along with Engels, first presented a dialectical view of historical social changes. Here nothing was said about the nature of social

AMP = Asiatic Mode
of Production

formation in China, India or other countries of Asia. Europe was again the central focus and the starting point was classical Rome.⁸

It was only in 1853 that Marx first developed his distinct ideas about the Oriental social formation, focusing almost singularly on India. But his first pronouncement of the existence of the AMP as a distinct mode of production appears in the "Preface" to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859). Here he specifies in a very clear and unambiguous language four different stages of the productive development of all the 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.⁹

Let me now pass on to the examination of the main propositions of the AMP and of the specific arguments justifying each of those propositions that tout ensemble constitute the theory of the AMP in Marx's writings. The readers are forewarned that unavoidable repetitions of certain ideas of Marx will occur in my discussion below. ←

II. The Absence of Private Property in Land

The notion that in the Orient there was no private property in land had long been present in Western thinking. The acceptance of this notion was in vogue since the time of classical Greece, for example, "in the Greeks' description of the claims of the Persian kings to absolute lordship over land and water."¹⁰ This idea was further reinforced by the Western perception of Islamic law which, again, vested all the lands in the king's proprietorship.¹¹ This notion of the absence of private property in land in all the Oriental societies received its greatest

impetus from the 17th century onwards in the wake of geographical discoveries and metropolitan expansion in the colonies. Subsequently, this became the distinguishing feature of the majority of all European writings on Asian societies.¹²

Two distinct groups of Western writers, who exercised considerable influence on Marx's writings on the Oriental social formations, emerged. The first group advocated the absence of private property in land on the basis of the king's sole proprietorship of all lands. One in this group was Francois Bernier who convinced Marx of the uniqueness of Indian society. This uniqueness consisted in the absence of private property or an individual's proprietary right over land. In his book Travels in the Mogul Empire, Bernier mentions the practice of occasional land grants by the king who was designated as "proprietor" of the land and who did not surrender his proprietary rights over the lands granted by him. The relevant passages read as follows:

It should also be borne in mind, that the Great Mogol constitutes himself of all the Omrahs, or lords, and likewise of the Mansebdars, or inferior lords, who are in his pay; and, what is of 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, 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-ghir, or, as in Turkey, timar; the word jah-ghir 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-ghir; and upon these domains he keeps contractors, who are also bound to

pay him an annual rent.¹³

This description by Bernier was uncritically accepted by a host of subsequent others and served as the dominant paradigm for the rising political economy and philosophy in the West thereafter. James Mill wrote in his The History of British India (1818):

Every European visitor, without one exception that I have found, agrees in the opinion, that the sovereign was the owner of the soil. ... From these facts (i.e. the accounts of the European travellers - BB) only one conclusion can be drawn, that the property of the soil resided in the sovereign; for if it did not reside in him, it will be impossible to show to whom it belonged.¹⁴

Mill also provided an explanation for such non-development of private property in land among the Hindus of ancient India. According to him,

It is only in stages of society considerably advanced, that the rights of property are so far enlarged as to include the power of nominating, at the discretion of the owner, the person who is to enjoy it after his death. It was first introduced among the Athenians by a law of Solon, and among the Romans, probably, by the twelve tables. The Hindus have, through all ages, remained in a state of society too near the simplicity and rudeness of the most ancient times, to have stretched their ideas of property so far.¹⁵

Richard Jones exercised the greatest single influence on Marx's writings on Asia. But, for his own ideas, Jones relied heavily on Bernier.¹⁶

Echoing Bernier, he declared the sovereign as "sole proprietor of the soil of his dominions."¹⁷ He wrote:

Within the period of historical memory, all the great empires of Asia have been overrun by foreigners; and on their rights as conquerors the claim of the present sovereign to the soil rests.¹⁸

The second group, exclusively composed of British colonial administrators and judges, opposed this idea of the king's ownership of the land.

Among them Mountstuart Elphinstone(1779-1859), Henry S. Maine(1822-1888)

and George Campbell(1824-1892) are most noteworthy. Marx read the writings of all three and regarded them as valuable sources on the Indian social formation. Of them, however, it was only Maine who decisively concluded against the king's ownership of land. According to Maine, private ownership in India existed only in moveables and in chattles but land remained common property.

It was especially impossible to sell or alienate the land or a portion of it without the consent of the co-villagers of the village community.¹⁹ Maine clarified this point without any shadow of doubt while comparing Irish Brehon law with Hindu law. Maine wrote:

The rules of the Irish Brehon law regulating the power of individual tribesmen to alienate their separate property answer to the rules of Indian Brahminical law which regulate the power of individual members of a joint family to enjoy separate property. The difference is material. The Hindoo law assumes that collective enjoyment by the whole brotherhood is the rule, and it treats the enjoyment of separate property by individual brethren as an exception. ... On the other hand, the Brehon law, so far as it can be understood, seems to me reconcilable with no other assumption than that individual proprietary rights have grown up and attained some stability within the circle of the tribe.²⁰

The other two, Elphinstone and Campbell were, however, somewhat indecisive on this issue of landownership. For example, Elphinstone in his The History of India (1841), at one place, writes that in ancient India "the king was regarded in the code (i.e. the code of Manu - BB) as possessing the absolute property of the land."²¹ Elsewhere, he generalized for communal ownership of land, which he believed to be certainly true of all Hindu governments of India.

We might conclude that all land was held in common by the village communities, and is still the case in many parts of India; and this may, perhaps, have been the general rule, although individuals may have possessed property by grants of land from the villages or of his share of the produce from the king. ... The rights of landholders are theirs collectively. ... A landholder, for instance can sell or mortgage his rights, but he must first have the consent of the village, and the purchaser steps exactly into his place and takes up all his obligations.²²

Campbell in his Modern India (1842), which Marx read and used, sides with Maine in favour of communal ownership of land:

When the communities are so strong, independent, and well-organized, there can be no doubt with whom rests the proprietary rights; they will permit no encroachments, and there is generally no middle-man between them and the government. ... Therefore, one man could not, without the consent of the others, sell to a stranger, whom they probably would not choose to admit into their society.²³

But, elsewhere, Campbell advanced arguments in favour of the existence of private property in land in India from antiquity.²⁴ This point regarding Campbell's views will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

It now remains to be seen how these two trends of thought were reflected in Marx's own writings. After reading the accounts of Bernier, Marx in his correspondence with Engels of June 2, 1853 wrote enthusiastically and approvingly:

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.²⁵

Elsewhere, in an article in the New York Daily Tribune (hereafter NYDT) in 1858, Marx refers to the communal ownership of land in the Orient.

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 allotting it out to individuals for cultivation while the zemindars and talookdars were in their origin nothing but the officers of the Government, appointed to look after, to collect, and to pay over to the prince the assessment due from the village.²⁶

These two statements highlight the fact that the issue of private property in land in the Indian social formation took two forms in Marx, who, thus, only stepped in the footsteps of his predecessors, especially those discussed above. This also proves, beyond doubt, Marx's reliance on Bernier, Mill, and Jones, and also on British colonial administrators such as Maine, Elphinstone and Campbell as far as the issue of non-existence of private property in land in the Oriental social formation is concerned.²⁷

These two lines of arguments continued to pervade Marx's most widely read texts such as the Grundrisse and Capital. As I have stated, Marx started with the king's ownership of land in 1853. But in 1857 Marx declared in the Grundrisse that in the Oriental form

...property exists only as communal property, there the individual member is as such only possessor of a particular 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. The individual is thus only a possessor. What exists is only communal property, and only private possession.²⁸

All Asiatic forms, to Marx, exhibited this fundamental relationship between the individual member and the community. But this communal ownership of lands, however, was not a unique feature of Oriental social formations but rather of all early social formations. This is clearly

spelled out in his A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy:

At present an absurdly biased view is widely held, namely that primitive communal property is a specifically Slavonic, or even an exclusively Russian, phenomenon. It is an early form which can be found among Romans, Teutons and Celts, and of which a whole collection of diverse patterns (though sometimes only remnants survive) is still in existence in India. A careful study of Asiatic, particularly Indian, forms of communal property would indicate that the disintegration of different forms of primitive communal ownership gives the rise to diverse forms of property. For instance, various prototypes of Roman and Germanic private property can be traced back to certain forms of Indian communal property.²⁹

This point was reaffirmed by Marx once again in a letter to Engels in 1868 while referring to Von Maurer's writings on the German village community.³⁰

Apart from Asiatic and Slavonic forms, Marx mentioned two other forms of communal ownerships, namely, Roman and Germanic. Contrary to the Asiatic form, in both Roman and Germanic forms there was individual property alongside the communal property. For example, in the Germanic form "the communal property appears only as a complement to individual property, with the latter as the base, while the commune has no existence for-itself except in the assembly of the commune members, their coming-together for the common purposes."³¹ In the Roman form, on the other hand, property appears to exist "in the double form of state and private property alongside one another."³² Here,

... the land is occupied by the commune, Roman land; a part remains to the commune as such as distinct from the commune members, ager publicus in its various forms; the other part is divided up and each parcel of land is Roman by virtue of being the private property, the domain of a Roman, the part of the laboratorium belonging to him; but, also, he is a Roman only in so far as he possesses this sovereign right over a part of the Roman earth.³³

In later years, especially in Capital (vols. 1 and 3) Marx repeatedly refers to communal ownership in land as a basic feature of the Indian village community. He reiterated in Capital all his basic formulations on this point in the Grundrisse and Critique of Political Economy. Conforming to these, he discussed the differences in "Co-operation" between nascent capitalism in the West and the AMP in pre-British India.³⁴ In the same way, in the third volume of Capital (1894) Marx accused the British of destroying the "Indian economic community with common ownership of the soil" while creating "a caricature" of capitalist landed property in different parts of India.³⁵

All this, no doubt, points to the fact that Marx was inclined to characterize the Indian social formation by communal ownership in land. But, at the same time, he also attributed landownership to the state. After 1853, Marx wrote in the Grundrisse that in the Asiatic societies there was the "Comprehensive Unity" which stood "above all those little communities". This unity appeared as the "higher proprietor or as the sole proprietor" in contrast to the little communities which he regarded only as "hereditary possessors."³⁶ Here, the individual appears to be property-less, or property

... appears mediated for him through a cession by the total unity - a unity realized in the form of the despot, the father of the many communities - to the individual, through the mediation of the particular commune.³⁷

Leaving the Grundrisse aside, Marx does not explicitly say in Capital that the state is a higher community. Neither does he mention that the real proprietor is the community. On the other hand, he attributed in

an unambiguous manner landownership to the state. In the Oriental social formations, the direct producers do not confront a private landowner but are rather "under direct subordination to a State which stands over them as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign."³⁸ Here rent and taxes coincide. The essence of the sovereignty of the state in the Orient "consists in the ownership of land concentrated on a national scale". As a result, "no private ownership of land exists, although there is both private and common possession and use of land."³⁹ In light of this evidence, although the issue of landownership in AMP took two forms in Marx's thought, it has to be acknowledged that he was more inclined in favour of communal ownership of land.

The question of the difference between ownership and possession takes on special importance and is very crucial for Marx. This distinction between ownership (i.e. proprietorship) and possession (i.e. occupancy) was already well developed in Jones.⁴⁰ As Krader points out, the distinction found its place both in Hegel and in Marx.⁴¹ As far as the latter was concerned, the owner and possessor were two different and clear entities in India. In the Grundrisse, it was mostly the community which was the owner and the individual the possessor. In Capital, especially in the third volume, Marx's emphasis was on the state as the owner although, at the same time, he admitted the existence of common and individual possession of land. There are two aspects of Marx's arguments as far as this distinction is concerned. First, his application of this distinction to the AMP means that Marx adhered to a legal view of ownership. In the Grundrisse, where Marx ascribed

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ownership to the "higher unity" (i.e. the state) that was despotic, he argued that this Oriental despotism implies a legal absence of private property. This legal propertylessness seems to be based on a foundation of communal property,⁴² since in the Asiatic form the individual "never becomes a proprietor but only a possessor."⁴³ In The Critique of Political Economy Marx reaffirms this legal distinction of ownership and possession. Here he wrote:

No ownership exists, however, before the family or the relations of master and servant are evolved, It would, on the other hand, be correct to say that families and entire tribes exist which have as yet only possessions and not property. . . . One can conceive an individual savage who has possessions; possession in this case, however, is not a legal relation.⁴⁴

This view seems consistent with Marx's characterization of the AMP with possession but not with ownership. Again, in Capital (vol. 3), Marx writes that the "legal view of free private ownership of land, arises in the ancient world only with the dissolution of the organic order of society, and in the modern world only with the development of capitalist production. It has been imported by Europeans to Asia only here and there."⁴⁵ This assertion leaves no doubt that as far as the AMP was concerned, Marx repeatedly referred to a legal view of ownership and, thus, ascribed the "principle of no property in land" to the pre-colonial Indian social formation. There remains, however, the question of what constitutes the legal view of private ownership for Marx. ✓

For him, "the legal view itself only means that the landowner can do with the land what every owner of commodities can do with his commodities."⁴⁶ That is to say, since the individual is always a

possessor and never an owner in the AMP, the individual by virtue of his occupation, has only the capacity to put the land into use (i.e. cultivation). Naturally, the private 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. In other words, the land is not a commodity in the AMP and the possessor cannot do with the land what every owner does with his commodities. Marx adhered to this view till the last days of his life. In his notes on Maine's Lectures on the Early of the History of the Institution (1875), Marx criticized Maine for ignoring the fact that the "absolute property in land which everywhere in Occidental Europe exists more than in England."⁴⁷ By absolute form Marx obviously meant free private ownership of land. Marx always compared the nature of property ownership in the AMP with the highest form of private ownership, i.e. the modern bourgeois form of property.

Ours would be a one-sided portrayal if Marx's doubts on the issue of private landed property in the AMP are not presented. Marx was well-aware of the controversy among the British colonial administrators and jurists. In the very beginnings of his correspondence with Engels on India in 1853, he wrote:

As to the question of property, this is a very controversial one among the English writers on India. In the broken hill-country south of Crishna, property in land does seem to have existed. ... 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.⁴⁸

This statement by Marx clearly indicates that he had some reservations about applying the principle of "no property in land", especially to the

Hindu period of Indian society. A more definite view was expressed by Marx in 1858 in the NYDT:

The land, however, in India did not belong to the Government, the greater proportion of it being as much private property as the land in England, many of the natives holding their estates by titles six or seven hundred years old. It was only in certain districts where there were large tracts of waste land, in which no individual had an interest, that the Government had any power to make land grants.⁴⁹

Of course, there is no doubt that these vacillations are exceptional in nature on Marx's part. The main burden of his writings exhibit abundantly that private ownership in land in the pre-colonial Indian social formation did not exist. In fact, this becomes evident when Marx says that it was the British who introduced in India the institution of private property, "the great desideratum of Asiatic Society."⁵⁰

Finally, the question is why the Orientals never arrived at private landed property. Marx's explanation, following Engels, was climatic or geographical in the main. Since artificial irrigation constituted one of the bases of agriculture in the arid or semi-arid regions of India, economical and common use of water necessitated intervention of the centralizing authority of the state. The state intervened in view of the absence of private or voluntary association because of the existence of the low level of civilization and the too vast extent of territories.⁵¹ Elsewhere in the Grundrisse, Marx again focused on the importance of the role of irrigation works by the state. According to him, "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."⁵² It is clear that Marx did emphasize the role of irrigation and public works of the state as one of the most important obstacles to the development of private landed property in the Oriental social formations.

Marx considered that the Oriental form of property was the starting point everywhere, both in the East and in the West, and that private property itself was of later origin. In the Grundrisse, Marx tried to explain how communal property was replaced by private property in the Occidental social formation. One explanation is that with the passage of time the interaction between and operation of the different natural and human factors gave rise to population increase, migration, etc. As a result, old forms of tribal property decayed, and a new form of property arose. He wrote:

The survival of the commune as such in the old mode requires the reproduction of its members in the presupposed objective conditions. Production itself, the advance of population (this too belongs with production), necessarily suspends these conditions little by little; destroys them instead of reproducing them etc., and, with that, the communal system declines and falls, together with the property relations on which it was based.⁵³

In the case of the Asiatic form, this did not occur because the individual never became independent from the commune and because production remained based on a self-sustaining unity of agriculture and manufacture.⁵⁴ In the next section, I shall discuss in detail Marx's views of the self-sustaining nature of Indian village communities.

The other path of development from communal property to private property in the West, especially in Rome, came through war and conquest.

Through war and conquest, one tribe/clan conquered the other tribe/clan. Here social differentiation and new forms of property relations arose in the mixture of the conquering and the conquered clans. "Slavery and serfdom are thus only further developments of the form of property resting on the clan system."⁵⁵ But, again, this was not possible in the Asiatic form. "In the self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture, on which this form rests, conquest is not so necessary a condition as where landed property, agriculture are exclusively predominant."⁵⁶ This is why the Orientals never arrived at private property in land. This was no doubt the distinguishing feature of the Orient to Marx. In his own words, "This is the real key even to the Oriental heaven."⁵⁷

III. Social Stagnation and the Village Community

An important correlated proposition of the AMP depicts the pre-colonial Indian social formation as consisting of numerous village communities. They constituted the social basis of what has been called Oriental despotism. The village communities were characterized by an inextricable unity of agriculture and handicrafts. This unique combination of agriculture and handicrafts provided the village communities with such self-sufficiency as was necessary for their simple reproduction and 'tenacious existence'. They were locked within their independent organization and distinct life.⁵⁸

A few words may be said with regard to the industry (i.e. handicrafts) in the village communities. Here, one finds a simple or

natural division of labour rather than, as in a capitalist mode of 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 is broken down into several operations and these operations are performed by several workers. The division of labour is geared to high levels of skill and specialization in work operations. They are detailed according to the needs of capitalist production. Further, in capitalism, the products produced through this social division of labour are exchanged as commodities in the market place. "The social division of labour subdivides society, the detailed division of labour subdivides humans."⁵⁹ In contrast, the division of labour, one that existed in the economically self-sufficing village communities of India, presents a very different picture. In this form of 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 simple division of labour is one that characterizes what Marx calls "primitive society based on property in common."⁶⁰ To be sure, it is only a natural, but not social, division of labour. In Marx's own words: "Co-operation, such as we find it at the dawn of human development, among races who live by the chase, or say, in the agriculture of Indian communities, is based, on the one hand, on ownership in common of the means of production, and on the other hand, on the fact, that in those cases, each individual has no more torn himself off from the navel-string of his tribe or community, than each bee has freed itself from connexion with the hive."⁶¹

To Marx, the village community system with its simple division of labour and unity of agriculture and manufacture was one of the most distinctive characteristics of the pre-colonial Indian social formation. Marx quoted at length a description of the Indian village community which originally appeared in the Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company (1812). This Report listed the various village officials and their functions. In addition, it is stated in the Report that "under this simple form of municipal government, the inhabitants of the country have lived, from time immemorial."⁶² Following the Fifth Report, Marx labelled the Indian villages "stereotype forms of social organism" with "undignified, stationary and vegetative life."⁶³

Similar descriptions of the Indian village economy continued to appear in Marx's later writings, especially in Capital (vol. 1).

Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, some of which have continued down 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 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. It is the surplus alone that becomes a commodity, 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.⁶⁴

Apparently the division of labour, outlined in the afore-mentioned description, is a simple or nature-determined division of labour. It is

not social division because it excludes especially the process of the exchange of commodities. The result of this exclusion is quite consequential. Since exchange itself is a chief means of "individuation" and makes "the herd-like existence superfluous and dissolves it", the primordial division of labour in the AMP leads to the development neither of the free individual and eventually private property in land nor of the cities and towns, which presuppose the simultaneous existence "of the municipality, and thus of politics in general."⁶⁵ In any case, the village communities vary from place to place in India. But in the simplest form of them, the land is tilled in common and the product divided among the members. Simultaneously,

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 through and escorts them to the next village; the boundary man, who guards the boundaries against neighbouring communities; the water-overseer, who distributes the water from the common tanks for irrigation; the Brahmin, who conducts the religious services; the school master, who on the sand teaches the children reading and writing; the calendar-Brahmin, or astrologer, who makes known the lucky or unlucky days for seed-time and harvest, and for every other kind of agricultural work; a smith and a carpenter, who make and repair of all the agricultural implements; the potter, who makes all the pottery of the village; the barber, the washerman, who washes clothes, the silversmith, here and there the poet, who in some communities replaces the silversmith, in others the schoolmaster. ... The whole mechanism discloses a systematic division of labour; but a division like that in manufactures 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, and without recognizing any authority over him.⁶⁶

What are the sources of Marx's ideas on the Indian village communities? It has already been evident that Marx based his description of the Indian village on the Fifth Report. The analysis which he represents in Capital as a whole also was thoroughly influenced by the ideas of the Fifth Report. Did Marx himself read the Fifth Report? A review of relevant passages in Marx's writings on village community clearly point to the fact that Marx himself did not read the Fifth Report first hand.⁶⁷ The fact of the matter is that Marx always quoted from others, mainly British colonial officials, in respect of the village community. Nowhere does he directly cite the Fifth Report. In his article on "The British Rule in India" (1853), for example, he quotes from George Campbell's Modern India.⁶⁸ In Capital (vol. 1), he cites, in addition to Campbell, Mark Wilks and Thomas Stamford Raffles.⁶⁹ As noted earlier, Marx was also very familiar with the works of other colonial administrators including Henry Maine. The failure to read first hand the Fifth Report had disastrous consequences for Marx, as I shall show later. For example, the relevant section on village community in the Fifth Report only referred to a particular region (viz. Madras in South India) and not to the entirety of British Indian territories. In any case, all these colonial administrators, in their turn, were deeply influenced by the Fifth Report. The picture of the village community as portrayed in the Fifth Report was used as the most authentic source material by almost all the writers and British administrators in the 19th century.⁷⁰ In fact, the similarities between

the descriptions of the village community in the Fifth Report and in other writers including Marx, are astounding and remarkable. Dumont rightly notes that these descriptions

appear to repeat each other so precisely that we are obviously not faced with the results of independent observations, but rather with the reiteration of a single theme, each author copying another, as is frequent in the literary history.⁷¹

In this connection, the only deviation on Marx's part is worthy of mention. The Fifth Report depicted the Indian village community as a corporation or township resembling a republic and this was accepted especially by Wilks. Although Marx quoted the entire passage in his article in NYDT in 1853, he omitted any comparison of the village communities with republics. He emphasized only the aspect of each village as a corporation or township.⁷²

Finally, let me refer to the role of the village community and the state in the extraction of surplus labour from direct producers. I have already indicated that in the Asiatic social formations, the individual was never a proprietor or owner of land. The community was the hereditary possessor, and the state stood as a comprehensive unity over the little village communities. This comprehensive unity of the state, which separated it from the real village communities, was the unity of the higher or sole proprietor of all lands. This unity was realized in the form of a despot, the father of many communities, and at the same time entitled him (or the state) to any surplus produce beyond what was necessary for the reproduction of the village communities and their corresponding economic formations.⁷³

The surplus product - which is, incidentally, determined by law in consequence of the real appropriation through labour - thereby automatically belongs to this highest unity. Amidst oriental despotism and propertylessness 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.⁷⁴

This is one of the very few statements which directly focused on the extraction of surplus labour by the state as a higher unity maintaining itself concretely as a despotic form of monarchy. In Capital (vol. 3) Marx repeated himself by positing the state both as the landowner and as the legitimate authority, authorizing itself to pump out the unpaid surplus labour from direct producers.⁷⁵ In this connection he pointed out that "the specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled."⁷⁶ Furthermore,

It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers... which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state.⁷⁷

In the Asiatic form, since the state itself owned the conditions of production it was in a position to demand the unpaid surplus labour. It is unclear whether Marx considered the state itself the ruling class. It remains ambiguous from this portrayal of the despotic state in the

AMP whether it was an institution of a class-divided society. Most probably it was not, because the ideas of "class rule and even of class as a social category are absent from his characterization of the Asiatic mode of production."⁷⁸

The notion that the Indian social formation remained stagnant from time immemorial logically derives from the nature and functions of the village communities as found in Marx's writings. There are several dimensions of the static village communities and, so, of the Indian social formation as a whole. The central theme, however, revolves around the fact that India's basic economic structure, consisting of self-sustaining village communities, remained unaltered since remotest antiquity until the first decade of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹

Let me examine in some detail the leading causes of stagnation of the pre-colonial Indian social formation so far as these could be derived from Marx's writings. In the first place, the Indian village communities were so cut off spatially from one another and from the outside world that any prospect of change or progress was evidently non-existent. The British introduced the railways which, among other things, provided a boost to the further development of productive forces, accelerated industrialization, and helped develop coal, engineering and steel industries. In addition to facilitating regular and rapid communication and transportation by means of railways, steam navigation and postal system, the British also introduced the free press that enabled the growth of individualism and the exchange of ideas. Before 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.⁸⁰

These physically isolated village communities, providing impetus to the continuation of stagnation and despotism, may be inoffensive in their appearance but they have continued to restrain "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."⁸¹

Secondly, a far more important factor of stationariness in the Indian social formation consisted in the very mode or manner of production in the village communal economies, i.e. in the unity of agriculture and manufacture. One aspect of this unity is the bondage of the individual member to the community and the persistence of simple reproduction. In Marx's own words,

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-à-vis commune; that there is a self-sustaining circle of production, unity of agriculture and manufactures, etc.⁸²

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

remain still due to the inherent simplicity of productive organization in the village communities, or the relative ease with which they were able to spring up time and again.

The simplicity of the organization 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 societies, 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 society remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky.⁸³

The other aspect of this unbreakable unity of agriculture and handicrafts is that stagnation is a logical outcome of the simple division of labour within the village community. There are several reasons for this. First, due to the overwhelming rural character of the social formation and self-sufficiency of the village communities, "the chief part of the product is destined for direct use by the community itself, and does not take the form of a commodity."⁸⁴ This implies that the product never enters the market. Second, the craftsmen are also confronted with an unchanging village market which prevents the growth of division of labour between peasants and artisans. Even in the case of population growth a new community grows only to join the old communities, with the result that the simple division of labour based on the unity of agriculture and crafts continues on.⁸⁵ This virtually ruled out any further growth of productive forces in the pre-colonial Indian society. The relevant passage in Capital (vol. 1) reads like this:

The whole mechanism discloses a systematic division of labour; but a division like that in manufactures is impossible, since the smith and the carpenter, &c., find an unchanging market, and at the most there occur, according to the sizes of the villages, two or three of each, instead of one. 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 handicrafts in the traditional way, but independently, and without recognizing any authority over him.⁸⁶

Thus the village artisans, in addition to losing their independence and enterprise in view of their total dependence on the village community, were deprived of any incentive to produce for the market for profit, and thus to innovate. Consequently, the growth of a market for the means of production suffered; the nature-determined division of labour did not grow into the social division of labour; and the technical basis of production remained unchanged. In sum, Marx offers us a picture of stagnation, especially as he never mentioned any urban market and urban artisans in pre-colonial India.

A third factor follows from the unique combination of agriculture and industry, and an absence of exchange of commodities within the simple division of labour characterizing the AMP. It concerns the lack of opposition between town (or city) and country. This lack of opposition, again, resulted in further stagnation of the pre-colonial Indian social formation. To Marx, the basic opposition between town and country was of critical importance for progress and development. "The foundation of every division of labour that is very well developed, and brought about by the exchange of commodities, is the

separation between the town and country. It may be said, that the whole economic history of society is summed up in the movement of this anti-thesis."⁸⁷ But in Asia the towns and cities never arose, as Marx believed, except as "wandering camps"; they generally existed "alongside villages" only when their locations were either exceptionally good points for external trade or where the king and his satraps exchanged their surplus for luxury items.⁸⁸ In other words, there was no real internal trade, and the market importance of the urban centres or towns in pre-colonial India was insignificant. In contrast to this, the Western social formations were founded on an opposition or contradiction between town and country. To Marx, "the history of classical antiquity is the history of cities."⁸⁹ In the middle ages the extension of trade and communication led separate towns to destroy the barriers of isolation while, at the same time, helping them to free themselves from feudal ties. The struggle in the towns paved the way for the rise of bourgeoisie.⁹⁰ In contrast, the towns of Asia exhibited only a "kind of indifferent unity of town and countryside."⁹¹ Briefly put, the pre-colonial Indian social formation lacked any dialectic, i.e. any mechanism or agency of internal social change and development.

Thus, while the unity of agriculture and handicrafts persisted in the village communities, the cities and towns of India had little to offer for further social development. The internal stagnation continued until the interference of the British which

dissolved these semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities, by blowing up their economical basis, and thus produced the greatest, and so to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard in Asia.⁹²

This social revolution consisted in "the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia."⁹³ In this connection, it is worth noting how Marx viewed the role of British colonial rule for India. The thrust of his articles and letters of 1853, was to point to the destruction of the immobile pre-colonial Indian social formation as an historical inevitability.

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindostan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution.⁹⁴

In the third volume of Capital, Marx reiterated his above-mentioned conviction of 1853 justifying metropolitan colonialism. The English commerce, by destroying spinning and weaving industries, broke the unity of agriculture and industry and thus "exerted a revolutionary influence on these communities and tore them apart."⁹⁵ To sum up, the British rule, however painful for the Indians, was historically positive and revolutionary in the long run.

This brings us to the fourth and final point of Marx's ideas, that is, the absence of classes and, so, of class contradictions and struggles in the pre-colonial Indian social formation. Since individuals were never owners, they were not constituted into opposing social classes. There was no owning class that appropriated the surplus labour of another class, which did not own. There was neither social stratification in terms of ownership/non-ownership of the means of

production (i.e. land) nor antagonism between owning and non-owning classes since they did not exist. It means that India had no history, for "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."⁹⁶ This absence of class antagonisms and struggles in the pre-colonial Indian society ultimately meant that the AMP was stagnant because the contradictions, as found in a class society, between the productive forces and the relations of production were absent. India, as any other Oriental social formation, was without its own dialectic of social change. Therefore, it was impossible for India to

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 the 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 conquered by the Briton.⁹⁷

Neither in the Grundrisse nor in Capital (vols. 1 and 3) was there any reference to the existence or the possibility of class antagonisms and struggles. As far as Marx was concerned, the absence of antagonistic classes in the Oriental social formations was rooted in their communal nature. In the Grundrisse Marx considered the Indian form the oldest continuing and the simplest of all forms of common property and communal production.⁹⁸

The absence of an internal dialectic of social change and development in the pre-colonial Indian social formation is clear and

unmistakable in Marx. To quote him:

Where there is already a separation between the commune members as private proprietors (on one side), and they themselves as the urban commune and proprietors of the commune's territorium (on the other), there the conditions already arise in which the individual can lose property, i.e. the double relation which makes him both an equal citizen, a member of the community, and a proprietor. In the oriental form this loss is hardly possible, except by means of altogether external influences, since the individual member of the commune never enters into the relation of freedom towards it in which he could lose his (objective, economic) bond with it. He is rooted to the spot, ingrown. This also has to do with the combination of manufacture and agriculture, of town (village) and countryside. In classical antiquity, manufacture appears already as a corruption (business for freedom, clients, aliens) etc. This development of productive labour (not bound in pure subordination to agriculture as a domestic task, labour by free men for agriculture or war only, or for religious observances, and manufactures for the community - such as construction of houses, streets, temples), which necessarily develops through intercourse with aliens and slaves, through the desire to exchange the surplus product etc. dissolves the mode or production on which the community rests and, with it, the objective individual, i.e. the individual defined as Roman, Greek, etc. Exchange acts in the same way; indebtedness etc.⁹⁹

The result, as shown, was stagnation for centuries. In Capital (vols. 1 and 3) Marx reaffirmed his views and concluded that the Indian social formation remained in its primitive form until British colonization.¹⁰⁰ In view of this class struggle, the motor force of human history, never occurred in the primitive Indian communities. All individuals in the village communities mutually shared the produce of their labour. The agricultural surplus in the form of tribute was appropriated by the despotic king, the sole proprietor, who was symbolized as the higher unity over the little communities. The state personified in the king or despot, was basically a state whose origins were not to be found in the

division of society into antagonistic classes. Clearly, the state was not an institution of the class society.

Once again, it is important to explore the sources of Marx's thesis of stagnation. This thesis, along with other propositions of the AMP as a whole, is after all not Marx's own invention. The eternal stagnation of the Orient is really an integral part of the whole European historiography on Asia.¹⁰¹ James Mill's The History of British India gave wide currency to the view that the Indian social formation remained stagnant from its classical antiquity. The manners, knowledge and society of the Hindus remained at a stationary condition "from the visit of the Greeks to that of the English."¹⁰² The same theme was echoed by Mill's German counterpart, Hegel. In The Philosophy of History (1837) Hegel articulated the distinction between the East and West, essentially based on what he called Spirit. In the East the spirit was unchanging, whereas the essence of Western spirit was change and development.¹⁰³ Inherent, if not genetic, absence of any mechanism of internal change in the Indian social formation meant that it was predestined to intervention by the civilizing spirit of the West. "It is the necessary fate of Asiatic empires to be subjugated to Europeans."¹⁰⁴ It is not difficult to understand that Marx was essentially repeating an old European dogmatic axiom on the Orient. Anderson has rightly pointed out that Marx "remained substantially faithful to the classical European image of Asia which he had inherited from a long file of predecessors."¹⁰⁵

As mentioned earlier, Marx's whole description of the Indian village community was indirectly borrowed from the Fifth Report. In his own analysis Marx followed thoroughly the description of the Fifth Report with the singular exception that he omitted the comparison of the village-communities with republics. The Fifth Report depicted the closed nature of the village, the weakly developed relation between the sovereign and the village, and the unchanging internal economy of the village from time immemorial. Marx followed all these without question. He also followed Richard Jones in regard to the notion of unity of agriculture and industry in the Indian village.¹⁰⁶ Finally, in drawing the portrait of cities and towns of pre-colonial India, Marx relied completely on the writings of Bernier. It is necessary to cite the relevant passage from Bernier in this connection. Describing the Indian cities as moving military camps, Bernier wrote the following in his letter to Monseigneur Colbert, the controller-General of the finances of Louis XIV:

I can well conceive that the army immediately about the King's person, particularly when it is known that he intends to absent himself for some time from his capital, may amount to two, or even three hundred thousand infantry. This will not be deemed an extravagant computation, if we bear in mind the immense quantity of tents, kitchens, 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 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 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 accommodations were not a little superior to those found in

the tents of armies.¹⁰⁷

Marx was thoroughly impressed and convinced by Bernier's description. He wrote to Engels in a letter in 1853 that "on the formation of Oriental cities one can read nothing more brilliant, graphic and striking than old Francois Bernier's Travels Containing a Description of the Dominions of the Great Mogul."¹⁰⁸ For his part, Jones also used Bernier's analysis of the weak role of cities and the fateful dependence of Indian craftsmen on the will of the sovereign to illustrate the differences between the Oriental and Occidental cities and their resultant consequences for the growth of the industry in the West.¹⁰⁹ As I have already stated, Marx was deeply impressed by the writings of Jones on Asia.

It is true that after 1867 Marx did not make any explicit statements regarding the stagnant character of the Indian social formation. At the same time, he said nothing explicitly to indicate that he had changed his position or that Indian society was a dynamic society containing the dialectic of internal social change and development.¹¹⁰

IV. Oriental Despotism and the State

In a way the political superstructure - the state - in the theory of the AMP is not very prominent. By this, however, I do not imply that Marx did not realize the importance of the state. From Marx's point of view, the comparative insignificance of the role of the state is natural because there is scarcely any reason (viz. protection of the interests of the owning class of non-producers, etc.) for the

state to come into being. Moreover, it had only a few functions to perform in view of the overwhelming role of village communities in the ordering and regulation of its members - the peasants and the artisans in the main. Given this, let me discuss the important dimensions of Marx's views on the state in the AMP.

As mentioned in the first chapter, characterization of the Asiatic monarchies/state systems as despotic was extrojected onto the whole Orient from the very beginning. That Marx remained influenced by the concept of Oriental despotism is borne out by the list of readings, evident in his notes and citations, that approvingly mention the concept as distinguishing the Eastern societies and peoples. In the formative period of his intellectual development, Marx harboured in his mind a picture of India (Asia) as ruled by a despot. It was a despotism in which "the state was enslaved to the 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.¹¹¹ Originally, this conception of Indian (Asiatic) despotism can be found pre-dominantly in the writings of Herodotus, Aristotle, Montesquieu and Hegel. In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State (1843) Marx made the following comment on Oriental despotism which stands in direct contrast to Western freedom:

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 the case in Asiatic despotism, where the political state like the material one,

was a slave.¹¹²

In the background of this statement was the tradition, then dominant in Berlin especially during Marx's university days, of a conception that only Europe was the center of democracy and Enlightenment. It is only after 1850, when Marx arrived in London, that he began to study the social formations of Asia. At this point Marx had already read Herodotus, Montesquieu and Hegel. In 1851 he read Richard Jones's Essay on the Distribution of Wealth which presented the Indian state as despotic. In 1853 he read the writings of many British administrators, most of whom strongly characterized the Indian state as a despotic one.¹¹³ Levine reports that "in all the sources Marx read in the period 1850-53, despotism was mentioned as the major characteristic of oriental society."¹¹⁴

Let me discuss a few of the sources in this regard. Despotism in India derived from two factors, one of which was the lack of private ownership in land. 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 counter-weight, the sovereign's power was absolutely unrestricted. Patton wrote that in the "immense extension of country, as far back as history can reach, perpetual sovereignties have existed with undiminished power and splendor, without the occurrence of any degree whatever of limitation, alteration, or restraint."¹¹⁵ For Jones, because of this absence of private proprietary interests, there existed no one in the society who could

"modify the power of a sovereign."¹¹⁶ Wilks suggested that the despotic monarchy in the East was preserved by divine sanction.¹¹⁷ Murray declared that "the Hindoos appear to have been always ruled by despotic governments."¹¹⁸ Marx was familiar with all these materials.

Although Marx nowhere made any reference to the factual abuse of political power by state officials he, with Jones and many others, considered that ownership belonged to the state and that, by implication therefrom, no privileged landed proprietors existed as contenders to political power in pre-colonial India. The result was despotism. Hence Marx says in the Grundrisse that in the pre-colonial Indian social formation, despotism and propertylessness seem legally to exist.¹¹⁹ In the relations of the direct producers to the natural conditions of labour, i.e. land, the state as the higher community, ultimately existing as a despot, intervenes. As such, it is entitled to surplus product because the state is the owner of the land. The state as

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 the many communities.¹²⁰

But in Capital Marx does not explicitly characterize the state as the higher community. The strong and centralized authority of the Mughal state possibly attracted his attention. In volume three of Capital Marx says that the state is both the sovereign and the landlord. In India sovereignty consists in landownership. Although it is impossible to exclude the communal aspect of the state or political organization, it

has to be acknowledged that Marx's emphasis moved back and forth between the village community and the state in respect of the location of landownership in the AMP.

The other reason for the existence of despotism was the existence and the effects of the idyllic village communities. These village communities, along with the absence of private landed property therein, provided solid foundations for the reality of Oriental despotism. What Marx found most objectionable about these village communities was their closed nature which, in turn, produced no possibility of internal social change or political development. In 1853, while referring to these village communities, Marx wrote that

... they 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.¹²¹

The linkage between despotism and the village communities was further reaffirmed in the last years of Marx's life. In a letter to Vera Zauslich, referring to the conditions of Russia, Marx wrote in 1881: "The isolation of the village communities, the lack of links between their lives, this locally bounded microcosm, is not every where an immanent characteristic of the last of the primitive types. However, wherever it does occur, it permits the emergence of a central despotism above the communities."¹²²

Finally, it remains to consider the role of the state in the AMP. To begin with, Marx initially stressed the state's function in providing for public, mainly irrigation, works.¹²³ Following Engels,

Marx referred to the department of public works along with those of finance and plunder - all three encompassing the spheres of action of the government in any Oriental social formation. The function of the state in providing for public works was initially important in view of its relation to landownership and of its role as the guarantor of the conditions for productive activities of the communities. In the Grundrisse this function of the state does not appear to have received extensive treatment, although Marx mentions that the construction of "aqueducts" and the means of communications were important functions of the state.¹²⁴ His emphasis on the hydraulic role of the state did not disappear in Capital. Marx wrote: "One of the material bases of the power of the State over the small disconnected producing organisms in India, was the regulation of the water supply."¹²⁵ The other function of the state was the extraction of surplus labour from direct producers. This extraction was possible by the state because it owned the chief means of production, i.e. land.¹²⁶ Further, toward the end of his life. Marx agreed with Maine that Ranjit Singh(1790-1839), although he was a despotic ruler in 19th century Panjab, never interfered in the affairs of the village communities.¹²⁷ From all these, it appears certain that in Marx's theory of the AMP the state never lost its importance altogether. In the final analysis, its political authority was nothing less than that kind of legitimate, (i.e. publicly recognized) power which was necessary to coerce all to its subjection and secure the products of their surplus labour.

Insofar as the political-administrative role of the village community is concerned, let me refer to Marx's description thereof, which he quoted from Campbell's Modern India. The relevant passage in the Fifth Report regarding the functions of the village officials is as follows:

Potail, or head inhabitant; who has the general superintendence of the affairs of the village, settles the disputes of the inhabitants, attends to the police, and performs the duty, already described of collecting the revenues within his village: a duty which his personal influence and minute acquaintance with the situation and concerns of the people renders him best qualified to discharge. The Curnum: who keeps the accounts of cultivation, and registers everything connected with it. The Tallier and Totie: the duty of the former, appearing to consist, in a wider and more enlarged sphere of action, in gaining information of crimes and offenses, and in escorting and protecting persons travelling from one village to another: the province of the latter, appearing to be more immediately confined to the village, consisting, among other duties, in guarding the crops, and assisting in measuring them. The Boundaryman; who preserves the limits of the village, or gives evidence respecting them, in case of dispute. The Superintendent of the Tanks and Watercourses distributes the water therefrom, for the purposes of agriculture. The Brahmin, who performs the village worship. The Schoolmaster who is seen teaching the children in the villages to read and write in the sand. The Calendar Brahmin, or astrologer, who proclaims the lucky or unpropitious periods for sowing and threshing. The Smith and Carpenter, who manufacture the implements of agriculture, and build the dwelling of the ryot. The Potman or potter. The Washerman. The Barber. The Cowkeeper, who looks after the cattle. The Doctor. The Dancing Girl, who attends at rejoicing. The Musician and the Poet. The officers and servants, generally constitute the establishment of a village. 128

It should be borne in mind that this description of the village community occurs only in connection with what then constituted the Madras Presidency, and not the Bengal Presidency. The detailed description of the various officials prove the self-sufficient character

of the village community and its power to conduct its own affairs without the interference of the state. This was also the central thrust of the dominant British administrative literature of the 19th century.

VI. Conclusion

The preceding discussion and analysis of the different propositions comprising the theory of the AMP indicates that Marx had a definite view about the Indian (or Oriental) social formation. In its essential features, it was different from any social formation in the West. Except for a common beginning, there was no other similarity between the Indian social formation and any other social formation of the West. It is especially important to mention that Marx consistently refused to accept any suggestion that India experienced certain feudal developments. Towards the end of his life, Marx read the works of the Russian sociologist M. M. Kovalevsky who proposed a theory of feudalism for India. Kovalevsky traced the rise of feudalism after the Muslim conquest (i.e. after 1206 A.D.) of India. His argument was based on the land grants or benefices for military services. This benefice was called Ikta. The Imam (i.e. the highest religious authority) distributed different types of Ikta to military leaders in return for military services from them. Kovalevsky mentioned three types of Ikta. In the first kind the distribution of plots of land or objects which produced revenue became full and exclusive property of the receiver. In the second type the donee only obtained "the supervision of certain rights" in the land granted to him. The third kind transferred the

right of use with dominant lordship over mining, roads, fairs, mills, etc.¹²⁹ This feudal development meant in a majority of cases the withdrawal of revenue from the state treasury, but it did not touch the rural population. The vast rural mass continued to stay on their lands as before according to the rights of communal or private property. But the former free owners of land, as a result of enforcement, became now dependent and their allodial possessions became feudal.¹³⁰ Marx refused to accept this as feudal development. He sharply criticized Kovalevsky for confusing the nature of feudalism in Europe and applying it to India. Marx's arguments against Kovalevsky's thesis can be summarized in the following way.

First, the existence of benefices in India does not automatically guarantee the presence of feudalism there. Similarly, the evidence of benefices is also found in Rome, and this does not authorize one to label Roman society as feudal society. Second, one of the most essential ingredients of feudalism is serfdom, which is not found in India. Third, in feudalism the land was the monopoly of the feudal landowners. It could not be alienated to the commoners. In other words, the soil in Europe was a prized object. This was not so in India. Fourth, the patrimonial jurisdiction was absent in India. In Europe the superior lord could not intervene in the jurisdiction of his vassal regarding the administration of justice. In contrast, this was not the case in India because the king was the supreme proprietor of land there.¹³¹ Finally, "according to Indian law, the ruling power is not subject to division among the sons; therewith a great source of

European feudalism is cut off."¹³²

Marx's criticism was based on the principle that "the course of Indian history is to be explained by indigenous, not imported categories."¹³³ The application of European feudalism to Indian history is juxtaposition of imported categories which are incapable of providing any satisfactory explanation of Indian history. Thus, when John Budd Phear (1825-1905) at one point considered the Bengal village feudal in nature, Marx reacted rather harshly and reproached him: "This ass calls the Constitution of the village feudal."¹³⁴ Marx also wrote:

The transformation - by the English rogues and asses of the Zamindars into private proprietors makes eo ipso (if not also in the idea of those asses) all intermediate interests into rights in land, and the owner of any such interest could encumber the land or alienate it within the limit of the right; his ownership could itself again assume the complex Hindu joint-parcenary form.¹³⁵

All these indicate that Marx tenaciously stuck to his AMP model of an unchanging Indian society in all its essentials to the last days of his life.¹³⁶

Footnotes

1. Thorner, "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 34; and Krader, "Reflections on the Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 1.
2. Levitt, "Karl Marx and Henry Sumner Maine: India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 164.
3. For detailed bibliographical information regarding Marx's sources on India, see H. P. Harstick, Karl Marx: Uber Formen Vorkapitalistischer Produktion, (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1977), pp. 218-30.
4. These components of the AMP are presented not in any order of personal preference. Each of them is as important as any other.

5. A. M. Bailey and J. R. Llobera, "The Asiatic Mode of Production: An Annotated Bibliography", CA, (Autumn, 1974), p. 96. In the last twenty-five years there has developed a controversy among Marxist scholars regarding "the most important" aspects of Marx's theory of the AMP. The trend suggests that only certain aspects of Marx's writings can be considered pertinent and relevant to the discussion of the theory. For example, Lawrence Krader argues that pre-capitalist societies did not assume central importance in Marx's writings until in the last few years (i.e. 1879-1882) of his life, especially when Marx started reading the works of H. S. Maine, J. B. Phear, L. H. Morgan, J. Lublock and made extensive notes on their works. But I think that, as Kahn and Llobera rightly point out recently, "the sources here (i.e. - the Ethnological Notebooks of Marx - BB), however, become extremely problematical, and consist largely of long extracts with short critical interjections, on the part of Marx himself. To deduce Marx's theory of pre-capitalist societies on the basis of these critical interjections or to go on even thinner ice and attempt to make some coherent sense of the specific passages Marx chose to copy out, is clearly highly problematical and at best produces an incomplete theoretical framework". See Kahn and Llobera, "Towards a New Marxism or a New Anthropology," in Kahn and Llobera, eds., The Anthropology of Pre-Capitalist Societies, p. 302. The position adopted in this dissertation attributes importance to all the writings of Marx on the theory of the AMP. It is not my intention either to dismiss altogether the articles of the 1850s as totally journalistic or to overemphasize Marx's ethnological notes.
6. See Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 8-16.
7. K. Marx, Wage-Labour and Capital, (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 29.
8. K. Marx and F. Engels, "The Communist Manifesto", in K. Marx and F. Engels, The Marx-Engels Reader (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972), passim.
9. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.
10. Sawyer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 6.
11. Ibid., p. 7.
12. See Ibid., pp. 9-39; and Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, pp. 462-72.
13. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire A.D. 1656-1688, pp. 204 and 224. Emphases in original.

14. Mill, The History of British India, Vol. 2, pp. 214 and 216.
15. Ibid., p. 173.
16. Cf. Sawer, op. cit., pp. 34-6.
17. Jones, An Essay on the Distribution of Wealth, p. 109.
18. Ibid., pp. 109-110.
19. H. S. Maine, Lectures on the Early History of the Institutions (London: John Murray, 1875), pp. 80-2. The same view is expressed in his Village Communities in the East and West, (London: John Murray, 1876), p. 154.
20. Maine, Lectures on the Early History of the Institutions, p. 111. Emphases in original.
21. M. Elphinstone, The History of India, (London: John Murray, 1874), p. 23.
22. Ibid., pp. 24 and 72. Emphasis in original.
23. G. Campbell, Modern India, (London: John Murray, 1852), pp. 90 and 94.
24. G. Campbell, "The Tenure of Land in India", in J. W. Probyn, ed., System of Land Tenures in Various Countries, (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co., 1881), p. 216.
25. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 451. Emphases in original.
26. Ibid., p. 314.
27. For details, see N. Levine, "The Myth of the Asiatic Restoration", JAS 37 (1977), pp. 75-7; and Sawer, op. cit., pp. 33-50.
28. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 477. Emphases in original.
29. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 33. Emphases in original.
30. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 466.
31. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 486. Emphasis in original.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 477. Emphases in original.

34. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 334.
35. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 334.
36. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 472-3. Emphases in original.
37. Ibid., p. 473.
38. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 791.
39. Ibid.
40. Jones, op. cit., pp. 113-17.
41. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 70, and 121-2.
42. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 473.
43. Ibid., p. 493.
44. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 207. Emphases in original.
45. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 616.
46. Ibid.
47. Cited in Levitt, Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence, p. 44.
48. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 456-7. Emphases in original.
49. Ibid., p. 278.
50. Ibid., p. 133.
51. Ibid., p. 90.
52. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 474. Emphasis in original.
53. Ibid., p. 486.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 493.
56. Ibid. Emphases in original.
57. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 451.

58. Ibid., pp. 92-4.
59. H. Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, (New York: MR Press, 1974), p. 73. Emphases in original.
60. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 87.
61. Ibid., p. 334. Emphases added.
62. W. K. Firminger, ed. with an intro., The Fifth Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East India Company, (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1969), vol. 1, p. 158.
63. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 93 and 94.
64. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 357. Emphases added.
65. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 496; and Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 69.
66. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 357-8.
67. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Society and Economy", pp. 42-4. Harstick also does not refer to the Fifth Report as a source of Marx's information on India.
68. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 92-3.
69. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, n. 2, p. 358.
70. See L. Dumont, "The `Village Community' From Munro to Maine", CIS, 9 (December, 1966), pp. 68-76.
71. Ibid., p. 70.
72. Cf. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 85.
73. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 472-3.
74. Ibid., p. 473. Emphasis in original.
75. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 791.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.

78. R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx", IHR, 2 (1975), p. 385.
79. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 91.
80. Ibid., p. 135. Emphasis in original.
81. Ibid., p. 94.
82. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 486.
83. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 358.
84. Ibid., p. 357.
85. Ibid., p. 358.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., p. 352.
88. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 467 and 474.
89. Ibid., p. 479.
90. K. Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 131-2.
91. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 479.
92. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 93. Emphases in original.
93. Ibid., p. 133.
94. Ibid., p. 94.
95. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, pp. 333-4.
96. Marx and Engels, The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 335.
97. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 132.
98. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 490.
99. Ibid., pp. 494-5. Emphases in original.
100. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 356-8; and vol. 3, pp. 333-4.

101. For details see, Anderson, op. cit., pp. 462-72; and Sawyer, op. cit., pp. 5-39.
102. Mill, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 118.
103. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, pp. 116-121.
104. Ibid., p. 149.
105. Anderson, op. cit., p. 481.
106. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 54.
107. Bernier, op. cit., p. 220. Emphases in original.
108. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 450.
109. Jones, op. cit., pp. 137-42.
110. See also chapter 10, p. 595-6.
111. Levine, op. cit., p. 74.
112. L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat, eds. with an intro., Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 177. Emphasis in original.
113. For details, see Levine, op. cit., pp. 74-6.
114. Ibid., p. 76.
115. Quoted in Levine, op. cit., p. 76.
116. Jones, op. cit., p. 139.
117. M. Wilks, Historical Sketches of South India in an Attempt to Trace the History of Mysore (Mysore: The Government Branch, 1930), pp. 26-7.
118. Cited in Levine, op. cit., p. 76.
119. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 473.
120. Ibid., pp. 472-3. Emphases in original.
121. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 94.
122. Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 143. Emphases added.
123. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 90.

124. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 474.
125. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, n.2, p. 514.
126. Ibid., vol. 3, p. 791.
127. See Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 260-1.
128. Firminger, ed., op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 157-8. Emphases in original.
129. See Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 201-2.
130. Ibid., p. 373.
131. Ibid., pp. 202-8.
132. Quoted in ibid., p. 202.
133. Ibid., p. 206.
134. Quoted in Levitt, "Karl Marx and Henry Summer Main: India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 165. Emphases in original.
135. Ibid.
136. "Whatever changes the Marxian view on the tribal system had undergone, they did not nullify the conception of the Asiatic mode of production or support the presentation of the history of Asia by isomorphic phases in Western Europe". G. Koranashvili, "Morgan's Influence on Marx: The Question of Asiatic Society", DA, 5 (November 1980), p. 252.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RIGHT TO PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND: A METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction, made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'. Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between the East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind', destiny, and so on. This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx.¹

The stanchion of Orientalism, based on an universalistic dichotomy between the Occident and Orient, comprises numerous domain assumptions: the conception of an atypical (e.g. Indian) social structure envisaged as an uneasy patchwork of tribes or castes, religious sects or cults, or congeries of groups of clients and patrons; the summation of politics as a series of internecine struggles, first, among intriguing royal and aristocratic families, and, second, between them and the rest of the population, a mainly exploited but otherwise undifferentiated peasantry; and, finally, the reduction of the Orientals to ahistorical debris who are destined to be catapulted onto a high-road of historical development designed in the dynamic West because they remain incapable of creating or reaching a history of their own given their conditions of vegetative quagmires, of inbred despotism, and

ageless customs.² Implicit in the above is of course the notion of the absence of private property, especially in land, until the desideratum was planted on the Oriental soil by Occidental capitalism.

Indeed, as I stated in the first chapter, the notion of the absence of private property in land in the East has persistently continued to dominate ideological and theoretical discourse in the West right from classical times. Even today, it has continued to permeate, almost without exception, the analyses of Western Marxists on the theory of the AMP.³ It is now overdue that this modern Orientalism, the (Marxist) materialist Orientalism, should end on legitimate grounds. It requires, therefore, as Turner says rightly, "a fundamental attack on the theoretical and epistemological roots" of Orientalism, especially those of Marx's materialist Orientalism.

Modern Marxism is fully equipped to do this work of destruction, but in this very activity Marxism displays its own internal theoretical problems and uncovers those analytical cords which tie it to Hegelianism, to nineteenth-century political economy and to Weberian sociology. The end of Orientalism, therefore, also requires the end of certain forms of Marxist thought and the creation of a new type of analysis.⁴

The contemporary renaissance of the debate over Marx's AMP is already characterized by, among other things, a rather stricter methodological and theoretical scrutiny of the validity of the AMP, as it was formulated by him over a hundred years ago.⁵ However, the scrutinizing process still remains incomplete and unsatisfactory.

Against this background, the major objective of this chapter is to undertake, from a methodological and theoretical standpoint, a critical evaluation of Marx's generalization of the absence of private

landed property in India - the master ingredient of Marx's theory of the AMP, which has recently become the purveyor of materialist Orientalism in the hands by the neo-Marxists. In the next two chapters I follow up the discussion by asking whether or not Marx's AMP reflects the empirical reality of India and, hence, whether or not it is empirically tenable.

II. Methodological and Theoretical Review: Predecessors and Contemporaries of Marx

In itself the theory of the AMP, insofar as it attempts to understand and explain the conformities of social development in non-European social formations, is the mark of a creative genius like Marx.⁶ In his own formulation of the AMP, however, Marx remained quite faithful to and in fact depended upon source materials, analyses, and interpretations left behind by a huge number of his predecessors and contemporaries.⁷ Since almost all of the components of the AMP are traceable to these data, let me therefore assay them methodologically and theoretically.

One of the most fundamental weaknesses inhibiting development of the scientific knowledge of Eastern social formations stemmed from the limitedness of the data sources, and their quality, on which Marx, most of his predecessors and contemporaries depended uncritically in their formulations of the AMP or its homologous paradigms. I use here the word "scientific" in Marx's sense to distinguish facts and empirical investigation from what is "arbitrary" or "fantastic" and from "absolute" truths of "justice" and "reason" of the utopians.⁸

Scientific activity involves, as I stated earlier, "the active search for, and presentation of, truths and evidence for them, using arguments and data which related not simply to what could be touched or counted, but to what could be stated in more general terms (including moral terms), to be the case with man and his world."⁹ From this point of view, the accounts of the different components of the AMP remained methodologically vulnerable in that they were based on a very limited range of materials most, if not all, of which were both unreliable and one-sided. Simultaneously this severely restricted the validity of theoretical (conceptual) generalizations regarding the East. Further the production of scientific knowledge became more difficult when others not only reproduced one-sided generalizations but uncritically reinforced them to a greater degree.

Indeed, the concrete data base for theoretical generalizations about the Oriental social formations remained extremely weak, say, from about 500 B.C. until the discovery of the sea route towards the end of the fifteenth century. The mythical dominated over the real, and the fantastic over the mundane. The terms such as the East or India remained conceptually interchangeable geographically and otherwise; it ruled out almost completely the possibility of the production of scientific knowledge of any specific Oriental social formations, let alone India. Lach draws attention to this aspect of the methodological and theoretical limits within Western historiography in these words:

The terms `Asia` and `East` are obviously imprecise as geographical conceptions. They are certainly no clearer when used in their adjectival forms to describe racial,

religious, or cultural attributes. But before the great discoveries, these terms were used interchangeably and so broadly that Egypt was sometimes pictured on maps as belonging to Asia. `India´ often stood as synonym for Asia, and, as late as 1523, Maximilian of Transylvania wrote that `the natives of all unknown countries are commonly called Indians´. ... `India´ was, in a general, undifferentiated sense synonymous with East. ... To grasp the total problem better, one needs only to recall that the Abbé Raynal writing in the eighteenth century still continued to define the East Indies as including `all regions beyond the Arabian Sea and the kingdom of Persia´.¹⁰

For example, neither Greek nor Roman historiography could fairly be expected to demonstrate the kind of rigorous methodological consciousness that characterizes research endeavours of today.

Since Greek historians never thought of historiography as primarily a reconstruction of the past for the sake of truth or intellectual curiosity but always an endeavour with a purpose - ranging from the preservation of noble memories to the education of active citizens to the gratification of desires for entertainment or even gossip - the simple methodology posed no problem. None of these purposes required the type of methodology that eventually would become a necessity when historians set out to reconstruct the past, piece by little piece.¹¹

Neither were the Roman historians interested to construct objective reality of social formations other than their own. "There was no incentive to transcend the Roman world. A corresponding lack of interest in the past of other peoples, including the Greeks, stood in the way of breaking through to a universal history."¹²

Apart from the paucity of reliable and authentic data, there was the problem of communication and this affected even those such as the traders whose profession demanded immediate interaction with their clients. Thus even if they had been motivated to learn about the social formations and institutions of the Oriental peoples in order to engage

in commerce, "their limitations of background and language would have prevented them from making more than superficial observations."¹³ Naturally, it was difficult to expect that observations on the Orient and its peoples, which emerged in the Graeco-Roman world, could be scientific.

In this connexion I refer to Marx himself. While dealing with whether or not Russia should pass through the stage of capitalism, Marx felt the necessity of learning the Russian language to qualify himself as a competent participant in the debate that was going on in Russia. He candidly admitted in 1877:

To conclude, as I am not fond of leaving `anything to guesswork' I shall come straight to the point. In order that I might be specially qualified to estimate the economic development in Russia, I learnt Russian and then for many years studied the official publications and others bearing on this subject. I have arrived at this conclusion: If Russia continues to pursue the path she has followed since 1861, she will lose the finest chance ever offered by history to a people and undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime.¹⁴

Yet, while fathering such an important theory as the AMP Marx himself, like most of his contemporaries who studied India, did not consider it worthwhile to learn any of the original Indian languages, especially Sanskrit even though the Indian social formation was the focal point for his analysis of the non-European world.

Neither the quality nor the sources of data for the Indian social formation improved during the medieval era in Europe. If anything, there developed even a more marked tendency toward further stereotyping and insularization of the Eurocentered Wetansicht of the non-European world. "The myth of Asia as a land of Griffons, monsters,

and demons, lying somewhere beyond the terrestrial Paradise, slowly enmeshed the popular imagination of the Medieval Europe and gradually penetrated the popular literature of the Crusading era. It was to be many centuries after Marco Polo(1254-1324) before the last of these fables would disappear from scientific and critical literature."¹⁵ In any case, from the 14th century onward a new development was the establishment of a linkage between Oriental despotism on the one hand and the absence of private property in land on the other. However, it may be recalled here that the notion of the absence of private property in India originated earlier.¹⁶

From the latter part of the 16th century, coinciding with the rise of European hegemony and colonialism over vast regions in the Orient, a large body of accounts began accumulating. India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and China came to be recognized for the first time as distinct parts of Asia.¹⁷ But the main burden of evidence flowing from the accounts of European travellers, sailors, merchants, missionaries, diplomats, officials and others remained strikingly unvarying in their portrayal and characterization of the non-European social formations and their peoples. The relative quantitative boom in the accumulated data continued to remain remarkably insufficient in terms of their reliability and objectivity, and thus did not change qualitatively the content of primitive Orientalism. They provided merely corroborative, instead of critical, evidence. Krader summarizes:

Judged from the standpoint of the present day, the writings of the eighteenth century and even the nineteenth had but a limited amount of data in reference to Asia; but there was

little awareness of this weakness revealed in those past reflections (a weakness from which we are today not free, although the awareness of it is greater). The lack of mindfulness of the limitations of factual knowledge was directly connected to the infant state of development of the sciences of man in the eighteenth century, whereby many concepts such as society, culture, social history, were poorly understood and explored.¹⁸

It is important to note that many serious Western thinkers (e.g. Alexander Dow, James Mill, Richard Jones, etc.) attempted to develop a so-called "scientific" concept of the Oriental society, although its different parts had already been recognized as distinct and also in spite of the fact that social researches upon the Oriental countries and institutions had not progressed beyond their infancy.

The apparent ideological motif in the hidebound heyday of European imperialism and colonialism is quite clear, i.e. the preconception of the Orient which is somehow or has got to be different from the Occident, whatever the plausibility of the level of abstraction.¹⁹ Naturally, the teleological formulation and usage of the concept of Oriental society was quite reminiscent of the distinction between the civilized and the barbarian made in the classical West. The new concept, though now theoretically more sophisticated and all embracing vis à vis progressive Europe, was of little utility otherwise. The concept of the Oriental society emerged as a category in and of itself, having its abode not in reality but in the minds of those who advanced and refined it.²⁰ There were other methodological problems, such as those of biased observation and biased interpretation, that bedevilled the production of scientific knowledge of Oriental social formations, especially India. The methodological canon of unbiased

observation simply means that the observer's observation must remain unaffected by his own beliefs, values, and preferences. The other canon signifies that his interpretation should duly weigh contending arguments before explanation of or generalization on a given fact (e.g. phenomena, event etc.) can be rendered. Such explanation or generalization is representative of the reality provided it is based on careful consideration of grounds that are well argued for and justified.

Almost all of the missionaries, sailors, merchants, officials, and others who wrote about India were not disinterested observers engaged in the pursuit of objective truths. They were not, in the first instance, interested in studying non-European social formations for their own sake. Whether they wrote and speculated about the nature of land ownership or political power in the Orient, they were clearly motivated to promote and maximize the economic and non-economic interests of their own nation states.²¹ While some were seekers of their own careers and fortunes, others studied Asia "only for what they could get from the latter, for their sustenance, just as the merchants for theirs."²² Some examples will go a long way to show how this affected Western perception of India and how Orientalism became further modernized and reinforced in the 18th and 19th centuries, if not earlier.

Bernier, the French physician who went to Mughal India literally to make money and whose writings influenced successive generations including Marx, had a similar motive. Bernier alleged that the absence of private property in land was due to the despotic ruler's ownership of

all land in Mughal India. The fact of the matter is that Bernier wrote "for a political purpose in a polemical way" about Mughal land tenure as he understood it.²³ Having argued that the decline of the Asiatic states was due to the absence of private property in land and its concomitant incentives, Bernier exhorted Colbert(1619-1683), one of the chief ministers of Louis XIV of France, "to preserve France from a similar decline - a reference to the contemporary rumours that Louis XIV and his ministers were planning to proclaim all land in France royal property."²⁴ Indeed, Louis XIV made the claim to the effect that "as representative of the State he was master of both his subjects and all their goods, and the State was sole proprietor of land."²⁵ Besides, I shall later point out certain grave contradictions in Bernier himself, that Marx did not, or failed to, consider.

Development of scientific knowledge about non-European social formations remained unsatisfactory in the 18th and 19th centuries in view of the fact that the mainstream Western (British) theorists such as Adam Smith, T. R. Malthus, Richard Jones, James Mill, and others²⁶ continued to draw, often uncritically, on sources that contained qualitatively no new information; while describing Oriental social formations they went on building upon data that merely confirmed age-old assertions, but were unbacked by authentic or indigenous sources. For instance, Richard Jones who occupied the Chair of Political Economy (1835-1855) as successor to Malthus at the Haileybury College maintained by Indian revenues, based his own Indian economic analysis simply on the data provided by Montesquieu and Bernier.²⁷ Even Marx almost entirely

neglected indigenous sources in the formulation of the AMP even though those were, as I shall show later, fairly available at his time.

In the capitalist epoch of imperial intemperance and global hegemony, perceived as divinely ordained, Western theorists, especially British political economists who also provided raw data to Marx, were themselves not completely detached observers unaware of the interests of their own countries. As Robbins said: "All that I contend is that we get our picture wrong if we suppose that the English Classical Economists would have recommended, because it was good for the world at large, a measure which they thought would be harmful to their own community."²⁸ What this means is that, regardless of the usefulness of the data used, the perceptions of the Western theorists about the colonized social formations were not plainly innocuous; neither were their theoretical generalizations always illustrative of the actual reality, in case that reality conflicted with the interests of their own nations. What was worse was the set of disastrous consequences that followed when their apparently "scientific" conclusions (e.g. doctrine of rent, etc.) were explicitly formulated into policies and were ruthlessly enforced and practiced in the subordinated colonies including India.²⁹

The most devastating example of what has been said, especially in regard to the uncritical use of unreliable data, biased observation, and biased interpretation, is the case of James Mill and his The History of India, first published in 1818. Mill's importance consists in the fact that his History is a sort of classical statement on the Indian

social formation, containing elaboration and confirmation of all major tenets of the AMP at a level of sophistication that was unmatched for a long time. He was also one of those who profoundly influenced Marx in his outlines of the AMP.³⁰ The publication of his History and the importance attached to it, along with the active influence exerted by his friends including David Ricardo(1772-1823) and Joseph Hume(1777-1855), enabled Mill to be appointed in 1819 as an Assistant Examiner of the India Correspondence at the India House. In 1830 he became 'Examiner', being then the head of the office, and remained so until his death in 1836. The concerns of the Examiner's office were, in today's equivalent, those of an economic planning body for colonial India. Naturally, he was at the very centre of decision-making authority and in a position to put into practice, to a certain degree, the findings and conclusions of his study.³¹

Mill did not have any first-hand acquaintance with India; neither did he know any of the relevant Indian languages. And still he set out to write a "judging history."³² Although Mill excused his ignorance of any of the Indian languages he would not have excused, Galbraith rightly reminds, "any man who essayed to comment on Greek or Latin poets without a knowledge of Greek or Latin."³³ However, for his part, he was determined to prove that Indian culture was "barren, perverse and objectionable" and this was so "in all particulars."³⁴

This being the objective, it mattered little whether the data available warranted a different conclusion or at best qualified generalizations. The latter he seldom made in regard to what he

considered vital objects of his scientific practice, as well as of utilitarian tryout in the Indian laboratory. Wilson, the editor of Mill's History, points out that his glaring methodological and theoretical blunders were no mere peccadillos.

He commonly attaches the greatest weight to the authorities which are least entitled to confidence, or adduces from those of a higher order, the passages which are least characterized by care and consideration. ... With regard to the facts of his History, the sources of his information were more scanty and less pure than the historian suspected. Exceptions even more comprehensive may be taken to his opinions. In many instances, the intensity of his prejudices has dimmed the clearness of his perception, and blunted the acuteness of his intelligence.³⁵

This is best illuminated in Mill's contention of the absence of private property in land. He argued that "the property of the soil resided in the sovereign; for if it did not reside in him, it will be impossible to show to whom it belonged."⁴¹ This theoretical argument, abstract as it was both logically and empirically, is nothing but an arbitrary determination of reality in absentia. No wonder Krader rightly considers Mill's argument poor in both form and content. "To whom the land belonged is a question of fact. The fact cannot be established by default, by assuming that there is no alternative, or only a logically untenable alternative, as though one were conducting a proof more geometrico. The ownership of the land, or to whom it belonged, can only be established by empirical investigation, which James Mill failed to do."³⁷

Mill's stated generalization was based on his mishandling of data. In support of his claim, Mill states that "every European

visitor, without one exception that I have found, agrees in the opinion, that the sovereign was the owner of the soil."³⁸ To buttress his case Mill cites, among others, Mark Wilks who, in his turn, cited Bernier, Thevenot, Chardin and Manucci. But, ironically, Mill suppressed here the fact, as I shall show later, that Wilks himself opposed his assertion and defended vehemently the existence of private ownership of land in pre-British India.³⁹ Besides, one can raise other questions about Mill's assertion, such as whether unanimity equals truth, or the competency of European visitors whom he cited in his favor. Let me give another example of the bias in Mill's manipulation and interpretation of Indian data. I refer to the works of Sir William Jones (1746-1794) who was "the first English scholar to know Sanskrit."⁴⁰ In a letter to Lady Spencer, he wrote in 1791:

Our nation, in the name of the King, has twenty three millions of black subjects in these two provinces; but nine tenths of their property are taken from them, and it has been publicly insisted, that they have no landed property at all: if my Digest of Indian Law should give stability to their property, real and personal, and security to their persons, it will be the greatest benefit they ever received from us.⁴¹

Insofar as Hindus were concerned, "they most assuredly were absolute proprietors of their land, though they called their sovereigns lords of the earth."⁴² Jones, it may be noted, also criticized Bernier for his hasty generalization on the issue of property in India.

Mill was acquainted with the works of Jones, the most brilliant of the British scholars who, besides being a barrister and knowing twenty eight languages, was the first to make "an organized effort to study the history, society and culture of India."⁴³ Since Mill was

determined to remove positive evaluations of any aspect of the Indian, especially Hindu, society,⁴⁴ it was not surprising that he also wanted to combat Jones's view. How he did can be best described by Mukherjee:

In his effort to prove that the Hindus had no idea of private property and considered their kings the supreme lords of the soil, Mill used Jones's translation of Manu VIII, 39. However, to suit his theory Mill rearranged the relevant passage on the ownership of land: 'I have substituted the word supreme for the word paramount used by Sir William Jones (which has but) as it relates to the feudal institutions of Europe and is calculated to convey erroneous ideas'.⁴⁵

In fact Mill conveyed a wrong meaning by asserting that the phrase 'supreme lord of the soil' makes the king the proprietor of land; actually, in view of so many provisions on ownership, differentiation between public and private ownership, and the justifications behind the king's rightful dues in the Hindu legal treatises and especially in Manu, the significance of the afore-mentioned phrase is merely nominal or symbolic, rather than economic.⁴⁶ As the editor of Mill's History points out:

He is not lord of the 'soil' he is lord of the earth, of the whole earth or kingdom, not of any parcel or allotment of it; he may punish a cultivator for neglect, in order to protect his acknowledged share of the crop; and when he gives away lands and villages, he gives away his share of the revenue. No donee would ever think of following up such a donation by actual occupancy, he would be resisted if he did. The truth is, that the rights of the king are a theory, an abstraction; poetically and politically speaking, he is the lord, the master, the protector of the earth (Prithvi pati, Bhumiswara, Bhúmpa), just as he is the lord, the master, the protector of men (Narapati, Naréswara, Nripa). Such is the purport of the common title of a king; but he is no more the actual proprietor of the soil than he is of his subjects; they need not his permission to buy it or sell it, or to give it away, and would be very much surprised and aggrieved if the king or his officers were to

buy or sell or give away the ground which they cultivated.⁴⁷ Mill was, however, not theorizing in a vacuum. Even if due consideration is given to his data sources, certainly his conclusions were not based completely upon them. There were other grounds, though never explicitly stated, which structured Mill's thinking on the issue of ownership of land.

First, he was unable to support private ownership of land in India because he found the landowning class to have become a parasitic class in Britain⁴⁸ which had emerged then as the workshop of the world and, so, as the leader of industrial capitalism. He demanded that, as Marx pointed out, "rent should be handed over to the state to serve in place of taxes. That is a frank expression of the hatred the industrial capitalist bears towards the landed proprietor, who seems to have a useless thing, an excrescence upon the general body of bourgeois production."⁴⁹ Naturally, Mill's theoretical emphasis implicit in his economic doctrines resulted in a vindication of state ownership. To quote Marx again:

He supports the same historical interests as Ricardo - those of industrial capital against landed property - and he draws the practical conclusions from the theory - that of rent for example - more ruthlessly, against the institution of landed property which he would like to see more or less directly transformed into State property.⁵⁰

In light of this preconception, which had its social origin in industrially advancing Britain, it is barely hard to understand why Mill was bent on proving state ownership of land in India.

In this regard it is relevant to note that Mill also formulated a "scientific" doctrine of rent according to which "the government

should collect directly from the producers the whole `rent` of the soil (that is the surplus after costs and an average profit had been calculated and deducted)."⁵¹ In reality Mill's doctrines of state ownership and rent, in the second place, served a vital function in the sustenance of British imperialism in India. To a certain extent, imperialism in India enabled Britain to sustain and maintain its empire of profit and power especially vis à vis other Western imperialist nations. The reason is that Mill's doctrines both facilitated and legitimated the continuous transfer of a constant amount of economic surplus - known as "drain" in the relevant literature - from India to Britain.⁵² If the extraction of agrarian surplus was to be maximized the state ownership of land was then the most fitting contrivance to do the job. Also the share due to the king had to be instrumentally regarded not as tax, but as rent of the state. This rationale, though shrouded in the abstract utilitarian language of Mill's political economic principles, explains why agrarian surplus (i.e. land revenue) remained the largest source of the colonial state's income upto the 1920s.⁵³

Of course, this means that Mill's doctrinaire principles, in general the espoused official ideology of the colonial ruling class, were rigorously implemented in various provinces of India. They were carried into practice first in the North West Provinces and then extended to the Madras and Bombay presidency regions, where land settlements were entered into with the small peasants who remained technically not owners but possessors of their holdings. In other

places, such as in Bengal and Oudh, the "ownership" rights of landed proprietors came to be saddled with restrictions in favour of occupant peasants. It was by no means a wonder that 81 percent of the agrarian land in British India came to be held in temporary, but not permanent tenures.⁵⁴ The be-all and end-all objective of the colonial ruling class became the extraction of maximum agrarian surplus. As R. M. Bird, one of the leading architects of the land tenure system in the North West Provinces, said:

The Government must draw from the country as large an income as its resources can be safely made to bear. The necessity of keeping up a large Army for external defence and to deter the disaffected from, or repress attempts at internal treachery and tumult, it is enough to mention. I myself very conscientiously believe that the future good of India depends on the continuance of British rule. But in order to do the very good which I trust Britain is destined to effect for India she must for a long time continue to press on the resources of India.⁵⁵

The concentrated severity with which agrarian surplus was exacted can be exemplified by pointing out that Lord Salisbury stated in the 1870s that he did not care whether the collection from land was rent or tax so long as "we get the money."⁵⁶ This explains why the propounding of the doctrine of state ownership was so opportune from the imperialist point of view. It explains other things as well, e.g. why no one was awarded absolute (i.e. capitalist) ownership of land in colonial India or how the bulk of the raised revenue of the colonial state (about 30 percent from 1872 to 1947) was wasted for the imperialistic purposes of primarily securing British interests in India and abroad.⁵⁷ Instead of promoting the greatest good of the greatest number, as Mill's doctrines

were supposed to do upon their implementation, they brought in fact the greatest misery on the greatest number of Indians. For the first time in history India lost self-sufficiency in food production, as per capita food production declined drastically during the period of colonialism.⁵⁸

If the extraction of agrarian surplus was maximized by the formulation and implementation of the doctrine of state ownership of land this purpose was served even more by disbanding, in as much as it could be done, the landed intermediaries since this would save further surplus for the colonial state. Logically, this prompted the ruling class to make agrarian land settlements directly with the peasant producers. To be sure, the advantage to be reaped was not economic only but political as well. Most illiterate peasants who became individual land tax payers to the state were not economically independent; neither were they politically capable of organizing themselves. As a result, they were hardly in a position, for most of the period of colonialism, to threaten the basis and maintenance of colonial rule. The peasant-oriented land settlements served, in this light, a two-fold political purpose. They enabled, on the one hand, the colonial ruling class to be in direct touch with the peasants. On the other hand, they enabled the ruling class to legitimize its rule in that it claimed to be the protector and guardian of the peasant masses. Hence, this political consideration played a vital role in the so-called theoretical exercises and empirical investigations in regard to who owned the land in India.⁵⁹

From this standpoint, finally, it is not difficult to discover why Mill, like a plethora of other colonial officials, became the

strongest supporter of land revenue settlements directly with the peasants. Let me illustrate the above-mentioned political consideration from William Thackeray(1778-1823), whom Mill cites when he was compelled to qualify in another context his claim of state ownership by saying that "all which is valuable in the soil, after the deduction of what is due to the sovereign belongs of incontestable right to the Indian husbandman."⁶⁰ This is what Thackeray said:

Considered politically therefore, the general distribution of land, among a number of small proprietors, who cannot easily combine against government, is an object of importance. The power and patronage, and receipt of the circar (i.e. the state - BB) rent, will always render zemindars formidable, but more or less so, according to the military strength and reputation of the government. ... By retaining the administration of the revenues in our own hands, we maintain our communication and immediate connection with the people at large.⁶¹

To be sure, this was not an isolated view of a disgruntled official. There were many prominent others such as Thomas Munro(1767-1827), Holt Mackenzie(1787-1876) and Henry James Sumner Maine, for instance, who emerged as active champions of the village system and peasant-oriented land settlements and reforms for imperially modernizing colonial India.⁶²

Precisely what role those discussed fiscal and political considerations played in the choice, manipulation and interpretation of data which merely confirmed and expanded the scope of Orientalism (or the AMP in our case) is difficult to estimate. But it is beyond doubt that they unmistakably exercised determinant influence, given ample evidence of a perceived necessity to safeguard and perpetuate the alien regime on the colonial soil.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the British officials, whose writings became the substantive source material for the theory of the AMP in modern times,⁶³ were generally zealous officials devoted to securing their mother country's interests; they were not, in the first and last instances, disinterested scientists, as we are now more or less acquainted with. Those officials reached conclusions they often wanted to reach, and for this purpose used the materials which were corroborative, rather than critical. Very few of them used indigenous sources and "those that were used were not always applied in a critical way."⁶⁴ Naturally different considerations (e.g. political, economic, racial, national, etc.), while affecting the investigative process, remained invisible, unstated, dressed-up or even openly denied. Sometimes their findings cloaked those considerations and legitimated colonial rule on different grounds including the alleged necessity of civilizing the barbarian East. This explains why Platonic philosopher-rulers of Britain produced volumes on Orientalism on the basis of data that supported their preconceived goals. It is ironic that Marx himself failed to discover most, if not all, of those afore-mentioned considerations that affected the works of those colonial officials and political economists on whom he relied for his AMP. Recently, Thapar draws attention to the deficiencies in respect of the inquiries into the issue of private property in India:

It is surprising that references to private property in land should have been overlooked. The sociological texts, the dharmasāstras and the early text on political economy, the Arthasāstra, list and discuss the laws and regulations for the sale, bequest, and inheritance of land and other forms

of property. More precise information comes from the many inscriptions of the period after 500 A.D., often in the form of copper plates recording the grant of land by either the king or some wealthy individual to a religious beneficiary, or, alternatively, by the King to a secular official in lieu of services rendered to the King. These inscriptions were deciphered in the nineteenth century, but were read primarily for the data they contained on chronology and dynasties. ... Not only do these inscriptions provide evidence of the categories of ownership of land, but where they refer to waste land, it is possible to indicate the gradual extension of the agrarian economy into new areas.⁶⁵

Let me now pass on to the critique of Marx.

III. Marx: A Methodological and Theoretical Critique

It is well-known that Marx attempted to formulate systematically, for the first time, a theory of the mode of production that would explain the uniformities in the pattern of social development in the Orient, as distinct from those that were found in the three successive and related stages (e.g. ancient, feudal and capitalist modes of production) of European development. And yet substantively there is little that is new in Marx's theory, which his leading predecessors and contemporaries had not said. Of course, they did not use the term "Asiatic Mode of Production" as Marx did. This is particularly true of India, and it is worthwhile to note that Marx read more about India than any other non-European social formation.⁶⁶ Marx had at his disposal larger data sources than what was available to some of his noted predecessors. Even then, in spite of his reading of a relatively wider range of source materials,⁶⁷ there are very few citations and documentations in his writings on India, the absence of which remarkably erodes the authoritativeness of his theory of the AMP. Further, Marx

was not simply a disinterested scientist engaged in the revelation of the humans' social development across different social formations. His theoretical endeavour on the AMP was circumscribed by the objective of his problematic of the capitalist mode of production. That is, to the extent the AMP represents the bare origins and the primitive beginnings of man, the CMP represents both the highest and the modern. The latter is brighter to the extent the former is darker, passed behind by Europeans before the Graeco-Roman classical times. While more will be said later, let me discuss some of the most important methodological and theoretical problems that severely weaken the internal consistency and apparent validity of the AMP.

To begin with, a serious methodological flaw of the AMP, which gives rise to legitimate concerns about its theoretical effectiveness as an explanatory category, is that Marx used regrettably "a narrow material base"⁶⁸ to father such an important theory as the AMP. The importance that he attached to the AMP is quite clear in view of the fact that he compared, most often than not, the CMP with the AMP, the highest with the lowest stages of development.⁶⁹ I may leave aside the question of comparability of the two units at different levels of their development. But, more importantly, it can be stated that such comparison loses its significance especially when the AMP was based on, as I shall show later, questionable findings from a limited range of materials compared to a whole range of diverse data that went into his formulation of both the theory and critique of the CMP. Further, like his Orientalist predecessors, Marx was quite subjective in the selection

of his data on India, and this stands in the sharpest contrast to the methodological awareness and theoretical rigor which he displayed elsewhere, whether in the analysis of the CMP or in digging out the motives and prejudices of such classical economists as Adam Smith, T. R. Malthus, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, David Ricardo, and others.⁷⁰ The reason is not far to seek, for Marx had his bias, his own axe to grind. This would explain very well why he almost exclusively used the corroborative evidence of a select group of European travellers and British officials, why he did not look for and utilize relevant countervailing indigenous source materials, and why he uncritically took over many concepts (e.g. rent-tax couple from Adam Smith, etc.) on India from classical economists and British officials whom he severely criticized in other contexts.

To elaborate, in his Capital (vol. 1) Marx cites Wilk's Historical Sketches of the South India (vol. 1) and Campbell's Modern India, asserting "possession in common of the land" in the village community and discussing a stagnant division of labour therein through an enumeration of the tasks of the village functionaries.⁷¹ What is missing in the same context in Marx is that Wilks found strong evidence, both theoretical and empirical, of private property in land in India, and that Campbell's position, while tilting at times toward the absence of private property, was at best contradictory in very many ways. From a reading of the entire passage which Marx devotes to his discussion to the above-mentioned themes one carries the impression that in India there was no private property in land. At the same time Marx's

discussion accentuates the contrast with the CMP additionally in terms of the complex social and technical division of labour under the auspices of private property in the West.

Yet, this is what Wilks said in regard to India: "The passages from the Digest itself, which prove beyond the possibility of cavil the existence of private property in land, crowd upon me in such numbers that I am only at a loss which of them to select."⁷² Campbell's views, as contained in his Modern India, can hardly be summarized to sustain Marx's thesis of "possession in common of the land" and indeed are often quite contradictory. A few pertinent points in this regard may be profitably highlighted. For Campbell, as for many other British officials, the starting point in the search for owners in India was capitalist private property, not pre-capitalist private property. Thus he states that "one of the strongest tests of proprietary right is the investment of capital in the soil by building wells and such works."⁷³ From such a point of view, it was hardly possible that one would find a great many owners in pre-British India. Such a starting point was obviously inappropriate, because the development of productive forces including the growth of absolute (or capitalist) private property was not even but uneven at that time in capitalist Britain and pre-capitalist India. One of the several categories of property discussed by Campbell was the lowest or aristocratic type. Describing it he says that "land, so far as use and possession went, was the property of him who first tilled it, subject to the proper rent (my emphasis - BB) to the government". This property effectively means only the right of

cultivation, which "could have little market money value" and naturally it amounted "to little more than a sort of very strong tenant right."⁷⁴ Several contradictions are apparent in Campbell's description. It is very clear that he reduces "property" eventually to "a tenant right", although he could not escape calling it "property" in land. Actually, the relevant legal provision in Hindu law can be found in Manu's work, Manusmriti, composed between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. Manu was explaining the origin of and justification for private property in land when he said that "they declare a field to belong to him who cleared away the timber."⁷⁵ As I shall show later, there are many clear provisions in his work that distinguish ownership from possession and define rights of ownership.⁷⁶ In any case, Campbell recognizes private property, however weak it may be in his sense. At the same time he used the word "rent", presuming a priori the state as the land owner and making the proprietor a little more than a tenant. Factually, later in his discussion, Campbell made these proprietors of land altogether into "the tenant-right men."⁷⁷ As a matter of fact, Campbell and a host of other British officials constantly mystified the distinction between rent and tax insofar as the share of the state in the produce raised is concerned. Why Campbell and other officials mystified their so-called scientific deliberations can be explained only by those political, economic and other considerations to which I have already drawn attention. In the indigenous usage there is no tax on land, let alone rent due to the king; it is a tax on the crops grown, and that too because of the protection which the state affords to their owners.⁷⁸

The stronger form of property, in Campbell's characterization, existed among democratic village communities. The concept of community here stands for a number of proprietary families, although he also points out that "the whole land is the common property of all."⁷⁹ If not totally mystifying or intended to create total confusion, the latter statement is, at the least, contradictory because, as Campbell says, the proprietary members "considered themselves masters of the village, of all the lands attached to it, and of the other inhabitants - the watchmen, priests, artificers, &c., being their servants rather than village officers."⁸⁰ Campbell further adds that proprietary individuals, though belonging to a family as joint and equal owners, had their shares strictly defined, lands separately cultivated, and their expenses separately paid. Their lands may be annually changed to guard against inequality. This resembles the practice of the Germans, to whom Campbell incidentally refers. The above description suggests that individuals were proprietors who were also constituted into a community - a position which Marx would hardly accept because he sharply separates the "Asiatic" form of property from the Germanic form of property.⁸¹

In an essay published later, "The Tenure of Land in India", and which appears in Marx's bibliography, Campbell is more forthright. Here he is cognizant of the differences between pre-capitalist and capitalist forms of private property. He clearly points out that in the sense of "holding the land subject to the payment of customary rents (my emphasis again - BB), I think that private property in land has existed in many parts of India from time immemorial."⁸² He also found feudal systems,

"extremely similar to that which prevailed in Europe", existent in several parts of the country.⁸³ What is more important, Campbell gave a detailed description of what he understood by village community:

When I speak of a village `community`, I use this latter word in an ordinary English sense, and not to signify the actual holding in common. ... The bond which keeps together a village community is, then, rather municipal than a community of property. The cultivated land is held by individuals, and the common interest in common property is scarcely greater than that which exists among the commoners of an English manor.⁸⁴

Recent research bears out, in the main, Campbell's description of the village community. That is, the village community did not, as an entity in and of itself, own the land in the village on behalf of all the individuals as a community⁸⁵ - a position that is not depicted by Marx.

The preceding discussion of Campbell amply demonstrates that Marx's modes of reading and interpretation were anything but analytical, critical and objective. He did not look for conceptual problems, contradictions, and internal inconsistencies in Campbell's arguments. The main points of Campbell's discussion on the nature of private property in land or the village community do not corroborate the picture that Marx draws in his own discussion. Marx's methodological and theoretical laxity is also evident in his reading of Bernier, who is admittedly responsible for providing him with a golden key to the Oriental heaven: the absence of private property in land and the Mughal king's legal monopoly of all land in the realm.⁸⁶ Naqvi points out several serious contradictions in Bernier, which apparently escaped Marx's attention for no manifest reason.

First, Bernier, whose political motivations I have already

alluded to, mentions scores of Rājas (puisne kings or feudal tributaries - BB) who reigned within their territories either as tributaries of the Mughal king or as autonomous rulers both inside and outside of the Mughal empire. The Mughal kings dealt with them with care and caution to control or win them over. Now, if the Mughal king was the one and only proprietor of all lands in the empire, what were their (i.e. Rājas - BB) relations to lands within their territories, to the intermediaries (e.g. zamindars or other landholders of their kind), and to the peasants at the bottom of the agrarian social structure? Further, why did he fail to produce any juridical or substantive evidence, beyond polemical observations, to sustain his buoyant assertion of royal ownership? This is very crucial when one takes into account that Bernier stayed in India for five years, and most of the time in the capital, Delhi, in the service of Fazil Khan, the Chief Steward of the Royal Household. Thus Naqvi rightly observes:

It is obvious that these Rajas, occupying large territories, could not have possibly acquired the huge resources, without being overlords of the agricultural lands in their estates, able to draw resources from these lands in their own rights. Besides, Bernier has made no reference to any law or even a Quazi's (judge's) verdict, indicating even by implication, that possession of land was necessarily in all cases or even generally non-hereditary in the case of persons, other than government officials, who received temporary jagirs, in lieu of their emoluments, or that they were subject to escheat on the death of the holders, with or without an issue to succeed them.⁸⁷

Again, for no apparent reason Marx glossed over other vital factors such as the relatively favourable climatic condition in India. Bernier's work does not contain any reference to the lack of rain or the creation

and maintenance of irrigation works by the state. Thus, Marx's explanation of the absence of private property in land and the royal ownership of all land due to the alleged aridity of the soil and the necessity of state intervention in large-scale irrigation actually flies in the face of Bernier's own account.

Examples of Marx's biased observation and interpretation can be illustrated from other source materials that appear in his bibliography. This would mean that Marx's tenacious assertion of the absence of private property in India was subjective and not based on a factual account. It would also mean that Marx cannot be excused on the ground of unavailability of source materials during the time when he wrote about his AMP. This would be true to the extent to which the existence of the private property in land can be shown in the same source materials. These are: The Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Successions (1801) and The Law of Inheritance from the Mitākṣarā (1865) by H. T. Colebrooke (1765-1837); Hindu Law (1825) by Thomas A. L. Strange (1756-1841); Hindu Law and Usage (1878) by John D. Mayne (1828-1917); and The Institutes of Nārada (1876) edited by Julius E. Jolly (1849-1932).

Colebrooke's Digest is one of the earliest texts that sought to systematize complicated and often contradictory views of the different schools of Hindu law. Nevertheless it contained such provisions as confirmed the existence of private ownership of the immovable property. Devala states that "after the death of the father, sons may divide his estate; but they have not ownership, or full dominion, while a faultless

father lives."⁸⁸ Manu encourages primogeniture but does not disapprove of the partition of parental property if "they choose to be separated."⁸⁹ In fact he encourages individualization of ownership, for separate living increases "merit" of the individual and, hence, "separation is meritorious."⁹⁰ A later law-giver, Nārada, who composed Nāradaśmṛiti between 100 A.D. and 400 A.D., directly encouraged not joint ownership by the family, but individualization of ownership by each of the family. "If they severally give or sell their own undivided shares, they may do what they please with their property of all sorts, for surely they have dominion over their own."⁹¹

Colebrooke and other British legal commentators referred to numerous schools of Hindu law, including the Mitākṣarā school to which Marx paid only fragmentary but definite attention. Mitākṣarā is a commentary on the śmṛiti composed by Yājñavalkya, a pre-eminent jurist and philosopher who is said to have lived between 100 B.C. and 300 A.D. Mitākṣarā was written by Vijñāneśvara, who lived towards the end of the 11th century in the feudal kingdom of Vikramaditya VI (1076 A.D.-1126 A.D.) of the Cālukya dynasty in Kalyāṇī (now in Maharashtra).⁹² In the context of the point under review here, the most relevant in Mitākṣarā is the provision on, inter alia, the joint-ownership of the family's landed property. The sons, as distinct private individuals, are treated by birth as equal owners in regard to the ancestral immovable property. In effect this means that the father was not free to alienate the immovable estate without the consent of his sons (co-heirs), except for pious purposes or when he was in distress.⁹³ In light of this, several

points should be made in connexion with Marx's reading and interpretation of this Mitāksarā provision.

First, Marx continued to speak, curiously though, in terms of common and/or private possession, whereas Mitāksarā discusses in terms of ownership, especially joint-ownership of the ancestral estate. Second, Marx adhered to the notion of the communal property, whereas Mitāksarā refers not to common property at large in the village, but to joint property of certain families that might have owned landed property in the village. Marx failed to discern that the composer of Mitāksarā (i.e. Vijñāneśvara) was emphatically biased or inclined in favour of joint ownership. This is why Vijñāneśvara was indecisive, as pointed out by Mayne, even in regard to whether or not a Mitāksarā father had absolute power of disposal of the ancestral movable property; neither was he decisive over whether or not such a father enjoyed absolute power of disposal of his own self-acquired immovable property. In contrast, any of his illustrious predecessors such as Brhaspati (c.300 A.D.-500 A.D.) and Kātyāyana (c.400 A.D.-600 A.D.) plainly empowered the father with the absolute power of disposal, at his pleasure, of his own self acquired property.⁹⁴

Indeed, the Procrustean bed of restraints which Vijñāneśvara imposes upon the alienation of landed property is quite atypical and singularly characteristic of Mitāksarā,⁹⁵ for there were many other commentators and jurists, both preceding and following the author of Mitāksarā, who were far more liberal in this regard. Further, it is counter-productive to extend Mitāksarā restraints on alienation to

historical periods prior to the composition of the Mitāksarā, as Marx seemed to have done in his almost polemical critique of Maine.⁹⁶ A closer scrutiny of the Hindu legal treatises will bear testimony to the changing legal thinking on, and development of, the Hindu institutions. One aspect of this was the growth of the tendency toward elimination of restraints on the alienation of the immovable property. Thus Mayne states that "we have already seen reason to believe, that there was a time when the shares of separated kinsmen in land were not absolutely at their own disposal. But all such restrictions had passed away before the time of Narada."⁹⁷ From this point of view, Mitāksarā is not only exceptional in its emphasis but also representative of a given type of (feudal) material conditions (e.g. closed village economy, the lack of commodity production, the limited division of labour, etc.) in a social formation within the material contexts of which it was composed.⁹⁸

The restrictions were at bottom relative. Strange, whose work was certainly read by Marx, makes this abundantly clear:

Not that property in land cannot be legally divested and transferred by sale, as well as by gift; the former (says Jagannatha) occurring constantly in practice. The concurrence of sons in the alienation by the father, of land, however derived, as required by Mitāksarā, is dispensed with, where they happen to be all minors at the time, and the transaction has reference to some distress, under which family labors, or some pious work to be accomplished, which the other members of it, equally with the father, are concerned should not be delayed. Such are the consecration of sacrificial fires, funeral repasts, rites on the birth of children, and other prescribed ceremonies; not to be performed without an expense, in which the Hindoos are but too apt to indulge, on such occasions, to excess. Urged by any such consideration, and the sons at the time incompetent to judge, their concurrence may be assumed; and the father will be justified in acting without it, to the extent that the case may require.⁹⁹

To all intents and purposes the sale of land, according to Mitākṣarā, had "to be presented as a gift."¹⁰⁰ The restrictions on the alienation of land were not unique to India, for they existed also in medieval Europe.¹⁰¹ Anyway, Strange found private property in southern India to be "not only more perfect, but more prevalent."¹⁰² In addition, he maintained that Hindu law distinguished between real and personal, movable and immovable property. Immovable property included, "beside land and houses, slaves attached to the land, and annuities secured upon it, the latter bearing a close resemblance to that species of incorporeal hereditament, which we call corodies."¹⁰³

Fourth, the doctrinaire character of Marx's reading of the available data and his platitudinous mode of interpretation, as evident in his persistent denial of private property in India, can be made no clearer than by his silence on the data provided by Nārada and Jimutavāhana, respectively the predecessor and successor of the author of Mitākṣarā. I shall discuss Nārada in the next chapter. It suffices here to say that Jimutavāhana, who wrote his commentary Dayabhāga between 1100 A.D. and 1150 A.D., reached just the opposite conclusion of Vijñāneśvara on the point of the father's right of alienation.¹⁰⁴ For Jimutavāhana the father is, as Mayne confirms, "the absolute owner of property", with the consequence that "the sons had no right in it till his death."¹⁰⁵ The existence of private property, whether individual or joint-family, was not at all an issue for him, as it was for Marx. For Jimutavāhana, it was absolute or exclusive: "Therefore, since it is denied that a gift or sale should be made, the precept is infringed by

making one. But the gift or transfer is not null: for a fact cannot be altered by a hundred texts."¹⁰⁶

Finally, let me look at Marx's methodological and theoretical one-sidedness from another point of view, from the context of Europe. If it is granted, as Marx indeed thought, that communal or common ownership prevailed in India, even then it is nothing so unique or extraordinary a criterion, methodologically and theoretically, as to warrant the designation of the mode of production in pre-British India as the "Asiatic" mode of production. The simple fact is that communal ownership, communal restrictions on the village or private lands, and joint family system prevailed in Europe in varying degrees right up to recent times. When the material conditions (e.g. the pressure of population growth, the spread of commodity production, the growth of internal and external trade, the rise of market towns, colonialism, etc.) became favourable, giving rise to the development of the CMP, only then those afore-mentioned institutions declined. In pre-British India, such institutions continued to survive simply because appropriate material conditions responsible for their decay were still to become predominant forces of social change.

The institution of communal ownership declined rapidly in Western Europe, but it did not disappear altogether. As Blum reports:

Villagers in districts along the Moselle River practiced collective ownership and use for several centuries up to the nineteenth century. Widespread agrarian communism still existed in early twentieth-century Spain, in Leon, the Aragonese slopes of the Pyrenees, and in Estramadura. In Sardinia village communes held their land collectively until the mid-nineteenth century when enclosure began. Until that

time individual possession of land existed only in peripheral regions of the island that were first populated in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. In Corsica, too, land was held communally. Individual holding there established itself gradually, the process going on more intensively in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, and still not complete in the 1960s.¹⁰⁷

Communal ownership including equal partition of property existed in Britain.¹⁰⁸ I shall discuss this aspect later. In regard to the situation in France, let me cite Sobul:

The foundations of the rural community were the collective ownership and use of the communal goods, the collective constraints upon private property for the benefit of the inhabitants as a group (prohibition of enclosure, compulsory rotation of crops), by the rights of usage over woods and fields (right to pasture on the fallow, of gleaning and stubble (chaumage), and lastly, by the rules of communal agriculture (the regulation of temporary cultivation, the fixing of the dates of harvest, the regulation of pasture on communal lands, etc.). ... The communal spirit was thus reflected not so much in the organization and cultivation of the fields, but in social relations and in the practice of mutual aid. Whatever the regional differences, at bottom the rural community is characterized by the duties it imposes on all the inhabitants and on individual property. We may thus define it at the end of the old regime as a system of 'natural' agricultural economy, a pre-capitalist mode of production with class relationships reflecting this state of affairs.¹⁰⁹

An important aspect of the pre-capitalist property in many parts of Europe was the existence of certain prior rights to kinsmen to what they considered the family's patrimony. Blum points out this:

In these lands relatives had first claim to purchase inherited land offered for sale by a relative. Moreover, if the land had been bought by a person not a member of the family of the seller, kinsmen within a degree of kinship and within a period of time set by local law or custom could buy back the land at the price for which it had been sold. The rule did not apply to land which the seller had himself purchased. His kinsmen had their special claim only to land he had inherited; that is, land which was considered part of

the family's patrimony. This custom prevailed in much of France, where it dated at least to the tenth century and continued in use up to the Revolution.¹¹⁰

In other words, the communal and/or familial restrictions on landed property were not unique to India only. Similarly, the persistence of joint family and its authority was not unique in India.

In terms of structure and functions the joint family in Europe can hardly be said to be different in substance from that in India. This, however, does not mean that they were identical in every detail. Essentially there were close parallels between the two. The joint family, where it existed in Europe, was

made up of two or more nuclear families related usually by blood but sometimes by adoption, who lived under a single roof or in dwellings closely grouped together and who ate together (if necessary in shifts). They held and worked their land jointly, shared jointly in its product, and were subject to the authority of the family head. Typically the members of the family owned no individual property except for clothing and small personal effects. ... Sometimes entire villages were made up of joint families; in still other places joint and nuclear families lived side by side; and in regions of dispersed settlement joint families, like nuclear families, lived in hamlets or in isolated farmsteads, with the nearest neighbour far away. Joint families had as many as eighty to 100 people in them, but their populations more usually numbered between twenty and thirty, and sometimes even less. ... In general, membership went in the male line; daughters who married out joined the families of their husbands. ... The male members of the family either chose one of their number who they considered the most capable to act as their head, and to represent the family in the village assembly, or automatically accorded the position to the oldest man among them. The head of the family's duties and his authority varied widely. In some places he alone made the decisions which concerned the activities of the family and the private lives of its members. In other places all the adult male members took part in the making of all decisions, and the head served only as the agent to carry out their orders.¹¹¹

This case begs the question of why one cannot judge the provisions of

the Mitāksarā regarding private landed property and the joint family based on the same standards used to understand these phenomena in Europe. Unless one conceptualizes in terms of Orientalism, it is difficult to understand why Marx attached so much importance to the Mitāksarā, as he did in his vitriolic attack on Maine,¹¹² and why he ignored so many other juridical commentaries including those by Nārada and Jimutavāhana.

Of course, there were other vital contradictions in the sources that Marx used. The point is Marx failed to discover them. To cite an additional instance, John Budd Phear examined whether or not private property existed in India from what he called a "modern" English sense. By this he meant in fact capitalis landed property. The more interesting, though also frustrating, aspect of his examination is that he deliberately compared Manu's concept of private property with "property in the modern English sense" even when he knew that Manu's work belonged not to the modern, but to a very archaic past. He forgot, or for some reason did not care, to compare it to the landed property in ancient England. Further, while he recognizes "private ownership of cultivated plots", he dilutes the conception of ownership by saying that "the owner is only another name for cultivator", implying that the owner cannot be owner if he is a cultivator, and that one is an owner only if he receives rent.¹¹³ Needless to say Phear was not alone in describing property in India precisely in the way he, like most other British officials, wanted to describe it. One bright example of this muddled thinking, as I have shown already, was Campbell.

One of the most glaring examples of contradictions and confusions that enveloped Marx's AMP, affecting it with serious methodological and theoretical consequences, pertains to his characteristic indecision in respect of the location of ownership and/or possession of land in pre-British India. In the Grundrisse Marx regards the village community in abstraction but realized in the despot "as the higher proprietor or as the sole proprietor". The real community appeared "only as hereditary possessors."¹¹⁴ He also refers to "communal property", "common property", and "communal production."¹¹⁵ Insofar as the real individuals are concerned, "the propertylessness" was stated to be "legally" prevalent; the individual has no property "but only possession" or he "never becomes a proprietor but only a possessor."¹¹⁶ In Capital (vol. 1) Marx mentions "ownership in common of the means of production" at one place and "possession in common of land" at another.¹¹⁷ In the third volume of the same work he refers to "the common ownership of land" at one place, and to a sovereign's ownership as well as to "both private and common possession and use of land" at another.¹¹⁸ In sharp contrast to all these, Marx, it should be recalled, was quite certain and decisive in his assertion of the absence of private property in India.

Evidently, Marx's imprecision with regard to the location of the ownership and/or possession of land, perhaps a product of his too uncritical reliance on the works of colonial officials, gives rise to a labyrinth of methodological and theoretical questions that can hardly be answered; on the other hand, they effectively erode the validity of the

AMP as an explanatory category of social development. For instance, analytically it is one thing to speak of common property, as could be found in certain Hindu legal texts in respect of the family's property in land, and it is completely another thing to speak of communal property, obviously suggesting ownership of the villagers as a community. Why cannot the village community be simultaneously both owner and possessor to the complete exclusion of such rights of any individual(s), for ownership may very well include the right to possession also? Again, it is one thing to say that the community is the owner, another thing to say that it is the possessor, and yet another thing to say that it is both owner and possessor. If the community is supposed to be the owner, it would mean that it is the authorized recipient of agrarian surplus (rent), which is obviously an absurd proposition for various reasons. Indigenous traditional laws and customs do not uphold such a position, because they authorize the king/state to be the legitimate receiver of revenue for affording protection. Community is an abstraction or a unity, not generally independent of and separated from the real individuals, and this community hardly appropriated surplus, which actually went to the state/king.

If the community is the owner, is it then a class, a position which was far away from Marx's intent. The community can hardly be called a class from the Marxist methodological point of view because the concept of class always expresses prior antagonistic class relations and exists only within the terrain of class struggles.¹¹⁹ If the state and

the community are both supposed to be owners, this would beg several questions: why did the state originate to begin with, when there were no contending classes in the AMP as advanced by Marx? Do both the state and the community(ies) constitute a property owning class. And, if so, what is the relation between the state and the community as a class, which are abstractions, on the one hand, and the real individuals, whether or not possessors or joint possessors, constituting another class, on the other? Is it class antagonism? Finally, from the point of view of the development of private property from its collectivist or communal origins, as Marx approached the issue, it is one thing to say that individuals in India were common possessors, another thing to say that they are individually private possessors, and still another thing to say that they are both private and common possessors, and/or common owners. There is little doubt that, from this standpoint, Marx's imprecision deprived his theory of the AMP any chance of ever attaining a desirable level of theoretical rigor and consistency.

However, as has been said, Marx was quite steadfast in his contention that the individual in the Orient always remained a possessor whereas he became, at a certain point in time, an owner in the Occident, regardless of whether it had ancient, feudal or capitalist modes of production. In this respect Marx dichotomized the East and West in juridical language by tracing and locating "possession" in the former and "property" in the latter.¹²⁰ This criterion which Marx used was Romanistic in character, deriving particularly from Ulpian's dictum to the effect that "proprietas has nothing in common with possessio."¹²¹

This dichotomy is not without its problems. First, as I stated earlier, it ignores the logical or functional fact that the rights of ownership may very well include, among other things, the right of possession.¹²² Second, it ignores the connection between ownership and possession in Roman law, and especially the fact that even possession could ripen into ownership in Roman law.¹²³ Finally, Marx's favoured criterion of ownership, especially the legal view of it, is hardly applicable to the feudal social formation. While more will be said in chapter 5, it should suffice here to say that neither the lord of the land nor the serf attached to it owned land. If the serf held his land from the lord, the latter might have held his land from some one higher up in the feudal landed hierarchy at the head of which was the king who, strictly from the legal point of view, was the owner of all land in his kingdom.¹²⁴ "Under the feudal system, private ownership of land did not exist for either the noble or the serf."¹²⁵ Marx was not unaware of it and, therefore, had to change his criterion of ownership to fit in with the system of feudal tenure. He acknowledged that the feudal lord was not a landowner as such, but like a king. His relationship to the serf was directly political, and his ownership was hierarchical in form and substance.¹²⁶

Given what has been said, Marx generally fell back on a legalistic, rather Romanistic, criterion to differentiate the Asiatic from European social formations. While discussing capitalist rent, Marx makes this observation:

With the legal power of these persons (i.e. those holding a

monopoly over certain portions of the globe as their landed property - BB) to use or misuse certain portions of the globe, nothing is decided. The use of this power depends wholly upon economic conditions, which are independent of their will. The legal view itself only means that the landowner can do with the land what every owner of commodities can do with his commodities. And this view, this legal view of free private ownership of land, arises in the ancient world only with the dissolution of the organic order of society, and in the modern world only with the development of capitalist production. It has been imported by Europeans to Asia only here and there.¹²⁷

This view of Marx raises serious methodological and theoretical questions even if the question of Europeans' granting of free private ownership to the Orientals is set aside for the present purpose. If the point is to emphasize the weakness of feudal property rights the point is well taken, because a feudal owner was hardly capable of doing with his property what a capitalist owner can do with his commodity.¹²⁸ But if Marx is assuming the same nature for private ownership in both ancient and capitalist modes of production, as he seems to have done, he indeed runs into serious methodological and theoretical difficulties, although this sort of analysis is predictably well suited to his dichotomization of the Occident from the Orient.

To illustrate, how can Marx methodologically assume, as he did in the above instance, the same legal development of private property because it logically presupposes, without any substance, the presence of the same "material conditions of life", the same "economic structure of society", and the same "legal and political structures", corresponding of necessity to the same modes of production?¹²⁹ In terms of Marx's own methodology, the juridical relations, generally speaking, are in the main a consequence, but not constitutive, of the economic level.¹³⁰ As

he said: "The law depends rather on society, it must be an expression of society's communal interests and needs, arising from the material mode of production, and not the arbitrary expression of the will of the single individual."¹³¹ This being the case, it raises the serious question of how far, if at all, Marx was justified in seeing the same nature of private ownership in both Roman and capitalist social formations, apparently when they had different modes of production.

Methodologically, Marx's claim also violates his cherished notion of historical specificity. "To try to give a definition of property as of an independent relation, a category apart, an abstract an eternal idea, can be nothing but an illusion of metaphysics or jurisprudence."¹³² To be sure, Marx did not mix up, in another context, the historically specific character of property in the ancient and capitalist modes of production. For he says in the third volume of Capital: "Slavery on the basis of capitalist production is unjust, likewise fraud in the quality of commodities."¹³³ The point is that when it comes to a comparison of the West with the East, Marx did not simply continue to adhere, with orthodox rigidity, to his assertion of the absence of private property in the latter especially India; more than this, he held on to a doubtful claim of an almost universalistic presence of absolute private property in the former. It is no wonder that in his virulent attack against Maine, Marx reminded him that absolute property in land "everywhere in Occidental Europe exists more than in England."¹³⁴

This geographical placenta which tied Marx to the Occident would

go a long way to explain, not why he became on specific occasions oblivious of the historical specificities of property in Europe, but, more importantly, why he failed to discover the existence of both private property and the historically specific changes in property in India - changes that would have come in a comparison of the works of, say, Manu, Nārada, Vijñāneśvara, and Jimutavāhana. Of course, these works were then available, and references to their works do appear directly or indirectly in Marx's bibliography. This would also explain why Marx was consistently comparing Asiatic "common ownership", "common possession", "possession", etc.¹³⁵ with absolute property, especially capitalist private property in the West. Evidently, Marx suffered from a tendency, bred in Orientalism, to magnify the positive or progressive aspect of Western development through its comparison with the negative or backward aspects, sometimes in exaggerated form, of non-European development.

In light of this, let me discuss certain other theoretical positions that bear on Marx's modes of comparison of the West with the East. Generally speaking, Marx's point of departure is absolute property in land - dominium ex jure quiritum - in terms of jus utendi et abutendi, i.e. the right of use and of disposal.¹³⁶ Leaving aside the meaning(s) of dominium,¹³⁷ it may be pointed out that in his critique of Maine, Marx states, while looking for the distinguishing mark of private ownership, that the Roman law of XII tables (451-450 B.C.) confers absolute freedom of disposition on the testator.¹³⁸ But the fact of the matter is that the XII Tables belongs merely to what Jolowicz and

Nicholas call "the archaic period" in the history of Roman legal development. Roman law reached its "stable maturity" in the classical period (117-235 A.D.). The Justinian era (527-565 A.D.) was no less important because the Emperor gave "to Roman law what was, in a sense, its final form."¹³⁹ Within the over-all context of the Roman legal development, therefore, Marx's assertion of the testator's position is hardly corroborated in terms of developments both before and after the enactment of the XII Tables. Scott provides the argument:

Previous to the adoption of the Laws of the Twelve Tables, no rule of testamentary disposition had been either devised or formulated at Rome. Where a man had not already actually transferred his estate to some one, it passed to those legally entitled to it, who were styled haeredes legitimi, or heirs-at-law. The Twelve Tables conferred upon the owner of property unrestricted authority to dispose of it at his pleasure, regardless of the moral claims which might with justice be urged by his descendents. The harshness of this custom was subsequently modified on the ground of paternal duty, and the estate at once remained entirely in the hands of the heir, who, prior to that time, had through the legal fiction of the unitas personae, been regarded as invested with a quasi joint-ownership of the same.¹⁴⁰

Against this argument of Scott, it seems apparent that Marx over-generalized the testator's capacity in such a way as to make it representative of the whole of Roman law or of the Occident.

Serious theoretical issues are also involved in respect of the extent of absoluteness of the concept of dominion (ownership) in Roman law. The Romans did not define ownership, but the modern Romanistic lawyers defined it in such a way as to confer an unlimited power on the owner. Schulz argues that "the Roman law from which we have to construct a definition clearly shows that Roman ownership was very far

from bestowing an unlimited power on its holder."¹⁴¹ In the same vein Thomas argues that "at no stage was the power of a dominus over his property, especially land, wholly unfettered."¹⁴² An important and obvious sense in which ownership might be absolute is that of enjoyment, and the Romans understood the meaning of ownership usually in terms of enjoyment. Nicholas says:

Thus, the commentators adapted the definition of usufruct by adding to the rights of use and enjoyment the right of abuse - ius utendi fruendi abutendi. The adoption is a little forced, since abuse has to include alienation, but it is also, in its emphasis on the plenitude of enjoyment conferred by ownership, misleading.¹⁴³

Indeed there were many restrictions on the use, enjoyment and, so to say, abuse of his property by the Roman owner.

In general these can be described summarily in the following words of Thomas:

Already, the Twelve Tables forbade tilling or building within two and a half feet of the boundary of one's land so that there was always a limes of five feet between holdings and required that a neighbour be allowed to enter to collect fruit from his own trees which had fallen on the adjoining land. Damnum infectum and operis novi nuntiatio (concerning certain obligations that restricted absolute enjoyment of their property by owners - BB) have already been considered; there was also the actio aquae pluviae arcendae which lay in respect of work on a neighbour's land which varied the natural flow of water to the plaintiff's land to his detriment. The height of buildings was controlled and houses could not be pulled down with a view to sale for profit. Riparian owners had to allow access to the river to the public. It would appear also that a person might be expropriated in whole or part with or without recompense. And, quite apart from actual servitudes, it seems that a land-holder had generally to show appreciation of his neighbour's right to his enjoy his own property.¹⁴⁴

In another sense, in the sense of title, ownership can be absolute.

That is, in Roman law the owner's right is not simply better than other

competing rights but rather the best and the only right of its kind. "There is nothing intermediate between the right of ownership and the 'fact' of possession."¹⁴⁵ But, when it came to proving the absolute title the Roman plaintiff could hardly do anything other than what his English counterpart did, viz. "to show a right to possession deriving from possession itself, and to be prepared to show that it was better than any which the defendant could adduce in answer."¹⁴⁶ Finally, the uniqueness (or absoluteness) of the Roman concept of ownership can be clarified in the sense that "a man is either owner or he is not owner."¹⁴⁷ But even this characteristic - uniqueness in terms of indivisibility - is only superficially true because of the claims of bonitary (i.e. praetorian) ownership and bona fide possession.¹⁴⁸ In light of all this, the absoluteness of Roman ownership can be understood in the sense that it consists in the inviolability of ownership, i.e. "in the principle that a man cannot lose ownership without his consent, with its corollary that a man cannot pass a better title than he has."¹⁴⁹

Another theoretical aspect to which legitimate objection can be raised concerns Marx's blurring of the respective natures of ownership in Roman and in capitalist social formations in the context of their comparison with the absence of private property in India. Although the relevant literature on the modes of production is not enlightening on this point, it can nevertheless be suggested that the sum of rights attaching to ownership as a whole in the capitalist social formation is indubitably wider than that in the Roman social formation. Donahue, Jr.

provides us with an important summary on this point:

We might argue that the tendency toward absolute individual property rights in Roman law was more apparent than real. The classical Roman law never developed a remedy whereby an individual, upon proof of ownership, specifically recover the thing. The court would declare his right to the thing, but the defendant could always choose to respond in damages. The Roman law of persons put extraordinary power over things in the hands of the head of the household, the paterfamilias, so extraordinary that it had to develop an elaborate system whereby individuals could make binding legal transactions with things that were in fact but not in law their own. The tendency in Roman law is not to allow division of ownership led to its treating landlord and tenant law as a branch of obligation rather than of property, but the final results were not far different from those of our own legal system. Indeed, the results were somewhat more favourable to the tenant than those, until very recently, of our legal system. The Romans' univocal concept of ownership greatly limited the types of right one might have in the land of another. But it would seem that the Romans sometimes used devices categorized as part of the law of obligations to achieve ends that in other laws would be achieved by devices categorized as part of the law of property. Finally, and perhaps most important, the sharp cleavage in Roman law between public law and private law prevented them from ever developing a legal notion of protection of property against the state. Thus many of the conflicts in land use that in our system were until quite recently the subject of private tort suits or private agreements enforced by the courts were probably dealt with in Roman law as legislative or administrative matters.¹⁵⁰

However, it is needless to reassert that the Roman notion of dominium influenced the legal thinking on capitalist property. Thus, Blackstone defined property as "the sole despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe."¹⁵¹

While dealing with the non-European world, Marx rigorously employed one aspect of his dichotomy of property and possession. The acid test for identification of the AMP in Marx was the absence of

private property and the prevalence of common ownership and private possession. Against this background, I may leave the Roman terrain for one not in feudal, but in pre-feudal Anglo-Saxon England where Marx's favoured criterion of private property in land can hardly be found.

If a law of property can be said to have existed, it did so only as unwritten custom; we must learn of it from charters and lawsuits in which rights to property were involved. What the law and lawyers call property and ownership did not exist in the Anglo-Saxon mind. The law was interested only in possession. Property is never at stake but always its possession, and this is what must be recovered or retained.¹⁵²

That is why it is not difficult to understand the significance of the old aphorism in England: "Possession is nine-tenths of the law."¹⁵³ If free and unconditional right of alienation is the distinguishing mark of private property, as Marx asserted especially in his critique of Maine and generally in the Indian context, "the Anglo-Saxons never had this full ownership, though they came near to it at times."¹⁵⁴ Two land titles in Anglo-Saxon England were folkland and bookland. Folkland was land held by custom or folk-right, and its ownership lay in the community. Bookland was land often granted by a king by a charter, a book. Neither was capable of being alienated unconditionally. "Both folkland and bookland could be alienated only for the length of three generations, when the land returned to the original line of descent. Whether from folkland or bookland, alienated land was only on loan, making it laenland."¹⁵⁵ Further, as Lovell adds, "a man could not devise folkland, or rarely bookland, by a will. Land law generally favoured a descent by male partage, all sons equally sharing the holding

of their father, rather than by primogeniture, except possibly in Kent."¹⁵⁶ The distinction between personal property and real property did not develop until the 12th and 13th centuries.¹⁵⁷ It was not until the early 17th century that "the earliest explicit definition" of property appeared in the English law books.¹⁵⁸ Not until 1660 did all land, in general, become transmissible by will and purchase.¹⁵⁹

Precisely on the same criterion - the legal absence of private property - Marx would hardly call the pre-feudal mode of production an Asiatic mode of production. Amid enthusiasm for the discovery of the inner logic and progressive role of capitalism as the highest materialist feat of the West, Marx left no suggestion anywhere, so far as I could ascertain, of even the possibility of the existence of the AMP in England. The closest he would go toward this was his recognition that, as he wrote to Engels on March 14, 1868, "the Asiatic or Indian forms of property constitute everywhere in Europe the beginning, ..." ¹⁶⁰ In effect this meant that, while India remained where it was (i.e. at the level of primitive communal property), the European social formations moved ahead. Pre-British India was, among other things, stagnant whereas England, being dynamic, moved ahead and, hence, the AMP does not apply.

In other words, when it came to the non-European world Marx remained at bottom thoroughly a geographical determinist even though, generally speaking, he was not a geographical determinist.¹⁶¹ Sawyer has rightly stated that "Marx's whole analysis of the differing development of East and West, ultimately rested on the use of a geographical factor

as an explanatory variable."¹⁶² In Capital (vol. 1), Marx says:

Apart from the degree of development, greater or less, in the form of social production, the productiveness of labor is fettered by physical conditions. These are all referable to the constitution of man himself (race, & co.), and the surrounding Nature. The external physical conditions fall into two great economic classes, (1) Natural wealth in the means of subsistence, i.e. a fruitful soil, waters teeming with fish, &c., and (2), natural wealth in the instruments of labor, such as waterfalls, navigable rivers, wood, metal, coal, &c. At the dawn of civilization, it is the first class that turns the scale; at a higher stage of development, it is the second. Compare, for example, England with India, or in ancient times, Athens and Corinth with the shores of the Black Sea.¹⁶³

Let me leave aside the extremely contentious observation on whether or not India belonged to the second category, resting on technological and natural resources, before the imperialist intervention by Britain especially from the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁶⁴

More importantly, what is absolutely clear in Marx's statement is that India continued to vegetate in the timelessness of pre-history until the interventionist logic or spirit of capitalism jerked India into the orbit of European world historical development. India failed to experience a progressive historical transition from the natural to the historical state of social development, as European social formations successively did. India's productive forces were unproductive of change, but ceaselessly reproductive of torpor. An integral aspect of this was the non-development of private property. In brief, India was in the womb of Nature, perhaps Asiatic nature, until the umbilical cord tying India to it was slashed by the surgery of Western capitalism. This explains why Marx named the non-European mode of production the "Asiatic" mode of production. To be sure, it was not

a matter of semantics. Marx did not use this terminology casually or arbitrarily. He named it on the basis of what he construed to be objective reasons.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, he was scarcely casual or arbitrary when he stated that the British gave Indians two distinct forms of private property - "the great desideratum of Asiatic society."¹⁶⁶ It is far from an exaggeration to say that in Marx's AMP it is geography which, along with other factors, determined the mode of production. In an important sense, the AMP is indeed an integral component as well as a product of geographical determinism. To put it otherwise, Marx's AMP is a materialist variant of Orientalism.

In illustration of this I will turn to Marx's analysis of the origins of private property in India and in the Occident. It may be recalled that in Marx's view the absence of private property was accounted for by an alleged set of negative climatic conditions that prompted authoritarian intervention by the state.¹⁶⁷ How did private property develop in the West? Marx proposes that the development of various forms of property including private property in land depends on certain material or concrete conditions that determine the relation of members of a community or tribe to their land and soil in the process of their reproduction. In other words, their property is determined partly by "the natural inclinations of the tribe" and partly by

the economic conditions in which it relates as proprietor to the land and soil in reality, i.e. in which it appropriates its fruits through labor, and the latter will itself depend on climate, physical make-up of the land and soil, the physically determined mode of its exploitation, the relation with hostile tribes or neighbor tribes, and the modifications which migrations, historic experiences etc.

introduce.¹⁶⁸

Added to this were other particular factors, such as the growth of population, war and conquest, slavery and serfdom¹⁶⁹ - all of which as a whole, in the course of dissolution of the old objective conditions of existence of the community and of social evolution, led to the decline of the communal property on the one hand, and to the rise of the private property on the other.¹⁷⁰

But, as stated earlier, these causal factors, ranging from "natural inclinations" of the members of the community to the physical and social conditions they lived in, operate favourably only in the Occident but remain inconsequential in the non-European regions including especially India. What is the reason? Marx's answer is highly illuminating theoretically:

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 à vis the commune; that there is a self-sustaining circle of production, unity of agriculture and manufactures, etc.¹⁷¹

It is perfectly clear in what Marx says in the above that his explanation of the non-development of private property runs counter to scientific methodological canons of unbiased observation and interpretation, and is based on wholesale theoretical arbitrariness and teleological analysis. There is no conceivable reason why the individual in the East could not be independent of the community if required material conditions prevail there. Marx neither advances any viable or distinct reason nor adduces any concrete data in support of his own presupposition. Why would the unity of agriculture and

manufactures fail to act as a positive catalyst for the development of the private property in the Orient, when the same unity was no hindrance to the growth of private property in the Occident? What is rather perplexing is that Marx himself recognized the existence, though in other context, of such unity in all pre-capitalist modes of production, especially in both ancient and feudal modes of production in Europe.¹⁷² Evidently, when it comes to the Orient and its peoples Marx changes his criteria to suit his predetermined objective, i.e. to bring out the differential character of the Orient and its peoples regardless of whether or not those criteria contradict his position from the general methodological and theoretical points of view. Thus, Marx theorizes not only on the basis of geographical determinism but becomes as well the founding father of what I call materialist Orientalism.

Marx's theoretical arbitrariness in his deliberate changes of criteria to realize his predefined goal is exemplified by his one-sided teleological analysis of the roles of population growth, and war and conquest. Kiernan draws our attention to Marx's theoretical subjectivism on the point of differential impact of population growth in the Orient in these words: "It seems curious that while Marx repeatedly treats growth of population as the prime mover of, for instance, early Roman history, driving the simple clan community to war in quest of more land and of slaves, he seems to neglect population as a factor in India."¹⁷³ Regarding the development of private property, the population growth factor was a positive accelerator only in the West, but not in the East. Similarly, in Rome the causal factor of war and

conquest played a positive role in the dissolution of the communal bond and, hence, in promoting the development of private property. In India war and conquest do not, perhaps should not according to Marx, play such a constructive role. Marx's curious, circular reasoning is this:

In the self-sustaining unity of manufacture and agriculture, on which this form (i.e. Asiatic form - BB) rests, conquest is not so necessary a condition as where landed property, agriculture are exclusively predominant.¹⁷⁴

The echo of this argument in the Grundrisse reverberates in Capital, where he contends that "the storm-clouds" of the political sky of the Orient do not touch "the economic elements" of the social formations there; they merely signify rampant changes of dynasty only.¹⁷⁵ Even leaving aside the methodological appropriateness of this exaggeration of the political absolutely apart from its logical economic contexts and foundations, one can raise serious theoretical objection to his evaluation of the role of war and conquest in India. Au fond, Marx's dogmatic assertion is self-contradictory and circular. One of his recent critics has precisely pointed out this. To quote him:

It is self-contradictory insofar as, according to Marx himself, the unity of agriculture and manufacture was as much a part of the Roman and Germanic, as of the Asiatic, forms. Therefore, if conquest is not an essential condition for the Asiatic form, why should it be so for the Roman and the German? The argument is circular for the following reason. The starting point for all societies - Asiatic and non-Asiatic - is the absence of private property in land, and it is mainly through war and conquest resulting in subjugation of alien tribal land and population that private property in land develops in the West. However, when it comes to the question of why war is an essential condition in the West and not in the East, Marx's argument is that it is due to the predominance of landed property and the need for slaves, etc., in the former.¹⁷⁶

From this point of view, Marx's AMP is not based on Marx's own

scientific methodology and theory. The holism of the AMP is nothing short of the ideology of Orientalism, the ideology of materialist Orientalism.

IV. Conclusion

The term "Asiatic" in the AMP was, for Marx, "a synonym for primitive, for some ancient and unchanging social organization."¹⁷⁷ One of the most vital ingredients of this social organization or, so to say, of the AMP was "the absence of private property in land" or "a legal absence of property."¹⁷⁸ This was in contrast not only to the development of private property in land but also to its development in multiple forms at different historical periods in the Occident. The development of private property in Europe and its non-development in non-European regions was not a mere methodological and theoretical divide in Marx; it is in consistent conformity to his implicit objective to conceptualize the essentiality of the distinction between the East and West in terms of what the AMP was in the former vis à vis the ancient, Germanic, feudal, and capitalist modes of production in the latter.

In this regard there is nothing unique in Marx because, as I have demonstrated, his predecessors and contemporaries also reached the same conclusion from the same epistemological and ontological point of departure. This is what Orientalism is, although Marx's own variant is what I have called materialist Orientalism. What distinguishes Marx from his predecessors and contemporaries is this. In the course of his

inquiry into the inner working mechanisms of capitalism as the highest state of historical social development, Marx was the first to formulate the ingredients of the earliest, pre-historic developmental stage (e.g. "Asiatic", or "Oriental" social formation) in a holistic manner from the materialist standpoint. Among other things, this enabled Marx, in his comparison of the AMP with the CMP, to bring out in full view the dynamic achievements of man in capitalism (e.g. successive class struggles eventually leading to the rise of capitalism, the unprecedented burst of the potential in man, man's mastery over nature, etc.), to criticize some negative aspects of imperialism in the colonized social formations, and to visualize the image of socialism that would follow when the internal contradictions of capitalism including private property are brought to an end by a victorious proletariat. The absence of private property was thus a prime ingredient of the AMP and, as I shall show later, it was logically connected with other ingredients of Marx's AMP, making it a holistic ahistorical reality of the Orient.

Those afore-mentioned differences apart, Marx offers nothing that is unique on the point of the absence of private property in India. On the contrary, he is even more vulnerable than his predecessors and contemporaries precisely because, in addition to inheriting their problems, Marx added his own methodological and theoretical problems. To illustrate this I need not tautologize what I have already shown. It suffices here to affirm that Marx's assertion, rather than demonstration, of the absence of private property in land in India is

full of insoluble methodological and theoretical flaws, and that his assertion is hardly a product of scientific effort by his own standards. Marx arrived at his own generalization, just as so many of his predecessors and contemporaries did, without really engaging himself in the active and critical search for truths and evidence that were then available. He relied almost exclusively on the data provided by a select group of colonial officials and travellers who, in the era of Western hegemonic domination through capitalism, had their own interests to depict India in the way they did. Marx did not bother to utilize indigenous source materials which were then available. His presentation of truths and evidence, as I demonstrated in several cases (e.g. Wilks, Campbell, Vijñāneśvara, Jimutavāhana, etc.) were most often inadequate and fell short of acceptable scientific standards. Many times the meanings attached to his concepts were imprecise and, hence, the concepts themselves were of little use (e.g. communal or common ownership, common ownership and private possession, common and private possession, etc.). Not infrequently were his arguments and interpretations overtly biased, such as in the case of his refusal to acknowledge any positive role of the growth of population, or of war and conquest in the development of private property in India. He changed criteria to suit his own preconceived bias. Sometimes this compelled him to exaggerate and overgeneralize the negative in India, such as his suggestion of the village communal ownership although the relevant Indian materials evidence the joint family's private property in land, pure and simple. It led him to underrate or altogether omit any

positive in India (e.g. the existence of private property or even self-acquired private property). In characteristic consonance with it, he magnified the positive in the West, the best example being the equalization of Roman private property with capitalist private property.

As a result, what followed from Marx's investigations is not what can be called scientific knowledge of the Oriental or Indian social formation. Methodologically and theoretically, his assertion and particularistic substantiation of the absence of private property in India emerged as a particular, while the development and accentuation of private property in the West became the general. On a higher plane, this conforms to Marx's conclusion to the effect that while the ancient, feudal and capitalist modes of production are logically integrated stages of the general reality of (Western) development, the AMP signified the breakaway from this general reality; it is a lifeless case of particular development or, more appropriately, of continued undevelopment in the Orient. No wonder, Marx laid the foundations of materialist Orientalism.

Footnotes

1. Said, Orientalism, pp. 2-3. Emphasis in original.
2. See Ibid., passim; and Turner, Marx and the End of Orientalism, esp. pp. 1-9 and 39-52.
3. See, for example, Godelier, "The Concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and Marxist Models of Social Evolution", pp. 209-57; A. M. Bailey, "The Renewed Discussions on the Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production", in Kahn and Llobera, eds., The Anthropology of Pre-Capitalist Societies, pp. 89-107. However, a few recognize the existence of private landed property on a limited scale both before and during the Mughal period. See Currie, "Problematic Modes and the Mughal Social Formation", pp. 9-21; "The Development of Petty

- Commodity Production in Mughal India", pp. 16-24; and "The Asiatic Mode of Production: Problems of Conceptualizing State and Economy", 251-68; and Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, pp. 276-300.
4. Turner, op. cit., p. 85.
 5. A representative example of this new tendency can be found in Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, pp. 178-200.
 6. L. S. Vasil'ev and I. A. Stuchevskii, "Asiatic Mode of Production", SSH, 5 (Winter 1966-67), p. 29.
 7. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p. 481.
 8. P. Thomas, "Marx and Science", PS, 24 (1976), pp. 1-23.
 9. See, Chapter 1, p. 54.
 10. D. F. Lach, Asia in the Making of Europe (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), vol. 1, p. 4.
 11. E. Breisach, Historiography: Ancient, Medieval & Modern (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 38-9.
 12. Ibid., p. 76. See also J. W. Sedlar, India and The Greek World (Totowa, N. J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980), p. 13.
 13. Lach, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 19.
 14. See Marx's letter (November 1877) to the Editorial Board of the "Otechestvenniye Zapiski", in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 377-8. Emphases added.
 15. Lach, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 20.
 16. See chapter 1, p. 54.
 17. Lach, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 335.
 18. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 21.
 19. Cf. Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., p. 220.
 20. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 58-9.
 21. Ibid., pp. 6-7; and J. O'Connor, "The Meaning of Economic Imperialism", in R. I. Rhodes, ed., Imperialism and Underdevelopment: A Reader (New York: MR Press, 1970), pp. 101-50.
 22. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 23.

23. Ibid., p. 89.
24. Sawyer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 10, Emphases added.
25. Ibid., p. 12.
26. See Barber, British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858, passim.
27. Sawyer, op. cit., pp. 11 and 34-9.
28. L. Robbins, The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 9-11.
29. For a review of these abstract generalizations and their concrete enforcement in colonial India, see E. Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), passim; Ambirajan, Classical Political Economy and British Policy in India, passim, and Barber, op. cit., passim.
30. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, n.2, pp. 22; and Levine, "The Myth of Asiatic Restoration", p. 76.
31. See L. Stephen and S. Leeds, eds., The Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963-64), vol. XIII, pp. 382-8; Barber, op. cit., pp. 126-40 and 156-76; and Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India, p. 48.
32. Mill, The History of British India, vol. 1, p. xviii.
33. J. K. Galbraith, "John Mill's India", in ibid., p. 4.
34. Ibid.
35. H. H. Wilson, "Preface of the Editor", in Mill, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. x-xi.
36. Mill, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 216.
37. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, n.79, p. 68. Emphases in original.
38. Mill, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 214.
39. In another context, however, Mill cites Wilks. See ibid., n.2, p. 226.
40. C. E. Buckland, Dictionary of Indian Biography (Detroit: Gale

Research Company, 1968), p. 226.

41. Sir William. Jones, The Letters of Sir William Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 902-3.
42. Cited in S. N. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), p. 132.
43. Ibid., pp. 2-3. In his book, Mukherjee summarizes brilliantly the achievements of Jones.
44. Barber, op. cit., pp. 128-31.
45. Mukherjee, op. cit., n.3, p. 176. Emphases by Mukherjee. There is another aspect that should be mentioned. In the original translation by Jones the relevant passage, which does not deal with ownership of land as such, is as follows: "Of old hoards, and precious minerals in the earth, the king is entitled to half by reason of his general protection, and because he is lord paramount of the soil". See William Jones, Institutes of Hindu Law (Calcutta: Rajasthan Press, 1796), p. 148. When he quotes this provision in his own text, Mill first mentions the phrase "the superior lord of the soil", but not the "lord paramount of the soil". But in his footnote, he substitutes the word "supreme", not the word "superior" as in his text, for "paramount". It is difficult to account for all this. But it is not an exaggeration to say that Mill was evidently biased in favour of establishing the absence of private property in land in India. See his History, vol. 1, pp. 212-3.
46. See also J. W. Spellman, Political Theory of Ancient India (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), p. 209.
47. Wilson, in Mill, The History of British India, vol. 1, n.3, p. 212.
48. Sawyer, op. cit., pp. 31-2.
49. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 161. Emphases added.
50. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, part 3, p. 85. Emphases added only in the last part of the sentence.
51. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 32. For details of Mill's doctrine of rent, see Barber, op. cit., esp. pp. 158-63.
52. See F. Clairmonte, Economic Development and Underdevelopment (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 76-85; and A. G. Frank, Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), pp. 71-9, 87-91, 146-54, and 173-208.

53. D. Kumar, "The Fiscal System", in D. Kumar, ed., The Cambridge Economic History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 2, p. 929.
54. For full details, see Bipul Kumar Bhadra, The Mode of Production, Social Classes and the State in Colonial India, 1757-1947: A Case Study of the Process of Dependent Capitalist Development, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (Hamilton: McMaster University, 1984), pp. 463-544. See also Stokes, The English Utilitarians and India, pp. 80-139; and Barber, op. cit., pp. 169-74.
55. Cited in E. Stokes, The Peasant and the Raj (Cambridge: The University Press, 1978), p. 92.
56. Cited in Ambirajan, op. cit., p. 177.
57. See D. Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1976), pp. 12-3; and K. N. Reddy, "Indian Defence Expenditures: 1872-1967", IESHR, 7 (December 1970), p. 474.
58. Daniel and Alice Thorner, Land and Labor in India (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 106.
59. For details of this argument, see Bhadra, op. cit., pp. 650-60.
60. Mill, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 224.
61. Firminger, ed., The Fifth Report, vol. 3, p. 576.
62. See T. Munro, The Life of Major General Sir Thomas Munro (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), vol. 1, pp. 174 and 185; and vol. 2, p. 152; S. C. Gupta, Agrarian Relations and Early British Rule (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963), p. 117; and Maine, Village-Communities in the East and West, pp. 105-6 and 153-4.
63. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 10 and 79.
64. Ibid., p. 10.
65. Thapar, "Ideology and Early Indian History", pp. 401-2. Emphases added.
66. Vasil'ev and Stuchevskii, op. cit., p. 29.
67. For a bibliography of Marx's readings on India, see Harstick, Karl Marx: Uber Formen Vorkapitalistscher Produktion, pp. 218-30.
68. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 176.

69. This is particularly true of Marx's Capital.
70. See L. Althusser and E. Balibar, Reading Capital (London: NLB, 1977), pp. 11-198; and Krader, "Reflections on the Asiatic Mode of Production", pp. 1-2.
71. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 356-8.
72. Wilks, Historical Sketches of the South India, vol. 1, pp. 140-1. Emphases in original.
73. Campbell, Modern India, p. 94.
74. Ibid., p. 83.
75. Manu, The Laws of Manu (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), IX. 44, p. 335.
76. See, for instance, Ibid., VIII. 199-200 and 264, pp. 290 and 301.
77. Campbell, Modern India, p. 84.
78. Manu, op. cit., VII. 130, pp. 236-7; and viii. 39, pp. 259-60. In Muslim law also, revenue of the state in this connexion was neither rent nor even a tax on land; it was a share of the actual crop. See I. Habib, "North India", in T. Raychaudhuri and I. Habib. eds., The Cambridge Economic History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), vol. 1, p. 235.
79. Campbell, Modern India, p. 87.
80. Ibid., p. 85.
81. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 484-5 and 493.
82. Campbell, "The Tenure of Land in India", p. 216.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., pp. 222-3. Emphases added.
85. Habib makes it clear that the presence of village community in Mughal India does not mean that "there was a village commune that owned the land on behalf of all its members. No evidence exists for communal ownership of land or even a periodic distribution and redistribution of lands among peasants". See Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, p. 123.
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87. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Society and Economy", p. 394.
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95. B. N. Datta, Hindu Law of Inheritance: An Anthropological Study (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1957), pp. 108-10 and 124.
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99. T. Strange, Hindu Law (London: Parbury, Allen, and Co., 1830), vol. 1, pp. 19-20.
100. Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records, p. 12. See also Kane, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 567.
101. See Chapter 4, pp. 233-5 of this dissertation.
102. Strange, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 15.
103. Ibid., p. 16. Emphases in original.
104. U. C. Sarkar, Epochs in Hindu Legal History (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1958), pp. 182-3.
105. Mayne, op. cit., p. 215. See also, Strange, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 18.
106. Mayne, op. cit., p. 211; and H. T. Colebrooke, Three Treatise on

- the Hindu Law of Inheritance (Madras: Higginbotham & Co., 1895), s. 30, p. 32.
107. J. Blum, "The European Village as Community: Origins and Functions", AH, 45 (1971), p. 169.
108. See G. L. Gomme, The Village Community (London: Walter Scott, 1890), pp. 64-5 and 168-70; and G. C. Homans, English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1942), pp. 109-43.
109. A. Soboul, "The French Rural Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", PP 10 (November 1956), pp. 82-3. Emphases added. See also M. Bloch, Feudal Society (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), vol. 1, p. 133.
110. Blum, "The European Village as Community", p. 170. Emphasis added.
111. See J. Blum, "The Internal Structure and Polity of the European Village Community from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century", JMH, 43 (1971), pp. 562-5. Emphases added.
112. For Marx's comments on Maine see, Levitt, Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence, pp. 50-1.
113. Phear, The Aryan Village, pp. 236, 256 and 258-9.
114. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 472-3. Emphases in original.
115. Ibid., pp. 88, 477, 484 and 490. Emphases in original.
116. Ibid., pp. 474, 484 and 493.
117. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 334 and 357.
118. Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 333 and 791.
119. K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), p. 106; and T. Dos Santos, "The Concept of Social Classes", SS 34 (1970), pp. 174 and 177.
120. It may be noted that the word `property` was rarely used before the 17th century in the modern sense of "an object of legal rights, or possessions or wealth collectively". Donahue, Jr. states that "Our word `property` comes either directly or through French propriété from Latin proprietas which means `the peculiar nature or quality of thing` and (in post-Augustan writing) `ownership`. Proprietas is itself derived from proprius, an adjective, equally applicable to physical things or qualities meaning `own` or `peculiar`, as opposed to communis, `common`, or alienus, `another's`". See C.

- Donahue, Jr., "The Future of the Concept of Property Predicted from its Past", in J. R. Pennock and J. W. Chapman, eds., Property (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 31. Emphases in original.
121. Cited in C. R. Noyes, The Institution of Property (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936), n. 41, p. 300.
 122. Paton, A Text-book of Jurisprudence, p. 467; and P. Phillips, Marx and Engels on Law and Laws (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1980), p. 173.
 123. J. A. C. Thomas, Textbook of Roman Law (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 138-9.
 124. L. Huberman, Man's Worldly Goods (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), p. 10. See also CH. Petit Dutaillis, The Feudal Monarchy in France and England from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 67; and Studies and Notes, Supplementary to Stubb's Constitutional History (Manchester: The University Press, 1911), p. 55; B. Lyon, A Constitutional and Legal History of Medieval England (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), p. 457; G. L. Ganshof, Feudalism (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 165; and F. Pollock and F. W. Maitland, The History of English Law (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), vol. 1, p. 236.
 125. J. E. Cruickshank, et al., The Rise of Western Civilization (Ontario: Longmans Canada, 1965), p. 325.
 126. K. Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (New York: International Publishers, 1964), pp. 100-1; and Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 45.
 127. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 616. Emphases added.
 128. For the growth of the right of free alienation of land, see C. B. Macpherson, "Capitalism and the Changing Concept of Property", in E. Kamenka and R. S. Neale, eds., Feudalism, Capitalism and Beyond (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), pp. 104-24; R. S. Neale, "Introduction: Property, Law and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism", in Ibid., pp. 2-27; and M. E. Tigar and M. R. Levy, Law and the Rise of Orientalism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), pp. 196-210.
 129. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 20.
 130. Phillips, op. cit., p. 201.

131. Cited in Ibid., p. 187. See also Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 83; Capital, vol. 1, pp. 84-5 and n.2, p. 615; and vol. 3, pp. 339-40; The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 37; and Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 81.
132. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 154.
133. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 340. See also Ibid., pp. 786-7; and Marx's letters of April 2, 1858 and January 24, 1865, in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 126 and 186-7.
134. See p. 91 of chapter 2.
135. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 87, 334 and 357; and vol. 3, p. 791.
136. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 79-81.
137. "Muirhead finds that 'it is impossible to say when the word dominium came into use', and assumes that it was after the time of the Twelve Tables, for then 'it is mine' was enough. Gaius, in the middle Empire, hardly ever uses it. But he does speak often of the dominus. By the time of Justinian, and his most recent sources, dominium is not uncommon, though by no means standard. ... The eventual exact coverage of the word dominium in late Roman law, if it can be said to have arrived at exactitude, covers the relation of the master of the house only to the slaves and to non-human objects, animate and inanimate. ... The Romans did not develop the content of the idea. They named it only ... The content of the term dominium has been supplied by medieval and modern analysis and speculation, concurrently with the development of the idea of a right of protection. But, as we have already noted, no such idea was indigenous in English law and there is no form to which it can be applied with certainty". See Noyes, op. cit., pp. 78-9 and 296. Except the word 'dominium' emphases added.
138. Levitt, Anthropology and Historical Jurisprudence, p. 43.
139. H. F. Jolowicz and B. Nicholas, Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law (Cambridge: The University Press, 1972), pp. xiii-xiv and 4-7.
140. S. P. Scott, "Editor's Preface", in S. P. Scott, ed., Corpus Jvris Civilis: The Civil Law (New York: AMS Press, 1973), vol. 1, p. 47. Emphases added.
141. F. Schulz, Classical Roman Law (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 338.
142. Thomas, op. cit., p. 133. Emphasis in original.

143. B. Nicholas, An Introduction to Roman Law (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), p. 154. Emphases added.
144. Thomas, op. cit., pp. 133-4. Emphases added.
145. Nicholas, op. cit., p. 155.
146. Ibid., p. 156.
147. Ibid., p. 157.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid.
150. Donahue, Jr., op. cit., pp. 36-7. Emphases added.
151. Cited in T. Grey, "The Distribution of Property", in Pennock and Chapman, eds., op. cit., p. 73.
152. Lyon, op. cit., p. 94.
153. C. R. Lovell, English Constitutional and Legal History: A Survey (New York: Oxford University press, 1962), p. 38.
154. Ibid., pp. 18-9.
155. Ibid., p. 19. Emphasis in original.
156. Ibid., p. 39. Emphasis in original.
157. Lyon, op. cit., p. 483.
158. G. E. Aylmer, "The Meaning and Definition of 'Property' in Seventeenth Century England", PP, 86 (February 1980), pp. 87-97.
159. Tiger and Levy, op. cit., p. 198.
160. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 466. See also his Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 112; and with Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 42-8 and 79-81.
161. For the general argument that Marx was not a geographical determinist, see M. Quaini, Geography and Marxism (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), esp. pp. 57-121.
162. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 107.

163. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 512. Emphases added.
164. For pre-British India's position in this respect, see R. Dutt, India Today (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 21-8; Clairmonte, op. cit., pp. 72-6; and Frank, op. cit., esp. pp. 17-9.
165. M. Vitkin, "Karl Marx and the 'Asiatic' Mode of Production", ATS, 3 (April 1978), p. 1. See also chapter 1.
166. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 133.
167. See, chapter 2, pp. 92-3.
168. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 486.
169. Ibid., pp. 486-7 and 493.
170. Ibid., p. 486. Emphases added.
171. Ibid., p. 493. Emphasis in original.
172. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, pp. 786-7 and 796; and vol. 1, pp. 747-9.
173. V. G. Kiernan, Marxism and Imperialism (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), p. 170.
174. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 493. Emphases in original.
175. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 358.
176. H. Singh, "The Asiatic Mode of Production: A Critical Analysis", Working Paper No. 49 (Toronto: Department of Sociology, University of Toronto, July 1983), p. 9.
177. Kiernan, op. cit., p. 169. See also Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 127 and 284; and Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis", p. 479.
178. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 451; and Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 70.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND: AN EMPIRICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

It was the British colonial officials who, for the first time, undertook the painstaking search after the true owner of landed property in India.¹ But, without really scrutinizing the indigeneous empirical source materials, almost all of them rigorously championed and enforced the doctrine of royal or state ownership of all lands in India.² This was, however, in conscientious conformity with the attainment of such goals and purposes that in fact nurtured British imperialism and colonialism in India. As I have stated in the previous chapter, such goals and purposes were the maximization of the extraction of agrarian surplus, the weakening or destruction of the indigeneous landed class that would intercept a portion of the produced agrarian surplus or that could pose any political threat to British colonial domination, and, finally, accelerating the growth of a peasant possessory form of land tenure due to the enforcement of the so-called principles of an international division of labour and the absence of private property in land. All these considerations are hardly taken into account in the Europocentric historiography of Orientalism which assumes, rather than demonstrates, the absence of private landed property in India. This historiographical bias applies as much to Marx's AMP as to certain

recent studies on the Indian social formation.³ Be that as it may, there are many others who have clearly demonstrated the prevalence of private property in land on the basis of literary, philosophical, legal and epigraphic source materials.⁴ In between the opponents and proponents, there is an intermediate group who asseverate that ownership of land rested with neither the state nor the individual, but with the village community. The most famous spokesman of this argument was Maine, who also, as I stated elsewhere, influenced Marx in this regard.⁵

Against this backdrop of controversies between three contending schools, my major objective in this chapter as well as in the next one is to show, contrary to Marx's assertion in the AMP, that private landed property existed on a significant scale in pre-British India. This can be shown à gogo by a scrupulous examination of the concrete evidence from a variety of indigeneous sources, such as literary, philosophical, historical, legal and epigraphic data concerning the Hindus. As a matter of fact, some of the British colonial officials utilized some of the same data, and even confirmed the existence of private ownership of land in India.

II. The Origin and Development of Private Landed Property in India

The inquiry into the concrete evidence concerning the existence of private property in land can be conveniently prefaced by pointing out that the very concept of ownership (or property) remained undefined even in such an advanced legal system as that of the Romans; neither was it defined by the English before the 17th century. The former spoke of 'dominium' while the latter emphasized 'possession'. Derrett is right

when he says that both Roman and English legal systems have persistently avoided, or contrived to avoid, the necessity of explicitly defining the concept of ownership, even though they habitually employed the concept at every turn.⁶

All this was in sharp contrast to what prevailed in India.

Derrett argues:

The best studies of Property as a concept (as distinct from the questions whether private property existed in ancient civilizations, whether certain persons ought to own particular kinds of objects, or what are the conditions subject to which owned objects may be used and transferred to other owners or users) have been written by Indians. The literature is mostly in manuscript, and the excellence of the discussions is unknown not only to comparative lawyers and students of jurisprudence in the West but even to the majority of Indian scholars as well.⁷

To be sure, the Indian jurists were not merely speculating in vacuo about the concept property from an ivory tower detached from the real and material world in which they lived and composed. Indeed, they could not have written such advanced texts on property, as they in fact did, unless there already existed a developed private property rights system recognized by all in the pre-British Indian social formation. At any rate, in connection with his discussion of an Indian text called Svatvavicara (i.e. Discussion of Property) and written around the first quarter of the 17th century, Derrett draws our attention to high points of the controversy amongst Indian jurists over the nature of property in these words:

The 'category' school held that Property had an objective reality of its own independently of a particular individual's consciousness, and for this type of definition ample legal supports was forthcoming. The 'impression'

party believed that property was a special figment or condition of the brain, and that without consciousness of Ownership (based upon legally verifiable data) Property did not exist at all. They denied that any conjunction between 'me' and 'my thing' existed, and their theory had to resort to devices to explain the property of babies and lunatics - at least it must have done so, for we have hardly any trace of the actual arguments amongst the literature at present recovered. The inherent weakness of the 'impression' theory led to a further development. The conjunction between the Owner and the thing, which the 'category' school subsume but do not explain satisfactorily, and which the 'impression' school deny, struck yet another school of thought as the solution to the problem. The constant factors in the discussion were Time (the period during which Property exists), acquisition (which involves an acquirer), and loss or cesser (by which Property ends).⁸

This amazing level of sophistication is a sharp contrast to the simplistic portrayal of the Indian situation in Marx's AMP. Those who debated about property were also precisely those who laid down law for the Indians. Jimutavāhana, whom I have mentioned in the last chapter, defined ownership as "the quality in the object owned of being used by the owner according to his pleasure."⁹ Nīlkantabhaṭṭa, who wrote Vyavahāramayūkha, defined ownership as "a special capacity produced by purchase, acceptance and the like."¹⁰ He wrote in the 17th century and his work is considered authoritative in different parts of Gujrat, Bombay and Mysore.¹¹ Mitramiśra is another 17th century jurist whose work, called Vīramitrodaya, is considered authoritative in Benares, Bengal and Western India.¹² For him, ownership was "an attribute indicative of the quality in the object owned of being used according to pleasure."¹³

Evidently, but contrary to what Marx's schema envisaged, these Indian definitions sound much like those that prevail in a modern

capitalist social formation, i.e. definitions of absolute private ownership. In a capitalist social formation the full rights of the owner, though ultimately subject to the determination by a given state, are these: (1) the power of enjoying which includes such rights as the determination of the use to which the res can be put, the power to deal with the produce as he pleases or the power to destroy; (2) the power of possession which includes the right to exclude others from enjoyment; (3) the power of alienation inter vivos (i.e. from one living person to another) or the power to bequeath the res by will.¹⁴ All these rights as a whole did not necessarily exist prior to the advent of capitalism in any country, whether India or not. For instance, the right of free alienation can hardly be imagined especially in the feudal era in view of the hierarchical nature of feudal landed property.¹⁵ What we are looking for in India, therefore, is not so much absolute or individualistic private property based on capitalism as relative private property that characterizes pre-capitalist modes of production.

In the indigeneous law and usage, the concept of ownership is expressed by the pronoun svam (one's or self) and by such derivatives svāmin (owner), svatva, svāmya or svāmitva (right of ownership). The concept of possession, indicating a bare right to use, is covered by the verb bhuj (to enjoy, use or possess) and its derivatives like bhukti, bhoga and upbhoga.¹⁶ Property can be of two kinds, immovable or sthāvāra (e.g. lands, houses, fields etc.) and movable or janigama. The word 'dravya' conveys the sense of all property, whether immovable or movable.¹⁷ The Indian jurists also prescribed different modes by which

property of any kind can be acquired. Gautama, who wrote between 600 B.C. and 300 B.C., enumerated a number of ways one could become an owner. These were: inheritance, purchase, seizure or finding. There were additional modes in conformity with the varna status of the acquirer, such as acceptance for the Brāhmaṇa, conquest for the Kṣatriya, and gain (by labour) for the Vaiśya or Śūdra.¹⁸ While Gautama's enumeration was for any kind of property, the later law givers specifically concentrated on immovable property. For instance, Brhaspati, who flourished between 200 A.D. and 400 A.D., laid down seven modes of acquiring immovable property: "by learning, by purchase, by mortgaging, by valour, with a wife (as her dowry), by inheritance (from an ancestor), and by succession to the property of a kinsman who has no issue."¹⁹ Besides Gautama and Brhaspati, there were of course others who also prescribed rules for acquiring property.²⁰

To protect the proprietors the Indian law-makers outlined elaborate rules, specifying the time at the expiry of which the proprietors could lose ownership of their properties to possessors who might have otherwise got hold of them. Gautama and Manu prescribe that an owner loses his title to movable property if he simply watches the stranger use or enjoy that property for ten years, but does nothing to recover its possession.²¹ Yājñavalkya (100 A.D.-300 A.D.) prescribes that at the end of 20 years' adverse possession of the immovable property by the wrongful possessor the ownership of the original owner is extinguished and the wrongful possessor becomes the rightful owner.²² Later writers, such as Vishnu (100 A.D.-300 A.D.), Nārada (100 A.D.-400

A.D.), Kātyāyana (400 A.D.-600 A.D.) and Brhaspati extended the period up to three generations or about sixty years, at the expiry of which adverse possession ripens into ownership and the original owner of the landed property loses his ownership to the adverse possessor.²³ At the height of feudalism in the 11th century Vijñāneśvara, the author of the Mitākṣarā, raised it upwards to 100 years, only at the end of which the presumption of title to ownership would arise.²⁴ In the 13th century Devanabhatta's Smṛticandrikā prescribed 105 years' possession as proof of ownership.²⁵

In this connection it is important to note that the rules of adverse possession generating ownership were of no significance whatsoever to Marx. Determined as he was to deny the existence of private property in India, Marx simply dismissed the rules as of no consequence on the plea that "right of possession on the basis of length of occupancy is not found everywhere."²⁶ While this explanation again proves beyond a doubt the epistemological caprices and the teleological biases of Marxian Orientalism, the fact of the matter is that the rules of adverse possession existed especially in Roman law, which was otherwise the be all and end all yard-stick for Marx when measuring any social development in the non-European world. And what is even worse is that Marx himself stated elsewhere that "the course of Indian history is to be explained by indigeneous, not imported categories."²⁷ In any case, the Indian jurists were concerned to afford maximum protection to the lawful owners as against unlawful occupiers, especially in the uncertain times of a feudal era marked by internecine warfare and

military conquests. The more they became concerned, the more they increased the length of the period of adverse possession extinguishing ownership and, thus, strengthened the hands of the landed proprietors vis à vis the potential dangers of dispossession amid constant uncertainties of feudalism. Sharma has rightly stated that the "rules reflect the situation in which, though the land of an individual or even of the king might be occupied without legal title by his tenants or by some powerful neighbour for 100 years, the original owner of the land would not be deprived of his rights."²⁸

Likewise, the Indian jurists ensured that any and every possession could not generate ownership and that the plea of possession, however long its duration, was not enough but prima facie culpable unless it complied with certain requirements. For Gautama, land is not at all "lost (to the owner) by (another's) possession", and "hell is (the punishment) for a theft of land."²⁹ According to Vasiṣṭha, who flourished between 600 B.C. and 300 B.C., the person who takes away somebody's land is called an "assassin", and even the king is commanded not to "take property for his own use from (the inhabitants of) his realm."³⁰ Manu prescribes that one who possesses himself of a house, a tank, a garden or a field by intimidation is liable to a fine of 500 panas; if he merely trespasses upon these objects, the fine is 200 panas. Stealing land is equivalent to stealing gold of the Brāhmaṇa.³¹ To Nārada, one who enjoys without title, even though for many hundred years, is liable to the same punishment as ordained for a thief.³² "That possession only can create proprietary right, which has been

legitimately inherited from the father."³³ Brhaspati states that "a house, field, commodity or other property having been held by another person than the owner, is not lost (to the owner) by mere force of possession, if the possessor stands to him in the relation of a friend, relative, or kinsman."³⁴ Vyasa and Pitamaha enjoin that a valid possession must comply with these five requirements: it must have a good title to back it up, it should be of long standing, it must be uninterrupted or continuous, it should have been free of protest by any person, and it must have been openly enjoyed before the very eyes of the defendant.³⁵

Having drawn attention to these important aspects of private property among the Hindus, as elaborated in the works of their law-givers, let me pass on to its chronological development in the Indian social formation, whose first civilization, called the Indus civilization, flourished more than 4000 years ago. Nothing definite is known as yet about its prevailing forms of property or property relations. Suffice it to say here that the Indus civilization was highly urbanized and had a developed system of social stratification or class division as evidenced by the existence of highly specialized crafts, variations of house sizes, the localization of blocks and barrack-like dwellings, and considerable internal and external trading activities.³⁶ In comparison, a lot more reliable information is available from the time of the Vedic India (c.1500 B.C.-600 B.C.), and one prime source of such information is the Rig Veda, the most sacred book of the Aryans who entered India around c.1600 B.C.³⁷ Fundamentally

a book of prayers, the main theme of which is the material affluence of the Aryans in a total of 1028 hymns, the Rig Veda enjoys the unique distinction of being one of the oldest surviving source materials for the study of social relations. Basham says: "The whole of the Rig Veda had been composed long before the Iliad, and there is hardly anything in the Old Testament in its present form which is as old even as the latest Rig Vedic hymns."³⁸ The Rig Veda portrays what prevailed in India during the early Vedic period (c.1500 B.C.-1000 B.C.).

Sharma argues that among the earliest Rig Vedic people, who knew of the use of plough and combined pastoralism with incipient agriculture, land was not held in individual ownership but in communal ownership, although private property was well established in movables such as cattle.

It would be too much to ascribe 'individual ownership in land' on this basis to the Rg Vedic people. In the absence of the use of the iron ploughshare and an assured water supply, cultivation may have shifted from river bank to river bank. Since the amount of rainfall in the Panjab (the place where Rig Veda was composed around 1500 B.C. - BB) is not more than 20 inches, the fight for water appears to be as important as that for cows. This implies that occupation of a piece of land did not last long. We hear of the gift of cattle, slaves, chariots, horses, etc. but not of the gift of land. Nor is the king represented as the protector of arable fields (ksetra) (as is the case in the Dīgha Nikāya) or even of the land in general. Evidently one of the strongest reasons for the office of the king is the protection of property, but in the Rg Vedic age the King protects cattle (gopa, gopati); he does not protect land. Clan ownership of land therefore may have obtained at this stage.³⁹

Sharma's arguments about clan/communal ownership mostly applies to the earliest Vedic period. There are definite indications that private landed property developed in the later Vedic period, i.e. mostly around

1000 B.C.-600 B.C.⁴⁰ On the basis of evidence direct from the Rig Veda

Rai argues:

Even in the Rigveda, fields (Kshetra), are described as having been carefully measured, and this, along with such epithets as "winning fields" (urvarā-sā, urvarā-jit, kshetra-sā), also indicates that the arable land was owned by families even during the period of the Rigveda. Āpalā's reference to her father's fields in the Rigveda shows that land was regarded as the property of the family headed by a patriarch. It appears from certain passages of the Vedic literature that in the early Vedic age the proprietary right was not vested in all the members of family, and the patriarch had absolute power over the members and property of the family. Stories by Rijrāśva being blinded by his father, or of the sale of Sunahśepa point, no doubt, to the developed, patria potestas. It is further borne out by the story of adoption of Sunahśepa by Viśvāmitra who disinherited his fifty sons for their disobedience to his command. In the kāthaka Samhitā the father is mentioned as ruling over the son. It appears, therefore, that originally the patriarch had unrestricted power over the family or vamsa...Probably by the time of the later Vedic age, the father's absolute right over the family property was being challenged.⁴¹

The embryonic development of private ownership is indicated by the use of such terms as signified "mine", "yours" and "his", and they are related to sva, meaning one's own or pertaining to one's own self. There is little doubt that property relation had then evolved, just as "it is mine" was enough to signify private property relations in Rome by the time of the XII Tables.⁴² Sharma observes that arable lands formed the bone of contention in war and conquest in view of the use of such terms, though a few in number, as urvarā-jit, urvarā-sā, kstra-sāt, etc.⁴³

Indeed this confirms, contrary to Marx's supposition, the positive role of war and conquest in generating private property in

land. Important terms that suggest the growth of private ownership beyond any shade of doubt include these: kshetra (a separated plot of land or field), khilyas (the boundaries marking only one plot or field from another), kshetra-jesha (acquisition of land), kshetrā-sā (gaining land), and kshetrasya pati (lord of the land) in Rig Veda; kshetram-jaya (conquering cultivated land) in Maitrāyani Samhita; and kshetrasya Patni (mistress of the fields) and kshtṛānām patih (lord of fields) in Vā-jasaneyi Samhita.⁴⁴ It is interesting to note, at one and the same time, that there is no direct evidence of communal ownership in Rig Vedic India.⁴⁵ Some contend that ownership of the community in the village "was probably confined only to the grass-lands lying on the boundaries of the fields."⁴⁶ In the Vedic literature there is again little that suggests a king's ownership of the territory over which he ruled.⁴⁷ In the Vedic texts the concept of land tax is absent and there is nothing in them that shows any obligation on the part of the cultivator to pay any tax for cultivation of his fields. The term bali, used several times, carries the sense of offering or tribute on a voluntary basis to the kings or clan chiefs, who also had no regular collectors of taxes as such.⁴⁸ In the later Vedic age (c.1000 B.C.-600 B.C.), bali was possibly turned into an obligatory payment. Even then, the king's share was considerably low, i.e. one-sixteenth (1/16), compared to one-sixth (1/6) of the produce of later times.⁴⁹ In the later Vedic age such texts as the other Vedas (e.g. Yajur and Atharvan), the Brāhmanas, and the Upanisads were composed in the lands of Kurus and Panālas, which included the major portion of Western Uttar Pradesh,

almost the whole of Harayana, and the neighbouring parts of Panjab and Rajasthan. This age was characterized by, among other things, the beginning of the breakdown of tribal states as well as by the emergence of territorial state systems.⁵⁰

From about 500 B.C. down to the rise of the Maurya state (322 B.C.-185 B.C.) the Indian social formation experienced remarkable changes in its economic, political, and ideological structures.

Economic changes include the spread of plough cultivation, the practice of transplantation of paddy, the use of iron tools, the classification of cultivable lands, the growth of the practice of keeping the land fallow, the utilization of new plants and fruits (e.g. mango etc.), the rise of commerce, the growth of the practice of minting coins, and so on. A part of the population moved to the middle Gangetic basin, an area that covered mainly eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.⁵¹

Politically, there arose monarchical as well as republican states. The former were concentrated in the fertile areas of the Ganges plain. The republican states, prevalent among the Vedic tribes who retained much of their tribal tradition, were concentrated around the northern periphery of the monarchical states in the Ganges plain (in the foothills of the Himalayas and just south of these) and in northwestern India or Panjab.⁵² Ideologically, the Brāhmanical ideologues legitimated the extraction of surplus in the form of taxes, tributes or tithes.

Buddhism flourished between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C. in the north-eastern kingdoms of Magadha and Kosala covering eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Buddhism, while emphasizing individualism, also provided a

formidable ideological alternative to the reigning Brahmanical pretensions and ritualism.⁵³

All these transformations led to further consolidation of the institution of private ownership whose existence is corroborated by the evidence from the Dharmasūtras, Pali works pertaining to Buddhism, and epigraphy. Altekar rightly points out that "there is conclusive and overwhelming evidence to show that at least from c.600 B.C. the ownership of private individuals in their arable land could not be affected by the action of the state, except when there was a failure to pay the land tax. People could freely gift away, mortgage or sell their lands."⁵⁴ While the Dharmasūtras, such as those of Gautama, Āpastamba, Baudhayana, and Vasīṣṭha, are Brāhmanical texts reflecting the patterns of social development mainly in northern India, the Pali works show how profound were the roles of Buddhism and certain material developments in the region of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.⁵⁵

The Dharmasūtras formulated rules of social conduct for Aryans. They represent a stage of legal development in which the rules of social conduct increasingly became the rules of legal obligation and, as such, depended less and less upon customs, which were relegated to the status of a subsidiary source of law. In contrast to the Dharmasūtras, the Dharmaśāstras (such as those of Yājñavalkya or Manu) lay down positive rules of behaviour for all, whether Aryans or not. Often epigraphic evidence (e.g. the Valabhi grant of Dhruvasena in 525-6 A.D., etc.) confirm their status as laws of the land.⁵⁶ In any event let me summarize a few important aspects of the property law as formulated by

authors of the Dharmasūtras.

I have already mentioned that Gautama prescribed different means of acquiring property. According to him, landed property of the householder is not lost to a stranger by virtue of the latter's adverse possession for whatever length of time. Gautama recognizes royal ownership of the treasure trove, disfavours traffic in land, permits barter in land, and regards the king as "master of all", excepting however the Brāhmanas who could also own treasure troves provided that they found them.⁵⁷ Baudhayana suggests the landlord-tenant relationship: "He cultivates six Nivartanas (of) fallow (land); he gives a share to the owner (of the soil), or solicits his permission (to keep the whole produce)."⁵⁸ Vasiṣṭha considers gifts of land as highly exemplary acts.⁵⁹ "Whatever sin a man distressed for livelihood commits, (from that) he is purified by giving land, (be it) even a 'bull's hide'."⁶⁰ "He who gives a house obtains a town."⁶¹ Apastamba attests to the prevalence of the practice of leasing land. "If a person who has taken (a lease of) land (for cultivation) does not exert himself, and hence (the land) bears no crop, he shall, if he is rich, be made to pay (to the owner of the land the value of the crop) that ought to have grown."⁶²

The above-mentioned Sruti writers of the post-Vedic era did not support any kind of "common ownership of ancestral property,"⁶³ of which later commentators, including Vijñāneśvara, approved. In this connection the statement of Jaimini (500 B.C.-200 B.C.), cited often in support of common ownership, can be mentioned. Jaimini, it should be

noted, was not a lawyer in the sense that jurisprudence was not his special field of study as this was, for example, for Gautama and others.⁶⁴ The context of Jaimini's discussion is as follows. At a certain sacrifice, named viśvajit, it was asked whether or not the king could give away all the lands within his kingdom to the priest as his fee for conducting the said sacrifice. Jaimini states that a sacrificer (e.g. the king) can give away all of which he is the owner, and that land (in his kingdom) cannot be given in a viśvajit sacrifice by reason of its not being special because it belongs to all alike.⁶⁵ In all probability this does not refer to common (or communal) ownership of all lands in a kingdom. What Jaimini's comment in relation to the issue of ownership of land means is this: First, land is an object of ownership, or is in fact owned, by all persons of whom one is no more or less owner from another in terms of one's prospective or actual capacity to become an owner. Second, there is nothing majestic or imperial in the act of giving away a piece of land as fee by the king, for anyone owning similarly a piece of it also can give it away as fee on an auspicious occasion, be it viśvajit sacrifice or not. Finally, the king cannot give away any land in his kingdom because he alone does not own and control it exclusively. From his standpoint, Jaimini's position sharply contradicts those who read principles of communal or state ownership into it.⁶⁶ The same was also Colebrooke's opinion. He says:

The maxim of the law, that the 'king is the lord of all excepting sacerdotal wealth', concerns his authority for correction of the wicked and protection of the good. His kingly power is for government of the realm and extirpation of wrongs; and for that purpose he receives taxes from husbandmen and levies fines from offenders. But right of

property is not thereby vested in him; else he would have property in house and land appertaining to the subjects abiding in his dominions. The earth is not the king's, but is common to all beings enjoying the fruit of their own labour. It belongs, says Jaimini, to all alike; therefore, although a gift of a piece of ground to an individual does take place, the whole land cannot be given by a monarch, nor a province by a subordinate prince but the house and field acquired by purchase and similar means, are liable to gift.⁶⁷

In the Pali canonical works the evidence for private property in land is overwhelming. The proprietors of cultivated or arable land are mentioned here as Khettpati, Khettsāmika, or Vatthupati.⁶⁸ In the Suttanipata a bhiksu (monk) is sharply distinguished from a householder in terms of the latter's possession of children, cattle, cultivated land or house. In Mahavagga it is stated that a secular individual could offer cultivated land, gold, slaves, cattles, etc. to a monk, although the latter is debarred from accepting any or all of them. The Anguttara-nikāya states that a monk must not accept a gift of land, whether tilled or not. From the above two sources it appears that an individual could not have offered land unless he owned it or could buy it from some other owner. Again, an individual was also capable of receiving a plot of land as a gift from someone else.⁶⁹

The Buddhist works also point to the actuality of large-sized landed estates and employment of slaves or wage workers. According to the Suttanipata, the land in the private farm of a Brāhmaṇa was worked with 500 ploughs. It was the Brāhmaṇas or big setṭhis (i.e. merchants and usurers) who owned big landed estates. In the Suvannakakkata-jātaka one finds large estates of 1,000 karas of land worked by slaves and hired labourers (karmakars). The Sālikedāra-jātaka depicts a Brāhmaṇa

who rented one-half the land and worked the rest with slaves and hired laborers. Sometimes, the owners delegated the task of operating their large estates to the administrators. The Chullavagga describes a merchant buying an orchard from a crown prince.⁷⁰ In several other Jā taka stories one finds landowners sitting in markets with a view to selling their commodities.⁷¹ Summarizing the trend Rai states: "In fact the picture, which emerges from a study of the Pali literature, leaves the impression of a society which was sharply divided between the large landholders and the landless wage-earners."⁷²

The Jain canonical works also come out for the private ownership of land. Gopal reasons:

The Uttarādhyayana Sutra mentions land (khetta) along with cattle, gold, dwelling place etc. as means of obtaining pleasure. According to the Brhatkalpa Bhāṣya agricultural land or Khetta is considered among the ten kinds of external possessions, others being buildings, gold, conveyances, furniture etc. There are many (other - BB) references showing that lands and houses formed the main possession of a householder.⁷³

Landed estates existed not only in the monarchical states, where the Brā hmanas constituted the dominant fraction of the landed aristocracy, but also in the republican states, wherein kṣatriya noble families (rājā-kulas) emerged as dominant owners. Rai argues that in the republics private ownership emerged after the republican clans came to be exposed to the over-riding influence of the Indo-Aryan culture. It was then that their original clan or communal ownership broke down and gave way to private ownership of separate families (kulas) constituting the clan.⁷⁴ Examples of republics wherein private property dominated

include those of the Lichchavis, the Koliyas, the Śakyas, and others. In the Vaiśali republican state, the number of rājans (estate owners) were about 7,707 in a total population of about 168,000.⁷⁵

Kautilya's Arthaśāstra, which contains a depiction of the politico-economic structures of the Indian social formation during the regime of the Mauryas (322 B.C.-185 B.C.), attests to the further development of private property. It took the form of an increased differentiation among various types of immovable property.⁷⁶ One type is a tangential corroboration of Marx in the sense that Arthaśāstra confirms the existence of state ownership of land, but this offers little support to Marx, for it allows state ownership over "all unoccupied land" only. Correspondingly, a frequently mentioned state activity was sunyanivesa or settlement in unoccupied land.⁷⁷ The second category of landed property is the personal land of the king or the royal demesne. It is signified by the word svabhūmi.⁷⁸ This reference is not the only pebble on the beach.

Indeed, there are other sources that confirm the separate identity and prevalence of this form of personal property. For instance, in a Nasik inscription Gautamiputra Satakarni (c.106 A.D.-130 A.D.) is stated to have granted one hundred nivartanas of royal land (rājakaṃ kestram) to certain ascetics. The Chandalur grant of Kumaravishnu II, a Pallava King of Kanchi who reigned from 510 A.D. to 530 A.D., mentions 800 pattikās of khas land (rāja-vāstu) in the village of Chandalura.⁷⁹ In Deccan the land constituting the personal domain of the ruler was called "Prabhumanyam". It was his personal property and

the produce which it yielded was consumed in his household.⁸⁰

Inscriptional evidence confirms the prevalence of the king's personal ownership of land (rājakīyabhūmi) in southern India. An inscription from Tirumali of Ramnad district in Madras, dated 1196 A.D., thus, "records a gift of land from the personal property of the king for the morning service in the temple."⁸¹ Again, many land grants of Pāla kings (c. 760 A.D.-1142 A.D.) in Bengal specifically mention that "land being given was held by the king personally and had not yet been alienated (sva-sambaddh-avicchinna-tal opeta)."⁸²

The third and final form of landed property in the Arthasāstra is the individual's private ownership of land. In general, the concept of vāstu refers to immovable property and includes houses, fields, gardens, buildings of any kind, lakes and tanks.⁸³ The main points of evidence concerning the presence of private landed property can be summarized in the words of Kangle:

The Ksetrika, the owner of the field, is distinguished from the upavāsa, the tenant. Again, in connection with disputes regarding boundaries between two fields, it is stated that if neither party can prove its claim, the disputed portion is to go to the king; similarly, land, the owner of which cannot be traced (pranasta-svāmikam), is also to go to the state. The word svāmin used here can hardly be understood to mean only 'one who is in possession'. Again ksetra, that is, a field or land figures among property, the sale of which is governed by certain regulations. The sale (vikraya) of land is also referred to for purposes of restricting the transaction to persons of the same category, by tax-payers to tax payers and by grant-holders to grant holders. Now, the right of alienation by sale is a well-known characteristic of ownership. From the sale the state gets only the sales-tax. From 2.1.10 it might be deduced that if the cultivator fails to till the land given to him, it may be taken away from him and given to another person by the state. But that refers to state lands that are distributed at the time of new settlements. There is no

indication in the text regarding the steps to be taken when land revenue is not paid. Apparently, the pradestrs are to manage enforcement of payment. But there is no suggestion that land is to be taken away from a defaulter and given to another, as we would naturally expect in a situation where all land belongs to the state.⁸⁴

Like many other Hindu juridicial treatises, the Arthaśāstra enjoins a number of strict injunctions for the protection of the rights of landowners.

For example, a forcible seizure of vāstu (e.g. fields, house etc.) is a theft for which a graded punishment is ordained.⁸⁵ "If the owner of any one of the following, viz. wet fields, gardens, or any kind of buildings, causes damage to those owned by others, the fine shall be double the value of the damage."⁸⁶ A person's "immovable property, pledged and enjoyable with or without labour..., shall not be caused to deteriorate in value while yielding interest on the money lent, and profit on the expenses incurred in maintaining it."⁸⁷ The tenant commits an offence when he, though asked by the landlord to evacuate, continues to reside in the house. If the tenant voluntarily evacuates the house before the expiry of the year, he has to pay the balance of the annual rent. The landlord commits an offence when he forces out of his house the tenant who has duly paid his rent. The landlord is justified to do so, however, when the tenant is involved in such acts as "defamation, theft, robbery, abduction, or enjoyment with a false title."⁸⁸

Land was on the way to become a prized object because all were not equally capable of conducting transactions about land. "Tax payers shall sell or mortgage their fields to tax payers alone; Brāhmaṇas shall

sell or mortgage their Brahmadeya or gifted lands only to those who are endowed with such lands."⁸⁹ Finally, the authority of the father in the Arthaśāstra appears to be that of an absolute owner.

So long as ancestral property is not divided, it is entirely the property of the person who owns it. He has no legal responsibility for preserving it for the benefit of his heirs. At least there is no law to compel him to do so or to use it in a particular manner, and none other, but it seems to be implied that if he has faith in the ritual of srāddaha he may be persuaded to think that something which has a value should be left behind to meet its cost and thus to enable his heir to perform the rite after his death to the satisfaction of the departed spirits of himself and his ancestors and thus continue the tradition of his family.⁹⁰

Generally speaking, the Arthaśāstra does not provide evidence for the prevalence of communal ownership.

The first complete definition as well as justification of private property was advanced in two texts: the Buddhist text of Milindapañho ("the Question of Milinda") and the Brahmanical text of Manu. I shall discuss Manu's position later. In the Milindapañho (150 B.C.-100 A.D.), the principle of private ownership was enunciated as follows:

And it is as when a man clears away the jungle, and sets free a piece of land, and the people use the phrase: 'That is his land'. But that land is not made by him. It is because he has brought the land into use that he is called the owner of the land.⁹¹

The practice of donating one's dwelling, field or premise is also alluded to in the text.⁹² The occurrence of private ownership preceded indubitably its formal definition and justification. Even then, this formal process is remarkably important from the point of view of the internal dynamism of India's economic structure. First, the formal

definition and justification of ownership freed the way for further colonization or clearing of lands by providing incentive to anyone who wanted to benefit by ownership, i.e. to enjoy and use fruits of his labour.⁹³ Second, it enabled an entrepreneur to employ servile labour for productive purposes either in his existing farm or in its expansion through the process of further clearance of new lands and making them cultivable. Third, it was a provenance of livelihood and employment for someone who preferred to break away from his parental family, whose meagre resources but increasing size might have become a veritable breeding ground of mutual jealousy and bickering amongst its members. Finally, the Milindapañho legitimized the claims of existing occupiers who could, thus, emerge as landowners on their own rights.

Like Milindapañho, the text of Manu defined and justified private ownership. "They declare a field to belong to him who cleared away the timber, and a deer to him who (first) wounded it."⁹⁴ As I stated elsewhere, Manu is one of those ancient Hindu jurists who favoured individualization, rather than collectivization of the ownership of land.⁹⁵ In Manu there are numerous enunciations confirming the existence of private landed property.

Those who, having no property in a field, but possessing seed-corn, sow it in another's soil, do indeed not receive the grain of the crop which may spring up (IX.49). If no agreement with respect to the crop has been made between the owner of the field and the owner of the seed, the benefit clearly belongs to the owner of the field; the receptacle is more important than the seed (IX.52). If seed be carried by water or wind into somebody's field and germinates (there), the (plant sprung from that) seed belongs even to the owner of the field, the owner of the seed does not receive the crop. (IX.54).⁹⁶

Manu neither champions common property for all family members nor makes the joint-family system mandatory for them.⁹⁷ The sons had no right whatsoever over the paternal and maternal estates while the parents were alive; they could divide equally the estate only after their deaths. The eldest son, however, might choose to take the whole paternal estate according to Manu's rule of primogeniture.⁹⁸ Any of the sons may acquire property by his own labour without using the patrimony. In that case, it is his self-acquired property that he might not choose to share with his brothers.⁹⁹

Yājñavalkya (100 A.D.-300 A.D.), who succeeded Manu, represents an era that witnessed the breakdown of centralized state system and the onset of feudalism in the Indian social formation.¹⁰⁰ Like Manu, he was a protagonist of individual ownership of land.¹⁰¹ Among other things, he specifically prescribes that an individual's ownership right to land is not extinguished before the expiry of twenty years during which the owner does not question the encroachment of his property by an outsider.¹⁰² What is more important in the present context, however, is that Yājñavalkya favoured joint ownership of the father and son in the ancestral property, both real and personal.¹⁰³ This development, arising for the first time in Hindu legal annals, is not at all the same thing that appears in Marx's AMP. That is to say, this common ownership of the father and son in the land of the father's father is not equivalent to communal ownership writ large as Marx had in mind. Furthermore, the threads of individualism in Yājñavalkya are quite strong. For instance, he logically allowed the son his option to demand

partition of the ancestral property.¹⁰⁴ Besides, the father or, for that matter, any of his sons could individually acquire his own property by dint of his labor and/or learning and, hence, was free to use and enjoy it. This included the right of disposal, especially by gift.¹⁰⁵

At this point I should mention that the institution of private ownership in India, as elsewhere before the rise of capitalism, was not absolute or exclusive in character; on the contrary, it was relative in that certain restrictions were imposed on it in what was understood to be the best interest of the community in which the individual happened to live. In the contexts of the pre-capitalist milieu these restrictions were not so much a fetter as a safeguard that secured the individual owner in the exercise of his rights of use, enjoyment and disposal of landed property. Let me specify a few of the restrictions that indeed suggest the collectivist underpinnings of individual private property in land before the rise of capitalism.

First, the owners were subject to certain obligations the fulfillment of which maximized the realization of their property rights.

The proprietors of two adjacent houses must be careful to have due consideration for each other; thus it is forbidden to obstruct or injure a veranda, window, drainage pipe or a shop etc. or to construct a privy, a fire-place, a receptacle for leavings or to dig a pit or to open a window or to drive a drainage pipe in the immediate vicinity of the neighbouring houses (Kāty. 18, 20f; Brh. 19, 24-26). A distance of at least three feet or two Aratnis must be observed (Vas. 16, 12; Kāty. 18, 22). Also public roads, bathing places, gardens etc. cannot be misused, defiled or obstructed for similar purposes (Nār. 11, 15f; Brh. 19, 27f; Kāty. 19, 23-26).¹⁰⁶

Second, some Hindu law-makers expressly lay down that the principle of

private property must not be governed solely according to the interests or considerations of the individual alone; it should rather yield to the logic of greatest productivity, benefitting more people in the community.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Yājñavalkya allows a stranger to construct a bridge or sink a well upon land owned by another, provided that such action affects the land to a slight degree and yet serves "a great many useful purpose". However, the stranger is supposed to inform the owner of the land; if he does not, then the benefit goes to the owner or, in latter's absence, to the king.¹⁰⁸ The solicitude for preservation of the individual's ownership, without jeopardizing what might benefit the community at large, is quite manifest in Nārada, who says this:

when the owner of a field is unable (to cultivate it), or dead, or gone no one knows whither, any stranger who undertakes its cultivation unchecked (by the owner or others) shall be allowed to keep the produce (XI.23). When the owner returns while the stranger is engaged in cultivating the field, (the owner) shall recover his field, after having paid (to the cultivator) the whole expense incurred in tilling the waste (XI.24).¹⁰⁹

Nārada even anticipates a situation where the landowning peasant is too poor to recover his land. In that case, "a deduction of an eighth part (shall be made), till seven years have elapsed. But when the eighth year arrives, (the owner) shall recover the field cultivated (by the other, as his independent property)."¹¹⁰

Third, some legislators impose certain limits on the individual's capacity to dispose of his property. For instance, according to Yājñavalkya, one could give away only so much of his property as would not interfere with the maintenance of his kinsmen, besides his wife, son and grandson. Nārada allows maintenance only for

the members of the donor's family.¹¹¹ This restriction on alienation is not non-pareil, for it can be found in France "where a father cannot dispose inter vivos or by will of more than a certain proportion of his estate."¹¹² Fourth, as I have already shown, the Arthaśāstra restricted transactions (e.g. sale or mortgage of land) to certain specified groups and, thereby, excluded others from entering into those transactions. Of particular significance are the details which the Arthaśāstra sets forth à propos the sale of landed property. The selling and buying must be in public and could not take place without the presence of the owner. The transaction is to be conducted by public bidding, and the right to purchase follows a given order of precedence like this: kinsmen, neighbours and rich persons. A congregation of neighbours and elders of the nearby village or neighbourhood conduct the transaction.¹¹³

Further, it is the task of the relevant state official to "register gifts, sales, charities, and remission of taxes regarding fields."¹¹⁴

Finally, the Hindu law-givers instituted elaborate rules of procedure and formality, and assigned prime importance to the participation of the community or inter-community members with regard to the resolution of disputes over the real property, especially boundary disputes between two villages, or between two houses or fields.

Obviously, the purpose was to secure the legitimate rights of the parties concerned and, hence, to eliminate future potential litigation as far as practicable. The highest court of appeal in the hierarchical judiciary prescribed by the jurists was, of course, the king.

Furthermore, almost all of the law-makers treated false evidence

concerning land ownership and other ancillary matters as singularly reprehensible, immoral and criminal.¹¹⁵

While all these rules additionally confirm the fact of the existence in India of "a highly developed individual property,"¹¹⁶ the direct evidence for communal ownership supporting the AMP is extremely skimpy, if not altogether negligible.¹¹⁷ I have stated elsewhere that pasture lands around the village were possibly held in common during the Vedic times. In Tirduka Jātaka a fruit tree is depicted as common property. Manu recommends that some land surrounding a village or town on all sides should be reserved for pasture. The amount of such space is about 100 feet in the case of a village and about 300 feet for a town. The Arthaśāstra prescribed 800 angulas as common pasture.¹¹⁸ Nā rada suggests a kind of joint ownership when he states that the two individual landowners are entitled to equally enjoy the fruits of a tree that has grown on the boundary separating their contiguous pieces of land.¹¹⁹ Brhaspati states that a common road or pasture shall be used by co-heirs of landed property in due proportion to their individual shares therein.¹²⁰ An epigraph, which belongs to the post-Mauryan period, records the gift of a village by the people of Nasik (Nā sikakas), suggesting that the donors were collectively owners of the gifted village.¹²¹ An inscription from the reign of Sundara Cōla (c.956 A.D.-973 A.D.) from Madhurantakam "records the sale by the Sabhā in a public manner (sabhai-vilai) of some land described clearly as part of the unappropriated common land of the village."¹²²

Some evidence of the existence of communal property in different

degrees comes from south India, especially Madras.¹²³ First, there was complete ownership in common, involving cultivation and enjoyment in common over the land of the entire village. The individual received a share of the produce. In the second type, the individual enjoyed a particular portion of the village land, whereas the community retained collective ownership. His possession of the land was, however, subject to occasional redistribution for ensuring equality amongst the holders. In the final form, the degree of communal ownership is minimal because the community retained its right only over a portion of the village land, while the rest was separately owned by each household free from the control of the community. The village body, called variously sabhā, ūrōm, ūrār, nādu, nagaratār etc., exercised different degrees of rights depending on the specific type of village (as mentioned above) which it represented. For instance, in the first type of village, it had the theoretical power to alienate the whole of the landed property in the village - an act that would mean its own cessation. In the other two types of villages, it could only alienate the unappropriated land. Here the village body also enforced the right of preemption.¹²⁴

Thus, the villages of Māngādu decided that an owner, who wanted to sell this land, should sell it to another "landowner within that village and not to any outsider". The owner was even barred from giving it as a dowry (stridhana) to someone outside the village. Furthermore, the village body often excluded certain groups from the potential list of buyers. Hence, an inscription states: "If any among the share holders mortgages or sells his shares to Śūdras, he shall be put out of

the Brahman community, and such shares shall not belong to this place."¹²⁵ This restriction, making the land inalienable to Śūdras or the commoners, clearly contradicts Marx's allegation that "the soil is not a prized object in India as it is in European feudalism where it could not be alienated to commoners."¹²⁶

It should be especially pointed out here that the available evidence concerning communal ownership in different degrees, as discussed above, does not corroborate what Marx had in mind when he conceptualized his AMP. There are several reasons for this. First, the villages, actually known as Caturvēdimangalam or by other kindred terms (e.g. Brahmadēya, Mangalam, Agaram, Brahamapuram, Agrahāra, Agara-brahmadēya, Brahmadēśam, etc.), are examples of those where land was not held by all residents (or varṇas), as Marx thought, but only by the Brāhmaṇa landlords to whom a body of cultivating tenants was bound for rendering certain obligations, viz. payment of portion of their surplus produce (i.e. rent). Correspondingly, the village body was not the nucleus of communal ownership, but mainly an assembly of Brāhmaṇa landowners lording distinctly over a class of servile tenant labourers.¹²⁷ Second, in those villages where communal ownership existed in one form or another the individual was an owner in the first instance, not a possessor as Marx envisaged. An individual owned a piece of land or had to own a share in the land of the village before he could be a member of the village body (sabha) or any of its committees. The authority of the body, which might otherwise affect the right of a landowner, was au fond an ensemble of the authorities of individual

landowners who constituted themselves into a collective entity mainly for achieving certain mundane or economic benefits.¹²⁸

Third, the Brāhmaṇa villages where some form of communal ownership existed were decisively in the minority. Most of the villages in south India, mainly Madras, were non-Brāhmaṇa villages, i.e. where non-Brāhmaṇas dominated. In these villages, again, it was peasant proprietors (vellān-vagai) who held the village lands. The non-Brāhmaṇa village too had its assembly - uur - which, correspondingly, consisted of landowning cultivators.¹²⁹ It was because of the dominance of the peasant proprietors over larger parts of south India that one can understand why Sastri said: "Great prestige attached to ownership of land, and everyone, whatever his occupation, aimed at having a small plot he could call his own."¹³⁰ Finally, the evidence that in certain Brāhmaṇa villages some form of communal ownership existed does not in any way support Marx's claim for yet another reason. For Marx, communal ownership represented a primitive and spontaneous stage in the evolution towards absolute private ownership. In so far as India is concerned, all those villages were deliberate creations of the kings or their feudatories. They made collective landgrants not only for religious but also for secular or political purposes (e.g. the establishment of new settlements by clearing new territories, the provision for military training, the defense of the borders, etc.) from the beginning of feudalism onward.¹³¹ The royal grants raise rather the question of whether or not the king/state was the de jure owner of the land. Invariably, the question is also related to the efflorescence of

feudalism and feudal land tenure.

The development of a hierarchical land tenure (i.e. the rise of conditional landed property), along with certain additional aspects of private landed property, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Here, a few examples could be cited to illustrate the point that Marx failed to consult, or chose not to consult, empirical materials that would have negated his assertion of the absence of private landed property in India. Indeed, these materials came from official British sources. The most important among them was, of course, the Fifth Report (1812) of the British House of Commons, which Marx, strangely though, did not read. The said Report amply proves the existence of private property in land, sometimes in the exclusive or absolute form found in capitalism. Thus, in regard to Canara and Malabar, the Fifth Report states that: "The lands in general appear to have constituted a clear private property, more ancient, and probably more perfect, than that of England. The tenure, as well as the transfer, of this property, by descent, sale, gift and mortgage, is fortified by a series of regular deeds, equally various and curious, and which bear a very strong resemblance, in both parts of the country."¹³²

It was certainly not the only pebble on the beach. The landed proprietors distinguished by names of meerassadar or mahajanums, so stated the principal collector of Tanjore and Trichinopoly,

have the right of selling, bestowing, devising, and bequeathing their lands, in the manner which, to them, is most agreeable. ... The class of proprietors to whom I allude, are not to be considered, as the actual cultivators of the soil: the far greater mass of them, till their lands

by means of hired labourers, or by a class of people termed pullers, who are of the lowest, and who may be considered as the slaves of the soil. The landed property of these provinces, is divided and subdivided in every possible degree. There are proprietors of 4,000 acres, of 400 acres, of 40 acres and of one acre.¹³³

The Fifth Report echoed the same situation in case of Bengal presidency.

Here, the Zamindars appeared to be absolute proprietors of land. John Shore in his minute of 18 June 1789 said:

I consider the Zemindars as the proprietors of the soil, to the property of which they succeed by right of inheritance, according to the laws of their religion; and that the sovereign authority cannot justly exercise the power of depriving them of the succession, nor of altering it, when there are any legal heirs. The privilege of disposing of the land, by sale or mortgage, is derived from this fundamental right, and was exercised by the Zemindars before we acquired the Dewanny....The Sanction of government was often given to sales, mortgages and successions; but the want of it did not, as far as I know, render them invalid.¹³⁴

In the case of Panjab J. B. Lyall, a high-ranking colonial official, stated in no uncertain terms that "full individual proprietary right with power to sell and mortgage was well established in many parts of Panjab before the advent of the British rule."¹³⁵ In fact, there were many others who corroborated the actuality of private landed property in India. James Todd (1782-1835), a high-ranking colonial official avouched it in Rajasthan, where the landed proprietors were known as Bhumias.¹³⁶ Thomas Munro (1761-1827), another top official who became one of the high priests of peasant-oriented land reforms in colonial India, confirmed it in the Canara region as back as 1801.

All land is private property, except such estates as may have fallen to the Sirkar (i.e. the state - BB) from the failure of heirs, or the expulsion of owners by oppression, under the Mysore Government. By means of a variety of

Sunnuds (i.e. the title deeds - BB), I traced back the existence of landed property above a thousand years, and it has probably been in the same state from the earliest ages; the inhabitants having so great an interest in the soil, naturally adopted the means of preserving their repetitive estates, by correct title deeds and other writings. Besides the usual revenue accounts, all private transfers of land, and all public Sunnads respecting it, were registered by the Curnums, who, as accountants, are much superior to our best Mutsiddis. In consequence of this practice, there is still a great mass of ancient and authentic records in Canara.¹³⁷

Most, if not all, of these materials, were in all probability available by the time when Marx conceptualized his AMP. In this light it is a thin excuse to argue that the necessary materials were not available to Marx; nor is there any rationale on his part for not utilizing them. Indeed, he flouted his own materialist methodology that makes it incumbent upon us to develop any and every concept upon necessary empirical foundations.

III. Conclusion

Although more will be said in the next chapter, there is hardly any doubt that Marx's assertion of the absence of private landed property in India is simply inaccurate in view of the overwhelming material evidence available in the indigeneous sources. In point of fact, as could be established from a variety of literary, philosophical, historical, legal, and epigraphic data, Marx derived almost no support to buttress his thesis of the absence of private property in land - the conditio sine qua non of the AMP - in as much as pre-Muslim India is concerned. Not only is Marx's claim wrong from an empirical point of view, but he is doubly mistaken in projecting upon India what was fundamentally a simplistic and stagnant view of property, or rather lack

of it, for all time.

Marx was doubly mistaken for the following reasons. First, the whole range of indigeneous source materials bear decisive witness both to the presence of private ownership of land and to its institutional developments (e.g. lease, mortgage, sale) from a quite early period of the Indian civilization. Second, none of the Hindu jurists subscribed to the predominance of village communal ownership. It may be recalled here that Marx paid fragmentary but definite attention to the Mitāksarā, the commentary of Vijñāneśvara, which imposed restriction on the father's capacity to alienate ancestral immovable property.¹³⁸ But as I discussed in Chapter 3, Vijñāneśvara did not advocate village communal ownership of land, although Marx seemed to have interpreted the joint-ownership of the family's private landed property as evidence for his thesis of village communal ownership. À la rigueur, this is a good instance of Marx's misconstruing of the intention of the author of the Mitāksarā. If Marx wanted to, he could have straightened out his Weltanschauung, if not his confusions, insofar as he denied the presence of private landed property in India. At least, Munro's account of the landed property and private transfers thereof should have enabled Marx to do just that. At one and the same time, there is hardly any need to exaggerate the importance of the theoretically formulated absolute restriction on the alienation of landed property, as laid down in the Mitāksarā. Neither can private property be denied on that ground. Thus Kane justly points out:

The text could not be taken literally when we have seen that

sales of land have been taking place for at least two thousand years. All that the text means is that a sale should be clothed in the form of a gift. Similarly the few smrti passages that include lands and houses among indivisible properties are to be explained as having in view the fragmentation of a field into small uneconomic plots or holdings or the division of a single small house among numerous co-sharers. It is impossible to believe that the texts meant that houses could never be partitioned among co-heirs. All that we can reasonably infer is that as a general rule such partitions were looked upon with disfavour by society.¹³⁹

As a matter of fact all pre-capitalist social formations generally seemed to have disfavoured alienations of land, and this is what made private landed property relative and conditional.

That this was so can be illustrated by experiences from Western Europe itself. This is what Bloch said:

The feudal West universally recognized the legality of individual possession, but in practice the solidarity of the kindred was frequently extended to community of goods. Throughout the country districts there were numerous 'brotherhoods' - groups consisting of several related households sharing the same hearth and the same board and cultivating the same common fields. The lord frequently encouraged or even enforced these arrangements, for he considered it an advantage to hold the members of the 'communal households' jointly responsible, willy-nilly, for the payment of dues...The deeds of sale or gift for the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries which the ecclesiastical muniment chests have preserved for us are instructive...But loudly as these charters or deeds may proclaim the rights of the individual, they almost never fail to mention at a later stage the consent of the various relatives of the vender or donor. Such consent seemed so far necessary that as a rule there was no hesitation in paying for it...Formerly, sales of landed property had been somewhat rare; their very legality seemed doubtful, in the eyes of public opinion, unless there was the excuse of great poverty...The tendency at first was to require that before every alienation for value received the property should be offered first to one of the relatives, provided it had itself been acquired by inheritance - a significant restriction and one which was retained. Finally, from about the beginning of the thirteenth century, family control was

reduced to a simple recognition of the right of the relatives, within prescribed limits and according to a stipulated order, to take the place of the buyer once the sale had occurred, on repayment of the price already paid. In medieval society there was scarcely an institution more universal than this right of redemption enjoyed by relatives (retrait lignager).¹⁴⁰

From this vantage point, Marx's analysis of India appears arbitrary in both its methodological and theoretical aspects.

Footnotes

1. Alavi states that all European travellers before the formal onset of British colonialism in India espoused, without a single voice of dissent, the doctrine of the king's exclusive proprietorship of all lands. See H. Alavi, "India: Transition from Feudalism to Colonial Capitalism", JCA, 10 (1980), p. 359.
2. See, for example, B. Lindsay, "Law", in L. S. S. O'Malley, ed., Modern India and the West (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 102-37.
3. For a glaring example, see Sen, The State, Industrialization and Class Formations in India, pp. 14-45.
4. Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, pp. 327-38; L. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", JBR, 46 (1960), pp. 27-44; Ghosal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, pp. 80-103; Bandyopadhyaya, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, vol. 1, pp. 110-21 and 291-2; Nath, A Study in the Economic Condition of Ancient India, pp. 127-38; Altekar, State and Government in Ancient India, pp. 273-7; G. L. Adhya, Early Indian Economics, (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 25-30; Md. Aquique, Economic History of Mithila (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1974), pp. 32-77; D. N. Jha, Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times, (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1967), pp. 9-21; and R. Thapar, Ancient Indian Social History (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1978), p. 32.
5. See Maine, Village Communities in the East and West, esp. pp. 103-71.
6. J. D. M. Derrett, Essays in Classical and Modern Law (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), p. 333.
7. Ibid., pp. 334-5.
8. Ibid., pp. 340-1.

9. Ghosal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, p. 85.
10. Ibid., p. 86.
11. Sarkar, Epochs in Hindu Legal History, p. 193.
12. Ibid.
13. Ghosal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, p. 86.
14. Paton, A Text-Book of Jurisprudence, p. 467. See also Chapter 5, pp. 257-9.
15. See Tigar and Levy, Law and the Rise of Capitalism, pp. 199-200.
16. J. Jolly, Hindu Law and Custom (Calcutta: Greater India Society, 1928), p. 196; and G. M. Bongard-Levin, "On the Problem of Landownership in Ancient India", SAA, 13 (Winter, 1974-75), pp. 42-3. See also J. N. C. Ganguly, "Hindu Theory of Property", IHQ, 1 (1925), pp. 265-79.
17. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, vol. 3, pp. 574-5.
18. Gautama, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), part I, X. 39-42, pp. 228-9. The approximate dates of composition of the works of Hindu jurists have been cited from Kane, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. xvii-xx.
19. Brhaspati, The Minor-Law Books (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1965), IX. 2, p. 309.
20. For instance, see Manu, The Laws of Manu, X.115, p. 426.
21. Ibid., VIII. 147-8, p. 279; and Gautama, op. cit., XII.37, p. 240.
22. Yājñavalkya, "Yājñavalkya Samhita", in M. N. Dutt, trans. The Dharma Shastra (New Delhi: Cosmo Publishers, 1978), vol. 1, 24, p. 66.
23. Vishnu, The Institutes of Vishnu (Oxford: Clarendon, 1880), V.187, p. 40; Nārada, The Minor-Law Books (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), I.91, p. 63; Brhaspati, op. cit., IX.28-9, pp. 313-4; and Kātyāyana, Kātyāyanasmṛiti on Vyavahāra, (Bombay: P. V. Kane, 1933), 318 and 327, pp. 177-8 and 180.
24. Ghose, The Principles of Hindu Law, vol. 2, p. 192.
25. Kane, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 321.
26. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 208.

27. Ibid., p. 206.
28. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 150.
29. Gautama, op. cit., XII.39 and XIII.8, pp. 240 and 244.
30. Vasistha, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1882), part II, III.16 and XIX.14, pp. 19 and 97.
31. Manu, op. cit., VIII.264 and XI.58, pp. 301 and 441.
32. Nārada, op. cit., I.87, p. 62.
33. Ibid., I.90, p. 63. Emphasis added.
34. Brhaspati, op. cit., IX.11, pp. 310-1.
35. Kane, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 318.
36. For details, see B. and R. Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); B. B. Lal, "The Indus Civilization", in A. L. Basham, ed., A Cultural History of India (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), pp. 11-9; S. Ratnagar, Encounters: The Westerly Trade of the Harappan Civilization (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981); and W. A. Fairservis, Jr., The Roots of Ancient India (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1975).
37. For a general description, see G. S. Ghurye, Vedic India (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979).
38. A. L. Basham, "Introduction", in Basham, ed., A Cultural History of India, p. 2.
39. R. S. Sharma, Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India (Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 29-30. This book is hereafter abbreviated as Material Culture.
40. See, for instance, Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", pp. 27-8; Ghosal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, p. 82; Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 111-5; and Datta, Hindu Law of Inheritance, p. 12.
41. Rai, The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 25-6. See also R. Pal, The History of Hindu Law in the Vedic Age and in Post-Vedic Times Down to the Institutes of Manu (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1958), pp. 334 and 381.
42. Noyes, The Institution of Property, p. 78.

43. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 27-9.
44. R. K. Mookerji, Indian Land System: Ancient, Medieval and Modern (Alipore: Bengal Government Press, 1940), pp. 1-5.
45. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 111-5; Habib, "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India", p. 24; and B. N. Datta, Dialectics of Land-Economics of India (Calcutta: Mohendra Publishing House, 1952), p. 7.
46. Ghosal, The Agrarian System in Ancient India, p. 82.
47. Pal, op. cit., p. 82; and Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 118.
48. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 32, 72 and 161.
49. U. N. Ghosal, Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System, pp. 7-12.
50. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 56, 64, and 162.
51. Ibid., pp. 89-116; and J. C. Darian, "Social and Economic Factors in the Rise of Buddhism", SA, 38 (1977), pp. 226-38.
52. R. Thapar, A History of India (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), vol. I, pp. 50-2. See also S. N. Misra, Ancient Indian Republics (Lucknow: The Upper Indian Philosophy House, 1976), passim.
53. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 108-9 and 117; Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 113; R. Thapar, "Ethics, Religion and Social Protest in the First Millenium B.C. in Northern India", Daedalus, 104 (Spring, 1975), pp. 119-32; O. P. Jaiswal, "Lord Buddha and the Dominant Class: An Evaluation of their Mutual Class Relations", in D. Chattopadhyaya, ed., Marxism and Indology (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi, 1981), pp. 222-9; B. G. Gokhale, "The Brāhmanas in Early Buddhist Literature", JIH, 48 (April, 1970), pp. 51-61; and J. W. DeJong, "The Background of Early Buddhism", in L. Gopal, chief. ed. D. D. Kosambi Commemoration Volume (Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1977), pp. 56-65.
54. Altekar, State and Government in Ancient India, p. 275. See also Chandra, "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies and Colonial Rule", pp. 50-2.
55. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 90-1.
56. Kane, op. cit., vol. I, part I, pp. 13, 20-1, and 301; N. C. Sen-Gupta, Evolution of Ancient Indian Law (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1953), pp. 13-5; and R. Lingat, The Classical Law of India (Berkeley: University of California, 1973), pp. 273-4.

57. Gautama, op. cit., VII.15-6, X.43-4, XI. 1, pp. 210, 229 and 231.
58. Baudhayana, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1882), Part II, III.2.2, p. 288.
59. Vasīṣṭha, op. cit., XXVIII.16, XXIX.19, pp. 134-5 and 137.
60. Ibid., XXIX.16, p. 137.
61. Ibid., XXIX.14, p. 137.
62. Apastamba, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), part I, II.11.28 (1), p. 166.
63. Datta, Hindu Law of Inheritance, p. 20.
64. J. D. M. Derrett, Religion, Law and the State in India (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 124.
65. Jaimini, The Mimāmsā-Sūtras of Jaimini (New York: AMS Press, 1974), VII. 2 & 3, p. 390.
66. See also Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, pp. 330-2.
67. Cited in ibid., p. 331. Emphases added.
68. Gopal, "Ownership of Agriculture Land in Ancient India", p. 28.
69. Bongard-Levin, op.cit., pp. 44 and 48.
70. Ibid., pp. 45 and 47.
71. Rai, The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Change in Ancient India, p. 15.
72. Ibid., p. 16.
73. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", p. 28.
74. Rai, The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Change in Ancient India, p. 34.
75. Ibid., p. 31; and Nath, op. cit., p. 129.
76. Trautman suggests that Arthaśāstra was authored by more than one person around the second century A.D. See T. R. Trautman, Kautilya and the Arthaśāstra (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), pp. 114-87. Trautman's conclusions, especially in regard to the dating of Arthaśāstra, have been questioned by Rai. According to the latter "Trautman himself admits that except for Books 2, 3, and 7 the

application of statistical investigation technique to the remaining books is problematic because of sample size. Moreover, his basic premise has been rightly questioned especially in view of the fact no other work of Kautilya is available which may serve as a control in the investigation. On the question of dates, Trautman has nothing new to offer in way of method. He follows the well worn line of argument based on inner evidence of the text. This line of enquiry has been laid thread-bare by the historians over a period of three quarters of a century. Kangle after reviewing all evidence, concludes that there is no convincing reason why this work should not be regarded as a product of Kautilya belonging to the Mauryan period". See G. K. Rai, Involuntary Labour in Ancient India (Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House, 1981), p. 87.

77. R. P. Kangle, The Kautilya Arthasāstra (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1963), part 3, pp. 167-8.
78. Ibid., p. 170; and S. Bhattacharya, "Land-System in Kautilya's Arthasāstra", IESHR, 16 (1979), p. 85.
79. D. D. Das, The Economic History of the Deccan From the First to the Sixth Century A.D. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969), p. 23; and Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records pp. 5-6. In the medieval era, the extent of the royal demesne possibly changed from time to time, as it did even in England. For the latter, see B. P. Wolffe, The Royal Demesne in English History (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), p. 227; and The Crown Lands 1461 to 1836 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 18-9; and R. S. Hoyt, The Royal Demesne in English Constitutional History (Ithaca: Cornell University: 1950), p. 4.
80. A. Krishnamoorthy, Social and Economic Conditions in Eastern Deccan From A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1250 (Secunderabad: The Author, 1970), p. 77.
81. Appadorai, Economic Conditions in Southern India: 1000-1500 A.D., vol. 1, p. 116.
82. B. M. Morrison, Political Centers and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal (Arizona: University of Arizona, 1970), p. 99.
83. Kautilya, Kautilya's Arthasāstra, (Mysore: Mysore Printing House, 1967), VIII.166, p. 190.
84. Kangle, op. cit., part 3, pp. 170-1.
85. Kautilya, op. cit., IX.169 and XVII.192, pp. 194 and 219-20.
86. Ibid., IX.169, p. 195.

87. Ibid., XII.178, p. 205.
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117. Ibid., p. 203; and Jha, Revenue, System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times, p. 12.
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122. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Cōlas (Madras: University of Madras, 1955), p. 567.
123. See also A. Guha, "Land Rights and Social Classes in Medieval Assam", IESHR, 3 (1966), pp. 217-39.
124. Appardorai, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 125 and 133-4.
125. Ibid., p. 135.
126. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 202. Marx's allegation is also groundless in view of what Campbell says: "Nowhere is the possession of good land so prized than in India". See Campbell, Modern India, p. 32. *Emphases added.*

127. Appadorai, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 140-1 and 151; N. Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles During Chola Imperialist Rule", in R. E. Asher, ed., Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies (Madras: International Association of Tamil Research, 1971), vol. 2, p. 241; K. R. B. Raja, "Agrahāras in Medieval Karnataka", JKU, 4 (1960), pp. 106-14; and V. Balambal, "Sabha's Control over Land During the Reign of the Imperial Colas", JIH, 58 (1980), p. 13.
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137. Munro, The Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro, vol. 1, pp. 347-8. Emphases added.
138. See Chap. 3, pp. 158-61.
139. Kane, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 567. Emphases added.
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CHAPTER FIVE

PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND AND FEUDAL DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

...it seems to me that this outline nevertheless enables us to reach a fairly firm conclusion. Feudalism was not 'an event which happened once in the world'. Like Europe - though with inevitable and deep-seated differences - Japan went through this phase. Have other societies also passed through it? And if so, what were the causes, and were they perhaps common to all such societies? It is for future works to provide the answers.¹

This remark of Marc Bloch is, in a profound sense, quite prophetic because the debate concerning whether or not non-European social formations developed feudalism or a feudal mode of production (FMP) has continued to the present day. Byres recently points out rightly that this debate is not only likely to continue, but it is one that "promises to be lively, controversial, and fruitful."²

That is as it may be, but Marx on his part categorically rejected calling India a feudal social formation. As noted elsewhere, he actually criticized Kovalevsky for the latter's application of feudalism to India, particularly Muslim India (1206 A.D.-1757 A.D.).³ Marx also differed from others - like Hegel, Campbell, Phear, Maine, etc. - who labelled India or any aspect of its social formation as feudal or as approaching feudalism. What is, however, interesting is that Marx insisted on explaining India by "indigeneous, not imported

categories."⁴ But this is exactly what he himself did not do. He judged the Indian social formation in terms of categories drawn precisely from an ensemble of social formations in Europe that developed feudalism. This is by no means unique, for Marx did the same thing also in other respects. For instance, I have shown in chapter 3 that Marx judged (i.e. when he adduced reasons) whether or not India developed private property in terms of criteria drawn basically from the Roman social formation. In a crucial sense, then, for India or, for that matter, the Orient as a whole Marx continuously changed his criteria in order to counterpose the dynamic uniqueness of Europe (that successfully went through several modes of production and achieved capitalism) to the stagnant uniqueness of the Orient, which remained where it was. In all fairness it should, however, be mentioned here that Marx rejected feudalism specifically for Muslim India. He did not discuss the applicability of feudalism to pre-Muslim or Hindu India, i.e. the period under examination here. But it should also be mentioned that Marx did not distinguish between different productive phases of Indian "history", because in his schema India never progressed beyond its archaic communal phase. At the same time, the main burden of the corpus of Marx's writings makes it abundantly clear, in one way or another, that India was incapable of developing beyond that phase, let alone feudalism.

In light of this, the main objective of this chapter is to continue our discussion of the development of private landed property in India. My particular attention is, however, on a number of feudal developments that occurred in India between the 4th century A.D. and the

13th century A.D. I exclude certain aspects of the lord-vassal relationship and various forms of servitude (i.e. slavery and serfdom), leaving these for discussion in chapter 9.⁵ Finally, in order to achieve my objectives I discuss briefly a few relevant aspects of European feudalism that bear on the characterization of India as feudal.

II. European Feudalism: Some Pertinent Remarks

Unfortunately there is still no complete agreement among historians, even of mediaeval Europe, as to how the essential features of their 'feudalism' should be defined, but at least they can point to certain societies which they and virtually everyone else would not hesitate to recognize as 'feudal'. ...We must of course leave it to the historians of other countries (Japan and China, for instance) to decide for themselves whether certain societies in their area of study, can usefully be described as 'feudal' (or 'semi-feudal' or 'quasi-feudal'), provided only that they make it perfectly clear what these terms meant to them.⁶

In the contemporary literature one can very easily discern a firmly entrenched intellectual consensus, now tacit then explicit, which has surprisingly united a whole lot of analysts whose methodological and theoretical orientations are as diverse and contradictory as could be imagined. This consensus, otherwise bred in Orientalism, concerns their obstinate reluctance to allow feudalism or the FMP to be used as a productive conceptual category for explaining societal developments in India or, for that matter, in the Orient. A few examples are in order.

Although he exhorts us to give the AMP "the decent burial that it deserves", Anderson is most reluctant to allow the use of feudalism or the FMP for explaining Oriental social development. If it is allowed, he argues, "all privilege to Western development is thereby

held to disappear, in the multiform process of a world history secretly single from the start."⁷ Quomodo? The answer is that European feudalism, but definitely not Japanese feudalism, "proved the gateway to capitalism."⁸ The whole of Anderson's analysis is teleological, for the uniqueness of the West consists in the uniqueness of capitalism which is treated thus as an end of history. Anderson is quite unable to foresee the logical possibility that capitalism, regardless of its actual spatio-temporal location in the West, could have developed anywhere, had material conditions leading to it been present therein. Neither is he capable of seeing that the West is "simply the site of the first and successful conjuncture of transition to capitalism."⁹ No less important is his failure to see "the anti-capitalist nature of feudal ideology."¹⁰ By making capitalism completely a product of "European" feudalism - an ideal typical abstraction - many analysts including Anderson simply bypass the role of the Oriental or non-European pre-capitalist social formations in the development of capitalism that is otherwise alleged to signify the West's uniqueness.¹¹ In other words, this sort of analysis fails to see that the development of capitalism is not merely a question of development from within Europe; if it were so, it would have arisen before the sixteenth century and without ruthless exploitation and underdevelopment of the colonies and semi-colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America.¹²

Anderson, like others including his predecessor Marx, makes one exception. The attribution of feudalism or the FMP to the Oriental social formations can be allowed only on Occidental terms, i.e. on the

basis of certain common criteria that are arbitrarily chosen from the (Western) European social formations as one entity, as counterposed to yet another collective entity the Orient. These common criteria - the alleged quantum sufficit which would reproduce a summated Occidental feudalism - are then applied to an individual social formation like India or Japan or China to judge the genuineness of its 'feudalism'. The geographical determinism as well as Eurocentrism implicit in this sort of methodological and theoretical abstractionism are not difficult to identify. On the one hand, it conveniently picks and chooses only certain common criteria that suit its teleology (e.g. the demonstration of the uniqueness of feudalism/ capitalism/West/Europe), ignoring the differences between feudalisms of Europe. On the other hand, when it comes to the comparison of the 'feudalism' in a given Oriental social formation, it takes the difference(s) as a definitive negation of feudalism there - the difference that occurs due to the absence in one Oriental social formation of the common criteria, i.e. features common to all West European feudalisms.

The same approach is uncritically adopted, for example, by two non- or anti-Marxist scholars, namely, A. Rudra and H. Mukhia, both of whom thus vainly seek a one-to-one correspondence between India and the entire Western Europe in order to pronounce upon the genuineness of feudalism in India. Not surprisingly, as a result, they deny that India ever developed feudalism or the FMP. Like Anderson, they completely reject the AMP, whether formulated by Marx or revised by others. Without offering any substantial suggestion as to how to determine the

mode of production in pre-British India, Rudra makes an apologetic plea for the study of the Indian social formation on the basis of its cultural dimension. Mukhia defends the prevalence of what he calls self-dependent or free peasant production.¹³ Yet the point has been made that empirically and theoretically it is impossible to have anything called "the peasant mode of production."¹⁴

Daniel Thorner, another critic of Indian feudalism contends that James Todd (1782-1835), a British colonial official, was wrong to call feudal what obtained among the Rajputs. It is stated that among them kinship relations predominated over alleged feudal institutions. At bottom, this denial was also the view of two other British colonial officials, A. C. Lyall (1835-1911), and William Crooke (1848-1923).¹⁵ The argument of Thorner and others is faulty for several reasons. First, Todd was not unaware of the role of kinship relations among the Rajputs. Even so he found feudal relations, which developed due to the inadequacy of kinship relations which in fact strengthened the former. Second, it is improper to judge the genuineness of the Rajputs' feudalism in terms of what existed during the period of colonialism, when their lord-vassal relations might well have been shaped by kinship or blood connections. Factually, these connections received greater impetus for rejuvenation and expansion during the period of colonialism.¹⁶ Thus Coulborn says:

To judge their earlier character by that of the nineteenth century Rajput polities would be as much an error as to judge Spanish feudalism in its heyday by Don Quixote. The Indian fiefs had in fact lasted in their full vigor upwards of three centuries and, even though they then began to lose it, they still exist as political units today, which is more

than the corresponding French ones do.¹⁷

Finally, one can rightly point to Japanese feudalism, in which "the expressive `code` of the lord-vassal relationship was provided by the language of kinship, rather than the elements of law."¹⁸

In any case, the inadequacy of the endeavour, which vainly seeks to find in India certain chosen common features of Western European feudalism, should be illuminated by stressing that differences might well exist between Indian feudalism and feudalism of a European nation, just as there exist differences between the feudalisms of England, France, Italy and Germany. This also means that the so-called common criteria, arbitrarily selected from West European social formations, might not be individually or collectively of the same effectiveness for any given West European social formation. This is why, as I shall show in a while, it is impossible to dismiss certain `feudal` developments in India, even when a few of them might not be of the same intensity as that of the parallel feudal developments in an European social formation.

Let me make the point clear by drawing some of the vital differences that exist between different West European social formations. First of all, if feudalism is so unique as to produce capitalism, then what explains why England, which imported feudalism from outside, developed first the capitalist mode of production, while France, the classic homeland of Western feudalism, lagged behind in its development quite noticeably? Even around the 1850s France remained a country in which two-thirds of its population were small-holding

peasants whose continuation in fact meant obstruction of the growth of the CMP.¹⁹ In the 13th century the political structures of England and France seemed much alike only "superficially", whereas there remained at bottom what Painter calls "striking differences" between them.²⁰ The English state was far more centralized than the French state, the latter being "an alliance of feudal principalities, some of which were almost sovereign."²¹ In England the sub-vassals swore fealty not only to their lords but also to the king, who emerged as the owner of every inch of the English soil.²² Neither is it triviality that the sheriff, directly representing the English king in each county, "remained stronger than any baron in his territory."²³ Thus, says Strayer, "even the greatest vassals had to give obedient service to William and his sons; if they failed in their duties, they were quickly punished."²⁴ Full fragmentation of authority took place only in the frontier districts (e.g. Marches of Wales), not in England proper. All this explains why England was the "strongest state" in Western Europe.²⁵

The polar opposites to English feudalism are exemplified by Italian and German feudalisms. From Italy comes Libri Feudorum (the Books of the Fiefs), "the only written systematization of feudal law which had become part of the general legal heritage of Europe."²⁶ In spite of this, it has been forcefully argued that Italian feudalism was so distinct that it cannot be regarded as representative of Western feudalism.²⁷ "While there was feudalism in Italy, it never had a clear field and was unable to develop as it did in France or England."²⁸ In contrast to England, where allodial (free) property was "completely

eliminated", in Italy "the allod remained the dominant form of land tenure through the Middle Ages."²⁹ In other words, in Italian feudalism, the institution of fief did not dominate. The allodial property existed in all parts of Germany. In certain regions, e.g. Frisia, Saxony and Thuringia, it was "even of considerable importance."³⁰ Germany, otherwise "far less profoundly and less uniformly 'feudalized' than France", was at bottom a loose coalition of independent principalities in the 13th century.³¹ To summarize, German and Italian feudalisms "favoured the vested interests of tenants-in-chief and vassals and acted as an obstacle to national consolidation. Instead of providing the basis of a common law, as it did in England, it evolved a special code for the princes, magnates, and knights, thus underlining the division between ranks of society."³²

The differences between feudalisms of West European countries point at the same time to the differences of opinion among analysts over the definition of feudalism and the FMP, or even over common elements in them.³³ In a recent work on feudalism in different countries, Strayer and Coulborn thus hint at the problem in the following words:

No single description of feudalism has ever fitted exactly with all the facts of Western European history which it tried to cover; it will obviously be much more difficult to find a formula which will describe common elements in nine different feudal or partially feudal societies. On the other hand, in trying to discover the common elements to these societies, it may be possible to resolve some of the differences which still remain among scholars as to what the essential characteristics of feudalism are.³⁴

This is not an isolated opinion. The problem is compounded by the fact that "even in the most feudalized part of Europe there was diversity

from country to country or fief to fief in the feudal customs governing the lord-vassal relationship, the feudal tenure or property, and private jurisdiction."³⁵ In a sense, the nature of feudalism is such that it defies all attempts at its systematic presentation. This nature can be best described in the words of Bloch: "Struggles of the great feudatories against the king; rebellion against the former by their own vassals; derelictions of feudal duty; the weakness of vassal armies, incapable from the earliest times of halting invaders - these features are to be read on every page of the history of feudalism."³⁶

For Strayer and Coulborn feudalism is primarily a method of government embracing the relation between lord and vassal. Feudalism is political, not "an economic or a social system."³⁷ In direct contrast, it is exactly so to Bloch, for whom the fief is only one element, though a very important one. What is more is that "to him a society might still be feudal even if the fief accompanied a more subordinate position."³⁸ Bloch's essentials of feudalism are these:

A subject peasantry; widespread use of service tenement (i.e. the fief) instead of a salary, which was out of the question; the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority - leading inevitably to disorder; and, in the midst of all this, the survival of others forms of association, family and state...³⁹

In about a page and a half Bloch discusses Japan and calls it feudal even though it lacked some of the essential ingredients of European feudalism, e.g. European commendation, vassalage in the nature of contract rather than of submission, lack of plurality of lords, absence of demesne, etc.⁴⁰

There is also a lack of agreement among those who analyse in terms of 'mode of production'. For Laclau, these are the essentials of the FMP:

1. the economic surplus is produced by a labour force subject to extra-economic compulsion;
2. the economic surplus is privately appropriated by someone other than the direct producers;
3. property in the means of production remains in the hands of direct producer.⁴¹

For Dobb, the FMP is virtually identical with serfdom.⁴² Elsewhere, it has been stated that Marx also raised the issue of the absence of serfdom in India.⁴³ Leaving aside the definitional problems,⁴⁴ it should be stated that the identification of serfdom with FMP is questionable for several reasons which will be discussed in chapter 9. Suffice it to say here that if the words 'feudalism' and 'feudal' come to designate phenomena associated basically with the fief (feudum or feodum), then it, not serfdom, has the best claim for identification with the FMP. In this sense, it presupposes, not serfdom, but a military cum landed class.⁴⁵ Finally, let me briefly mention the differential emphases in Anderson with regard to the essentials of the FMP. These are, above all, hierarchical landed property controlled by feudal lords, extra-economic extraction of surplus from the serfs who are attached to the soil, and the parcellization or fragmentation of sovereignty.⁴⁶ I should particularly point out here that Anderson does not define sovereignty. On the other hand, it is argued in a different context that the fragmentation of sovereignty is "itself a concept of non-Marxist historiography."⁴⁷ Further, "state power was not so much

fragmented (or parcellized) as confined within practical limits, given the slow communications and effective radius of the exercise of military force."⁴⁸

III. Landed Property and Feudal Developments in Pre-Muslim India

Let me now pass on to the demonstration of certain feudal developments that overwhelmed the Indian social formation, especially between the 4th and 13th centuries A.D. As I stated earlier, all those developments might not be necessarily identical with parallel aspects of European feudalism. For instance, as Romila Thapar argued:

Indian feudalism did not emphasize the economic contract to the same degree as certain types of European feudalism, but the difference is not so significant as to preclude the use of the term feudalism for conditions prevailing in India during the period. The basic prerequisites of a feudal system were present in India.⁴⁹

It should also be pointed out that feudal developments in medieval India were uneven, just as no part of Europe was ever completely feudalised.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it is needless to point out that certain economic, political, juridical, and social developments that occurred in medieval India are designated here as feudal, precisely because they strikingly resemble similar developments in European feudalisms. For this reason, such feudal developments completely negate Marx's AMP, particularly in its assertion of the absence of property in India.

A number of portentous phenomena which arose and ranged over about 500 years from the demise of the Maurya state (185 B.C.) to the rise and consolidation of the Gupta state (c.320 A.D.-550 A.D.) finally consummated in the birth of feudalism in early medieval India (c.550

A.D.-c.1206 A.D.).⁵¹ Such phenomena include: the invasions of India by different ethnic groups, the disintegration of the centralized states, the appearance of localized centres of political authority, the growth of the practice of land-grants and, hence, of servile tenures in land, the rise of a landed class that combined economic, political and juridical powers of coercion at local levels, the increasing assimilation of the Śūdras with the Vaiśyas as dependent tenant peasantry in varying degrees of servitude including serfdom, the first ever germination of economically self-sufficient village communities and their expansion into newly colonized areas, the decline of trade, and so on.⁵² Although the disintegration of the Gupta state was followed by the establishment of numerous territorial principalities (e.g. those ruled by the Maitrakas, the Kalachuris, etc.), the state established by Harṣavardhana (606 A.D.-647 A.D.) was apparently a unified and centralized state.⁵³

Au fond, however, the process of feudalization of the state apparatus had advanced by this time so much as to affect even the Harṣa state. He administered

his empire according to the system which was by now traditional, through vassal kings and henchmen, resembling the barons of medieval Europe, who might hold high offices at court or act as district or provincial governors, but who were also great landowners, and were virtually kings in their own domains.⁵⁴

Since Harṣavardhana the Indian kingdoms, more often the domains of feudal kings (lords), grew smaller. It is the beginning of a sort of feudalism from above, where the 'feudal' kings (e.g. a tributary), while paying tribute to a particular king or emperor, ruled in their own

rights. Before long "the real basic class" on which the feudal domains depended came to consist of landowners or, rather, "the class of feudal landowners."⁵⁵ A good many of them were recipients of grants of land. Indeed, it was also from the time of Harṣavardhana that the practice of granting land, instead of cash salary, had become the familiar mode of remunerating public officials.⁵⁶ The practice was of significant practical consequence. The state itself was relieved of the unpleasant responsibility for both collecting taxes from different parts of the country and distributing them among officials. It was also almost completely spared of the troubles of maintaining justice, law and order in the donated lands, for now it was the responsibility of the land recipients to do the same, particularly for the sake of their own enjoyment.⁵⁷ The first phase of feudalism developed in the kingdoms of the Pālas (c.760 A.D.-1142 A.D.), the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (757 A.D.-973 A.D.), and the Pratihāras (c.800 A.D.-1019 A.D.). The heyday of feudalism was reached between the 11th and 13th centuries in the kingdoms of (1) the Gāhādvālas (c.1090 A.D.-1193 A.D.), (2) the Candellas (c.916 A.D.-1203 A.D.), (3) the Kalachuris (c.950 A.D.-1195 A.D.), (4) the Caulukyas (c.974 A.D.-1192 A.D.), (5) the Paramāras (c.974 A.D.-1060 A.D.), and (6) the Cāhamānas (c.973 A.D.-1192 A.D.).⁵⁸ Feudalism not only embraced northern and western India, but spread in varying degrees to parts of eastern and southern India as well.⁵⁹

The most important aspect of the FMP concerns the nature of the feudal property, the fief, which usually consisted of land. However, it need not be always so, for "anything of value could be considered a

fief."⁶⁰ Strictly speaking, the fief is a conditional and non-hereditary form of tenure. Even when it became hereditary, the receipt of the fief remained subject to compliance with certain requirements (e.g. formal investiture, payment of relief, etc.). Added to this was the legal indivisibility of the fief. All this attests to the character of the fief more as a public office than as a mere piece of land.⁶¹ Furthermore, the fief (or the landed property) was not owned absolutely or exclusively by anyone singly, as in capitalist ownership. Feudal ownership was hierarchical.

For nearly all land and a great many human beings were burdened at this time with a multiplicity of obligations differing in their nature, but all apparently of equal importance. ...The tenant who - from father to son, as a rule - ploughs the land and gathers in the crop; his immediate lord, to whom he pays dues and who, in certain circumstances, can resume possession of the land; the lord of the lord, and so on, right up the feudal scale - how many persons there are who can say, each with as much justification as the other, 'That is my field!' Even this is an understatement. For the ramifications extended horizontally as well as vertically and account should be taken of the village community, which normally recovered the use of the whole of its agricultural land as soon as it was cleared of crops; of the tenant's family, without whose consent the property could not be alienated; and of the families of the successive lords.⁶²

The feudal lord was thus not a landowner pure and simple. At the height of a feudalism he was more like a king, because he was "the head of the army, the tax collector, empowered to mint new currency, the administrator in chief, and director of the economy."⁶³ Thus, to put it otherwise, "the lord was something less than an owner and the peasant was something more than a tenant."⁶⁴

Legally speaking, all land in the state was the property of the

king, and all the subjects held their tenures directly or indirectly from the king as his tenants.⁶⁵ The coincidence of sovereignty with the sovereign's ownership of all land in the state is the integral component of the FMP, not of the AMP as Marx suggested.⁶⁶

William the conqueror and his lawyers did not distinguish his property from his sovereignty. Both were possessions rather than property. He was both landlord and king. The soil belonged to him by right of conquest, and the people were his subjects. Property and sovereignty were one, since both were but dominion over things and persons.⁶⁷

These feudal developments, i.e. the legal ownership of land by the king/state as well as the hierarchical nature of landownership in practice, also took place in early medieval India.

Full legal doctrinal support for the king's or state's ownership of all lands, in so far as that is available, does not apparently seem to be forthcoming until the very late stage of Hindu legal development. Actually, it comes when the era of the Smritis (i.e. Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras), especially that of the Dharmaśāstras (i.e. Ordinances of the Sacred Law), came to an end around 800 A.D. From about the 7th century begins the period of the commentators and the writers of digests who based their works on the writings of their predecessors, i.e. the "original" Hindu law-makers. This period, while closing with the rise of colonialism, also coincides with the onset of a spate of invasions and with the rise of the Rajputs and Muslims in India.⁶⁸ Even though traces of unsympathetic support for royal or state ownership could be traced to the Smritis, it was mainly in this last stage that one could find explicit approval of such doctrine.⁶⁹ This is particularly

significant because the early support for the absence of individual ownership mostly came from the foreign analysts on India like Diodorus, Strabo, Arrian, Megasthenes, Fa-hien and Yuan Chwang.⁷⁰ At any rate, according to Gautama the king is the proprietor of a treasure-trove, but if a Brāhmaṇa finds it, it is his property.⁷¹ Vishnu awards mines to the king, and treasure-trove to a Brāhmaṇa who finds it. If the king finds the treasure-trove, he is supposed to give one half to the Brāhmaṇas.⁷² This is also true of Manu who, however, awards the king one half of "ancient hoards and metals (found) in the ground."⁷³ The Arthaśāstra attests to the existence of state owned lands that were rented to the interested cultivators. Maybe, the Arthaśāstra suggests that virgin and uncolonized lands were state property.⁷⁴ However, as I said before, the state did not own all land. On the contrary, it prescribed no "steps to curb the growth of large landholders."⁷⁵

When Gautama or Manu spoke of the king as "the master of all" or "the lord of the earth", they at best implied a general lordship - not ownership - over all things, both material and non-material, in his earthly realm. Even to this there was an important exception in favour of the Brāhmaṇa, who is considered "master of everything."⁷⁶ The momentum consequent upon feudal developments called for and climaxed into the propagation of royal or state ownership of land. This doctrine stood more for an ultimate than for an actual ownership of land. However, it served several practical purposes and was actually in conformity with the needs of the time. First, the doctrine fitted in well with the requirements of constant wars and conquests that were the

major mechanism by which feudal lords sought to increase their territorial expanse as much for additional surplus as for political power and social prestige.⁷⁷ The royal or state ownership doctrine proved quite handy in providing a rationale that sought to legalize territorial acquisitions by means of wars and conquests. No wonder, the soldiers were elevated to the status of "the highest class" and the division of the kingdom, creating a hierarchy of feudal landlords, came to be sanctioned.⁷⁸ Gifts of land solely for religious or spiritual purposes were no longer the only items of commendation as they were before.⁷⁹ Now, in the wake of feudal developments, lands could be bestowed upon one who had demonstrated "valour", among other things.⁸⁰ The kings were said to be heading for heaven when they, "seeking to slay each other in battle, fight with the utmost exertion and do not turn back."⁸¹ All in all, some jurists (e.g. Nārada and Brhaspati) in the feudal epoch prescribed all that would, in one way or another, foster the king's authority and practically uphold his ownership. These include the following: authorization to dispossess even a legitimate owner, making unimpeachable the royal edicts that might either override law and custom or create proprietary right by confirmation of erstwhile possession, and the power to resume gifts of land of all except those received by the Brāhmanas.⁸²

It was Kātyāyana (300 A.D.-600 A.D.) who, for the first time, mentioned the king's ownership of land. This ownership is, however, restricted only to his claim over one-sixth of the produce of the land. If the landowner fails to pay the tax, the king as the ultimate owner is

authorized to confiscate his land and sell it in order to recover the arrears.⁸³ Bhaṭṭasvāmin, a 12th century commentator of Kautilya's Arthaśāstra, states: "Those who are well versed in the śāstras admit that the king is the owner of both land and water, and that the people can exercise their right of ownership over all other things except these two."⁸⁴ The royal or state ownership of land is also found in Mānasollāsa, also a 12th century work that recommends grants of fiefs for secular purposes.⁸⁵

It advises the king to make various kinds of gifts, including those of territories, to leading vassals (sāmantamānyakas), and various grades of ministers, such as mantrins, amātyas and sacivas. Gifts should also be made to servants (bhrtyas), kinsmen (bāndhavas) and other people who render military help to the king and render him counsel. Altogether 16 kinds of secular gifts are listed, and they include not only distribution of villages, towns, mines and marks of honour comprising seats, cāmara, umbrella and means of conveyance but also that of virgin girls and prostitutes.⁸⁶

Accordingly, the tenet of royal or state ownership, secondly, expedited the feudalization of the state, i.e. the creation of lordships that enabled their recipients to enjoy such powers as were usually the monopoly of the sovereign.⁸⁷

For the same reason, the tenet of royal ownership enabled the king to create new or confiscate existing ownership rights according to the circumstances involved. It should be added, however, that confiscation or resumption of land occurred only exceptionally.⁸⁸ The law-makers are unanimous in suggesting that the king, as the protector of his subjects, must not normally turn to such extraordinary measures as confiscation or resumption, except as an expedient in the last

resort. Exceptions to this normal rule occurred, more importantly, in cases of rebellion when the king was apparently not bound to honour the grant, which was generally perpetual in duration.⁸⁹ Finally, the doctrine of royal or state ownership proved thoroughly an ingenious mechanism by which unoccupied lands could be either sold to the bona fide purchasers or granted to the Brāhmanas who, in their turn, were expected to establish habitation and make the land productive.⁹⁰

The jurists who, in one way or another, made the king the ultimate owner did not, however, cease to be protagonists of individual ownership. For instance, Kātyāyana takes private landownership for granted: "Since (human) beings reside on it (on land) their ownership thereof has been declared."⁹¹ Marx can hardly derive any corroboration from Kātyāyana even though the latter spoke of common or joint ownership. The reason is that it pertained only to the family, specifically to the grandfather's or ancestral property, but not to the village communal ownership of all village lands which Marx had in mind. Besides, there are other aspects, including individual ownership of self-acquired immovable property, which make Kātyāyana quite a defender of the institution of private property.⁹² This position is not different with Brhaspati, who says: "when land is taken from one man by a king actuated by anger or avarice, or using a fraudulent pretext, and bestowed on a different person as a mark of his favour, such a gift is not considered as valid."⁹³

Nārada, who I mentioned in chapters 3 and 4,⁹⁴ was far more individualist than either Kātyāyana or Brhaspati. Nārada regarded the

householder, the father, as completely independent in relation to other members of his family in the matter of inherited property and in the conduct of legal transactions (e.g. gift, hypothecation or sale of a house or field).⁹⁵ The father, being "the lord of all" he owned, can distribute property unequally among his sons; he may lawfully exclude one or all of them on certain grounds like hostility toward the father, expulsion from the caste, impotence, or commission of a minor offence.⁹⁶ Nārada's defense of private ownership can hardly be expected to be anymore perfect than this: "A householder's house and his field are considered as the two fundamentals of his existence. Therefore, let not the king upset either of them, for that is the root of householders."⁹⁷

Epigraphic remains abundantly demonstrate the existence of private property for both secular and religious purposes. This is evident from transactions involving the sale, purchase, and donation of landed property.

In two of the Jambukesavaram inscriptions (of the later Chōlas-BB), the land which was sold to the temple is stated to have been purchased by the head (mudali) of the donor's family from somebody else who is again stated to have purchased it from some other persons, which indicates that actually land transfer of a secular nature occurred. Moreover, all the lands were purchased by the Jambukesavaram temple itself and were not donated to the temple. This may indicate the secular nature of those transfers and taken together with the evidence shown above, may indicate further the prevalence of secular land transfer among individuals.⁹⁸

An inscription of the Lingraja temple records the donation of a piece of land which one Bhāvasadāśiva-guru purchased with savings from his begging.⁹⁹ Another inscription records the gifts of two plots of land by a merchant of Kalyāna and Mugudāsa.¹⁰⁰ According to an inscription,

which describes the situation in certain region of Orissa in the 10th century, one Seda, the son of a storekeeper and a grandson of a nobleman, purchased the village of Tadeśvara from one Silābhanja who could have been a ruler. However, the interesting point is that Seda resold the village to three persons.¹⁰¹ Sometimes inscriptions, otherwise recording deeds of gift, specifically mention private landowners in connection with the demarcation of boundaries of the gifted lands.¹⁰²

A parallel fact was the attitude with which the ruling class (i.e. those in public offices and exercising political power) respected the inviolability of private property. If any one of them desired to give away a piece of land, it was first purchased from some other owner(s) when he did not have his own. Thus, in order to make a gift Ṛṣabhadatta, governor of the Nasik-Poona region under the king Nahapana (119 A.D.-124 A.D.), bought a piece of land from a Brāhmaṇa at the price of 4000 Karṣpānas.¹⁰³ Vidyavinita Pallava, a member of the royal family in the Kuram plates of Parameśvara-Varman I (c.670 A.D.-695 A.D.), had to purchase 1200 kulis of land to prepare burnt bricks for the construction of a temple.¹⁰⁴ Hastivarman, who belonged to the ruling house of the Eastern Gangas and issued his charters in 575 and 576 A.D., purchased two and a half ploughs of land (halas) from the residents of a Brāhmaṇa village.¹⁰⁵ In the same region (i.e. Deccan) Dadi Madhya, an official under mahāmaṇḍaleśvara Kulothunga Rājendra Choda, purchased a mango grove from one Sūra Bēta. Eriyama Nayaka, an official under the same feudatory ruler, purchased land with 2,000 arecanut plants on it

from one Sahāvāsi Tiruvattari.¹⁰⁶

The obligation to validate property transactions apparently rested with the king, his certain officials, and members of the community in view of the absence of a land registration office, which exists in modern times for purposes of recording dealings in land.¹⁰⁷ In certain cases, as in medieval Andhra Pradesh, land grants were made "in presence of a large number of local landlords, the 'Raṭṭadlu' as they were called."¹⁰⁸ The compliance with procedural formality can be illustrated by the following command of Mahārāja Bhulunda, a vassal of certain paramount lord, who rendered his assent to gift of land in 357 A.D.

Be it known to you that at the request of Ashādanandin, we (hereby) give our assent to the entire brahmadēya gift of a strip of land consisting of the field belonging to Khuddataka, together with the surrounding kachchha (bank), on the boundary of Ulladana, to the Brāhmana Kusāraka of the Bhāradvāja gotra, to be enjoyed by (him and) his descendants as long as the moon, the sun and the stars would endure. (Wherefore), all persons connected with Us should consent to this grant, now that he may thus been permitted by us, so long as he enjoys and cultivates the field according to the conditions for enjoying brahmadēya (land).¹⁰⁹

A few points of this 'perpetual' gift may be noted. First, Ashādanandin was perhaps the purchaser of the field owned by Khuddataka. Second, donation was validated by the 'royal' command.¹¹⁰ Third, the property, though intended to be owned for an indefinite period of time, was conditional in that it could only be used and enjoyed, but not alienated. It perhaps became unconditional after the death of the donee and, hence, could be alienated.

The following is a deed of mortgage contract, which concerns a

certain region of central India in the early 13th century. Herein, the saiva ascetic Sāntaśiva is described as having

given, by way of mortgage, the village Alaurā, together with all dues (such as) bhāga, bhōga, taxes on pravanis and inclusive of (payment in) gold, to the Rānaka, the illustrious Dharēka, the son of Sēvarāja (who is) the son of the Thakkura Rāsala. Having obtained the permission of (his) elder (brother) Nādasiva, a son of the Bhattāraka, the holy Rajagūru Vimalasiva, and a younger brother of Sānta śiva ...has conveyed by way of mortgage the whole annual income of the patta (i.e. of the village Alaurā). In the matter of doing or desisting from doing anything, the wish of the illustrious Dharēka is (to be) followed. The witnesses to this deed are.... Knowing this, (the mortgagee) should enter into and take possession (of the village).¹¹¹

It should be mentioned here that the mortgagee was a feudal rankholder, a rānaka, just as his father was another feudal rankholder, a thakkura. Moreover, the deed of mortgage (vitta-vandha) was actually executed by Nādaśiva with the authority of his elder brother Sāntaśiva in presence of certain witnesses.

Be that as it may, the evolution and strengthening of ultimate royal ownership proceeded conjointly with that of feudal property (i.e. the religious and secular grants of pieces of land that increasingly became parcellized units of sovereignty). Before proceeding any further, I should incidentally mention a relevant point in regard to the creation of the fiefs. It has been argued powerfully by certain analysts that what the king granted was not ownership for, according to them, he was not the owner of most, if not all, lands in his kingdom. What he granted to the recipients were his own rights, i.e. rights to receive certain taxes, privileges and immunities.¹¹² This situation applies practically to cases where the record of a prior purchase by the

donor king (or feudatory) of the land from its owner(s) in the already established village(s) is not available. Even so, the superimposition of the recipient practically depressed the positions of the previous owners who were generally asked to obey the commands of the recipients. The act created in the course of time a kind of hierarchical landownership in the village.

However, there are cases where the terms in the land grants expressly extinguished the rights of previous owners and/or possessors. They rather created pure units of lordships which were both proprietorial and political in character. The following is an example of a grant of several villages by the Candella King Paramardin (1166 A.D.-1203 A.D.) to certain Brāhmanas:

Be it known to you that the above-mentioned villages, with their water and land, with their movable and immovable belongings, defined by their boundaries, with that which is below and above the ground, with all past, future and present imposts (ādāya), entrance into them being forbidden to the cātas and the rest...have been given...to the Brāhmanas. ...You must bring to the donees the (royal) share (of the crops), the (periodical) offerings (payable to the king) and everything else. Therefore no body shall cause any hindrance to them (i.e. the donees) if they enjoy, cultivate, cause to be cultivated, give away, mortgage or sell these villages, together with their houses and walls, together with their gates of exit and entrance, together with all their plants, viz. aśana, sugarcane, cotton, hemp, mangoes, madhūkas, and so forth, together with their forests, hollows and treasure-troves, together with their mines of metal and so forth, together with their cow-houses, together with all other objects found within their boundaries, and together with the external and internal incomes. 113

Clear as crystal, this punctilious determination of the land-rights is symbolic of the then prevailing ownership positions of landlords in the Indian social formation. As such, it clearly questions the stagnant and

simplified representation of the village which Marx imposed on India in his AMP.

The creation of the feudal lordships, combining privileges and immunities of both landownership and state power, became a generalized practice between the 11th and 12th centuries.¹¹⁴ The records of Malawa, Gujrat and Rajasthan attest to the fact that "the major portion of land in these areas was held as fiefs by kinsmen, vassals and officials, who were probably assigned more villages than priests and temples."¹¹⁵ The process of feudalization in southern India, especially in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, was more intensive and complete between the 10th and 13th centuries than was the case in northern India.¹¹⁶ What is striking is not the growth of a landlord class, but rather the general control which the landlords were able to exercise by virtue of their receipt of a bundle of "seignorial rights" along with the grants of land.¹¹⁷ By the 12th century one witnesses the presence in India of numerous principalities many of which, contrary to Marx's assumption,¹¹⁸ "owed their origin to the widespread practice of land grants or the partition of ancestral dominions among the princes of the ruling family."¹¹⁹ A number of works such as Harsacarita and Rājataranginī mention division of kingdoms amongst the king's relatives and officers.¹²⁰

By the 12th century, likewise, land emerged as a prized object and became the major basis of social status and political power.¹²¹ That land, not varṇa affiliation, was prized was reflected in a number of literary and historical sources, thus bearing the imprint of the time. They include Latakamelaka, Upamiti-bhava-prapañca-kathā, Aparā-

jitaprccha, Mānasāra, Rājataranginī, and certain Purānas.¹²² To exemplify how feudalization of the state apparatus - the coalescence of political power with landownership - gathered momentum and how landed property became a valued object of social distinction and attainment, let me refer to Upamiti-bhava-prapañca-kathā, an allegorical work produced in the 10th century. At one place it goes on to satirize the just-mentioned social trend by saying that "the lordship of even the portion of a field led one to pass off as mahāmandalika (i.e. a feudatory vassal like tenant-in-chief/count/duke - BB) and he who acquired two or three small villages considered himself as cakravartin (i.e. the supreme overlord/lord of the lords - BB)."¹²³ This being so, it was no wonder that kinship relations gave way to feudal relations.¹²⁴ "The Palas granted land to Kaivarttas, with whom they had no blood connections whatsoever. Similarly there is nothing to show that the sāmantas (i.e. lords or vassals - BB) in Orissa and rānakas (lords or vassals - BB) in Gujrāt were the kinsmen of their overlords. Most officials, who were granted fiefs in other parts of the country, did not belong to the kin of the grantor. ...The grant of land was not necessarily governed by the kinship principle, but by the need of rewarding services."¹²⁵

Indigeneous terms for feudal lords or vassals are numerous and include the following: bhūpāla, bhoktā, bhogī, bhogika, bhogijana, bhogapatika, bhogirūpa, mahābhogī, brhadbhogī, brhad-bhogika, rājā, rājñī, rājarājarānaka, rājyanka, rānaka, rājaputra, rāja-vallabha, thakkura, sāmanta, mahāsāmanta, mahāsāmantādhipati, mahāsāmantamahārājā,

sāmantamahārājā, mahāsāmantarānaka, sāmantaka rājā, māṇḍalika, mahā-
mandalika, mandaleśvara, mahāmandaleśvara, mahāmandaleśvaradhipati, nā-
yaka, mahānāyaka, Gavuṇḍa, etc.¹²⁶ To be sure, these designations stand
for different ranks in the feudal hierarchy, with different powers and
privileges attached to them. While the actual number of the layers in
the feudal hierarchy is difficult to ascertain and may very well depend
on specific contexts of space and time, the charters from south India
suggest mainly three levels of ranking among the lords and vassals. At
the top, there were great territorial lords or rulers of principalities
- the feudatory vassals - who owed nominal allegiance to the king as the
feudal suzerain (the supreme lord or mahārājādhirājā). These top
ranking lords were, for instance, mahāmandaleśvara, mandaleśvara, mahāsā-
mantādhipati, mahāsāmanta, mahāmāṇḍalika, and sāmanta. When compared to
their counterparts in Europe, they were like big tenants-in-chief or
barons in England, dukes in Germany, or counts in France. The bottom of
the feudal hierarchy was occupied by petty warriors or "ordinary
country-based soldiers knighted by means of fillet of honour (patta) and
the grant of a plot of land". They were variously known: bālālā
"swordsman", aṅkakāra "warrior", and besavagal "bond servants". In
between the territorial lords and ordinary soldiers there were numerous
locality officials, who administered the villages and districts on
behalf of the territorial lords.¹²⁷

The Aparājita-prccha, a 12th century text, classified the feudal
lords in a descending order according to the number of villages they
possessed. Their main ranks, along with the number of their villages,

are as follows: (a) mahāmandaleśvara: 100,000; (b) māṇḍalika: 50,000; (c) mahāsāmanta: 20,000; (d) sāmanta: 10,000; (e) laghu-sāmanta: 5,000; and (f) caturamśika: 1,000. Above mahāmandaleśvara stood, of course, the feudal suzerain, cakravartin mahārājādhirājā or the supreme overlord. Below caturamśika, there were holders of 50, 20, 3 and 2 villages, or just of one village. They were the village chiefs named rājaputras.¹²⁸ In a similar fashion the Aparājitapṛccha laid down the composition of an ideal feudal court. It recommended that the court of mahārājādhirāja should consist of 4 mandaleśas, 12 māṇḍalikas, 16 mahāsāmantas, 32 sāmantas, 160 laghusāmantas, and 400 caturaśikas. A number of rājaputras was also included.¹²⁹ It should be pointed out that it is not the literary works or the charters that alone testify to the existence of the feudal hierarchy. The same is also corroborated by epigraphic evidence.¹³⁰ An example of this, which simultaneously confirms the prevalence of subinfeudation, can be given. The Ratnapur stone inscription, dating back to the 12th century, indicates that certain thakkura chiefs were vassals of a chief of 84 villages called Punāpāksa. He was vassal of Mahārājā Bhupala Rayapala, who was most probably the ruler of the Naddūla mandala (or principality). In any case, Rayapala himself was a vassal who owed allegiance to the Caulukya king Kumarapala (1143 A.D.-1172 A.D.) of Gujrat.¹³¹

The generic name or the keyword for lord or vassal in India is sāmanta, although there were other terms to mean the same. Ergo, the feudal hierarchy in Indian terms is then the sāmanta hierarchy. The word sāmanta first occurs in the Arthaśāstra in the sense of a

neighbouring prince. From the seventeenth century onward, the word sā manta acquired the sense of a lord or vassal and connoted obligations expected of him. Both epigraphic and literary evidences attest to this phenomenon.¹³² The special status of the top ranking sāmantas was usually revealed by their decorations, the most important of which is the receipt of Pañcamahāśabda or five great musical instruments, e.g. śringa (horn), śankha (conch), bheri (drum), joyaghantā (the bell of victory) and tamaṭa (tambour). The right to use these five musical instruments in court and in processions was a pre-eminent emblem of great privilege, honour and royalty, which the feudal suzerain conferred on his feudatories, who, in their turn, bestowed it upon their own vassals.¹³³ In itself, the possession of and the right to use the pañcamahāśabda was symbolic of the lord's comprehensive authority. According to the usage, the grant of pañchamahāśabda signified "the virtual alienation of sovereign political rights in favour of the great warriors who fought the main battles for the monarch and who received in reward portions of the sovereign's territory as the domains of their private authority."¹³⁴ The gift of pañchamahāśabda reminds one of the institution of investiture by which the European lord symbolically invested his vassal with a fief.

The Lekhapaddhati, a 15th century text which reflected the fully developed feudal conditions in the then Gujrat, bears testimony to the usage of written contracts containing, inter alia, the obligations of the fief holders. It mentions three types of feudal charters. Of them, the most detailed was the charter of a rānaka (rānaka-pattalā).

In this case a rājaputra applies to the rānaka for a fief. When he is granted a village, he is required not only to maintain law and order in it, and collect revenues according to old, just practices, but also to furnish 100 foot-soldiers and 20 cavalry for the service of the rānaka in his headquarters. ...In their turn, the rājaputras, as we learn from the forms of contracts for the collection of the village revenues (grāmapattakas), farmed out their villages to merchants and their associates, who approached them for the purpose. ...The real master of the village was the rājaputra, who could not only grant land but also increase taxes and farm them out to whomsoever he liked.¹³⁵

While certain works like Kathākośa and Lekhapaddhati sanction secular and military grants generally for life and conditionally upon rendering of loyal service, the Mānasollāsa and the Udayasundarikathā recommended for permanent assignments of land in favour of the sāmantas and officials.¹³⁶

Both literary and epigraphic source materials indicate that the practice of granting pieces of land in lieu of military service from a specialized class of warriors was quite far-flung. These warriors bring to mind their counterparts elsewhere, the knights in England or chevaliers in France. How the remuneration of the military service by a grant of land operated in reality can be illustrated by the following example from Bangalore in southern India.

The inscription, which bears the date 890, states that a chief named Nagattara, on receiving orders from his Ganga overlord, mobilized his own vassals and rushed forth against the invading armies. The chief, who was accompanied by vassals (sāmanta-sahita), however, died in action. On hearing this, the Ganga overlord undertook to renew the vassalage by binding the badge of chiefship held by Nagattara (nagattara pattam) on the forehead of one Iruga, who appears to have been the main successor in the family of the deceased warrior. The conferment of chieftaincy vacated as a result of the death of its holder was accompanied by the grant of Bempur - 12 districts as Kalnād or military

service holding to the new underlord. The unobstructed enjoyment of the Kalnād was guaranteed by means of a stone charter or śāsana, which seems to amount to a written contract of vassal service. The 12 villages which constituted the Bempur - 12 territory are all named in the inscription. Bempur which is included in the list was evidently the headquarters of the ceded locality.¹³⁷

The Candella King Trailokyavarman granted in 1204 a village to the heirs of a rāuta sāmanta as mṛtyukavṛtau (i.e. for the maintenance of the family of the dead). The cause of the grant was death in the battle field of a warrior on behalf of the king.¹³⁸ There are Tamil inscriptions which record "the creation of iratta-mānya (rakta-mānya) or iratta-kkanikkai (literally 'blood present') or udirapatti (rudhira) meaning an endowment of rent-free land for the maintenance of the family of warriors killed in battle, and the holders of such estates belonged to different communities."¹³⁹

In the Vijayanagara Kingdom (c.1336 A.D.-1565 A.D.), the amara-nāyakas were the specialized class of warriors, who were bound to the Vijayanagar kings by ties of military service, and who, accordingly, held lands on a tenure called amara. In their turn, the amara-nāyakas could enfeoff their own vassals in similar conditions of providing military service, e.g. the supply of foot soldiers, horses etc.¹⁴⁰ Comparable to amara-nāyakas in the Vijayanagara the military vassals were known as nāyakas under the Eastern Gangas, rāutas under the Candellas, and the rājputras under the Caulukyias. This military development occurred mainly between the 11th and 13th centuries. A more substantial aspect in this connection is that "some families held the rank of the rāuta or nāyaka, especially the first, consecutively for

three generations. This led to the emergence of a considerable hereditary military class, living on fiefs assigned to its members."¹⁴¹

Given the uncertainties of boundless militarism that is immanent in feudalism, loyalty of the vassal to his lord was something whose importance in medieval era can hardly be disparaged. In medieval India this aspect of vassalage reached an extreme form in southern India, where the vassals demonstrated their readiness to sacrifice themselves if that would do any good to their lords.

A Devangere taluk inscription of 930 praises one Alliga as the servant of the shinning feet (belaradica) of his master. Alliga, who followed his master in death, was buried under the grave of his master (Kilgunthe). Bhogī, another faithful follower of a chief, committed self-immolation on the death of his master, Muddaka. The inscription was engraved in the year 973. Yet another inscription from the Pulinadu region of Andhra Pradesh mentions a similar instance in which the vassal burnt himself to death as a mark of loyalty to his overlord, the Bāna King.¹⁴²

The importance of personal loyalty of the warrior to his lord reverberates throughout different literary and historical works, e.g. Śiśupālavadha, Rājatarangini, and Dvayāśraya. Conversely, lukewarm loyalty became the butt of ridicule and satire. This was the case with the rāuttarājā Sangrāma-visara in the farce of Latakamelaka.¹⁴³

Vassalic loyalty to the lord was part and parcel of a whole complex of values associated with what is called chivalry in the feudal parlance.¹⁴⁴ "Good chivalry", which may include limitless valour, extravagant generosity, impeccable sense of honour and etiquette, lily-white personal fidelity, and so on and so forth, is said to be identical with "proper feudalism."¹⁴⁵ This concept of medieval chivalry was as much a characteristic of feudal Europe as that of feudal India.¹⁴⁶ In

India the development of the tradition of chivalry was a natural corollary when "war became a grand pageant, and death on the battle field the highest possible honour."¹⁴⁷ That the tradition played a vital role in both ancient and medieval India is illustrated by many historical and literary sources where chivalry became an important topic of treatment.¹⁴⁸ The Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, reflect the tradition of 'high chivalry', whereas the Arthasāstra subordinates chivalry (valour) to diplomacy. The "restrained valour" upheld in the Harsacarita can be matched with "arrogant chivalry" noticed by Bana in his Kādambari.¹⁴⁹ The growth of chivalry was further aided by the indigeneous bardic tradition. Yadava points out:

The literary and epigraphic sources also point to the fact that in the 11th and 12th centuries a number of bards and minstrels roamed about, singing songs of the valour of heroes and kings. At the close of the 12th century the retinue of Vastupāla of Gujrat consisted of 3,300 bards. By the 12th century bards had become a prominent section, and, as we gather from the Tripuradāha of Vatsarāja, they were playing an unhealthy role in society by stamping the tendency of internecine warfare. Extravagant bardic praise of fierce, arrogant chivalry may easily be noticed in the Naisadhīya Carita, the Prthvirājā-Vijaya, etc.¹⁵⁰

The complex of chivalric values came within the scope of what is known as ksātradharmā. In light of all such chivalric developments as discussed above, it is no longer possible to agree with Marx on the point that the so-called "poetry of the soil" did not arise in India.¹⁵²

Finally, a brief mention should be made of what has been designated as feudal development in the realm of medieval Indian art and architecture. This development is manifest in distinctive styles in sculpture and construction of temples.¹⁵³ The main trends of feudal

development in this regard may be summarized in the words of Sharma:

All over the country the post-Gupta iconography prominently displays a divine hierarchy which reflects the pyramidal ranks in society. Visnu, Śiva and Durgā appear as supreme deities, lording over many other divinities of unequal sizes and placed in lower positions as retainers and attendants. The Supreme Mother Goddess is clearly established as an independent divinity in iconography from this time and is represented in a dominating posture in relation to several minor deities. The Pantheons do not so much reflect syncretism as forcible absorption of tribal and lower order deities. The reality of unequal ranks appears in the Śaivite, Jain and Tantric monastic organizations, in which as many as five pyramidal ranks are enumerated. The ceremonies recommended for the consecration of ācārya, the highest in rank, are practically the same as those for the coronation of the prince. 154

IV. Conclusion

Having passed in review some principal developments in the Indian social formation, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Marx's AMP, when empirically viewed, is deficient and left wanting. A short perusal of the concrete historical data leave little doubt that the AMP is a conceptually inadequate in relation to the real Indian situation. The results of my investigation are summarized in the table on the following page.

The whole range of developments that took place at both infrastructural and superstructural levels make it quite plain that the Indian social formation between the third and thirteenth centuries was not at all static, least of all in respect of landed property. Indeed, these developments in property bear striking resemblance not to the AMP, which misrepresents the empirical reality of India, but to feudalism or the FMP, which Marx categorically rejected for application to India.

Summary of the Stages in the Development
of Private Landed Property in India,
c.1500 B.C.-1206 A.D.*

<u>Historical Period</u>	<u>Predominant Form of Landed Property</u>	<u>Predominant form of the Mode of Production</u>
c.1500 B.C.-1000 B.C.	Communal Ownership	Primitive Communal
1000 B.C.-600 B.C.	Transition to Private Ownership	Transition to the Classical
600 B.C.-300 A.D.	Private Ownership in Peasant Proprietary Form	Classical
300 A.D.-600 A.D.	Transition to Feudal Ownership	Transition to the Feudal
600 A.D.-1206 A.D.	Private Ownership in Feudal or Hierarchical Form	Feudal

* The issue concerning the precise nature of landownership in the Indus social formation (2500/2300 B.C.-1750/1500 B.C.) still remains unresolved, and, hence, it has been excluded from this summary. It may also be noted here that in Rome private property in land developed by the time of the Twelve Tables (451-450 B.C.), if not before. In England the feudal landed tenure developed after the Norman conquest (1066 A.D).

My discussion on some additional aspects of Indian lordship and on forms of servitude in chapter 9, will further strengthen this summation. All this does not mean, as I stated earlier, that all the features of Indian feudalism are, or are required to be, absolutely identical with those of feudalism in all West European social formations taken as a collective entity. However, this much is quite clear. In view of the abundance of empirical data of diverse types India does not at all provide Marx with the corroboration that he needed to make the AMP an empirical (and logical) antecedent and opposite of the ancient, feudal and capitalist

modes of production. Not only did India overcome the phase of primitive communism, marked by communal ownership, but it developed also private property in different forms, e.g. private property in its simple form (i.e. peasant proprietary form) and in its feudal form (i.e. hierarchical landownership, and the unison of landownership with political power). In certain cases the development of private property took the form of absolute private property in land. This is, as I have shown, true of cases where the Indian king granted lands to prospective owners in absolute or unconditional terms.

In this connection I should also point out, finally, that Marx derives no corroboration for his AMP inasmuch as the Indian king became, at a certain point of feudal developments, the ultimate legal owner of all lands in his domain. In the AMP Marx envisaged the state (or royal) ownership as the integral component of primitive communalism - a primeval natural condition where the individual private property was yet to separate out of the ager publicus or state property. The Indian form of common property, posited as state property also, was the "original", "direct" or "oriental" form of property which, till the time of Marx's writing, could not develop its own anti-thesis, i.e. individual private property.¹⁵⁵

This hypothesized situation in the AMP stands in sharp contrast to the actual state of affairs in India. Here the growth of the state ownership was predicated upon numerous concrete developments embracing feudal productive forces and relations., e.g. the break-down of the centralized state into regional or local centres of political power and

landownership, the legitimation of grants of land for rewarding acts of valour or military entrepreneurship, and the necessity of clearing forests and waste lands in order for creating and spreading new settlements. Instead of obstructing the growth of the propertied classes (i.e. landlords or peasant proprietors) owning and/or controlling the means of production (i.e. land), as Marx implies by virtue of his thesis of the Oriental state's monopoly of all lands, the state ownership in India proved highly productive, because it precisely stimulated the growth of such classes. As I have shown to a limited extent, the doctrine of state ownership was actually instrumental in the creation of a landed class, who would now lord over the peasantry and appropriate a portion of their surplus. Thus state ownership infused dynamic elements of class antagonism into the Indian social formation by causing further social class differentiation among the populace. In brief, state ownership, as envisaged in Marx's AMP, and state ownership, as it was the product of certain Indian historical developments and as it operated in practice, were absolutely at cross purposes. This only shows how detached was Marx's AMP from the empirical reality of India.

Footnotes

1. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 447.
2. Byres, "Modes of Production and Non-European Societies: The Nature and Significance of the Debate", p.3.
3. See chapter 2, pp. 118-20.
4. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 206.
5. See Chapter 9, pp. 498-513 and 541-6.

6. G. E. M. De Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests (London: Duckworth, 1981), p. 267.
7. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p. 402. Emphases added.
8. Ibid., p. 414.
9. P. Q. Hirst, "The Uniqueness of the West", ES, 4 (1975), p. 452.
10. See E. K. Hunt, Property and Prophets (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 11-3.
11. "In Western Europe feudalism did give rise to certain protocapitalist moments of transition, it is equally true that feudalism's modification in the West did not arise exclusively from inside the feudal form". See Banerjee, "Marx and the Transformability of 'Asiatic' Societies", p. 862. Emphasis in original.
12. See Frank, World Accumulation 1492-1789, passim; and his Dependent Accumulation, passim.
13. Mukhia, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History", passim; and his "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society", passim; and Rudra, "Against Feudalism", passim.
14. J. Ennew, P. Q. Hirst and K. Tribe, "'Peasantry' as an Economic Category", JPS, 4 (1977), pp. 295-322.
15. Thorner, "Feudalism in India", pp. 133-50.
16. Bhadra, The Mode of Production, Social Classes and the State in Colonial India, pp. 174-84 and 550-8.
17. R. Coulborn, "Feudalism, Brahminism and the Intrusion of Islam Upon Indian History", CSSH, 10 (1967-68), p. 372.
18. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p. 414.
19. See Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 8, 648, and 748-9; vol. 2, pp. 116-7; and The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), pp. 43, 105, and 109.
20. S. Painter, The Feudal Monarchies (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1951), p. 125.
21. Ibid., p. 126.

22. P. Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism (London: Verso, 1978), p. 160; and Ganshof, Feudalism, p. 165.
23. O. C. Cox, The Foundations of Capitalism (London: Peter Owen, 1959), p. 287. See also Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 430.
24. J. Strayer, Feudalism (Princeton, N.Y.: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), p. 42.
25. Ibid., pp. 42 and 46.
26. J. G. A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), p. 70.
27. Ibid.; and Ganshof, op. cit., p. 66.
28. J. Strayer, "Feudalism in Western Europe", in Coulborn, ed., Feudalism in History, p. 25.
29. Ganshof, op. cit., p. 67; and D. Herlihy, ed., The History of Feudalism (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 76.
30. Ganshof, op. cit., p. 130.
31. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 426; Painter, op. cit., p. 129; and Strayer, "Feudalism in Western Europe", p. 24.
32. H. Mitteis, The State in the Middle Ages (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 394-5.
33. The word "feudalism" comes from the word feu, feud, or feudum, meaning fee or fief which is usually, but not always, a piece of land granted by a lord to his vassal conditionally upon the latter's providing military services to the former. The word "feudal" in English language came in 1639. The other related words "feudal system" and "feudalism" first appeared respectively in 1776 and 1839. It thus appears that feudalism is "what was believed to have appeared in the Middle Ages by the political commentators of a later period". See J. S. Critchley, Feudalism (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978), p. 11 and 56; and R. Allen Brown, Origins of English Feudalism (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 20.
34. J. R. Strayer and R. Coulborn, "The Idea of Feudalism", in Coulborn, ed., op. cit., pp. 3-4. Emphases added.
35. R. S. Hoyt, Feudal Institutions (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 3.
36. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 235.

37. Strayer and Coulborn, op. cit., p. 4. See also C. Stephenson, Mediaeval Feudalism (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 14.
38. M. M. Postan, "Foreward", in Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. xiv.
39. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 446.
40. Ibid., pp. 445-6. For an excellent critique of Bloch, see B. Lyon, "The Feudalism of Marc Bloch" in his Studies of West European Medieval Institutions (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978), pp. 275-83. There were other elements (e.g. vassal courts, legalism, etc.) that were altogether absent or present in a limited degree in Japan. See Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p. 414.
41. E. Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America", NLR, 67 (May-June 1971), p. 33.
42. M. Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 35.
43. See chapter 2, p. 119.
44. See J. M. Bak, "Serfs and Serfdom: Words and Things", Review, 4 (Summer 1980), pp. 3-18; M. Bloch, Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 151-201; and R. Hilton, "Introduction", in P. Sweezy, et al., The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, pp. 14-7.
45. Herlihy, op. cit., p. xviii; H. Neubauer, "Feudalism", in C. D. Kernig, ed., Marxism, Communism and Western Society (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), vol. 3, p. 330; and P. Sweezy, "A Critique", in Sweezy et al., op. cit., p. 33.
46. Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, pp. 147-8.
47. Hilton, op. cit., p. 19.
48. Ibid., p. 16.
49. Thapar, A History of India, vol. 1, p. 242. Emphases added.
50. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 445.
51. Medievalists generally break European Middle Ages down into (a) the Early Middle Ages (500 to 1000), (b) the High Middle Ages (1000 to 1300), and (c) the Late Middle Ages (1300 to 1500). See B. D. Lyon, ed., The High Middle Ages: 1000-1300 (Glencoe: the Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 1. In terms of the development of feudalism,

generally its two phases are distinguished. The first one, covering the eighth to ninth centuries, is marked by almost a total absence of (theoretical) justification for the development of feudalism. The second one is the classical age which matured between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. The evidence for this maturity of feudalism is now available in lawbooks of the 13th century, e.g. the Norman Summa de Legibus, Bracton and Beaumanoir. See Strayer, "Feudalism in Western Europe", pp. 16-8; and Feudalism, p. 12; and Ganshof, op. cit., pp. xvii-xviii and 65-8.

52. For details, see Sharma, "The Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval Indian History", pp. 1-9; Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", pp. 31-63; Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, pp. 227-37; and Ancient India, pp. 187-98; and Thapar, A History of India, vol. 1, pp. 31-63 and 136-66; and "Asokan India and the Gupta Age", in Basham, ed., A Cultural History of India, pp. 38-50.
53. R. C. Majumdar, "Northern India After the Break-up of the Gupta Empire", in R. C. Majumdar, gen. ed., The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Classical Age (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), vol. 3, p. 60.
54. A. L. Basham, "Medieval Hindu India", in Basham, ed., A Cultural History of India, p. 52.
55. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, pp. 295 and 310.
56. Sharma, "The Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval Indian History", p. 4.
57. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", p. 32.
58. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, passim; and A. L. Basham, The Wonder that Was India (New York: Taplinger, 1968), p. xxii.
59. For southern and eastern India, see Nandi, "Feudalization of State in Medieval South India", pp. 33-59; Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles During Chola Imperialist Rule", pp. 239-44; Choudhary, "Some Aspects of Feudalism in South India", pp. 63-104; A. P. Sah, "Feudatories and Beneficiaries in Medieval Orissa: C. A. D. 600-1000", JIH, 54 (1976), pp. 531-7; V. Balambal, Feudatories of South India: 800-1070 A.D. (Allahabad: Chug Publications, 1978), passim; M. S. Govindasamy, The Role of Feudatories in Pallava History (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University, 1979), passim; and The Role of Feudatories in Later Chola History (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University, 1979), passim; Gough, "Dravidian Kinship and Modes of Production", pp.

- 265-91; and Jha, "Validity of the 'Brāhmana Peasant' Alliance and the 'Segmentary State' in Early Medieval South India", pp. 270-96.
60. Hoyt, op. cit., p. 2. As a matter of fact, the fiefs might well consist of a wide variety of things other than land, such as the fiefs in castle, in public authority (i.e. power to issue commands, control or punish free men), in rights entitling one to certain payments in regular intervals, and so on. For details, see Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 113-25; G. Forquin, Lordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), pp. 132-7; and B. D. Lyon, From Fief to Indenture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), passim.
 61. Herlihy, op. cit., pp. 75-6; and Stephenson, op. cit., pp. 24-5.
 62. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 116. Emphases added.
 63. E. Mandel, From Class Society to Communism (London: Ink Links, 1977), p. 27.
 64. F. E. Huggett, The Land Question and European Society (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 18. Neale goes so far as to say that the serf had "possession if not ownership of land". R. S. Neale, "Introduction: Property, Law and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism", in E. Kamenka and R. S. Neale, eds., Feudalism, Capitalism and Beyond (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), p. 17.
 65. Ganshof, op. cit., pp. 67-165; P. S. James, Introduction to English Law (London: Butterworths, 1979), p. 418; Cruickshank, et al., The Rise of Western Civilization, p. 325; Petit-Dutaillis, The Feudal Monarchy in France and England, pp. 66-7; and Huberman, Men's Worldly Goods, p. 10.
 66. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 791.
 67. J. R. Commons, Legal Foundations of Capitalism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 214. Emphases added.
 68. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, vol. 1, part 1, p. 545; and Datta, Hindu Law of Inheritance, p. 33. Datta suggests that this period was barren, "each one quoting the previous authors to prove his contention".
 69. For attempts to establish royal ownership, see R. Choudhary, "Ownership of Land in Ancient India", JBRs, 53 (1967), pp. 27-52; and Basham, The Wonder That was India, pp. 110-1.
 70. Kher, Agrarian and Fiscal Economy in the Mauryan and Post-Mauryan Age, p. 35; and Aquique, Economic History of Mithila, p. 41.

71. Gautama, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, X. 43-4, p. 229.
72. Vishnu, The Institutes of Vishnu, III. 55-8, p. 19.
73. Manu, The Laws of Manu, VIII. 37-9, pp. 259-60.
74. Aquique, op. cit., p. 42.
75. Bhattacharya, "Land-System as Reflected in Kautilya's Arthaśāstra", p. 89.
76. Gautama, op. cit., XI. I, p. 231; and Manu, op. cit., VIII. 37 and 39, pp. 259-60.
77. G. Therborn, What Does Ruling Class Do When It Rules (London: NLB, 1978), p. 71; J. S. Cohen, "The Achievements of Economic History: The Marxist School", JEH, 38 (March 1978), p. 34; and Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 235.
78. Nārada, The Minor-Law Books, V. 23 and XVIII. 2, pp. 134 and 214; Manu, op. cit., VII. 115; and Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 142.
79. Apastamba, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, II. 10. 26(1), p. 161; and Vasistha, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, XXIX. 16, p. 137.
80. Brhaspati, The Minor-Law Books, VIII. 18 and XVII. 3, pp. 306-7 and 347; Nandi, op. cit., pp. 35-43; Sastri, The Cōlas, pp. 574-5; and Kātyāyana, Kātyāyanasmṛiti on Vyavahāra, 876-7, p. 810.
81. Manu, op. cit., VII. 89, p. 230.
82. Nārada, op. cit., XI. 27, XV. 30 and XVIII. 21, 24, 45 and 49, pp. 160, 212, 217 and 220-1; and Brhaspati, op. cit., II. 27, IX. 4 and XIX. 17-8 and 23, pp. 287, 309, and 353-4.
83. Kātyāyana, op. cit., 16-7 and 704, pp. 121 and 263.
84. Cited in Kher, op. cit., p. 36.
85. Gopal, The Economic Life in Northern India, p. 9.
86. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 203.
87. Ibid., p. 152.
88. For actual instances, see Jha, Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times, p. 17; and Kane, op. cit., vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 863.
89. Das, Economic History of the Deccan from the First to the Sixth

- India in the Gupta Period (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), pp. 27-8; and Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records, pp. 9-11.
90. See T. N. Chakrabarti, "Transfer of Landed Property in Ancient Bengal", IC, 9 (1942-3), pp. 179-86; Y. Toshio, "Some Aspects of Land-Sale Inscriptions in Fifth and Sixth Century Bengal", AA, 43 (1982), pp. 17-36; Datta, Studies in Indian Social Polity, pp. 392-3; R. K. Sharma, The Kalachuris and Their Times (Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1980), pp. 136-7, 144 and 214-4; and Das, op. cit., pp. 39-40.
 91. Kātyāyana, op. cit., 17, p. 121.
 92. See Ibid., 325 and 838-93, pp. 179 and 295-315.
 93. Brhaspati, op. cit., XIX. 22, p. 354.
 94. See Chapter 3, p. 158; and chapter 4, p. 224.
 95. Nārada, op. cit., I. 26-7, 32-4, 38, VIII. 4 and XIII. 30-1, pp. 49-52, 147 and 196-7.
 96. Ibid., XIII, 4, 15 and 21, pp. 189, 192 and 194.
 97. Ibid., XI. 42, p. 164.
 98. N. Karashima, "Land Transfer as Seen in the Later Chola Inscriptions of Vedaranyam", in N. Jagadeesan and S. Jeyapragasam, eds., Homage to a Historian: A Festschrift (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976), p. 170.
 99. Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India, p. 6.
 100. Das, op. cit., p. 36. See also Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", p. 35; and P. M. R. G. Alwaye, "Medieval Land Rights: Structure and Pattern of Redistribution", in IHCP, 37th session (Hyderabad: Osmania University, 1978), pp. 280-1.
 101. Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records, p. 24.
 102. Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India, p. 7; and V. V. Mirasi, ed., Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum (Ootacamund: Government Epigraphist for India, 1955), vol. 4, pt. 2, pp. 478, 483, 495 and 533.
 103. Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India as Revealed by Epigraphical Records, p. 23.

104. G. Minakshi, Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas (Madras: University of Madras, 1977, p. 166.
105. D. C. Sircar, "Deccan in the Gupta Age", in Majumdar, gen. ed., op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 215-6; and Appadorai, Economic Conditions in Southern India 1000-1500, vol. 1, p. 118.
106. Krishnamoorthy, Social and Economic Conditions in Eastern Deccan from A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1250, p. 77.
107. Nārada, op. cit., XI. 1-12 and XVIII. 47, pp. 155-7 and 221; Brhaspati, op. cit., XV. 6 and XIX. 8-15, pp. 342-3 and 352-3; and Kātyāyana, op. cit., 467-71, 702-3, and 732-67, pp. 207-8, 262 and 269-77.
108. M. Venkateswarlu, "Land-Grants in Medieval Andhra", JAHRS, 2 (1949-50), p. 15.
109. Cited in Mirasi, ed., op. cit., vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 9-10. Emphasis in original.
110. Ibid., p. 8.
111. Cited in Ibid., pp. 374-5. Emphasis in original.
112. Gopal, "Ownership of Agricultural Land in Ancient India", p. 37.
113. Cited in D. C. Sircar, Indian Epigraphy (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1965), pp. 395-6. Emphases added.
114. Sharma, Social Changes in Early Medieval India, p. 2; and Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 147.
115. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, pp. 219-20.
116. Nandi, op. cit., pp. 58-9. See also footnote no. 59 of this chapter.
117. For full details see Sharma, "How Feudal Was Indian Feudalism?", pp. 24-5.
118. See chapter 2, pp. 119-20.
119. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 207. See also ibid., pp. 159 and 183; and his "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India (c. A.D. 1000-1200)", JESHO, 4 (1961) pp. 87 and 94.
120. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 142; and "Secular Land Grants of the Post-Gupta Period and Some Aspects of the Growth Feudal Complex in Northern India", in Sircar, ed., Land System and

- Feudal Complex in Northern India", in Sircar, ed., Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India, p. 73.
121. See Gupta, "From Varna to Jati: The Indian Caste System, from the Asiatic to the Feudal Mode of Production", pp. 262-3; Yadava "Problem of the Interaction Between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", p. 45; S. D. Digby, "Economic Conditions Before 1200", in T. Raychaudhuri and I. Habib, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 1, p. 46; and B. P. Mazumdar, "Merchants and Landed Aristocracy in the Feudal Economy of Northern India (8th to 12th Century A.D.)", in Sircar, ed., Land System and Feudalism in Ancient India, p. 65.
 122. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, pp. 145 and 173; and Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 207.
 123. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 151.
 124. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, pp. 178-83.
 125. Sharma, "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India", p. 101.
 126. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 264; Choudhary, "Some Aspects of Feudalism in South India", pp. 91-3; and Sah, op. cit., p. 533.
 127. Nandi, op. cit., pp. 47-52; and Choudhary, "Some Aspects of Feudalism in South India", p. 91.
 128. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 149.
 129. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 206; and Yadava, "Secular Land Grants of the Post-Gupta Period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal Complex in Northern India", p. 87.
 130. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 150.
 131. Ibid., p. 151; and his "Secular Land Grants of the Post-Gupta Period and Some Aspects of the Growth of Feudal Complex in Northern India", p. 87.
 132. Nandi, op. cit., pp. 33-4, and 47-8; and Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 136-7. For a history of the changing meanings of the word 'sāmanta', see L. Gopal, "Sāmanta - Its Varying Significance in Ancient India", JRASGI, pts. I & II (1963), pp. 21-37; and "On Some Problems of Feudalism in Ancient India", ABORI, 44 (1963), pp. 1-32.
 133. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 154.

134. Nandi, op. cit., p. 50. See also R. S. Sharma, "Feudal Elements in Rāṣṭrakūṭa Polity", JBRs, 46 (1960), pp. 248-9.
135. Sharma, "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India", pp. 97-9.
136. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 147.
137. Nandi, op. cit., pp. 40-1.
138. Sharma, "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India", p. 79.
139. Sircar, Landlordism and Tenancy in Ancient and Medieval India, As Revealed by Epigraphical Records, p. 31.
140. Ibid., p. 32; and Choudhary, "Some Aspects of Feudalism in South India", pp. 88-91.
141. Sharma, "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India", p. 102.
142. Nandi, op. cit., p. 56.
143. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 214.
144. Critchley, op. cit., pp. 38-9.
145. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 201.
146. J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Golden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 77 and 89.
147. Thapar, A History of India, vol. 1, p. 247.
148. For an excellent account of Tamil bardic poetry tradition, see K. Kailasapathy, Tamil Heroic Poetry (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1968), passim. See also Sastri, op. cit., esp. pp. 30-62.
149. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, pp. 201-2.
150. Ibid., p. 202.
151. Ibid., p. 203.
152. See E. Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 58.

153. See D. Desai, "Art Under Feudalism (C.A.D. 500 - 1300)", IHR, 1 (March 1974), pp. 10-17; and P. V. Ranade, "Feudal Content of Maharastra Dharma", IHR, 1 (March 1974), pp. 44-50.
154. Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval India in Indian History", p. 8. See also Jha, "Validity of the 'Brāhmana Peasant Alliance' and the 'Segmentary State' in Early Medieval South India", pp. 294-5.
155. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 471-9, 490, and 497.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL STAGNATION AND THE VILLAGE ECONOMY: A METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

My dialectical method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the idea', he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought... The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.¹

This is what Marx said in 1873, while he was defending the usefulness of his method of dialectical materialism in the revelation of inner mechanisms of capitalism and how they worked. But, as I shall show below, when it comes to unfolding the etymon of social development, or rather social undevelopment, of the Orient there is little that separated Marx from Hegel. Both are Orientalists sharing the same epistemology and ontology, which assumes that the inner essence of the West is essentially and constantly unfolding in its historical specificity and universal signification, whereas that of the Orient is essentially and timelessly non-evolutive in its ahistorical particularity. Furthermore, the Oriental social formations were

"veritable struldbruggs, incapable of genuine death as much as of development."²

In brief, what the AMP lacks is a dialectic - the mechanism of internal social change and development -, and this has far ranging Orientalist implications as much for the (Marxist) theoretical system of which the AMP is a part, as for the peoples of the East. Gellner draws attention to these aspects:

Marx himself had noted that the only genuine social revolution in India was imported by the English. The sheer fact of being thus turned into a cul-de-sac of history deprives those caught within it of any rational hope of liberation. Like the princess imprisoned by the dragon, their only hope lies in an extraneous liberator. Whether he eventually arrives or not, whether other non-stagnant societies exist, willing or able to act as knights/saviours, whether continents exist which are not constrained by the requirements of massive irrigation, depends on a historical and geographical accident. So, if the Asiatic Mode of Production exists, the promise of Salvation is replaced by a merely contingent, humiliatingly accidental and extraneous possibility of salvation. However, there is worse to come. Implicit in all this, of course, is a truly Victorian European vainglory: the distinction between a dialectical endogenously liberated Occident, and a static, passively liberated Orient.³

What thus drew dialecticians like Hegel and Marx together is what I call Orientalism. However, Marx sought to justify his case by drawing on concrete (material) reasons for what he considered the non-dialectical East, as opposed to the dialectical West.⁴ The significance of Marx's AMP, thus, consists in the fact that it represents not idealist Orientalism as traceable in Hegel, but materialist Orientalism formulated by none other than its founding father, Marx.

Against this backdrop, the primary objective of this chapter is to critically examine and assess Marx's thesis of the millennial stagnation of the village communities in the Orient (or synonymously India) from the Marxist methodological and theoretical point of view. In achieving this objective, I discuss also the historical antecedents of Marx's thesis.

II. A Methodological and Theoretical Review: Predecessors and Contemporaries of Marx

The assumption that India or, for that matter, the Orient has remained stationary in aeternum is not one that originated with Marx. As is invariably the case, the idea of the timeless immobility of the Indian social formation was conceived much earlier by a number of European thinkers, for whom the geographical divide between the East and West practically coincided with their methodological and theoretical point of departure. In the wake of Europe's capitalist industrialism and the proliferation of European imperialism into the remotest reaches of the Oriental social formations, different thinkers aptly took the development and success of capitalism for the inherent dynamism and success of Europe and the Europeans per se; they did not consider that Capital's successful development in certain parts of Europe was owing to an earlier ripening of the necessary (concrete) preconditions therein. As a natural corollary they, Marx being no exception, assumed that both the East and West must necessarily develop at the same pace or rhythm as if it were a divine law. They were not interested in the fact of combined but uneven development of the productive forces regardless of

their geographical location.⁵ Hence, the non-development of capitalism in certain parts of the world (i.e. Orient) came to be widely interpreted as the surest sign of the Orient's ageless stagnation. They began competing with each other to prove, in one way or another, that the causal forces of social and economic change were essentially extrinsic to the Oriental social formations. In this, the geographical location in the East or West came to exercise a determinate influence in what was largely a teleological and ideological, rather than scientific endeavour. Let me illustrate.

Genealogically, the popularization of the East as imprisoned within an irreversible inertia in saecula saeculorum was most probably an eighteenth century accompaniment of yet another, and also older, Europocentric popular characterization, Oriental despotism, which I shall discuss in detail in chapter 8. One of the stalwarts in this characterization was Montesquieu, who originally set out to discover the spirit of the laws. He argued that the spirit consisted of relations that the laws might have with various factors relevant to legislation. These factors might range from climate to the customs and manners of the people(s).⁶ However, he ended up practically identifying the geographical dimensions as independent variables that exclusively determined the character of both the peoples and their governments in the Orient. Despotism became the political function of the territorial vastness of empires in the Orient.⁷ Moreover, the particular absence of the temperate (or cold) climate in the Orient meant that the Orientals were not only servile, but spiritless as well.

The Indians are naturally a cowardly people; even the children of the Europeans born in the Indies lose the courage peculiar to their own climate. ... The laws, manners and customs, even those which seem quite indifferent, such as their manner of dress, are the same to this very day in eastern countries as they were a thousand years ago.⁸

There is another factor, the absence of private property in land, which added to the numbness and dumbness of the people in the Orient.

Thus the Indian laws which give the lands to the prince, and destroy the spirit of property among the subjects, increase the bad effects of the climate, that is their natural laziness.⁹

This completes the circle of political unfreedom and social torpor, characterizing the esprit general or caractere general of the Indians.

Montesquieu's grand theoretical delineation of the body - political and social of the Orient is unwarranted simply from the point of view of the adequacy and authenticity of the data on which he based his whole analysis. These data were, of course, provided by the seventeenth century European travellers like, among others, Bernier, Tavernier and Jean Chardin(1643-1713).¹⁰ It has been pointed out earlier that they were not disinterested scientists searching for unbiased truths about the Oriental social formations and their peoples.¹¹ Apart from the fact that they did not use any indigeneous source materials to buttress their observations, they were negatively biased from the beginning in their depictions of the Orient. For instance, Montesquieu harbored the explicit desire to warn his own countrymen against the dangers of reigning absolutism in France, which, if not checked by an independent nobility, might well melt into Oriental despotism.¹² Thus, his schema of Oriental despotism, rightly says

Sawer, "was intended as a negative example for home consumption, rather than as a systematic explanation of the principles of Asiatic governments."¹³

The French sociologist Auguste Comte(1798-1857), while praising Montesquieu for raising politics to the rank of a positive science, faulted him for not being historical and, hence, for not devising an evolutionary principle which would have embraced the natural development of human civilization. This deficiency was remedied by Hegel, whose main concern was philosophical, especially for the Volksgeist (the spirit of the nation/people) in contrast to the esprit des lois (the spirit of the laws) as in the politics of Montesquieu, who also spoke, however, of the esprit de nation.¹⁴ What is more important methodologically and theoretically was Hegel's uncritical appropriation of Montesquieu's geographical determinism and its application to his idealistic conceptualization of history as the self-unfolding of the world spirit.¹⁵ However, it was not Montesquieu who alone influenced Hegel's geographical determinism; the latter was also influenced by Herder and Ritter.¹⁶ What ensued from this fateful marriage of geographical determinism with the objective idealism in Hegel's philosophical apparatus of the world spirit, manifesting itself hierarchically in the spirits of different peoples in different epochs of the world history, was indeed an awesome enlargement and legitimation of an already commonplace European Weltanschauung in the first half of the 19th century. That is, since the Weltgeist (world spirit) is fundamentally the Weltgeist of the Abendland, "it is the necessary fate

of the Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans."¹⁷

In this grandiloquent schema the role of the East, in as much as it derives any importance from Hegel, is limited to the inescapable fact that it was the river plains of the East which provided favourable geographical conditions for the development of agriculture and, hence, gave rise to the primordial beginnings of human civilization, of the "light of spirit", or of the world history.¹⁸ Having done so, the East reached the limits of its productivity and exhausted its potential for further development from within. The locale of world history, which is apparently the development and coming to self-consciousness of the world spirit but which is essentially none other than the progressive development of the consciousness of individual freedom at bottom, now shifted to the temperate zone, "the true theatre of History", from the East (or the frigid or torrid zone), where "the locality of World - historical peoples cannot be found". Here, in the extreme zones, "man cannot come to free movement; cold and heat are here too powerful to allow Spirit to build up a world for itself."¹⁹ Hence, argues Hegel, "the History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning."²⁰

Insofar as India is specifically concerned, it did not fare any better; actually it sank to the bottom of the Oriental hierarchy of unfreedoms and non-developments. In contrast to China, Persia and Turkey, where despotism is disapproved and not a necessity, India is the nourishing soil for "the most arbitrary, wicked, degrading despotism". In India the absence of personal independence render the prevalence of

such despotism a normal phenomenon. Indians are incapable of writing history as much as of making one.²¹ "China and India lie, as it were, still outside the World's History", because they have remained "stationary" and perpetuated "a natural vegetative existence even to the present time."²² To be sure, the concepts of stationariness and lack of history in India were nothing new. In his The History of British India, James Mill stated that the Indians "have presented a very uniform appearance during the long interval from the visit of the Greeks to that of the English. Their annals, however, from that era till the period of the Mahomedan conquests, are a blank."²³ In a manner of speaking, Hegel just echoed the same ideas and concepts.

In any case, within what appears to be an irreversible and predestined geographical determination, there are other damaging factors that contributed to the historic stillness of Indian undevelopment. One of them is the caste system that brought about "the most degrading spiritual serfdom" among the Indians.²⁴ Another was the particular village constitution (e.g. the astrologer, the smith, the carpenter, the washerman, and so on). "This arrangement is fixed and immutable, and subject to no one's will. All political revolutions, therefore, are matters of indifference to the common Hindoo, for his lot is unchanged."²⁵ When any people, whether Indians or any other Orientals, arrive at such a dead end then, given the inexorable march and mobility of the European Weltgeist, it is their fate to be subjected inevitably to the Europeans. And this is all the more so because it would bring the Orientals into the very fold of World History by spreading

conditions of civilization amongst them.

Thus Hegel could rationalize the merchandizing of the "negro", who is identified as "the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state."²⁶ In the same vein, Hegel condoned and decriminalized the imperialist interventions of the West in order to force the Orientals out of their alleged unconsciousness and unfreedom of barbarism.

The material existence of England is based on commerce and industry, and the English have undertaken the weighty responsibility of being the missionaries of civilization to the world; for their commercial spirit urges them to traverse every sea and land, to form connections with barbarous peoples, to create wants and stimulate industry, and first and foremost to establish among them the conditions necessary to commerce, viz the relinquishment of a life of lawless violence, respect for property, and civility to strangers.²⁷

This was exactly what Marx also had in mind. As the most faithful disciple who just parroted Hegel in almost all matters concerning the Orient,²⁸ Marx echoed his guru by saying that England was laying "the material foundations of Western society in Asia."²⁹ Argued Marx: "The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution."³⁰ Hence, in Marx's AMP imperialism was a magnum bonum for the Easterners.

In any case, the consequences of the Hegelian viewpoint on the Orient - that it was the compulsive mission of the Occident to break the political despotism and social inertia of the Orient in order for the latter's elevation to civilization from its inherent savagery and

barbarism - proved enormously fateful. It encouraged and enabled the cooking of all sorts of rationalizations for imperialist interventions.³¹ A run-of-the-mill example of imperial missionarism and civilizing refrain of the West can be found in the following remark of a colonial official:

It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization, still recognizing that, while superiority confers rights, it imposes strict obligations in return. The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity. Material power is nothing but a means to that end.³²

It is not irrelevant to mention that in the 19th century the concept that it was the "providential destiny" of Great Britain to carry out the white man's burden became "an extremely powerful movement."³³

Since there is essentially no epistemological rupture whatsoever between Hegel and Marx in their animadversions upon the essential aspects of the Orient, and since Hegel profoundly influenced Marx in his formulations of the AMP, the methodological and theoretical deficiencies of the Hegelian viewpoint can hardly be ignored. In a sense, they were also Marx's deficiencies. To begin with, it must be stated that the data, which Hegel utilized in his understanding of India, were grossly inadequate in terms of their reliability and objectivity. They were highly coloured by the interests of the European colonial officials, travellers, merchants etc., who were not exactly disinterested seekers of truth. As I said earlier, in the main they merely corroborated what

had already been a commonplace knowledge in Europe (i.e. the alleged Oriental inferiority).³⁴ Hegel drew on the empirical data supplied principally by writers for whom Oriental despotism and stationariness were res adjudicata. Hegel refers to a variety of data on India (e.g. the Vedas, the Manusmṛiti, the Purāṇas, Kālidāsa's Sakuntalā, the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata) and often to certain British officials like William Jones, H. T. Colebrooke, and others.³⁵

A detailed assessment of the limitations of Hegel's data as well as his mode of handling and interpretation of those data cannot be undertaken here. However, let me give a few examples to illustrate my point. One may altogether leave aside such sweeping overgeneralization as this one made by Hegel:

What we call historical truth and veracity - intelligent, thoughtful comprehension of events, and fidelity in representing them,- nothing of this sort can be looked for among the Hindoos.³⁶

This sort of downgrading of the Indians was in singular conformity with the spirit of imperialism and colonialism in the 19th century, and can be found among many British administrators, who justified colonial domination on the grounds of reforming the Orientals from their depthless degradation and barbarism.³⁷ What is more deplorable is Hegel's uncritical appropriation of such a rationale. However, what happened when Hegel confronted rather the positive evidence of historical records? He wrote:

More definite information may be obtained from inscriptions and documents, especially from the deeds of gifts of land to pagodas and divinities; but this kind of evidence supplies names only.³⁸

Thus Hegel, while moaning and groaning about India's lack of history, invents a comfortable excuse simply to avoid confronting the truth that such records do indeed provide written evidence of Indian history in its differential aspects (for instance, the nature of the agrarian system). Again, he was often contradictory. Thus how can he say, as he did, that India had "an order of things very nearly approaching feudal organization"³⁹ when, according to him, the Indians had remained in vegetative existence till the time of penetration by British colonialism? If he wanted to, he could have found information that would have negated his uncalled-for assertion of the most degrading form of Oriental Despotism. Such a negation was forthcoming from Jones, whom Hegel mentioned at times.⁴⁰

Actually, Hegel exaggerates anything that was a negative aspect of the Orient and, then, attaches to it what may be called, to borrow Marx's expression, "mystical profundity."⁴¹ Hegel's favoured mode of abstraction and conceptualization is such that any negative pertaining to the Orient, regardless of its empirical validity and magnitude, gets transformed into an independent entity in and for itself, so much so that it becomes representative of the essence of the entire reality of the Orient. Hence, what Marx said about Hegel with respect to the latter's Philosophy of Right can also be said with respect to his other work, the Philosophy of History. That is, Hegel had this problem: "the inevitable transformation of the empirical into the speculative and the speculative into the empirical."⁴²

The fact that the East lagged behind the West in respect of the development of capitalist values (bourgeois political freedom etc.) was taken by him as irrefutable evidence that the West was the location of human freedom and progress. Therefore, in Hegel, geography became a prime determinant of the world historical process and, hence, of the natures of individuals and nations corresponding to the space wherein they were born and lived.⁴³ As a result, Hegel gives birth to an arbitrary, closed and ethnocentric view of development. To summarize in the words of Quaini:

The choice of `receptacles' of the spirit (men and peoples in the history of the world) and the delimitation of the `theatre' or geographical area of world history and of phases or moments of that history become so many arbitrary choices, because the empirical materials of history are introduced into the discussion without any real scientific control but in subordination to the general consciousness of the time, according to the dominant ideology of the Christian - Germanic society which Hegel was conscious of inhabiting...The possibility of a people freeing itself from the influence of the environment and of becoming a subject of history is made to depend upon the morphological and climatic structure of the various geographical regions of the world. In this way the geographical base of world history (not only past history but also the present and future) is, out of an assumed geographical necessity, arbitrarily reduced to the area of the Old World, or more precisely to its temperate zone. This in turn means that world history begins and ends within the confines of this area, and also that the geographical centre of world history is situated within this area, represented by the Mediterranean and Europe.

Thus the `geographical' outcome of Hegel's philosophy of history appears obvious: the dialectic of the spirit of the world takes on the air of a definitely ethnocentric history justified on a geographical basis and characterized by a unidirectional historical process in which the various historical periods or histories - natural phases are necessary stages in the progressive incursion of spirit into concrete reality, which in Hegel's view was consummated in Christian - Germanic or bourgeois society.⁴⁴

In so far as Hegel's anthropological historicism concentrates on the essence of world history as a duality between the East and the West, one being essentially imprisoned forever within stagnation and despotism, and the other essentially self-developing to realize the individual freedom and world-spirit, it can hardly be called scientific; it is both ideological and teleological.⁴⁵

Furthermore, in the Hegelian anthropological historicism the dichotomy between the East and West - the kernel of Orientalism - is treated as "rational" and, as such, is given "a necessary form."⁴⁶ It is the "universal premise" of Hegel that "world history represents the idea of the spirit as it displays in reality as a series of external forms."⁴⁷ Hence, geography "becomes necessity - it is the necessary sphere of appearance of world-historic peoples which represent the forms of realization and development of spirit on earth."⁴⁸ What results from this is that Hegel conceives the geographical divide between the East and West as an immutable component of epistemology and ontology or as an epistemological and ontological point of departure in the explanation of social phenomena. From this vantage-ground of the problematic, the Orient and/or the Orientals then became "an `object' of study, stamped with an otherness - as all that is different, whether it be `subject' or `object' - but of a constitutive otherness of an essentialist character."⁴⁹ Related to this is the assumption that the Oriental object is passive, non-participating, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign in regard to itself or its evolutive capacity and specificity.

To elaborate, its essence is historical in the superficial sense of going back to the bare origins of history, but it is actually ahistorical, lacking a developmental mechanism and a concomitant historical specificity, which the Occident possesses either in individual freedom, as Hegel advertised or in class antagonism, as Marx assumed.⁵⁰ What all this boils down to is that Hegel's dialectic is teleologically oriented. That is, in the Hegelian dialectic "the End is already there in the origin," to use an Althusserian expression.⁵¹ Given this epistemological and ontological role and rationalization of the East - West dichotomy in his anthropological historicism, which in itself appears as an autonomous entity working out on its own through the actions of individuals and nations in the West, it may be argued that Hegel was the founding father of idealist Orientalism, just as Marx was the same in respect of materialist Orientalism.

If Hegel made the East - West divide an epistemological and ontological point of departure in the description and explanation of the social phenomenon of the Eastern social formations, Marx added an important, precisely materialist, dimension into it. By identifying the East (or India) with the village communities, on the one hand, and the West with the urban and industrial towns, on the other, Marx indeed accentuated and expanded the scope of Orientalism. This distinction itself became an additional epistemological and ontological dimension with respect to any knowledge of the East. India emerged as a synonym for an entity whose essence and appearance coincided, as it were, in the village community. In the writings of colonial officials, it became an

"omnipresent reality"; its factual significance, however, lay only in its being utilized by the colonial revenue official as an unit for assessment and collection of the land revenue.⁵²

In his own materialist variant of Orientalism Marx made the village community practically an independent entity that was synonymous with and equivalent to the East and, hence, an epistemological and ontological boundary mark between the rural and stagnant East, and the urban and dynamic West. However, before I pass on to Marx let me briefly discuss how the village community became important and how a particular stereotypical picture of the Indian village community was consciously projected for reasons basically connected with British colonialism and imperialism in India.

The colonial officials' interest in the Indian village community dates back to the first decade of the 19th century, albeit general research into the nature and origin of village communities began in the mid 19th century.⁵³ Before long, by the later part of the 19th century, the village community became an "Anglo-Indian" (i.e. British officials') creation within the English - speaking world.⁵⁴ The concept first surfaced on 15 May, 1806 in Thomas Munro's "Report" from Anantapur:

Every village, with its twelve Ayangdees as they are called, is a kind of little republic, with the Potal at the head of it; and India is a mass of such republics. The inhabitants, during war, look chiefly to their own Potal. They give themselves no trouble about the breaking up and division of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred: wherever it goes the internal management remains unaltered; the Potal is still the collector and magistrate, and head farmer. From the age of Menu until this day the settlements have been made either with or through the Potails.⁵⁵

No sooner was this description of the village community put down in black and white than it became an original cliché that would be endlessly copied.⁵⁶ With the passage of time, this locus classicus would acquire and accumulate certain unvarying themes (e.g. the fixed constitution of the village in terms of the number of functionaries, the unchangeable simple and natural division of labour, debilitating political autonomy, economic self-sufficiency and ceaseless simple reproduction, common ownership, etc.) that would go into Marx's AMP. As I said, Marx drew upon the Fifth Report (1812) via Campbell, Wilks and Raffles. The Fifth Report bore remarkable resemblance to Munro's Report and became eventually, though with necessary and convenient additions, the basis of Marx's materialist Orientalism. Beside the enumeration of the village functionaries, the relevant passage in the Fifth Report reads as follows:

Under this simple form of municipal government, the inhabitants of the country have lived, from time immemorial. The boundaries of the villages have been but seldom altered; and though the villages themselves, have been sometimes injured, and even desolated, by war, famine, and disease; the same name, the same limits, the same interests, and even the same families, have continued for ages. The inhabitants give themselves no trouble about the breaking-up and division of Kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred, or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remains unchanged; the Potal is still the head inhabitant, and still acts as the petty judge and magistrate, and collector or rentor of the village.⁵⁷

This argument was incorporated in Mill's The History of British India,⁵⁸ as also in the works of other English officials who, in one way or another, contributed to the making of the village community a component of Marx's AMP, especially in his first volume of Capital. But the

symbolism of the village community reached its apogee in the hands of Maine, whose Village Communities in East and West systematically affirmed and developed what Hegel, for instance, had already said of the genesis of the West's historical development within the pre-historical contexts of the East.⁵⁹ Europe and India were, so Maine argued,

different phases in the same process of development; Europe was India's future, India was Europe's past. India contained...European civilization in its earliest known form, miraculously preserved by India's geographic isolation and the superficiality of post-Aryan invasions. Amongst the fossils thus preserved was the village community.⁶⁰

Thus, the Indian village community ran full circle of its life. It became, on the one hand, a memorial of the collectivist origins of the humanity of both East and West. For the same reason, on the other hand, it stood to remind all of how the West, having progressed to develop individual private property, went ahead of the vegetative East. Ironically, all this recalls Marx's own comparisons of the AMP with any or all European modes of production.

The grand edifice of the village community, as constructed by the colonial officials, was not, however, without serious methodological and theoretical problems - problems that challenge also the conceptual as well as empirical validity and relevance of Marx's AMP. To start with, the village community as a representation of the eternal and original India had no basis in reality; it was, as Krader said, "a means of making a coherent picture of the administrative need of the time."⁶¹ That is, such abstraction enabled the British administrators to get to grips with the problems of securing economic surplus and political

equanimity. Otherwise, the Indian villages were too complex to be amenable to such simplification as was actually made of them. Indeed there is hardly any indigeneous source material which warrants such an image of the village community as was drawn, for instance, in the Fifth Report. The limitations of the data concerning the Indian village community were connected with the limitations of the colonial officials, who rarely visited the villages themselves.

These early British scholars, unlike modern academics, were primarily administrators busy in their districts or provinces or departments. They had neither time nor inclination to make painstaking research before making bold generalizations about social institutions, customs and history. It was part of the Victorian life to be speculative, to be able to make bold generalizations, without bothering too much about the details.⁶²

This Victorian romanticism, rather than objective portrayal of the actual village, would also explain why descriptions of the Indian village community were so strikingly similar; and because they are so, "we are obviously not faced with the results of independent observations, but rather with the reiteration of a single theme, each author copying another, as is frequent in literary history."⁶³

A good example of unwarranted abstraction, but without foundations upon any dependable data, can be found in Maine's depiction of the village community. Maine had no faith in gathering information directly from the Indian peasants. He thus wrote:

I should feel much safer in applying the most sweeping theory of the great European thinkers on political economy or the most hurried generalization of great Indian administrators than in acting on the opinion of ignorant and puzzled peasants on difficult questions in which they never had a practical interest.⁶⁴

For the same authoritarianism in Maine, there is hardly any corroboration of this idealized village community by any evidence from indigeneous source materials. As I have said, he would have found none, had he attempted to get at them. What is worse is that he was blinded by his faith in the authenticity of the accounts of revenue officials. Thus, he claimed that "no Indian phenomenon has been more carefully examined, and by men more thoroughly in earnest, than the Village-community."⁶⁵ No wonder Maine was strictured by Baden-Powell for theorizing on inadequate data sources. Referring to the above-mentioned remark of Maine, Baden-Powell said:

(But) this `observation´ was from the administrative revenue point of view, and was very little directed to the history or ethnography of the villages. To anyone who has compared the documents available before (or about) 1870 with the materials since made accessible, Sir H. Maine's remark will appear truly astonishing.⁶⁶

On his own part Baden-Powell himself, while dismissing any simplistic and ideal-type village community, mentioned its two broad categories - joint and several.⁶⁷

Even if the question of the adequacy of data or ideological hypostatization of the village community were ignored, one could hardly overlook Maine's biased mode of analysis and interpretation of the data then available. Maine referred to Campbell, for instance.⁶⁸ In Chapter 3, I have referred to Campbell's views on the village community.⁶⁹ His views did not warrant the monolithic image, which Maine depicted of the Indian village community. Thus, as Dumont remarks, "Campbell distinguished between equality within the group of co-sharing families and the fact that these families were masters of the rest of the village

population, while Maine persists in confusing the `brotherhood` with the village population at large, including the craftsmen or servants of the village."⁷⁰ The reason for this is not far to seek. Maine's obscuring of the complexity of the village was as much ideological, justifying the inherent primitivism of India, as it was teleological, constructing a pre-determined view of village community independent of its empirical existence. The portrayal of the Indian village community as an economic cul-de-sac as well as a political and cultural desert was also an outcome of the structures of colonialism and imperialism, within the contexts of which the typical interest in the village community and studies thereon germinated and flourished.

The colonial officials who theorized on the village community were not plainly disinterested seekers of truth; neither were their formulations devoid of a "definite political slant"⁷¹ in conformity with the exploitative demands of colonialism and imperialism.

Whatever we might think of the British administrator - scholars, they were not, to use Mannheim's phrase, `unanchored`, coming from `relatively classless stratum` of society. They were fully `anchored`; they were committed to uphold an authoritarian regime, and they had already formed apriori ideas about India and her civilization, being fed on James Mill's History and Charles Grant's `observations`. Most administrators were busy at their own stations, only the speculative ones theorized about the nature of Indian society and the British role in India, partly to find a raison d'être of the authoritarian regime and partly to satisfy their intellectual appetite.⁷²

In other words, to the extent to which India was made especially the natural habitat of the primitive village communities and, ergo, of all that stands for barbarism, despotism and stagnation, the colonial

officials succeeded in rationalizing political domination and economic exploitation under the pretence of their so-called civilizing mission as the chosen instrument of Imperial Providence. To exemplify, one need not cite anyone but Maine, the avant-garde of the ideology of Indian village communalism. Like multitudinous other officials, Maine opposed the transfer of political power to the Indians and justified imperial authoritarianism in colonial India.⁷³ Since the Indian institutions, of which the village community was a very important one, were examples of arrested growth according to his scheme of scalar evolution, Maine argued that Britain's duty was to help improve such Indian institutions.⁷⁴ Thus, he rejoiced over the silent work of Providence that brought "one of the youngest branches of the greatest family of mankind from the uttermost ends of the earth to renovate and educate the oldest."⁷⁵

The politico-economic role of the village communities in India was highlighted and emphasized, most often to the point of absurdity, precisely by the same group of colonial officials who were, at one and the same time, antithetical to and apprehensive of the existence of any indigeneous group of landlords, who could assert their independence in such a way as to pose mortal threats to the continuation of the British rule. To many of these officials the village community conveniently appeared to be an equalitarian and autonomous body primarily of small peasants and secondarily of others, including artisans. These colonial officials (e.g. Munro, Holt Mackenzie, etc.) invariably favoured land revenue settlements, whether called ryotwari or mahalwari, with the

peasants, who were considered personifications of real India, i.e. India of the village communities. At bottom, these revenue settlements with the peasants were both economically and politically beneficial to the maintenance of British colonialism.⁷⁶

Thus Munro, who rose to become governor of Madras presidency (1820-1827) and who also reported on the village community back in 1806, wrote in 1794-5:

We have only to guard the ryots (i.e. peasants - BB) from oppressions, and they will create revenue for us...If we look only to the security of our own power in this country, it would perhaps be wiser to keep the lands, as they now are, in the possession of Government, giving them to the inhabitants in leases of from five to twenty years, than to make them over to them for ever, because there is reason to fear that such a property may beget a spirit of independence, which may one day prove dangerous to our authority.⁷⁷

This is exactly what happened especially in the ryotwari areas. For instance, in Madras the peasant superficially looked like a proprietor, but actually and legally he remained an occupant, usually, of a small plot of land.⁷⁸ It was only after 1859 that the Madras peasants were generally allowed to enjoy certain incidents of property rights (e.g. sale, mortgage, etc.).⁷⁹ A related aspect of the peasant-oriented land revenue settlements was the claim of the British ruling class that they were, as R. A. Cross, Secretary of State for India (1886-1892), stated, the "sole protector" of the peasants.⁸⁰ The peasants were "voiceless millions" to Viceroy Dufferin (1884-1888), or "the patient, humble, silent millions" to Viceroy Curzon (1899-1905).⁸¹

Whether put into words or not, the enormous significance of these extra-scientific considerations can by no means be ignored. In

other words, these non-scientific considerations played their role in the exaggeration of the importance of village communities in India. In this light it is hardly difficult to understand why the greatest theorist of the village community, Maine, became one of the most ardent protagonists of the peasants' occupancy rights in Panjab. He said: "I say that even if these beneficial rights of occupancy were really planted in the Panjab by the British government, they have grown up and borne fruits under its shelter and that it is not for its honour to give them up to ruthless devastation."⁸² On his part, Baden-Powell admitted to the creation anew of the village communities during the period of colonialism.⁸³

Similarly, the exaggerated focus on a cut and dried picture of the village community served only to conceal the deindustrializing, de-urbanizing and ruralizing effects of the international division of labour. The enforcement of the international division of labour, made inevitable by the rise of industrial capital and free trade (in Britain), meant transformation of colonial India into a rural and agricultural hinterland of urban and industrial Britain, the former supplying raw materials and primary commodities to the latter in exchange for its manufactured commodities.⁸⁴ This general ruralization of colonial India was the outcome of a two-fold process. On the one hand, right from the beginning of British imperialism and colonialism in the 1760s down to its eclipse after World War II, the indigeneous manufacturing industries suffered varying degrees of decline and devastation; neither did the indigeneous bourgeoisie receive any notable

support for their endeavours to establish modern industries. On the contrary, they met with active resistance by the British ruling class in different degrees.⁸⁵ By the first half of the 19th century India was converted "from a manufacturing country into a country exporting raw produce" or was reduced "from the state of a manufacturing to that of agricultural country."⁸⁶

The impact of the processes of de-industrialization earlier, and non-or inadequate industrialization later, was simultaneously aggravated by another process, which ruralized and peasantized India even more. This concerns the emphasis by the British ruling class not on the capitalist agriculture based on modern industry, but on the small-scale agriculture, which suited the peasant-oriented land revenue settlements.⁸⁷ Almost all of the British ruling class looked to India as a reservoir of agrarian raw materials and, hence, considered India's development in terms of traditional agriculture, rather than modern industry.⁸⁸ In 1899 Viceroy Curzon argued:

There is no country in the world that is so dependent upon the prosperity of the agricultural classes as India. There is no Government in the world that is so personally interested in agriculture as the Indian government. We are, in the strictest sense of the term, the largest landlords in creation. Our land revenue are the staple of our income; upon the contentment and solvency of the millions who live upon the soil is based the security of our rule.⁸⁹

This inordinate emphasis on the (traditional) agriculture, a facet of the international division of labour, continued almost down to the end of colonialism.⁹⁰ Given this overview of predilections of the imperial administrators with regard to India, it is hardly difficult to

understand why and how the symbolism of village community was advertised as an omnipresent reality readily identifiable with an India that was made, in a manner of speaking, agricultural and rural in essence.

III. Marx: A Methodological and Theoretical Critique

Marx did not pay any attention to these factors which were connected with the sustenance and maintenance of British imperialism and colonialism, but which at the same time led to the biased representation of the Indian social reality. Instead of revealing the methodological and theoretical inadequacies of his predecessors, Marx actually built his AMP upon them. Indeed, Marx enriched and strengthened the geographical divide between the East and West by identifying the former with the village community and, hence, by making the village community the epistemological and ontological essence of the East. In other words, according to Marx's materialist Orientalism, the East remained essentially rural, while the West was essentially urban as though the village community were either not important or altogether absent in the West. Implicit in this is the suggestion that the East is basically spiritless, while the West, regardless of its mode of production, is as large as life. As I stated in chapter 2, there were many causes which, according to Marx, explained why the Oriental social formations continued to stagnate in aeternum. Let me turn to the methodological and theoretical critique of Marx.

To begin with, the particular description of the Indian village community and its societal immobility, which Marx appropriated from Hegel, Campbell and others for his own purpose (i.e. construction of the

AMP), actually occurred in the Fifth Report in connection with the British East Indian Company's territorial possessions subject to the presidency of Fort St. George. It is obvious, therefore, that this particular description should have been utilized to represent the reality of the territories to which it applied in the first instance. Marx, who did not read the Fifth Report, peremptorily transferred it to the whole of India.⁹¹ What is at stake here, from both methodological and theoretical points of view, is Marx's unwarranted and out of hand over-generalization and, hence, misrepresentation of the reality of India or, for that matter, of the entire Orient. That it was sheer methodological arbitrariness on his part can also be evidenced by reference to Campbell's text, Modern India, which Marx read. In this book, Campbell clearly stated that in northern India and also in many places of southern India, the village communities presented an altogether different picture. There the villages were dominated by proprietary families, who considered themselves "masters" of their villages.⁹²

A similar description of the villages, dominated by landlord interests, came from Phear. Like Campbell, he found elements of feudalism prevailing in India. In particular, Phear called the Bengal village community feudal "for want of a better term", a caveat which he did not explain.⁹³ However, his description of the relationships between the Zamindar and his subject peasants (ryots) in the Bengal villages flies in the face of Marx's over-generalization.

He is their superior lord and they are his subjects (ryots), both by habit and by feeling "adscripti glebae". They would be entirely at the mercy of the Zamindar and his amla were it not for another most remarkable village institution, namely the mandal; this is the village headman, the mouthpiece and representative of the ryots of the village in all matters between them and the Zamindar or his officers.⁹⁴

All this, however, made no impact on Marx. Phear's description of the village community did in no way provide empirical support to Marx's AMP in respect of the village community. On the contrary, by describing such Bengal village community as 'feudal', Phear actually negated the AMP. Marx, of course, realized this, and this is precisely why he fiercely rebuked Phear: "This ass calls the constitution of the village feudal."⁹⁵

Marx's selective appropriation of the available data and, hence, arbitrariness in his modus operandi as well as his misconceptualization of Indian reality can be demonstrated by other examples. While canvassing his theory of the "unalterable division of labour" or of the impossibility of manufacture in what was viewed as a nature-regulated division of labour, Marx asserts that only such surplus as reached the state became a commodity.⁹⁶ In Asiatic societies "the monarch appears as the exclusive proprietor of the agricultural surplus product."⁹⁷ The simple division of labour in India was thus really rudimentary division of labour, not the social division of labour in view of the absence of the exchange of commodities.⁹⁸ Now, all this is tremendously important in terms of their consequences upon the Asiatic social formations.

That is to say, the absence of production of commodities, the absence of exchange of commodities, and the lack of cumulative expansion

of the natural (communal) division of labour into social and historical (individual) division of labour meant that India (or the Orient) remained where it was for ages and ages. The reason is that the process of exchange is a great source of individuation and, at one and the same time, an excellent solvent of the primordial mode of production in the natural community. It is this exchange in or production of commodities that enabled the ancient Graeco - Roman communities to move from the state of natural primitive communities into historical social formations, or from the phase of repetitive history to that of cumulative history.⁹⁹ It was this internal mechanism of social transformation and development that was absent in India where the individual, standing dead still, could not simply foresake his natural connection with his natural community.

Now the question is: What were the data on the basis of which Marx denied the stated mechanism of socio-economic change and development to the Indian social formation and, so, theoretically constructed his AMP? As far as I can see, there is no valid reason why Marx, after his readings of Campbell's and Bernier's works, should have failed to take note of the sufficient prevalence of commodity production and exchange in the (Mughal) Indian social formation.¹⁰⁰ Campbell had this to say on the existence of a mercantile class comprising the caste of Khattris in north India.

By them almost exclusively is capital accumulated and circulated; and in their capacity of bankers and traders they are found in every village, and highly cherished in all native states...A village community could not get on at all without a mercantile man as banker, money-lender, and accountant, and all these functions are performed by the

mercantile caste.¹⁰¹

Elsewhere, in connection with his discussion of the landlord dominated villages, Campbell referred to the importance of the "accountant, banker and mercantile inhabitants", who were highly regarded in the community of villages.

...Though they have no direct voice in the management (of the village - BB), they are courted as moneyed men, who increase the prosperity of the community, and with whom all have transactions. From them advances &c., are received; they take all the grain and credit it at the market price, and generally the revenue is paid through them. Money is power in all communities.¹⁰²

Furthermore, Campbell referred to occasional employment of the landless labourers called "kameens", who received "an annual allowance of grain for their services."¹⁰³

Campbell's data on the exchange and production of commodities and on the existence of a mercantile class - in brief, Campbell's description of the social division of labour - does in no way corroborate Marx's description; neither do his data support Marx's whole exercise for the establishment of an unbreakable self-sufficiency of the Indian village community. Nowhere in his work does Bernier also draw the same picture of the simple division of labour and lack of commodity exchange. Bernier gave detailed descriptions of Delhi market that catered to both rich and poor.¹⁰⁴ He referred to "the trade of the country" and "the merchants" in connection with the manufacture of shawls in Kashmir.¹⁰⁵ He spoke of "the native merchants" in Bengal, who dealt in different kinds of cotton and silk manufactures.¹⁰⁶ There were a host of others (i.e. European travellers, officials and others) who

abundantly confirmed the production and exchange of commodities for the purpose of sale rather than use.¹⁰⁷ In 1800-1 F. Buchanan(1762-1829), a colonial official, visited Mysore, Canara and Malabar. Here is what he said about the rural markets in Mysore in his A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar (1807):

At different convenient places in every Taluc (i.e. sub-division of a district - BB) there are weekly markets, which in good parts of the country may be about two or three miles from each other. To these the farmers carry their produce, and sell it, partly to consumers by retail, and partly by wholesale to traders. In the early part of the day they endeavour to sell their goods by retail, and do not deal with the traders unless they be distressed for money. It is not customary for readers to advance money on the crops, and to receive the produce when they ripen. At all these markets business is carried on by sale; no barter is customary, except among a few poor people, who exchange grain for the produce of the kitchen garden.¹⁰⁸

Tavernier, the French merchant who extensively travelled many parts of India between the 1640s and 1660s, remarked that a village in India must be really "very small" if it did not have one money changer or shroff.¹⁰⁹ His presence invariably meant the prevalence of petty commodity production and exchange in the village; and this ruled out prima facie the self-sufficiency of the village community in such absolute terms as Marx claimed. The point thus remains that Marx only selectively appropriated from the available data.

As I have repeatedly asserted, Marx's purpose was teleological and ideological, i.e. demonstration of the typical stationariness of the cellular village as one vital component of the holistic ahistorical reality of the Orient in the AMP. This was contrasted with the typical urbanism and dynamism of the holistic historical reality of the

Abendland, from the ancient Graeco - Roman, through feudal, to the modern capitalist times. Hence, this teleology and ideology pre-determined the unitary function which Marx's theoretical construction would serve in respect of the depiction of the Oriental reality. His methodological arbitrariness, implicit in his particular appropriation of the empirical data, was only an instrumental aid to that function. To fit in the Oriental social formations well with his preconceived schema of ahistorical undevelopment of the Orient, Marx often advanced a superficial rationale that was bereft of causality or utilized criteria that were one-sidedly applied only to the Orient.

An example of this biased methodological and theoretical endeavour is Marx's claim that spatial isolation between the villages and, correspondingly, the lack of means of communication between them were enough to produce "self-sufficient inertia" in the Indian social formation. Thus, rooted to the ground, there is no internal mechanism by which the villagers could overcome their swoon. It is the steam navigation and railways that had the power of raising the Eastern people from the dead.¹¹⁰ To the extent to which Marx attributed causality of self-sufficiency and immobility to the spatial isolation and absence of roads between the Indian villages, it was, other things being equal, a false causality in view of the simple historical truth that the pre-capitalist West too did not have railways, steam navigation, and similar modern means of communication and transportation. Therefore, if their absence in the pre-capitalist West did not produce stagnation, then why shouldn't it be the same also in the East?

On this reasoning, it appears that Marx looked at the East through jaundiced eyes. The use of the criterion of the modern means of communication and transportation was quite in conformity to his objective of revealing any negative aspect of the Orient, relative to any positive aspect of the Occident. This is why he implicitly assumed the role of the (British) railways as the breaker of economic self-sufficiency and stagnation in India; and for the same reason he justified the establishment of the railways, regardless of its terrible costs which could have been avoided had it been established by an indigeneous government.¹¹¹ By using particularly the criterion of the railways or steam navigation, Marx also broke his own law of historical specificity which states that "the handmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist."¹¹²

That this was true as much in the West as in the East can be illustrated. On the one hand, there is little doubt that the pre-capitalist West did not have the same system of the modern means of communication and transportation as the capitalist West. In the feudal age, so informs Bloch, "all roads were bad" and "between inhabited centres quite close to each other the connections were much rarer, the isolation of their inhabitants infinitely greater than would be the case in our own day."¹¹³ Not different was Postan's evaluation. The transport, like all transport in the pre-railway age, was "wasteful of time, equipment and manpower", and "most local roads were no more than mud tracks, barely usable in bad weather."¹¹⁴ Indeed, one of the most formidable obstacles to the growth of commodity production and exchange

during feudalism was "the bad condition of the roads. They were narrow, rough, muddy, and generally unfit for travelling. Then too, they were frequented by two kinds of robbers, ordinary brigands, and feudal lords who stopped the merchants and made them pay tolls for travelling over their abominable roads."¹¹⁵ The self-sufficiency of the medieval villages and the absence of convenient means of communication and transportation mutually reinforced each other. Thus Knight states:

All but a small percentage of the inhabitants of mediaeval western Europe lived in agricultural villages which produced practically everything they used and very little that they did not use...Transportation was so precarious and expensive, however, that there was more than the usual incentive to produce goods as near as possible to the place they were in demand.¹¹⁶

It was around 1830 that steam was used "to carry passengers on canals and rivers."¹¹⁷

On the other hand, insofar as pre-British, particularly Mughal India is concerned, the situation does not at all seem any worse than what existed in pre-industrial Europe. Mughal India did have organized and interconnected networks of overland roads as well as inland waterways, the latter being a cheaper and safer means of moving men and materials.¹¹⁸ Given the circumstances and nature of Mughal India's pre-industrial self-sufficient economic formation they were indeed "fairly adequate to meet the needs of the times."¹¹⁹ Marx was aware of the fact that the British 'millocracy' was endowing India with railways in order to enforce an international division of labour, and that India was thus being converted into an agrarian appendage of industrial Britain. He was also aware of the material advantages including irrigation that

India would derive from the establishment of the railways.¹²⁰ But, curiously though, Marx was not aware of the possibility that the British capitalists and colonial administrators could have exaggerated India's need for railways at a particular point of time, mainly for Britain's own national purpose.¹²¹ By the same logic, it involved an unwarranted denigration of the indigeneous system of communication and transportation which prevailed in Mughal India. This was more so because by that time industrial Britain had already modernized its own means of communication and transportation.

The fact that Mughal India had a relatively developed means of communication and transportation in terms of pre-capitalist standards was hardly unknown at the time of Marx. For instance, in the course of a British Parliamentary investigation in 1858, Major General G. B. Tremenheere, a superintending engineer of Panjab, said "yes" to this question raised by T. R. Perry, a colonial official who rose to become a member of the Council of India (1859-82):

Is it not the fact that for many hundred years India was superior to Europe as it regards the facility of transit from one part of the country to another during a great part of the year?¹²²

To another question, "do you believe that in former times the internal communications of the country were better than now?", a British merchant (J. T. Mackenzie) in India for 11 years replied as follows:

"Unquestionably, during the Hindoo and Mahomedan dynasties the interior of the country was intersected by roads; during our rule we have merely made great military roads."¹²³ As to the manner of travelling or means of transportation, Tavernier's remark is worth noting. It was, he said,

"not less convenient than all that they have been able to invent in order that one may be carried in comfort either in FRANCE or in ITALY."¹²⁴

All these hard facts had no impact on Marx. Even if this were ignored, the AMP would still then continue to remain a hornets' nest for other factors that brought India to a dead end. One of them is the self-sustaining unity of agriculture and industry (or manufacture), which prevented the development of private property as well. The unity of agriculture and industry in each spatially separate village community is actually both a cause and an effect of a host of other things - infinite simple reproduction of the conditions of natural existence, incorruptible bondage of the individual to his natural community, interminable blockage to the growth of commodity production and markets, impregnable barrenness of the rural division of labour and, consequently, lack of differentiation between town and country, and so on - that made the AMP the locus classicus of immemorial sedentariness of the Indian and other Oriental social formations.¹²⁵ This raises insoluble methodological and theoretical problems, corroding the alleged efficacy of the AMP as an explanatory concept.

Methodologically, Marx is thoroughly biased in insisting on the unity of agriculture and manufacture in isolated villages as a criterion that is applicable only to the Orient. The fact of the matter is that it applies as much to the Orient as to the Occident and, veritably, to all pre-capitalist social formations. Hindess and Hirst point out:

The conditions supposed in this explanation - 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 labour 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 the feudal mode of production, in the case of independent peasant proprietor - ship, etc. There is nothing specifically 'Asiatic' about these conditions: they apply alike in the eleventh-century Ile de France and ancient Germany as they do in the eighteenth-century Deccan. These conditions could equally well explain the 'stasis' of feudal production as they do the persistence of the Indian village system. These conditions are common to several forms of pre-capitalist production.¹²⁶

It is not, however, that Marx did not know of the universality of the unity of agriculture and manufacture in pre-capitalist social formations. In Capital (vol. 3) he clearly points out:

Domestic handicrafts and manufacturing labour, as secondary occupations of agriculture, which forms the basis, are the prerequisite of that mode of production upon which natural economy rests - in European antiquity and the middle Ages as well as in the present day Indian community, in which the traditional organization has not yet been destroyed. The capitalist mode of production completely abolishes this relationship; a process which may be studied on a large scale particularly in England during the last third of the 18th century.¹²⁷

In fact Marx was correct in seeing that the unity of agriculture and industry in England, the classic country where the CMP first developed, was in the process of dissolution.¹²⁸ But it was only by 1850 that the separation of agriculture from industry in England became "an accomplished fact. Factory production had gradually taken place of the domestic system."¹²⁹ Just as Marx was aware of the unity of agriculture and industry in all pre-capitalist social formations, so he was extremely clear about the revolutionary role of the capitalist mode of

production in dissolving that unity.

Capitalist production completely tears asunder the old band of union which held together agriculture and manufacture in their infancy... Modern industry alone, and finally, supplies, in machinery, the lasting basis capitalistic agriculture, expropriates radically the enormous majority of the agriculture population, and completes the separation between agriculture and rural domestic industry, whose roots - spinning and weaving - it tears up. It therefore also, for the first time, conquers for industrial capital the entire home-market.¹³⁰

Now, such being the case, as has been stated by Marx in the above, there is no denying the fact that he was indeed methodologically arbitrary in proposing the unity of agriculture and industry as a causal factor of Oriental stationariness.

This methodological arbitrariness generated its logical corollary, theoretical arbitrariness, in the form of misrepresentation of the Oriental reality. Marx's adherence to the criterion of unity in the case of the Orient is both a priori, and ideological as well as teleological. It is a priori because the so-called unity criterion is a false one, inasmuch as it is universal. It is ideological and teleological because his use of the criterion is eminently suited to vindicating his own pre-determined objectives, i.e. demonstration of the differential character of the Oriental social formations and their peoples à tout prix, regardless of whether or not this contradicts his own general methodological and theoretical standpoints. What it boils down to is that Marx epistemologizes the geographical divide and makes 'East' or 'West' an ontological entity, transforming each into a reality or a pure category in itself. Furthermore, he presents the East as though it were determined by nature only; at the same time, the West

appears as socially and historically determined. All this is nothing else other than what I designated as materialist Orientalism.

That this was so can be illustrated from a purely theoretical point of view. Conceptually, the use of the criterion of the unity of agriculture and industry is useless, because such unity could take diverse forms in different modes of production.¹³¹ Marx himself noted that capitalist production destroys the unity of agriculture and industry in one sense, i.e. replacement of the irrational and old-fashioned methods of agriculture by scientific ones. "But at the same time", so argues Marx,

it creates the material conditions for a higher synthesis in the future, viz the union of agriculture and industry on the basis of the more perfected forms they have each acquired during their temporary separation.¹³²

At bottom, the concept of the unity of agriculture and manufacture is a general category or abstraction, which is hardly of any significance in distinguishing one mode of production from another, especially the pre-capitalist ones. In Marx's own terms, the concept of the unity of agriculture and industry is as general and abstract as the concept of 'production in general', which he abandoned in favour of the concept(s) of particular historical form of production.¹³³

For this generality and abstractness, the concept of the unity of agriculture and industry in the AMP is a pseudo concept, even in a comparison of the AMP with the CMP.

By confining oneself to general formulas (such as: the 'combination of industry with agriculture', or the 'separation of industry from agriculture') one cannot advance a single step in elucidating the actual process of

development of capitalism.¹³⁴

From this vantage point, Marx's argument that the unity of agriculture and industry is the cause of self-sufficiency and, hence, of social structural torpidity sounds like a reductio ad absurdum, which cannot be explained unless one does so in terms of geographical determinism immanent in Marx's materialist Orientalism.

Let me look at Marx's methodological and theoretical one-sidedness from the context of the composition and nature of European village communities, which in general did not figure as constituent in the modes of production (e.g. ancient, Germanic, feudal and capitalist) that originated in the Occident. In the AMP the village communities were made cellular structures or microcosms only of the Oriental social formations, as if they were interchangeable.

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 really large cities must be regarded here merely as royal camps, as works of artifice...erected over the economic construction proper); the Middle Ages (Germanic period) begins with the 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.¹³⁵

In unambiguous terms Marx, thus, makes the Occident the promised land of urbanism and dynamism, regardless of the presence of countryside. Whether towns really existed in the Orient/India is an empirical question, and I shall deal with this aspect in the next chapter.

What is at stake here is Marx's methodological transformation of the geographical divide between the Orient and Occident into

epistemological and ontological points of departure in the (theoretical) description of the social phenomenon there, i.e. in the rural Orient or in the urban Occident. Especially this is so in as much as Marx kept on identifying the AMP with the village communities - both primitive and natural - in the Oriental social formations. It is precisely for this reason that he deliberately set aside the existence of some towns. Marx's words are: "not counting the few larger towns."¹³⁶ This corresponds with the teleological objective of Marx's Orientalism insofar as it suppresses altogether the positive or progressive force of the Orient in order for magnifying its contrast with the Occident. Immanent coincidentally is the suggestion of the Orient's coming to, and being at, a complete standstill in saecula saeculorum. The reason is that the Orient did not, as it were, keep pace with, and catch up on, the Occident in view of the former's failure to develop any of the latter's mode of production. In a way, Marx imposed dogmatic determinism on the Orient in the sense that he assumed a priori that the Orient has to be caught in a developmental race with the Occident. Now, theoretically there is no reason why the English village community, also economically self-sufficient, should not be a source of torpor at the same time. What it comes to mean, then, is that in his particularistic identification of the village communities with the AMP (or the Orient) Marx was guided not by the interests of science, but by those of materialist Orientalism in the last instance. In Marx's construction of the empirical as well as logical opposite and antecedent of any European mode of production (e.g. ancient, Germanic, feudal, or capitalist), the

Orient became a scapegoat to all intents and purposes.¹³⁷ Let me illustrate.

The village community was far from being unique to India, as Marx implied, because "from medieval times down to the nineteenth century the village community was the primary territorial unit of government in most of Europe."¹³⁸ When this is the case, it precisely points out how Maine was also just exaggerating by saying that India was Europe's past in the same process of development. Neither was India alone a congeries of "primitive component parts" called "little republics", as British colonial officials were apt to portray India in order to legitimate their authoritarian regime of exploitation and domination.¹³⁹ The fact of the matter is that in 1789 there were nearly 44,000 village communities in France alone.¹⁴⁰ More will be said about the political role of the European village community in a later chapter on the state and social classes. Here, I may concentrate on certain economic aspects of the European village communities.

Regardless of the variations due to the local needs and traditions as well as restrictions imposed by the lord and the state, the European village community was "simultaneously an economic community, a fiscal community, a mutual-assistance community, a religious community, the defender of peace and order within its boundaries, and the guardian of the public and private morals of its residents."¹⁴¹ In a typical English village there were artisans who met the needs of their community, just as Indian artisans did.

Every rural society needed workers in wood, leather, metals and pottery, since objects made of these materials were

essentials for agricultural production and for daily living. Most peasants were probably able to repair, and even to make, many necessary tools, but some specialists (i.e. artisans - BB) were essential. ... One of the important characteristics of the medieval rural craftsman, which brings him to the very centre of peasant life, was the fact he usually had some agricultural land as well as his workshop. 142

Therefore, if this division of labour (and also economic self-sufficiency) did not result in stagnation, then there is no reason why the same should not be the case also in India.

The European village community took a leading role in bringing about a remarkable, if not deadening, uniformity with regard to the agrarian division of labour. A few aspects of this role of the European village community may be summarized in the words of Blum:

In open-field country, where the strips of each household lay intermingled and were tilled under the two-or three-field system, the community, either through the decision of its assembly or the orders of its officers, set the times for ploughing, sowing, harvesting, haying and vintage. It decided what crops should be planted, and when the harvested fields should be opened for pasturing, and it set the rules for gleaning. In villages which used other tillage systems, such as field-grass husbandry in which land was tilled consecutively for several years and then allowed to go back to grass, the community specified which zone of its territory should be tilled and for how long. The community fixed the number of cattle each household could pasture on the common...it regulated the folding of sheep and tethering of livestock on arable land, it organized the animals of the village into a common herd tended by a shepherd or cowherd hired by the community, and it decided when the animals should be led into the hill pastures and when they should be brought down. In some places the community, or its officials, kept stud animals to service the livestock of the villagers or, as in the Swiss Canton of Aargau, required each household in rotation to maintain a bull for one year. In many parts of Eastern Europe, and up to the 18th and early nineteenth century in places in Western Europe, plowland was redistributed periodically among the households of the village, and in almost every land from the British Isles to Russia strips in the village meadow were allotted

anew each year as haying time drew near.¹⁴³

There were a host of other functions that engendered "a strong communal consciousness and unity" and which, concurrently, made it an exclusive entity closed to the outsiders. For instance, "the outsider who wanted to settle in the village, or rent or buy land in the territory of the commune, or graze his stock on the village's stubble fields and common pastures had to have the approval of the commune. This was not always forthcoming. The villagers did not want to dilute their rights and holdings, and so they did not take lightly the admission of new members into their communities or the grazing of other people's cattle on their land. If need be, they resorted to intimidation and violence to drive away unwelcome newcomers."¹⁴⁴

Marx's methodological and theoretical arbitrariness comes into full view when one considers how he avoided facing hard facts regarding the public works. While more will be discussed in a later chapter, suffice it to say here this. In his letters of June 10 and 14, 1853 Marx suggested that one of the reasons for India's stationariness was the state intervention in establishing and maintaining public works.¹⁴⁵ However, Marx concealed the fact that public works were the responsibility of other authorities (e.g. community etc.) as well. Interestingly, it was Engels who provided Marx with that vital information in a letter, dated 6 June 1853. Marx's purpose was manifestly ideological and teleological in that he wanted not only "to present the contrast between capitalist dynamism and pre-capitalist stagnation in as sharp light as possible", but also to show "his

contrast between the enterprising West and the unenterprising East."¹⁴⁶
 Thus, when it comes to the crunch, i.e. to the East, Marx could write
 like a true Hegelian:

And however much the English may have hibernicized the
 country, the breaking up of those stereotyped primitive
 forms (i.e. the village communities - BB) was the sine qua
non for Europeanization.¹⁴⁷

As a matter of fact, Marx's purpose would not have been fulfilled, had
 he not omitted the information that one of the agencies of public works
 was the Indian village community. In Europe too, the village community
 discharged such responsibilities as, inter alia, "the maintenance and
 repair of roads, bridges, dikes, water courses, and hedges."¹⁴⁸
 Needless to mention, it too had its village headman, village assembly,
 village council, herdsman, watchman, keeper of the village pound,
 schoolmaster, tax collector and so on and so forth.¹⁴⁹

Finally, just as the idealist Hegel could not find individual
 freedom in the East, so also the materialist Marx did not find the free
 individual (and, hence, individual private property) there. This last
 dimension, actually the most fundamental one, in the causation of
 Oriental stagnation was plainly the lack of the development of
 individuality in the first instance.

The crucial clue to the unchanging nature of Asian society
 is that there is no individuation: 'the individual does not
 become independent vis à vis the community'. It is this
 factor which, in the end, is taken to distinguish the
 Asiatic from the other forms of primitive communism and, a
fortiori from later pre-capitalist formations.¹⁵⁰

But, as Lubasz correctly points out, Marx failed to give any reason
 whatsoever for the non-development of individuality in the Orient and,

hence, for the vicious circle of self-same reproduction of the socio-economic stasis. There is no theoretical justification of why individualism should not, or cannot, occur outside of Europe. To quote Lubasz in extenso:

Why in one form of primitive communal life the individual does become independent vis à vis the community while in another he doesn't, remains a mystery. Although this notion occurs also in his ethnographical note books and in the drafts of his letter to Vera Zassulich, and clearly plays a decisive role in his thinking, Marx never grounds it theoretically.

This seems to me a significant defect, and one with an important consequence for the hypothesis of the immobility of the Asiatic mode of production. It is significant because it points to a central deficiency in Marxian theory, namely, to the absence of any theory of causation. As a rule, Marx doesn't need one: as a rule, he deals with change internal to a given system, and he deals with such change in terms of processes of development. But he does need one when he deals with change from one system to another, since such change is plainly not intra-systemic, and cannot be dealt with in terms of process. But though he needs one he doesn't have one. Consequently the crucial 'tearing apart' or sundering of the pre-capitalist unity of labour and the conditions of labour remains unexplained. How did it happen and why? We are not told. Similarly, the equally crucial sundering of the original unity of individual and community, the individual's becoming independent vis à vis the community, remains unexplained.

Why does this matter in the present context? I believe it matters because it shows that Marx gives no grounds for his assertion that the Asiatic form of primitive communism remains static while other forms of primitive communism change. And he can give none. The assertion remains an assertion and nothing more. Perhaps it was prompted by what Marx took to be a matter of fact - namely, that Asia simply was static. But no such bare matter of fact - even if it were fact - could count as an explanation. And it could not possibly establish the inability of Asian society to change. Marx doesn't give any theoretically grounded account of this supposed inability, doesn't give any explanation for it, cannot say why one integrally unitary social form disintegrates while another integrally unitary form fails to disintegrate. 151

Marx did not, and actually could not, give any reason, simply because he

was not pursuing science like his European predecessors, especially Hegel, and because, as I said, he was the materialist Orientalist par excellence. It is possible that Marx provided no causation for the non-development of individuality because, as he might argue, the institution of private property did not develop in the Orient. Indeed, Marx discusses this in the context of his tracing the development of private property in the chapter on capital in the Grundrisse.¹⁵²

However, if the cause of the lack of individuation in the East is the lack of development of private property, then it is not really a cause because, as I have shown in chapter 3, Marx had failed as well to account for the non-development of private property in the East. He keeps referring back to the same superficial and unreal causes - self-sustaining circle of production, unity of agriculture and manufactures, etc. - to construct his rationale for the lack of individuation, individual property, and evolutionary dynamism in the Orient.

From this standpoint of the wholesale absence of (real) causation in what it stands for or portrays, the AMP is a damp squib that epitomizes the high-water-mark of methodological and theoretical absurdities in Marx. If it were not for his materialist Orientalism, this would be hard to explain. For the same reason, one need not compare the AMP with the CMP to bring out that the former remained as still as the grave, while the latter was the Aladdin's cave of all historical development, or that the former is the direct opposite and antecedent of the latter. All this can be amply shown if the AMP is compared with the ancient mode of production of the classical Europe,

which demonstrated all marks of dialectical dynamism - individuation, individual private property, commodity production and trade, class struggle etc. - much earlier than the feudal or capitalist Europe did.

IV. Conclusion

It is idle to deny that Marx's AMP is seriously flawed even from Marx's own methodological and theoretical points of view. All things considered, contradictions are built into the very structure of the AMP - contradictions that eat into the credibility and efficacy of the AMP to begin with.

As I have shown, Marx's attempt to account for the socio-economic stationariness in the Oriental social formations, especially in India, is a complete failure. The so-called causative factors (e.g. the lack of social division of labour, economic self-sufficiency due to the unity of agriculture and industry, etc.) to which he pointed his fingers, were at bottom not really causative factors; very profoundly, they were pseudo-factors since they were neither specific nor essential to any geographical division of the world, specifically the Orient in the present context. At times Marx could not even attribute any causative factor. Thus, he was unable to specifically point out why individuation did not occur in the Orient. In chapter 3 I showed earlier how Marx was unable to provide any reason as to why causative factors like population, war and conquest, which led to the development of individual private property in Rome, could not give rise to similar development in the Orient. No wonder, Lubasz rightly points out that

Marx "has no theoretical or systematically cogent grounds for his assertion that the Asiatic variety (of primitive communism - BB) alone fails to disintegrate. The posited 'unchangeability of Asian societies' therefore is and remains an unsubstantiated claim and nothing more, even in terms of the logic of Marx's own theory of the sequence of modes of production."¹⁵³

If it were not for Orientalism, it would be hard to explain why Marx joined Hegel to propagate the theory of a non-dialectical East. At the same time, the non-development of industrial capitalism in the Orient does not imply by any stretch of the imagination and logic that the Orient had lent itself to absurd conceptual manipulation, as if it were completely lackadaisical. The development of industrial capitalism in the Occident does not give anybody a carte blanche for making a particular geographic region non-dialectical either in essence or in appearance. The simple truth, ignored by Marx and adherents of the AMP, is that each social formation has its own dialectic of change and decay, or of transformation and development. For Marx, the choice was definitely not between an affirmation of the dialectic in the Occident and its negation in the Orient; it was the dialectic itself - which reveals patterns of social transformation and development, slow or rapid -, and the dialectic in itself has nothing to do with a geographical divide between the Occident and Orient, not at least methodologically and theoretically. Ironically, Marx remained completely blind in this respect.

If Marx wanted to explain the slower development of the productive forces and relations (including capitalism) in the Orient, he could have done so by utilizing his own concept of combined and uneven development.¹⁵⁴ This operates as much within and between any European social formations, as between the Occident and Orient. That each social formation has its own rhythm, pace or motion of internal change and development is attested by Marx himself:

No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.¹⁵⁵

Marx could have utilized this law of differential pace of social change and development to explain that capitalism developed in Europe because material conditions first developed therein, and that it did not develop in the East because favourable conditions were till then immature or absent. Instead of doing so Marx followed uncritically his European predecessors, especially Hegel, and tried to justify his thesis of the total absence of the dialectic or any internal capacity for change and development in the Orient. More than this, because the AMP drags on, it was even incapable of destroying itself unless, of course, it was dragooned into doing so by the Occidental intervention. The idealist Hegel and the materialist Marx were one and the same in their insistence of "the West's uniqueness" by looking upon, as Lichtheim proudly puts it, "European history as an evolution propelled by a dialectic of its own, to which there is no parallel in Oriental history."¹⁵⁶ If it is not Orientalism, then what is it that united such incompatible bed

fellows as Hegel and Marx?

Footnotes

1. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 19-20. Emphases added.
2. E. Gellner, "Stagnation Without Salvation", TLS, 4163 (Jan. 14, 1983), p. 27. Emphases added.
3. Ibid. Emphases in original.
4. See Chapter 2, pp. 101-11.
5. Uneven development may occur at different levels, such as between countries, between regions within a country, between agriculture and industry, between one branch of industry and another, and so on. See J. Valier, "40 Theses on Imperialism and Revolution", International, 3 (summer 1977), pp. 43-54.
6. Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws, BK I, chap. 3 (14 and 15), p. 105.
7. Ibid., BK VIII, chap. 19, p. 178.
8. Ibid., BK XIV, chaps. 3(I) and 4, pp. 247-9. Emphases added.
9. Ibid., BK XIV, chap. 6, p. 250. Emphasis added.
10. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, n. 19, p. 31; and Melotti, Marx and the Third World, pp. 172-3.
11. See chap. 3, p. 136-49.
12. Sawyer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 13-4; and Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, n.4, p. 464.
13. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 14.
14. Therborn, Science, Class and Society, pp. 149-50 and 184-5.
15. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 27.
16. See Ibid., pp. 25-7; and Quaini, Geography and Marxism, p. 20.
17. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, p. 149.
18. Ibid., pp. 90-3 and 104-6.
19. Ibid., pp. 83-4. Emphasis in original.

20. Ibid., p. 109. Emphasis added.
21. Ibid., pp. 64, 122 and 168-71.
22. Ibid., pp. 121 and 180.
23. Mill, The History of British India, vol. 1, pp. 118-9.
24. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, p. 151.
25. Ibid., p. 161. Emphases in original.
26. Ibid., p. 97.
27. Ibid., p. 475. Emphases added.
28. See Lichtheim, "Marx and the Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 171.
29. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 133.
30. Ibid., p. 94.
31. For details, see K. E. Knorr, British Colonial Theories 1570-1850 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1964), pp. 201-414. See also F. G. Hutchins, The Illusion of Performance (Princeton: Princeton University, 1967), passim.
32. Cited in H. Alavi and T. Shanin, eds., Introduction to Sociology of Developing Societies (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982), p. 74.
33. Knorr, op. cit., p. 247.
34. See chap. 3, esp. pp. 134-5.
35. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, pp. 122, 157-9, 166-7 and 171-2.
36. Ibid., p. 170.
37. See Hutchins, op. cit., pp. 3-78.
38. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, p. 171.
39. Ibid., p. 172.
40. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones, pp. 40 and 126.
41. K. Marx, Early Writings (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 98. Emphases in original.

42. Ibid., p. 98.
43. Quaini, op. cit., pp. 19-23.
44. Ibid., pp. 23-4. Emphases in original.
45. Ibid., p. 23; Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, p. 203; and L. Althusser, "Marx's Relations to Hegel", in his Politics and History (London: NLB, 1972), pp. 181-6.
46. Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., p. 204.
47. G. W. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 152.
48. Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., p.204.
49. Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis", p. 107.
50. Cf. Ibid., p. 108.
51. Althusser, op. cit., p. 184.
52. C. Dewey, "Images of the Village Community: A Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology", MAS, 6 (1972), p. 291.
53. H. J. E. Peake, "Village Community", in E. R. A. Seligman, ed.-in-charge, Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, (New York: Macmillan, 1934), vol. 15, p. 253.
54. Dewey, op. cit., p. 291.
55. Cited in Dumont, "The 'Village Community' from Munro to Maine", p. 71.
56. Ibid.
57. Firminger, ed., The Fifth Report, vol. I, p. 158. Emphases added.
58. Mill, op. cit., vol. I, p. 218.
59. See Maine, Village Community in the East and West, passim. See also his Lectures on the Early History of the Institutions, passim.
60. Dewey, op. cit., pp. 306-7. Emphases added.
61. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 305.

62. S. N. Mukherjee, "The Idea of the Village Community and British Administrators", Enquiry, 3 (winter 1971), p. 58.
63. Dumont, op. cit., p. 70.
64. Cited in Mukherjee, "The Idea of the Village Community and British Administrators", p. 63.
65. Maine, Village Communities in the East and West, p. 103.
66. B. H. Baden-Powell, The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), n.1, p. 5. See also his The Indian Village Community (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1957), p. 4.
67. For details, see B. H. Baden-Powell, Land Systems of British India (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 107-8; and The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India, pp. 15-16.
68. Maine, Village Communities in the East and West, p. viii.
69. See chap. 3, p. 155.
70. Dumont, op. cit., p. 84. Emphases added. Dumont had his own axe to grind in the sense that he faulted Maine for not utilizing the data on the caste system.
71. Mukherjee, "The Idea of the Village Community and British Administrators", p. 59.
72. Ibid.
73. See Ibid., pp. 63-7; B. B. Misra, The Administrative History of India 1834-1947 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 29 and 45; and A. Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), p. 185.
74. Mukherjee, "The Idea of the Village Community and British Administrators", p. 67.
75. Maine, Village Communities in the East and West, p. 294.
76. See chap. 3, pp. 143-7.
77. Munro, The Life of Major General Sir Thomas Munro, vol. I, pp. 174 and 185. Emphases added.
78. Government of India, The Famine Inquiry Commission: Final Report (1945), pp. 251-2; and Government of Madras (India), Handbook of

- Information on the Administration of the Province of Madras (1947), pp. 87-8.
79. D. Kumar, Land and Caste in South India (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965), p. 85.
 80. See S. Gopal, British Policy in India (Cambridge: The University Press, 1965), p. 183.
 81. C. H. Philips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947 Select Documents (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 144; and Curzon, Lord of Kedleston, Speeches (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1906), vol. 4, p. 236.
 82. Cited in Mukherjee, "The Idea of the Village Community and British Administrators", p. 66.
 83. Baden-Powell, Land Systems of British India, vol. 2, p. 98.
 84. See M. B. Brown, The Economics of Imperialism (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 96-126; and Frank, Dependent Accumulation and Development, pp. 70-139.
 85. See Mukherjee, The Rise and Fall of the East India Company, pp. 299-392; Clairmonte, Economic Development and Underdevelopment, pp. 68-138; A. Bagchi, Private Investment in India 1900-1939 (Cambridge: The University Press, 1972), *passim*; and "Deindustrialization in India in the Nineteenth Century: Some Theoretical Implications", *JDS*, 12 (January 1976), pp. 135-64; and R. K. Ray, Industrialization in India: Growth and Conflict in the Private Corporate Sector 1914-1947, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), *passim*.
 86. Cited in Minutes of Evidence, Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to consider of the Petition of the East India Company for Relief, Parliamentary Papers, 1840 (353), vii, p. 24; and R. Dutt, The Economic History of India, (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1969), vol. I, p. 262.
 87. D. A. Washbrook, "Law, State and Agrarian Society in Colonial India", *MAS*, 15 (1981), pp. 649-721.
 88. See Cornwallis, First Marquis, The Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis (London: John Murray, 1859), vol. 2, p. 556; and W. C. Bentinck, The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), vol. 1, p. 333.
 89. Curzon, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 123-4. Emphases added.

90. See Linlithgow, the Marquis of, Speeches and Statements (New Delhi: Bureau of Public Information, Govt. of India, 1945), pp. 1 and 328; and E. F. L. W. Irwin, Lord, Indian Problems: Speeches (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932), p. 221.
91. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 123.
92. Campbell, Modern India, p. 85.
93. Phear, The Aryan Village in India and Ceylon, p. 62.
94. Ibid., p. 59.
95. Cited in Levitt, "Karl Marx and Henry Sumner Maine: India and the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 165. See also Krader, The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx, p. 256.
96. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 357-8.
97. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 467.
98. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 87, 334 and 357.
99. See Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 493-6.
100. For details of commodity production in Mughal India, see A. I. Chicherov, India: Economic Development in the 16th - 18th Centuries (Moscow: Nauka Publishing Company, 1971), passim.
101. Campbell, op. cit., pp. 53-4. Emphases added.
102. Ibid., pp. 89-90. Emphases added.
103. Ibid., p. 90.
104. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, pp. 248-52.
105. Ibid., pp. 402 and 419.
106. Ibid., p. 439.
107. For details, see Bhadra, The Mode of Production, Social Classes and the State in Colonial India 1757-1947, esp. pp. 175-208.
108. F. Buchanan, A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar (London T. Cadell et. al., 1807), vol. I, p. 125. Emphases added.
109. Tavernier, Travels in India, vol. I, pp. 28-9.

110. See chap. 2, pp. 101-2.
111. See Clairmonte, op. cit., 118-26; and J. M. Hurd, "Railways", in D. Kumar ed., The Cambridge Economic History of India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), vol. 2, p. 749.
112. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 109.
113. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, pp. 63-4.
114. M. Postan, "The Trade of Medieval Europe: The North", in M. Postan and E. E. Rich, eds., The Cambridge Economic History of Europe (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), vol. 2, pp. 143-4.
115. Huberman, Man's Worldly Goods, p. 18.
116. M. M. Knight, Economic History of Europe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), vol. I, pp. 87-8.
117. L. Girard, "Transport", in H. J. Habakkuk and M. Postan, eds., The Cambridge Economic History Of Europe (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), vol. 6, p. 212.
118. For details, see A. K. M. Farooque, Roads and Communications in Mughal India (Delhi: Idarah - I - Adabiyat - I - Delhi, 1977); I. Habib, "The Technology and Economy of Mughal India", IESHR, 17 (January - March 1980), pp. 1-34; and H. K. Naqvi, Urbanization and Urban Centres Under the Great Mughals: 1556-1707 (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1972); and Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803 (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968).
119. Bejoy K. Sarkar, Inland Transport and Communication in Medieval India (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1925), p. 71.
120. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 133-7.
121. See fn. no. 111.
122. Minutes of Evidence, First Report from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement in India, Parliamentary Papers, 1857-8 (261), vii, pt. 1, p. 8.
123. Minutes of Evidence, Second Report from the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement in India, Parliamentary Papers, 1857-8 (326), vii, pt. 1, p. 88.
124. Tavernier, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 39. Emphases in original.
125. See chap. 2, pp. 101-11.

126. Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., p. 202. Emphases added.
127. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, pp. 786-7.
128. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 648; A. Toynbee, The Industrial Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), p. 25; and J. A. Hobson, The Evolution of Modern Capitalism (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1927), pp. 52-3. For a description of the unity of agriculture and industry in feudalism, see Huberman, op. cit., p. 55.
129. Knight, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 436.
130. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 505 and 748-9. Emphases added.
131. For details, see V. I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), pp. 407-9.
132. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 505.
133. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 85-8.
134. Lenin, op. cit., p. 409.
135. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 479.
136. See Marx's letter of June 14, 1853 to Engels, in his On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 455.
137. Lubasz erroneously argues that Marx's objective in framing the AMP was purely logical, devising an antecedent of the CMP. To be sure, the construction of a purely logical concept is Hegel's, but not Marx's method. See chapter 10, pp. 585-7 of this dissertation.
138. Blum, "The European Village as Community: Origins and Functions", p. 157.
139. Wilks, Historical Sketches of the South of India, vol. 1, pp. 137 and 139. See also Campbell, op. cit., pp. 84-5; and Elphinstone, The History of India, esp. pp. 68-71.
140. Blum, "The European Village As Community: Origins and Functions", p. 157.
141. Blum, "The Internal Structure and Polity of the European Village Community from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century", p. 542.
142. R. Hilton, Bond Men Made Free (London: Temple Smith, 1973), pp. 35-6.

143. Blum, "The Internal Structure and Polity of the European Village Community from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century", pp. 542-3.
144. Blum, "The European Village as Community: Origin and Functions", pp. 164 and 165. Emphases added.
145. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 90 and 455.
146. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 471.
147. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 456. Emphases in original.
148. Blum, "The Internal Structure and Polity of the European Village Community from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century", p. 546.
149. Ibid., esp. pp. 545-62. See also Sobul, "The French Rural Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", p. 81.
150. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 474.
151. Ibid., pp. 474-5. Emphases in original.
152. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 486.
153. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 479.
154. See Marx, Grundrisse, p. 109, where he mentions the uneven development of material production relative to artistic development.
155. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.
156. Lichtheim, op. cit., p. 171.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIAL STAGNATION AND THE VILLAGE ECONOMY: AN EMPIRICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity. ... This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (i.e. civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; and to show it in its action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc. etc., and trace their origins and growth from that basis; by which means, of course, the whole thing can be depicted in the totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another). It has not, like the idealistic view of the history, in every period to look for a category, but remains constantly on the real ground of history; it does not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice.¹

The methodological and theoretical principles underlying the above-mentioned statement of Marx (and Engels) in The German Ideology are very insignificantly reflected in his AMP. In his A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy Marx said that "the Asiatic" mode of production, along with other modes that originated in Europe, was an epoch "marking progress in the economic development of society."² Marx is correct if this characterization means the invariant fact that

civilization and history first arose in the fertile plains of the river valleys of the Tigris-Euphrates, the Nile, the Indus, and the Huangho - all being located in the East.³ But he alone was no maverick in conceptualizing the stated role of the Eastern civilizations.⁴ Hegel clearly stated that it was on the river plains of the East where "property in land" commenced and where "the basis and foundation of the state" became possible.⁵

In any event the logical and empirical validity of the AMP is strictly limited to the bare fact that civilization and history chronologically first originated in the territorial space of the East. Beyond this, there is nothing that validates the AMP. In chapter 6 I have shown how different methodological and theoretical problems transformed the AMP into what I called a lame duck concept, i.e. a concept that is so full of internal contradictions that it cannot effectively function for the purpose for which it was formulated in the first instance. It is not difficult to understand why, therefore, Currie said this:

For if the Asiatic form is immanently static how then can it constitute a progressive stage in the development of productive forces? The contradiction is explicit.⁶

Similarly from the empirical standpoint, Marx's AMP is almost totally misrepresentative of the Indian economic formation. If anything, the AMP projects an empirical reality that is the product only of an 'idealistic' view of history, and which rarely stands on 'the real ground' of "Asiatic" history.

In this light the major purpose of this chapter is to undertake

an appraisal of the empirical validity of Marx's thesis of the social stagnation of the village economy of the AMP. For this I focus on the empirical experiences of the pre-Muslim Indian economic formation. As it will become unmistakably clear in this chapter, Marx's AMP can by no means be considered a productive conceptual category that reflects the empirical reality of the social economy of India; neither was the AMP itself based in the first place on the consideration of concrete historical facts of the Indian social economy. I must mention, however, one mitigating factor of consequence. Marx did not have access to such a huge mass of empirical data from diverse sources (e.g. archeological, literary, numismatic etc.) that we have now at our disposal in the later half of the twentieth century. In any case, it is redundant to add that such a mitigating consideration has nothing to do analytically with the fact that the theory of the AMP in itself is empirically invalid as its projected (Indian) reality is not corroborated by the concrete historical experiences of the pre-Muslim Indian economic formation.

II. The Rise and Development of the Ancient Indian Socio-Economic Formation

It has been commonly believed in the West that before the impact of European learning, science, and technology 'the East' changed little if at all over many centuries. The 'wisdom of the East', unchanging over the millennia, it was thought, preserved eternal verities which Western civilization had almost forgotten. On the other hand 'the East' was not ready to enter into the rough and tumble of the modern world without the guidance for an indefinite period of more developed Western countries.

These ideas were no doubt held in good faith by many well-informed people of earlier generations, and there may have been a grain of truth from the point of view of the nineteenth century. But there is no reason to believe that the rate of change in India in earlier times was any slower

than that of the other parts of the world. It was only from the sixteenth century onwards, when a combination of many factors led to increasingly rapid technological and scientific advances in Europe that the myth of changelessness of Asia began to appear.

In fact India has always been steadily changing.⁷

These words of a contemporary liberal social historian (A. L. Basham) put in perspective precisely the fact, ignored by Marx, that the Indian social formation, like any other social formation of whatever geographical location, was not stagnant per se. Indeed the reverse is the case, as is indicated today by a plethora of empirical data.

Among other things, they repudiate Marx's claim that the "Asiatic history" was marked plainly by an "indifferent unity of town and countryside", whereas the history of classical European antiquity remained "the history of cities."⁸ The fact of the matter is that India developed as well what was fundamentally an urban civilization - the Indus or Harappan civilization (2500/2300 B.C.-1750/1500 B.C.)⁹ which, in its turn, was the culminating point of a chain of interrelated material and cultural developments encompassing both productive forces and relations of production. If history is defined, as Marx does, as "nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims", the urban civilization of the Indus is the first historical act of the ancient Indians, for the Indus cities were products of their prior and conscious planning.¹⁰

To be sure, the Indus urbanism was not an accidental occurrence. Modern archaeological yields bear out that it was preceded by the formation as well as establishment of numerous agricultural communities

during the second half of the fourth and the early part of the third millennium B.C. This is the formative phase of the Indus civilization.¹¹ The transition to Indus urbanism was a gradual but inevitable response to the challenge posed by problems facing the villagers of the highlands.

What was lacking in the highlands was the space and the natural resources to stimulate the process. In the Indus Valley both were at hand. With little technological innovation but with an already largely established hierarchical system the organization necessary to handle the problems of settled life in the valley was created. Large populations, increasing number of specialists, surpluses of subsistence crops, storage (since a one-crop-a-year harvest was typical), and the maintenance of religious, social, legal and political forms mutually recognized by the population - these were the kinds of problems which needed solutions as settlement was established.¹²

It may be recalled here that Marx regarded the factor of population growth as a dynamic element of Roman history. But when he came to India, he dismissed any such dynamic role of the growth of population.¹³ Archeological evidence tends to suggest that in fact the growth of population was a dynamic element in that it accelerated the process of urbanism in ancient India.¹⁴

In any case, the pre-Indus social formations developed many productive forces such as these: town or village planning, pottery on wheel, brick built houses, stove and mud brick fortification wall round the inner or important settlement, etc.¹⁵ A few further aspects can be summarized in the words of Bridget and Raymond Allchin:

Throughout the whole Indus plain regular agriculture settlements, based on wheat and barley, and domestic cattle, sheep and goats, began to appear during this period. These settlements had regularly constructed houses, often with surviving traces of town walls, and some of considerable

size. While they still relied on stone for some purposes - for blades and bead - borers for instance - they also used copper, and probably bronze. Copper objects are reported regularly from the excavated sites of the Early Indus period, though they are not plentiful. There is as yet no clear evidence of when the use of tin, or some other alloy for the production of bronze, first occurred. In many areas these Early Indus settlements can be traced back to an earlier, sometimes Neolithic stage, and in those crafts where local fashions had already appeared, such as pot making, these antecedent traces often remain visible. Indeed, the pottery of the entire Indus system from the late fourth and early third millennia B.C. may be said to belong to a single craft province, clearly related to that of Baluchistan.¹⁶

Let me now turn to the Indus civilization proper, i.e. mature Indus urbanism lasting between c. 2550 B.C. and c. 2000 B.C.¹⁷

The Indus civilization, located in the northwestern parts of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, derives its name from the main river of the region called Indus, which is itself a corruption of the Sanskrit word Sindhu meaning river. The name India too is derived from the same source, i.e. Indus. According to one present estimate, about 2000 sites of this civilization have been located. The major sites are Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Chanhudaro, Rupar, Rangpur, Lothal, Kalibangan, Alamgirpur, Surkotada, Balakot and Allah Dino.¹⁸ However, the Indus civilization is best known for its two largest cities which are located now in Pakistan: Mohenjodaro beside the river Indus in the Larkana district of the Sind province, and Harappa beside the tributary river Ravi in the Montgomery district of the Panjab province. They stand at about 370 miles apart from each other. The Indus civilization covered an extensive area comprising the whole of Sind, Panjab, North West Frontier Province, a part of the Gangetic basin, Saurashtra, Gujrat, and

other coastal regions. Its total area of spread was 840,000 square miles - an area which was "very much larger than even the combined areas of the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt put together."¹⁹

Technically as well, the Indus civilization was not backward in comparison with them.

As Gordon Childe so rightly pointed out, India produced a 'thoroughly individual and independent civilization of her own, technically the peer of the rest', although resting upon the same fundamental ideas, discoveries and inventions as those of Egypt and Mesopotamia. We are now in a position to add to his statement that the extent and consistency in terms of town planning, craft and industries of the Harappan culture, far exceeded either. The most important single advance must have been the exploitation of the Indus food plains for agriculture, offering a vast potential production of wheat and barley. Many pieces of equipment, such as bullock-carts, provided prototypes for subsequent generations of Indian craftsmen, to spread through the whole subcontinent and survive into the twentieth century.²⁰

As a whole, the uniqueness of the Indus civilization is internal or 'Indian', rather than external.²¹ That is, "in all respects, the Indus cities were sui generis."²²

This Indus urbanism was sustained, above all, by an extraordinary system of agriculture and animal husbandry. The Indus sites are located at places which had double advantage: an adequate supply of water as well as a rich alluvial soil.²³ Ex facie, this fact negates Marx's AMP as well on two counts. That is, Marx's claims in regard to the hydraulic origin of the omnipotent state in the arid or semi arid region, on the one hand, and the consequent nondevelopment of private property due to the monopoly of landed property by the hydraulic state, on the other, fly in the face of such congenial environmental support. Moreover, one of the striking features of the Indus cities,

which immediately draws the attention of any of their visitors but which negates Marx's thesis of the lack of 'true' cities or towns in the Orient, is rigorous town planning, especially, of their streets and residential units.²⁴

The basic layout of the larger settlements, whether cities or towns, shows a regular orientation. At Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Kalibangan, this consists of two distinct elements: on the west a 'citadel' mound built on a high podium of mud-brick, with a long axis running north-south, and to the east - apparently broadly centred upon the citadel, and dominated by it - a 'lower' city, consisting of what must have been in the main residential areas. Probably the latter was originally more or less square. The citadel certainly, and probably also the lower town, was surrounded by a massive brick wall. At Kalibangan traces have been discovered of the remains of massive brick walls around both the citadel and the lower town. The citadel in particular had square towers and bastions. ... There appears to have been a general co-ordination of measurements of the streets, the largest being twice the width of the smaller, and three or four times that of the side lanes. ... The general population probably lived in the blocks in the lower town, while on or beside the citadel mound were buildings of a civic, religious or administrative status, including perhaps granaries.²⁵

There was planning in other aspects of Indus urbanism as well. All bricks, both burnt- and mud-bricks, were baked till standardization of their sizes was achieved. There was characteristic uniformity in the use of bricks, both sun-dried and burnt, in the building of uniform houses in the lower town. The same uniformity can be observed in the exclusive use of burnt bricks in the constructions of wells, drains and bathrooms.²⁶ An integral aspect of Indus urbanism was, however, variation in the sizes of dwelling places. This bears testimony to the prevailing socio-economic inequality, rather than communism as Marx had in mind, among the urban dwellers of the Indus.²⁷ The existence of the

granaries in the Indus implies the extraction of surplus and, hence, the existence of towns or cities as distinct from the villages in the surrounding countrysides. The extraction of surplus would imply also a class division in terms of a minority of appropriators and a majority of producers (peasants or craftsmen), and a division of labour between towns or cities and the villages. The barrack-like tenements might well have been the dwellings of slaves.²⁸

The Indus cities exhibited an "industrial" division of labour which was precisely different in nature and scope from one envisaged in the AMP. Archeological data attest to the fact that the major Indus cities contained, among others, "specialized groups" in a wide range of industrial crafts.²⁹ Marlow describes the various inhabitants quite eloquently:

The inhabitants of the two great cities had plenty to do, to reach and maintain their level of advancement. To begin with, the hewing of timber and baking of bricks must have provided work for thousands, and normal wear and replacement would have acquired a large labour force. The whole range of the architect's and builder's craft was very far advanced, and the back-room work must have been enormous; for throughout the history of the cities there was a uniform system of weights and measures and the preservation of the street lay-out points to long continuity of tenure and to a numerous class of scribes, as numerous as in Assyria under Asshurbani-pal. There was also an expert class of skilled craftsmen, including jewellers, silversmiths, and coppersmiths, engravers, sculptors, potters and real stampers. There must have been a body of sanitary and drainage engineers, for the drainage and sanitation was far in advance of anything to be found in India until the nineteenth century; hundreds of labourers must have been permanently employed in keeping clear the street drains and those leading to private houses.³⁰

It is not irrelevant to note that archeological excavations produced

almost 2000 metal artifacts at Mohenjo-daro and over 1000 at Harappa.³¹ All this implies the existence in the Indus cities of an extensive social division of labour.

An integral aspect of Indus urbanism was its economic basis in internal and external trade.³² The extent of trade in the basic essentials such as food or in luxury commodities is open to question. What is beyond question is the fact that, as Allchins point out, "with the inception of the full urbanism of the mature Indus period the volume of trade and interaction, both within the Harappan economic circle and without it, must have increased in scale and variety to a quite unprecedented extent."³³ This must imply, at the same time, "a considerable merchant class" or "a substantial middle class financed from trade and industry."³⁴ However, it should be mentioned that coins are yet to be discovered in the Indus cities.³⁵ The earliest coins of India cannot be dated earlier than the 5th century B.C. and the minting of coins in India seems to have taken place by the 6th century B.C.³⁶ In any case the existence of trade, both internal and external, is beyond doubt.³⁷ To this extent, it negates Marx's AMP insofar as the latter excludes general trade as well as a merchant class.

The complex trading system, which the Indus people evolved, was connected with the development of specialized occupational groups as well as of specialized centres of commodity production. Thus, for instance, a few specialized in the procurement and distribution of raw materials, while some others specialized in the production of different commodities at various specialized centres. Harappa might have

specialized in manufacturing metal tools, while Mohenjo-daro might have concentrated on making other metal products, textiles and the like. Chanhudaro focused on bead making and seal engraving. Lothal also developed the speciality of bead making. Certain towns like Sutkagendor, Sotka Koh, Balakot and Lothal were simultaneously port towns established mainly to export commodities to different places, especially to West Asia. Hence, the importance of those port towns consisted in their being centres of export trade.³⁸ Finally, mention should be made of the fact that particular places (e.g. lower town) in the Indus cities, argue Allchins,

must also have contained a wide range of shops and craft workshops: among these potters' kilns, dyers' vats, metal-workers', shell-ornament-makers' and bead-makers' shops have been recognized, and it is probable that had the earlier excavators approached their task more thoughtfully much more information would have been obtained about the way in which these specialists' shops were distributed through the settlement.³⁹

Wheeler also reports that "shops, including one with floor-sockets for large jars, can be recognized along the main streets."⁴⁰

That the urban civilization of the Indus was a trading civilization is manifest by its external trade links with many other distant economies.⁴¹ Allchins inform us that "there is plentiful evidence that the Indus merchants or caravan-leaders carried their trade far beyond the frontiers of the empire, and established contacts with other peoples, either still in a state of barbarism or belonging to contemporary civilizations."⁴² For instance, gold was imported from goldfields of North Karnataka, Afghanistan, and Persia. Silver came from Iran, Afghanistan and possibly south India. Most tools of the

Indus civilization were made of copper, which came predominantly from Rajasthan. Its other sources were south India, Baluchistan and Arabia. Tin might have come from the Khorasan and Karadagh districts in northern Iran. Lapis-lazuli came from Badakshan, a province of northern Afghanistan. Turquoise was imported from central Asia or Iran.⁴³ Both archaeological and literary evidences testify to the trade between the Indus cities and the cities of Mesopotamia. It flourished between 2600 B.C. and 1500 B.C., and especially after 2400 B.C. Indus merchants exported products of gold, ivory, carnelian beads, lapis-lazuli, shell and bone inlay goods, peacocks, cotton textiles, bird figurines, timber, etc.⁴⁴

A very developed commerce is hardly imaginable without a necessary system of weights and measures. Whether accidental or not, the Indus system of weights is curiously connected with the later Indian system of weights. Generally made of chert and cubical in shape, they progress from 1, 2, 22, 8, 16, 32, 64, 160, 200, 320, 640, etc. to 12,800.

From this, number 16 can at once be recognized as the predominant multiple and this unit is equivalent to 13.625 gm of modern weight. The system is binary in the lower, decimal in the higher and fractional in the thirds. The multiple number 16 has been considered as of 'traditional importance in early Indian numerology, surviving indeed in the modern coinage of, 16 annas to 1 rupee'. In addition to the coinage system it is also linked with the system of weights in force in India, which is 16 chattakas = 1 seer and 40 seers = 1 maunds (= 640 seers). In the land measurement scheme, the multiple of 16 is also predominant: 16 chittiks = 1 Kotta, and 20 Kottas = 1 Bigha (= 320 chittiks). In some parts of northern India, land measurement is done through a different unit: 1 Bigha = 20

Kottas (= 320 ch.) = 400 Dhur = 8000 Dhurki. Here also the multiple of 16 has been maintained.⁴⁵

A commensurate system of length measurement, which was in fact applied to Indus valley architecture, also evolved.⁴⁶ No less striking was the presence of literacy evidenced by inscriptions on the seals. That literacy was not confined to only a few is borne out by the fact that inscriptions occur also on pottery and other household objects. However, the script, having nearly 400 signs, is yet to be deciphered.⁴⁷

There is little doubt that the market economy was quite organized and sophisticated, and this is amply demonstrated by "the presence of regulated weights and measures, and of a script which was evidently used for trading purposes, as were the elaborate and well-made seals".⁴⁸ This being the case, the growth of private property was not in doubt. There is hardly any evidence that raises any presumption to the contrary. Piggott argues:

From merchants and trade to writing and arithmetic is a reasonable enough transition: Speiser has put the whole relationship into a delightfully cynical phrase - 'writing was not a deliberate invention, but the incidental by-product of a strong sense of private property'. It is not surprising, then, that the bulk of the inscriptions in the Harappa civilization that have survived are cut on stamp - seals, engraved with figures of animals or less often of gods and humans, and evidently used as a means of identifying the property of individuals. ... The seal as a method of marking property is of great antiquity and its use is very widespread in the Ancient East.⁴⁹

Indeed the seals which occurred in large numbers probably served purposes other than recording or registering ownership of the commodity. For instance, they could have authenticated written transactions of contract or loans, mortgage or sale of movable or immovable property.⁵⁰

In the present state of knowledge there is no direct evidence that either negates or confirms the existence of communal/state property or of private property in agrarian land. The presumption of the existence of private property in land, if I can hypothesize, seems to be stronger in view of the presence of attendant circumstances (trade, literacy, etc.) leading to the growth of the cities (and possibly city states) which would presuppose private property in land. As Marx (and Engels) indicated, the division of town and country is the separation of capital in the former from the landed property in the latter.⁵¹

How the Indus civilization came to an end is still an open question. To be sure the conquest theory, which rests on the alleged massacre of the civilized Indus people by the invading hordes of barbarian Aryans, is implausible in view of the lack of even a single bit of evidence to that effect.⁵² Its survival as an urban entity depended on "a delicate balance of internal relations between cities, towns and villages, and of external relations with neighbouring peasant societies and more distant urban societies. The end of the Indus urban phase probably arose from some major upsetting of this balance."⁵³ Such an upset was perhaps the result of a combination of several causes, e.g. the wearing out of the land, earthquake, great flood(s), epidemic diseases (typhoid or cholera) following in the wake of floods, the decline of trade, the revolt of the peasants against city-based ruling class of merchants, administrators, priests, etc.⁵⁴ It is less likely that the Indus civilization was brought to an end all of a sudden. At any rate, instead of spreading throughout India, the Indus civilization

remained confined only to certain regions such as Sind, Punjab, Gujrat and parts of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The rest of India was then passing through the neolithic (characterized by the cultivation of crops, domestication of animals and use of stones), and chalcolithic (characterized by the predominant use of copper in making tools and weapons) phases and had limited but meaningful contacts with the Harappan and other West Asian cultures.⁵⁵ What is more important in this connection is the migration of the Aryans (or Indo-Aryans) into north-western India, and this inaugurated what is sometimes called the Vedic era (c. 1500 B.C.-c. 600 B.C.). The concept of 'Aryan' is not racial in meaning but designates a large group of people belonging to a common family of languages like Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, etc. Literally the word Aryan means 'free born' or of 'noble character'. At the earliest times, it was used in all probability as an ethnic group.⁵⁶ The Aryans moved into India in two waves in two periods, "the first or early period dating from around 2000 B.C., and the second some six centuries later."⁵⁷ The region of their settlement was the land of the seven Indus rivers - sapta sindhava - which are the Indus itself, the Sarasvati, the Jhelum, the Chenab, the Ravi, the Beas, and the Sutlej. The last five, also tributaries of the Indus, give 'Panjab' - literally the land of five rivers - its name. It was here in Panjab that the seminomadic barbarian Aryans first settled. And, it was also here in Panjab that their priests composed the Rig Veda, the first records of the Aryan social formation.⁵⁸

The early Vedic social formation (c.1500 B.C.-c.1000 B.C.) is

essentially described by the Rig Veda, "the world's earliest surviving Indo-European literature" that was compiled by 1500 or 1400 B.C.⁵⁹ Rig Vedic India was essentially pre-urban with a copper and possibly iron technology. The social formation was then in a transition "from nomadic pastoralism dependent on cattle to an agrarian form with more settled communities."⁶⁰ One of the important aspects of the earliest Vedic phase is that it was characterized by constant and bitter feuds between the Indo-Aryans and other hostile groups such as Dasyus and Panis, on the one hand, or between groups of the Indo-Aryans themselves, on the other. The greatest god of the Rig Veda was Indra, who is considered "the apotheosis of the Aryan battle-leaders."⁶¹ To describe the contours of this evolving belligerent natural community in the words of Sharma:

War in the predominantly tribal society of the Rg Veda was a logical and natural economic function. It is rightly stated, man hunting was the logical extension of animal hunting. The legacy continued even in post-Vedic times because in the Dharmaśāstras war is recognized as one of the legitimate modes of livelihood, and justifies the existence of the Ksatriya varna. The Rg Vedic tribes being primarily herdsmen who lived on beef and dairy products, fought one another and outsiders for the sake of cattle. This is clear from several words such as gavisti, gavesana, gosu, gavyat and gavyu - which mean war. Other animals such as horses, goats and sheep were also prized, particularly horses which may have been mainly in the possession of princes, tribal chiefs and elders. The spoils may also have consisted of the personal effects of the defeated parties, e.g., the dresses, weapons, etc.⁶²

War does not seem to be altogether unproductive, as Marx wants us to believe only in the Indian context.⁶³ There are strong indications to the effect that constant wars provided an important condition for the development especially of movable property.

It has been argued elsewhere that in the Rig Vedic social formation the embryonic development of individual private property was signified by terms like "mine", "yours" and "his".⁶⁴ That war was an important factor in this evolution of private property in India, as also elsewhere in Rome, is attested by the fact that

the Rg Veda has a large number of terms for property which was won as a stakes in war. At least that is the meaning of the term dhana and pana used in that text. Besides, we encounter a few other terms such as rayi, reknas, dravinas, etc. But what did wealth consist of? The common use of the adjective gomat applied to rich people shows that it consisted mainly of cattle and not of land. In a predominantly pastoral society this was a quite natural phenomenon.⁶⁵

It is to be noted that the development of private property was not exclusively limited to movable property, particularly cows. As I have shown in chapter 4, there are well grounded indications that such development also started to embrace immovable things such as land or house.⁶⁶ The terms sadma and dama used for house indicate that it was regarded as private property. The terms such as urvarā-jit, urvara-sā, kstra-sāt etc. indicate that lands were the bone of contention in wars and, hence, objects of private ownership.⁶⁷

However, in all probability the individual ownership of land, though traceable beyond any shade of doubt, does not seem to have dominated, not at least in the earliest period of the Vedic social formation. The most convincing reason is that the Rig Vedic people were not yet then settled agriculturists, which they became in the latter Vedic period (c.1000 B.C.- c.600 B.C.). The tendency towards permanence of habitation continued to increase as the Aryans more and more took to

agriculture. Various agrarian practices connected with the ploughing, sowing, cutting of the corn with sickle, threshing and winnowing are described in the first and tenth books of the Rig Veda that were composed at a comparatively later date. In other words, such agrarian practices demonstrate that the agrarian economy became more stable towards the end of the Rig Vedic period.⁶⁸ The tendency towards increasing stability of the social formation is attested by literary references to the gift or distribution of cultivated lands among the Rig Vedic people. "It is stated that Viṣṇu made the land fit for cultivation and then gave it to the people. More clearly in another context it is stated that Indra, the great thunder-wielder with the help of his white-complexioned comrades, distributed the cultivated land, the sunlight and the waters."⁶⁹ By the time the later Vedic texts comprising the collections of the Yajur and Atharvan, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanisadas were composed, the Indo-Aryans made a definite transition to an economy based on agriculture. By this time (i.e. c.1000 B.C.-c.600 B.C.) the Indo-Aryans advanced from the plains of the Indus and its tributaries to the Indo-Gangetic Divide and the upper Gangetic basin comprising the Panjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and the neighbouring areas of Rajasthan. Both the Vedic texts and the archaeological finds, especially painted grey ware shards, corroborate a whole series of material developments that included the definite reliance on settled agricultural production.⁷⁰

The stated territorial expansion as well as agrarian production was hardly possible without the general use of iron implements. They

were indeed necessary for the extensive clearance of the primitive forests surrounding the Gangetic plains. The use of iron spread to several regions of India by 1000 B.C., and after 800 B.C. one can speak of a full "Iron Age."⁷¹ The reference to the yoking of 6, 8, 12 and 24 oxen to the plough indicates not only the prevalence of deep ploughing for increased agrarian production but also the use of iron implements, without which such deep ploughing was difficult to imagine.⁷² In the Rig Vedic era the people produced mainly yava or barley. In the later Vedic period they began producing other crops such as rice and wheat.⁷³ The four-fold varṇa system was mentioned once in the Rig Veda. But by the time of the later Vedas, especially at the time of the Yajur Veda, the varṇa system fully developed.⁷⁴ This implied not only the incorporation of the dasas (slaves) into the Aryan fold but also a progressive movement towards developing "advanced forms of property-holding" and "trade exchange on a sufficiently large scale."⁷⁵ This period witnessed the clear emergence of a class of landowners. Thus Keith states that "for the peasant working in his own fields, was being substituted the landowner cultivating his estate by means of slaves."⁷⁶

The social economy in this period also exhibits a greater occupational differentiation than before and hence the rise of new occupations. The Yajur Veda mentions occupations of the fishermen, fire-rangers, ploughers, washermen, barbers, butchers, footmen, messengers, smelters, smiths, potters, makers of jewels, ropes, dyes, chariots, bows, and so forth. Other texts refer to the merchant and his trade (vanijya), moneylender (kusidi), and merchant prince or headman

(sresthi) of a guild.⁷⁷ The Rig Vedic and later Vedic social formations attest to the growth, though slow, of exchange beyond the stage of barter. The concept of barter refers to "a method of exchanging goods and services directly with other goods and services without using a separate unit of account or medium of exchange."⁷⁸ Source materials in the Vedic period strongly suggest the prevalence of different media of exchange, especially niska, mana, rayi and hiranya-pinda. Maity argues that "gold and silver pieces of definite weight and standard were used by the people as media of exchange."⁷⁹ To this extent, this implies the growth of trade and traders, on the one hand, and of further division or specialization of labour, on the other.⁸⁰ However, the presence of the merchants and hence commodity production and commerce did not mean that they were the leading social class of the Vedic social formation. Indeed, the social economy of the Vedic period remained fundamentally agrarian, rather than urban. The agrarian surplus that was needed to sustain urbanism and its concomitant market economy was not produced in the later Vedic period. One reason for this is that the use of iron remained limited due to the paucity of its supply, on the one hand, and the sophistication needed to make extensive use of iron, on the other. Besides the later Vedic people did not know the art of paddy transplantation, which of necessity restricted the production of agrarian surplus.

All these problems were solved in the following period (i.e. c.600 B.C.-c.320 A.D.) which witnessed what has been hailed as the second urbanization or the second phase of urbanization in India.⁸¹

The second urbanization reveals stages of internal growth and horizontal expansion, and two new and crucial cultural elements, namely a multifunctional syllabic script and coinage, which are associated with this urbanization, serve as effective indicators of its geographical spread. The factor adding substantially to its internal growth process was an enormous expansion of trade networks in the period when India's early contact with central Asia and the Roman world reached its peak, and despite physical variations between the urban centres, between Ujjayinī and Nagarjunakonda for example, this network is evident in the unprecedented territorial mobility of men and goods in this period. It may not at all be fortuitous that a shrinkage in this network coincides with the decline of the urban centres from the post-Koṣāna throughout the Gupta period.⁸²

This thumbnail portrait of the post-Vedic urbanism, to be detailed below, surely provides no empirical validation to the AMP that pictures India in terms of entrenched stagnation of productive forces and relations, or of unpolluted ruralism of the isolated village communities. In the period under review the Indian social formation experienced remarkable economic, ideological, and political changes that, without any shade of doubt, make the AMP precisely a chimerical concept.

Economically, the hindrances to agrarian production and hence to raising a notable amount of agrarian surplus were overcome in the second half of the first millennium B.C. This coincided with the migration of a part of the population from the upper Gangetic basin to a newly colonized region, the middle Gangetic basin, which comprised eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. This region is also called Majjhimadesa extending from Allahabad to Rajmahal, and was identical with ancient Kosala and Magadha.⁸³ Politically, this period witnessed the formation of the full fledged class-based states. Ideologically, there emerged

several ideologies competing with each other for social acceptance by the citizenry. They are Buddhism, Jainism and Lokayata or Charvaka Darsana (materialism).⁸⁴ In any case, from an economic point of view, the growth of the productive forces included these: the practice of paddy transplantation, the classification of the fields on the basis of their quality (e.g. (i) best, (ii) middling, and (iii) inferior, forested and infertile), the utilization of new plants and fruit trees (e.g. mango etc.), the growth of the knowledge of irrigation and the practice of keeping the land fallow, the domestication of certain animals (e.g. nilgai, pig, deer, etc.). Finally, the extensive use of tools made of iron, in place of those made of stone and copper, led to the generation of the agrarian surplus that would sustain the second urbanism of India since the decay of the Indus cities more than a thousand years ago.⁸⁵

An important aspect of these new developments concerns the emergence of definite antagonism between the city or town on the one hand and the villages on the other. This evidence completely negates the AMP's depiction of India as a classless terrain of homogeneous ruralism. True, the Dharmasūtras, which were composed between 600 B.C. and 300 B.C., are clearly antagonistic to urbanism in their emphasis. These Brāhmanical texts generally reflect the patterns of development in northern India. But the Pali texts, the Buddhist source materials which reflect the state of affairs particularly in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, are emphatic in their urban bias. Indeed, Buddhism was integrally connected with the second urbanism. Similarly, certain

Brāhmanical texts like Kautilya's Arthaśāstra and Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra represent urbanism, whereas others like the Dharmasūtras are unequivocally rural in their orientation.⁸⁶ Among the writers of the Dharmasūtras the antagonism to urbanism took this form:

According to Gotam there is a perpetual an-adhyāya (non-recital of the Vedas) in the city. Āpastamba has a similar injunction; so also Vasistha and Manu. Āpastamba again forbids a Snātaka (pious householder who has completed his studies as a brahma-cārin) to enter a city. Baudhāyana makes this attitude very clear by declaring that nobody living in the city, with his body covered with the dust of the city and his eyes and mouth filled with it, can attain salvation even if he leads an austere life. In fact, the ethos pervading the law-texts is definitely oriented towards ruralism, with strong kinship bonds not possible in the city. The Brāhmanas arrogated to themselves supreme powers of dictation over others in the village but were themselves expected to lead an austere, lust-free and blameless life.⁸⁷

The growing urbanism precisely threatened the Brāhmanical domination, and Buddhism in a way championed the revolt against Brāhmanism.

Buddhism, the ideology of the second urbanism at the time of its beginning, contested the sanctity of the Vedas, argued against all Brāhmanical pretensions and ritualism, and brought out the absence of rationale in the varna stratification. It put emphasis on individual ownership and enterprise. It came to terms with and implicitly accepted the different institutions and practices of urbanism - trade, usury, public eating, prostitution, and so on and so forth - which were condemned by the village-oriented Brāhmanical sutra writers. The enormity of urbanism is prima facie indicated by the fact that, among other things, at least sixty cities or towns are listed in the Buddhist texts.⁸⁸

It is interesting to note that even the writers of the Dharmasūtras could not escape the reality of productive developments that led to urbanism. For instance, they were not unmindful of the role of the production and exchange of commodities in the social formation, and their works indeed attest to the prevalence of this aspect.

Thus the cereals, livestock, cloth, wool, herbs, metals, hides, salt, wood, agricultural implements, ropes, utensils, condiments, jewellery, perfumes, and arms might have formed the main articles of the trader's bag. The negative evidence proves trade in human being, horses, medicines, honey, flesh, roots, substances used for glueing, fruits, flowers, substances from which spirituous liquor might be extracted. ... References to various kinds of debts, deposits, interests, measures and weights, coinage, taxes and tolls, and above all, the grant of permission to the Vaiśyas and in some cases even to the Brāhmanas and Kstrijas, for trading and usury, prove that trade was well grounded now. The existence of the merchants' and usurers' guilds, the checking of weights and measurements, reference to carts (mahānasa) and boats along with their owners, and a distinct reference to commercial debt adds authenticity to the view.⁸⁹

The same evidence concerning the presence of commodity production and exchange is also available in the Buddhist source materials, confirming that urbanism rested above all on the solid bases of trade and industry. The trade was both external and internal. It presumed the existence of a well organized means of communication and transportation, connecting the cities and centres of trade and linking the villages as suppliers of agrarian materials to the cities.⁹⁰

That commodity production and exchange had advanced to a significant stage or that the basis of urbanism was a significant market economy can be illustrated by the following description of the trading activities at the lowest level.

Of merchants some specialized in the trade of single commodities. Of such Pānini refers to salt-merchants and spice-merchants. In addition to these, there were retail shop keepers, who had their shops (Āpana) in villages or towns and sold various articles of every day use, and also retail traders and hawkers who moved with their goods in carts or donkeys. As to the shops (Āpana, Panyāgāra) we hear of some for the sale of textile fabrics, groceries, and sellers of flowers, grains and other articles. Hotel and taverns too existed. Slaughterhouses, ale houses, and hotels for the sale of cooked meat and rice existed. As regards these last we have repeated mention in the Arthaśāstra and some early Buddhist works. ... Sellers of vegetable and other minor commodities brought their goods and halted at the city-gate and hawked thence for sale. So also hunters and fishermen bought meat and fish from outside to the markets in the town or carried from door to door.⁹¹

To succeed and become wealthy the shop keeper (pāpaniko) must have, it is stated, three qualities: "shrewdness, capability and the ability to inspire confidence."⁹² Dīgha Nikāya states that "if a man should start an enterprise (Kammante payojeyya) after contracting a loan and if his business should succeed he should not only be able to pay off the old debt he had incurred, but there should be surplus over to maintain a wife."⁹³ If anything, it appears that something of a sort of 'spirit of capitalism' pervaded the social formation of the time of Buddha (566 B.C.-486 B.C.).⁹⁴

The conception of trade carries necessarily the conception of the medium of exchange. The use of coins is alluded to in the Rig Vedic and later Vedic periods in the relevant literary source materials, but they have not been empirically found. However, in the period under review punch-marked coins that belong to 5th century B.C. onwards have been found in abundance. The newly arisen states - the mahajanapadas - are stated to have issued their own coins.⁹⁵ The very existence of

regular coinage implied "highly developed commodity production."⁹⁶ How strong and extensive the market economy became, is precisely indicated by the fact that "even the price of a dead mouse is stated in terms of money."⁹⁷ The production and exchange of commodities in the post-Vedic market economy reached such significant levels that it produced other beneficial results. One of them was the development of mathematical science.⁹⁸ Lamb thus makes this observation:

An interesting sidelight on the vitality of business in classical times comes from the development of the science of arithmetic with the invention of the concept of zero and the decimal place value system of numerology - this new discovery being the basic building block of subsequent mathematics and science. Why were the Hindus able to make this new formulation, while the Greeks with their capacity for abstraction were not. Perhaps because the social impetus and the need for these new tools came from expanding business and trade, which were held in higher esteem in ancient India than they were in Greece. Early Sanskrit works on mathematics are full of the problems of trade, taxation, interest and debt calculation. Indian businessmen at this time also developed double entry bookkeeping.⁹⁹

Evidently the then Indian social formation was completely different from the one depicted in the AMP which, it may be recalled, neither allowed dynamism in the development of productive forces and relations nor provided any scope for commodity production and exchange. Again, the evidence for the expanding role of commodity production and exchange can also be illuminated in terms of its impact on Pāṇini, the greatest of the Sanskrit grammarians who "set the linguistic standard of Classical Sanskrit, effectively stabilizing the language."¹⁰⁰ He utilized the exchange ratio prevailing in the 5th and 6th centuries B.C. to formulate his grammatical rules.¹⁰¹

The existence of the market economy¹⁰² presupposes the existence

of a sufficiently developed social division of labour and, hence, a commensurate class structure. While more will be said in this respect in chapter 9, let me say that post-Vedic India was not a social formation of undifferentiated masses as Marx claimed. The class structure looks quite complex. Of the social classes, the most notable were those of the merchants and financiers, the propertied urbanites, and the artisans. The merchants and financiers were the śresthis who lived in the cities, as did the other propertied urbanities called gahapatis.¹⁰³ The word gahapati literally means "lord of the house" and was equivalent to Roman paterfamilias. The gahapati was not, as Marx thought, an "ingrown" individual who formed a "purely natural component" part of the primitive community.¹⁰⁴ The industrial division of labour proceeded so much that the different textual sources enlisted numerous occupations and professions.¹⁰⁵ The Buddhist texts like Dīgha Nikāya refers to twenty eight crafts. The Mahavastu mentions thirty six that existed especially in the town of Rājagraha.¹⁰⁶ The Jātakas mention eighteen types of crafts. Of them the most important were the occupations of carpenter, blacksmith, weaver, gold smith, ivory maker, and sculptor.¹⁰⁷ Milindapañho, a post-Maurya text, enumerates as many as seventy-five occupations. The Kamasutra of Vātsyāyana, a work of the Gupta period (320 A.D.-c.540 A.D.), lists sixty-four urban industries.¹⁰⁸

In another crucial respect the pre-Mauryan social economy presented an altogether different picture than the one envisaged in Marx's AMP. That is, the pre-Mauryan economy attests to the

exploitation of the village by the town or city. The archaeological evidence confirms that

more than 550 NBP (i.e. North Black Polished phase distinguished by the use of glossy pottery, iron-objects and punch-marked coins - BB) sites that are known in the upper and middle Gangetic plains mainly represented rural settlements that served as feeders of towns in these areas. Town dwellers mainly comprised those who were not directly engaged in food-producing activities. Villages ... obviously supplied the surplus food for the large number of artisans, merchants and soldiers, and also for the household establishments of the king and nobles living in the town. The products from the countryside also supported a large number of monks and nuns who lived on the outskirts of towns and also wandered in the villages.¹⁰⁹

The artisans, on the other hand, did not live necessarily in the village, as Marx's AMP claims. Indeed, the source materials indicate that many of them resided and worked in the towns. Thus one hears "of `an ivory workers' street', `the smith's quarter', `the weavers quarter', `the Vaisya quarter' etc."¹¹⁰ When they did not stay in the towns they stayed in the what is called by Fick a tradesman's or professional village,¹¹¹ which is altogether different from what Marx had in mind. Thakur summarizes:

The Jātakas refer to artisans, like carpenters and smiths, who tended to settle in villages exclusively peopled by the persons of one single profession. These centres prospered because they were geographically located at such places which produced raw materials as well as commanded traffic let out for the consumption of these goods. Such `industrial' villages are a peculiarity of this period. These centres, in the beginning, were partly agrarian and partly industrial in the sense that besides the industrial activities the residents of such villages may have engaged themselves in agriculture as well. But, in due course, because of greater demands for their goods and increasing specialisation, these centres might have shed their rural background and emerged as towns.¹¹²

Clearly, the economic self-sufficiency of the post-Vedic social formation rested not on the unity of agriculture and industry in the villages, as Marx had in mind, but on the complementary relationship between the town as centre of industry and the village as the locality of agrarian production.

The economically self-sufficient village resting on the unity of agriculture and handicrafts became feasible only when the artisans moved into the village dominated by the peasant producers. This kind of self-sufficiency, which arose out of an interchange of produce between the artisans and peasants, first became observable in the Mauryan social formation (c.322 B.C.-c.185 B.C.). One reason for the growth of this kind of virtually self-sufficient village was the deliberate promotion of such village settlement directly under the control of the Maurya state.¹¹³ Once introduced, this would gradually engulf substantial parts of the Indian social formation. This coincided also with the decline of urbanism by the end of the rule of the Guptas. This is manifest in the works of Kautilya, who represented the times of the Mauryas, and Kālidāsa, who represented the post-Mauryan times, particularly the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. In any case, the antagonism between town and country was expressed in terms of

the naivete and crudeness of the rural folk. The word grāmya came to mean 'vulgar', the attitude of the townsmen was one of mockery, condescension and even unfriendliness. Kautilya would not allow the entry of performers, dancers, musicians, etc. into villages lest they disturb the village-folk, who 'are helpless and should be busy in the fields'. Kālidāsa says that nobody takes a gem to a village for assessment when a city (pattana) is available. He refers to the guileless looks of a village-woman interested only in the produce of their fields and contrasts them with the

sportive glances of the ladies of the city.¹¹⁴

Kautilya's Arthaśāstra makes a clear distinction between country (janapada or rāṣṭra) and city (durga or pura). The latter was inhabited by priests, soldiers, nobles, artisans, merchants and others.¹¹⁵

What strikes one about the Mauryan social formation is the existence of a centralized state that exercised unquestioned control over all the spheres of productive activity: agriculture, industry, and trade. But, to be sure, the Mauryan state was not at all a replica of the state presented in Marx's AMP. Neither did the Mauryan economy equal the economy of the AMP. For instance, there remained scope for private entrepreneurship and ownership, even though the state looked upon irrigation as a sphere of state activity. Thus, there is the rule in the Arthaśāstra that "the ownership of a tank is lost if it is not used for five years, except in times of distress, another that a person is free to sell or mortgage his tank."¹¹⁶ Again, the urbanism of the Mauryas rested completely on a market economy or what Kosambi calls "a powerful cash economy" that penetrated "into every corner of civic life."¹¹⁷ Although the state itself engaged "in commodity production on a large scale", this does not mean that the state was the only one, though dominant one, in the market. "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."¹¹⁸ The abundance of punch-marked coins that belong to the Mauryan phase of urbanism stands out as evidence for the existence of market economy.¹¹⁹ The

Arthasāstra's appraisal of everything in cash values is reflected in the table of fines. In particular, the fine is twelve times the value of the stolen article.¹²⁰ The cash nexus underlying the Mauryan social economy can further be illumined by stressing that every one of the state servants was paid in cash. "The highest pay was 48,000 panas per year each for the king's chief priest, high councillor, chief queen, queen mother, crown prince, and commander-in-chief. The lowest was 60 per year for the menial and drudge labour needed on such a large scale in camp and on state works."¹²¹ Finally, a reference should also be made to the payment of wage labourers in money. The labourers working on land were to receive a fixed wage of one pana and a quarter per month over and above the food they received. This same principle applied to workers in vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, flower-gardens and to herdsmen.¹²²

All in all the Mauryan economy, based as it was upon commodity production and exchange, does not corroborate the AMP. The same is true of the economy of the post-Mauryan phase (c.185 B.C.-c.320 A.D.) of urbanization. Both archaeological and literary sources indicate that in these centuries the process of urbanization deepened further and reached its peak. Archaeologically, the excavated sites of the Kuṣāṇa and Sātvā hana rulers exhibited urban structures marked especially by solidity and longevity due to application of the advanced knowledge of building materials (e.g. the use of baked tile for roofing, etc.). Similarly, the literary sources such as the Buddhacarita and the Saundarananda of Asvaghosa, the Milindapañho, and the Lalitavistāra depict the city as

the centre of, among other things, trade and industry, and describe various aspects of the city life.¹²³ One of the integral aspects of this phase of urbanism and market economy concerns India's external trade with Greece and Rome. In particular, hoards of Roman coins belonging to the first few centuries A.D. have been found in south India. While Indian imports consisted mainly of Roman money (gold coins), Rome imported such Indian commodities as these: ivory works, cotton and silk goods, pepper, cinnamon, pearls, indigo, etc.¹²⁴

The existence of internal trade is borne out by the hoards of coins issued by the Kuṣāṇas in northern India and by the Sātvāhanas in southern India.¹²⁵ The trading corporations also issued local coins bearing the names of market cities or towns such as Vārānasī, Kauśāmbi, Vidiśā, Ujjayinī, etc.¹²⁶ Some dimensions of the post-Mauryan market economy, which contradict Marx's AMP, are as follows:

Trade routes crisscrossed the subcontinent by now, and caravans of camels, oxen and donkeys carried the seeds of urban culture with coins and produce throughout India and beyond its geographic limits. The great overland trade route from Taxila to Kabul branched off to the Central Asian north and China, as well as to Kandahar and the Persian Gulf in the south and west, making India the economic center of Sino-Roman trade in this era of growing commercial intercourse. Shreni (merchants guilds - BB) prospered to such an extent that their wealthy members donated fortunes to religious orders, especially Buddhist and Jain, the traditional religious offspring of mercantile enterprise. In the Deccan, magnificently carved caves, the most famous of which are at Ajanta and Ellora, survive to this day as evidence of the affluence of merchant guilds, whose leaders are sometimes depicted outside entrance ways to religious shrines to commemorate their patronage of the order. Throughout India, bustling new cities emerged at caravan stops as well as ports, where shreni assumed responsibility for the maintenance of municipal order and evolved legal regulations governing the social behaviour of guild members, as well as their commercial conduct.

The increased use of coins and the growth of commerce and wealth led to the emergence of Indian bankers and financiers (Shreshthins or seths), who helped support failing guilds as well as impecunious monarchs and lesser landowners. ... Indian banking and commercial families established branches at as many of the great urban centers of enterprise as possible, both at home and abroad, thus clearly developing kinship networks of wealth that secured growing fortunes within shreshthin 'houses' of regal sources and power.¹²⁷

Neither was the evidence for expansion of the industrial division of labour lacking. It has been earlier stated that the Milindapañho enumerated seventy-five occupations. According to this work, the city was both a meeting place of people of diverse callings and a habitation of the Brāhmanas, nobles, merchants, workers and artisans.¹²⁸

The final phase of the second urbanization during the rule of the Guptas is also characterized by the gradual decline of urbanization and the market economy in India.¹²⁹ While more will be said with regard to this in the next section, let me discuss here briefly some aspects of continuing urbanization and the market economy during this final phase. The rural-urban divide of this phase was made clear by the literary sources of which the Kāmasutra of Vātsyāyana was the prime example. Vātsyāyana depicts a highly sophisticated urban culture in which as many as sixty-four crafts and arts were patronized by the city dweller (nāgaraka).¹³⁰ In Dhūrtavita samvāda and Ubhavābhisārikā, a town like Pātaliputra was depicted as the locale of "madding crowds, lofty buildings, perfumed streets, and large-scale commodity exchange". The Pādatāditakam mentions artisans and craftsmen "working in their work shops in the markets of Ujjayinī" and alludes to "the different sounds coming from the workshop of carpenters, from the whetting of bronze, or

from the finishing given to conch-shells with iron-instruments."¹³¹ Amara's lexicon called Amarakośa, composed in all probability around the 6th century A.D., gives a number of words for town or city: pur, purī, nagarī, pattana, putabhedana, sthānīya, nigama, śākhā-nagara (branch town) and mūla-nagara (main city).¹³² In particular, pattana, putabhedana and nigama were market places of thriving trade. The pattana stands for a trade center, the putabhedana for an emporium, and the nigama for a guild town of merchants.¹³³

The typical Indian urbanite was the nāgaraka of Vātsyāyana. The nāgaraka is a standard connoisseur who appreciates, cultivates and patronizes literature, art and music.¹³⁴ He is the epitome of urban culture in that he not only displays a refined taste and aptitude for all finer arts, but also involves himself in the pleasure of the senses. The city or town is the ideal place where one can live a life that is worth living. Of course, this presupposes meticulously designed and decorated housing accommodation, on the one hand, and a planned schedule of daily activities ranging from rising in the morning to participation in the artistic or literary gatherings, on the other.¹³⁵ This urbanite is utterly an individualist who dissociates himself from the man in the street as well as from his mass culture.

The nāgaraka is an individual in his own right, he is not one of the horde. The city culture is a clear indication of the decay of the community sense, the sense of "We", and marks the beginnings of a distinct individualistic way of life, the life of "I". ... Similarly, when Vātsyāyana says, in the last sūtra of his chapter on the daily life of the nāgaraka, that a wise man should avoid gatherings disliked by the public, which are not governed by any rules, and which malign others, he has certainly in mind the currency

of such gatherings - obviously the gatherings of the lower class people - which were viewed with contempt by the sophisticated urban dwellers.¹³⁶

The intensity of the impact of urbanism on the urban dwellers can be illustrated, in a way, by mentioning a remark of Isvaradatta, the author of Dhūrtavita samvāda. He sneers that "village life kills the life of senses."¹³⁷

III. The Origin and Development of the Feudal Economy: c.320 A.D.-1206 A.D.

As I stated earlier, the decline of the second urbanization coincided with the disintegration of the centralized Gupta state. Thereafter, the Indian social formation experienced far-reaching changes in its economic, political and ideological structures, and came to be dominated by ruralism based upon the material foundations of localized units of production. However, this does not mean an empirical validation of Marx's AMP for a number of reasons. The growth of the self-sufficient village economy, based on the unity of agriculture and manufacture, is not unique only to India because it prevailed elsewhere in Europe also. Again, the rise of the self-sufficient village economy also did not mean a complete absence of commodity production, trade, cities, and towns, as I shall show later. Finally, the self-sufficient village economy that arose in the post-Gupta period was not the one that would actually fit in with the AMP, for it approximated in all its dimensions substantially, if not completely, to feudal economy.

In any event the emphasis on ruralism, as opposed to urbanism, is traceable to Brāhmanical legal texts such as the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras. They, particularly the latter, display an ingrained

distrust for and antipathy towards urbanism that is basically secular in orientation. They emphasize the pursuit of one's dharma, i.e. one's social duties and obligations within the framework of caturvarna (four varnas) in the village. Thus they emphasize ruralism, which is dominated by the magico-mythical values laid down by the Brāhmanas, and denounce any deviation from this as adharmic.¹³⁸ At bottom, this denunciation of urbanism as adharmic was linked to, and part of the general denunciation of, all deviations from the established brāhmanical order of things - deviations that were said to have inaugurated the Kali Age, i.e. the age of all round social degeneration or decadence. This age is characterized by numerous events and tendencies such as: foreign or barbarian (mleccha) invasions; the emergence of a ruling aristocracy that also comprised the barbarians (e.g. Yavanas, Sakas, Hunas, etc.) and other outlandish people; disorders in the caturvarna as evidenced by the increased mixing up of varnas, by the rise of the Śūdras, by the degradation of the Vaiśyas, and by the diminishing importance of the older aristocracy and the priestly elite; the increased prominence of the heretical religions accompanied by a general decline of traditional religions and moral values; the exploitation by the newly emergent ruling class of the people who were coerced to pay exorbitant taxes or were subjected to forced labour; the refusal of the Vaiśyas to pay and sacrifice; the advent of natural calamities such as famines and droughts; widespread social tensions and disorders making the family and property insecure; over-all economic downturn involving the decay of the cities and the decline of trade, commerce and money

economy; and so on and so forth. These features are described in certain texts (e.g. the Mahābhārata, the Purānas, etc.) that were assigned to the third and early fourth centuries A.D., coinciding broadly with the decline and fall of the Kuṣāṇas and Sātvāhanas, on the one hand, and the firm establishment of the supremacy of the Guptas, on the other.¹³⁹

The process of de-urbanization was, as I said, an ingredient of the Kali Age, which was in fact an era of social crisis or rather social transition. It extended up to the sixth and seventh centuries, signifying the end of ancient India and the beginning of medieval India.¹⁴⁰ The forces that marked social crisis and transition were also the very same forces that generated feudalism and its self-sufficient economy. In light of this, let me turn to a brief discussion of the leading dimensions of India's transition to feudalism and its development of a self-sufficient natural economy based on the union of agriculture and manufacture.

One such dimension was the operation of natural and geographical factors such as famine, drought, flood, epidemic, etc. They might have adversely affected the process of urbanization either by causing the migration of people from the troubled urban area(s) to a secure place(s) in the village, or by destroying altogether the city or town in question. The Brhat-Samhita of Varāhamihira (505 A.D.-587 A.D.) contained lists of omens from natural, particularly celestial occurrences. For instance, it contained forecasts of 42 famines, 32 droughts, 11 floods and heavy rainfalls, 5 earthquakes, 9 fires, 2

thunder-strokes, 4 whirlwinds or storms, 2 plagues, 35 breakouts of disease and sickness, and 14 occurrences of pestilence. Not in all cases were literary references to natural calamities corroborated by archaeological evidence, but sometimes they were. Thus in the case of the cities or towns like Saikhan Dheri, Hastināpur, Atranjikhera, Śrāvasti, Vaiśali, Buxar, and Pātaliputra, floods seem to have played a decisive role in their eventual desertion and collapse.¹⁴¹

Another dimension that might have accelerated the de-urbanization of the Indian cities and towns and promoted the growth of a self-sufficient village economy concerns the political changes as well as barbarian or foreign invasions. For instance, when the capital of Magadha was shifted from Rājagraha to Pātaliputra, the latter gained importance at the expense of the former. Similarly the Hun invasion resulted in the destruction of certain cities or towns. A case in point is the conquest and destruction of Kauśāmbi.¹⁴² The literary sources on the Kali age refer to many other aspects of social crisis that originated from the political ascendancy of the indigeneous or foreign invaders and barbarians, called mlecchas (e.g. Yavanas, Sakas, Hunas, Abhiras, etc.).¹⁴³ They posed a threat to the Brāhmanical social order as long as they were not Hinduised. According to the relevant sources, their role meant not only large-scale exploitation of the people but also widespread lawlessness that destroyed the security of life and property. The ensuing social crisis was additionally compounded by a two dimensional varṇa conflict: one between the Brāhmanas and Kṣatriyas on the one hand and the Vaiśyas on the other; and the other between the

Brāhmaṇas and Sūdras. Thus, in the Kali age accounts, the emphasis was put on the prevalence of general anarchy and pervasive insecurity:

It is stated that in a state of anarchy a person can neither hope to acquire property nor to set up family, two combine to seize the property of one and many combine to seize the property of two. Further, a free person is reduced to slavery, and women are forcibly abducted. In the description of the Kali several references represent householders as thieves (parimosaka) and stealers of clothings. They also appear as thieves of crops. We learn that on account of oppressive taxes householders or peasants (grhastha) were reduced to a state of penury, and they had no option but to take to stealing although they also masqueraded as munis and took to trade. ... References belonging to the third and fourth centuries also bring into sharp focus the oppressive activities of the rulers. They tell us that in the Kali the kings would cease to become protectors and seize the property of their subjects through various kinds of taxes and imposts such as customs (śulka) and interest (vyāja). It seems that this statement refers to the oppression of traders. Another passage seems to speak of the oppression of peasants.¹⁴⁴

Inscriptional evidence points to the occurrence of the general social turmoil in the Kali age. Some inscriptions of certain Pallava kings, belonging to the third and fourth centuries A.D., describe them as "always ready to extricate dharma that had sunk down (avasanna) owing to the evil effects of the Kali age."¹⁴⁵ While eulogizing the exploits of Yasodharman, which included the victory over Huna ruler Mihirakula, the Mandasor stone pillar inscription (c.528 A.D.-535 A.D.) spoke of "the age as the ravisher of proper conduct (vinayamuṣiyuge)."¹⁴⁶ In the Harṣa stone inscription (553 A.D.-554 A.D.) of the Maukhari ruler Išānavarman, the rulers of the same "dynasty were eulogized for attempting to restore the norms of society, which were viewed as being submerged on account of the heightened effects of the Kali age."¹⁴⁷

During the earlier period of European feudalism the merchant was "an object of derision, scorn, and even hatred" in the halls of the feudal lords. The merchants' profit-making was regarded as a form of usury and the merchant's "soul was thought to be in jeopardy."¹⁴⁸ A strikingly similar development seemed to have taken place in India during the period of transition (i.e. Kali age) and even thereafter:

It is stated that in the sinful age, i.e. in the Kali, all would turn traders, who evidently are looked upon with contempt because of their anti-varna attitudes and activities. The traders are represented as indulging in many tricks and selling enormous commodities by adopting fraudulent weights and measures. The Divyāvadāna of about the second-third century A.D. indicates the oppression and harassment of traders through the imposition of customs, ferry dues, police station dues, etc. which they tried to escape by various means. The Smrtis of about the same time recommend advanced methods of assessing tolls than are found in the Arthasāstra of Kautilya. In addition to custom duties merchants had to pay a normal tax called Kara, which in the Arthasāstra is taken by Ghosal in the technical sense of benevolence. The Sānti Parva lays down rules for assessing a general tax called Silpapratikara to be levied from artisans, not known to earlier texts, which ask artisans to serve for a day in a month for the king. All this may have caused resentment among artisans and merchants against the existing political system.¹⁴⁹

This growing antagonism against the mercantile class was part of the general division that separated the haves from the have-nots. The Angavijja, a work on prognostication composed during the time of the Kuṣāṇas (c.48 A.D.-c.220 A.D.), pits the Ajja, the nobility of free persons belonging to the propertied class, against the Pessa, comprising the slaves, servants, hired labourers and others who were under varying degrees of servitude and dependence.¹⁵⁰ There is a varṇa dimension to this class schism. The mercantile class consisted basically of the Vaiśya varṇa, who enjoyed lower social status than that enjoyed by the

Brāhmanas and Kṣtriyas. The accumulation by the lower varṇa, the Vaiśyas or Śūdras for example, was naturally not to the liking of the higher varṇas, who apprehended the loss of status and power that rested on their already acquired property. From this point of view, the reason for denunciation of wealth can be understood, because its accumulation by persons of lower varṇas contained the possibility of their political and ritual advancement, thus upsetting the traditional supremacy of the Brāhmanas and Kṣtriyas. The Visnu Purana pointedly refers to the oppression of the merchants by rulers through the imposition of exorbitant śulka (e.g. ferry duties, tolls, transit duties, sales tax, etc.). The said source refers to merchants giving up trade and commerce in the Kali age.¹⁵¹

The source materials of this age also mention refusal of the Vaiśyas and Śūdras to pay taxes. Traditionally, the Vaiśyas were to carry on agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. The Śūdras were to serve the other three higher varṇas, but they actually worked as slaves, artisans, agricultural labourers, etc. An important characteristic of the transitional era is that the Vaiśyas increasingly became peasants and artisans - the occupations of the Śūdras. Both varṇas thus came to be bracketed together especially in the literature from the time of the Guptas. By the 11th century the Vaiśyas came to be treated like Śūdras ritually and legally.¹⁵² It is quite reasonable to assume that the ruling class began extorting the artisans and peasants in order to defray their increasing expenses on luxury goods. The inability of the direct producers to pay for this conspicuous consumption of the ruling

class produced two effects, both of which contributed to the de-urbanization of erstwhile Indian cities or towns, and to the development of self-sufficient units of localized economic production characteristic of feudalism. On the one hand, the taxpaying peasants, artisans and traders began deserting their places of work and habitation in the third and fourth centuries A.D. to which the Kali age references are ascribed. This expedited the de-urbanization process in northern India.¹⁵³

On the other hand, the ruling class attempted to collect taxes and other dues by tightening up the repressive apparatus of the state, i.e. by the use of danda or legitimate authority. They also tried to restore the traditional varna order by prescribing and enforcing varnasramadharmā. However, they were inadequate to overcome the transitional social crisis. Au fond it was a crisis of the mode of production in change because of the opposition of the direct producers, whether peasants or artisans. The problem of collection of revenue was solved by the rising feudal practice of land grants.

Since it became difficult to collect taxes it was not possible to run the state and to pay the priests, administrators, the army and numerous officials. Apparently, as an alternative, the practice of land grants, which was not unknown in early times, was adopted on a wide scale in a major part of the country, particularly from the 4th to 5th century A.D. onwards. ... The grant system relieved the state of the heavy responsibility of getting the taxes collected all over the countryside by its agents and then of disbursing them in cash or kind. On the other hand, priests, warriors and administrators were asked to fend for themselves in the villages assigned to them for their enjoyment. The system also relieved the state of the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the donated villages which now became almost the sole concern of the beneficiaries. Therefore it would be wrong to assume that political, administrative and juridical measures, which

created new property relations in land, were undertaken by the state entirely on its own.¹⁵⁴

The remuneration of state officials by grants of land in lieu of cash salary can be traced to Manusmriti. It provides for lordships of one, ten, twenty, hundred, and a thousand villages.¹⁵⁵ The earliest epigraphic evidence for land grants belong to the first century B.C. But they did not transfer administrative powers to the recipient. Such powers were transferred for the first time in the land grants to certain Buddhist priests by the Sātvāhana ruler Gautamiputra Sātkarni in the second century A.D. By the time of Hansha Vardhana (606 A.D.-647 A.D.), who presided over the last centralized kingdom in the early medieval era, the practice of remunerating officials by grants of land became a regular feature.¹⁵⁶

From the mid 4th century A.D. the process of feudalization of the state apparatus assumed two constant forms. They are the transfer of all sources of revenue, and the surrender of police and administrative powers. In at least six grants made during the Gupta period the residents of the granted villages were expressly asked both to pay taxes to the recipients and to obey their commands. In the inscriptions of the 5th century the ruler usually retained the power to punish thieves, but it was later given up. Thus the beneficiaries came to exercise judicial powers that contained authority to punish all offenses against the family, property, person, etc.¹⁵⁷ While more will be said with regard to the power and position of the feudal landed aristocracy and feudal lordships in chapter 9,¹⁵⁸ it suffices here to say that the early medieval Indian social formation was not based

completely on a peasant economy, especially the way Marx's AMP would want us to believe. Indeed it was the landlord dominated village that constituted the structural unit of localized production in India's feudal economy. There is nothing to prove that the producer peasants were in control over their holdings. At the same time numerous pieces of evidence prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the feudal landed intermediaries - big and small - controlled and enjoyed the estates which they received as fiefs and lorded over. Such technical terms as bhoktā, bhogī, bhogika, bhogijana, bhogapati, bhogapatika, bhogikapā-laka, bhogirūpa, mahābhogi, brhatbhogi, brhadbhogika, rājā, rānaka, sā-manta, mandaleśvara, etc. were used for those feudal interests who enjoyed landed estates.¹⁵⁹

It is important to note here that the lands were granted first in the outlying, backward and tribal areas. It began in the second century A.D. in Maharashtra but covered many parts of Madhya Pradesh during the 4th and 5th centuries. In West Bengal and Bangladesh it was common during the 5th and 6th centuries. The practice of land grants was further extended to Orissa in the 6th and 7th centuries and to Kerala in the 8th century. In other words, the landlord dominated natural economy first made its appearance in the peripheral regions where land was plentiful. The initial results were quite progressive since they facilitated the establishment of settlements in the newly created villages, increased agrarian production and brought tribal population within the fold of Hinduism.¹⁶⁰ In the beginning and in the main the winners in the process of feudalization of the state apparatus

were the Brāhmanas, for it was they who were the recipients of the land grants. The ostensible reason for awarding them with the land grants was invariably the acquisition of spiritual welfare and glorification of the achievements of the donor and his family. However, that was not the only reason behind land grants to the Brāhmanas. At bottom they served a more important, though feudal, political purpose. In the transitional period of the Kali age, when the Brāhmanas are depicted as running in all directions for security and livelihood because of the rebellious activities of the Vaiśyas and Śūdras, it looks strange on the surface that they were constantly showered with grants of land. The fact of the matter is that such grants empowered the Brāhmanas to simultaneously perform the state's essential functions of the collection of revenues and the maintenance of law and order.¹⁶¹ More than this, the Brāhmaṇa was "an essential adjunct of the state in reducing the mechanism of violence: his preaching of submission reduced the total administrative cost."¹⁶² The land grant of Pravarsena II, a Vākātaka king who reigned in about the middle of the 5th century A.D., explicitly laid down certain obligations that were to be observed by the recipient Brāhmanas before they could enjoy their shares in the granted village. Among others, they were asked not to conspire against the king, not to commit theft and adultery, and not to poison kings.¹⁶³

It was not the existence and domination of a class of feudal landlords in the evolving village economy that alone invalidates the application of Marx's AMP to India. It was also the existence and subordination of a class of servile labourers (of artisans and peasants)

that makes the AMP a mare's nest. More will be said in chapter 9 in connection with the development of servitude (e.g. slavery, serfdom, etc.) in the Indian social formation. Suffice it to say here that "if serfdom is understood as compulsive attachment of the peasants to the soil, it prevailed in good parts of Madhya Pradesh, eastern India, Chamba and Rajasthan."¹⁶⁴ Actually, the servility of the producers was directly the consequence of such feudalization that ensured the dominance of the landed interests in the first instance.

The specific mention of the transfer of all the common people or men of certain professions, along with that of the village in which they resided, does not appear to have been the only means of granting authority, involving the relationship of domination, over the peasants, artisans and other humble folk. The imposition of a sort of obligation on the rural folk to stay in the donated villages, to listen to and obey commands (ajna), and to render service in addition to the payment of dues, which we find in Banskhera (A.D. 628) and Madhuban (A.D. 631) inscriptions of Harsa, indicates another means of granting more or less the same authority. ... The expression ajnasravana-vidheya-bhutva or a variant of the same, used for listening to and obeying the commands of the donees, may be found in a large number of inscriptions from the 5th and 6th centuries A.D. onwards. ... The specific mention of the people, transferred along with land was, thus, a means of noting the alienation of rights over them, which appear to have been of more than one grade, corresponding to the status of people over whom they were to be exercised. (These rights could not but have ordinarily functioned within the framework of the varna-caste structure and the local customs). The purpose of it was to ensure that the people concerned would stick to the localities and remain attached to the donees for rendering dues and services to them.¹⁶⁵

The tendency towards growing subjection of the peasants, who were commanded to remain attached to the locality or to his sāmanta lord(s), became manifest from about the 5th century A.D. From the time of Nārada-smṛiti onwards, the Dharmaśāstras put increasing emphasis on

forced labour as well.¹⁶⁶

In any case, along with other factors (e.g. natural calamities, barbarian invasions, disintegration of the centralized state systems, the growing Brāhmanical and Kṣatriya hostility to and contempt for the producers (peasants and artisans) and merchants, etc.), the process of feudalisation caused not only the de-urbanization of the existing cities and towns but also, more importantly, the development of a self-sufficient economy based on localized units of production. The decline of the cities and towns as well as of trade and commodity production is corroborated by various pieces of evidence. Archaeological evidence shows that excavated urban sites like Vaiśali, Pātaliputra, Chirand (Saran district), Rajghat (Varanasi), Kauśāmbi, Śrāvasti, Hastināpur, Mathura, Purana Qila (Delhi), and certain others in Haryana and east Punjab thrived in the Kuṣāṇa age, declined in the Gupta age and, finally, mostly disappeared in post-Gupta times.¹⁶⁷

Evidently on account of the decline of Indian exports, artisans and merchants living in these towns flocked to cultivation. The decay and disappearance of urban centres created conditions for the rise of self-sufficient regional productive units, which were perpetuated by the political fragmentation of the country and by restrictions imposed on the movement of artisans and peasants.¹⁶⁸

Urbanism waned also in other places, such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh. The word nigama which earlier designated a city or town now came to mean a village. The economic self-sufficiency of the village economy arose not only because the artisans and merchants had to move into the villages since the cities and towns declined, but also because the artisans were deliberately located in the village

settlements newly established by the beneficiaries of land grants.¹⁶⁹

In other words, the typical village economy based on the unity of agriculture and manufacture was not a feature of the Indian social formation that existed from time immemorial, as Marx's AMP wants us to believe. On the contrary, this self-sufficient village economy became a regular feature towards the end of the sixth century A.D. when the problem of servicing the village was solved by moving the artisans into the village. Only then did the village artisans become "an integral part of the village system, not people who moved about freely to dispose of their services; at the same time, if their payment did not suffice, they could always set up their own as cultivators, so that there was a fair balance between technical needs and payment fixed by tradition."¹⁷⁰

In the wake of de-urbanization, on the one hand, and the spread of ruralization in terms of emergence of a self-sufficient village economy, on the other, commodity production and trade as a natural corollary declined. This is amply supported by numismatic evidence. The Kuṣāṇas issued a large number of copper coins that presupposed the existence of a market economy on a relatively large scale, for they were the coins of common use. This was not so with the Guptas, who only issued a few copper coins indicating that money economy was on the decline. The Pālas (c.760 A.D.-1142 A.D.), the Rāṣṭrakūṭas (757 A.D.-973 A.D.), and the Pratihāras (c.800 A.D.-1019 A.D.) ruled continuously for more than three centuries and their control extended over the entire country, except certain regions in the deep south. But it has not been possible to attribute with certainty any series of coins to them.¹⁷¹ The issue

of coins under the Kalachuris, the Candellas, the Gahadavālas, and other ruling houses in the 11th and 12th centuries was also on a small scale. This goes a long way to show the decay of external and internal trade, on the one hand, and the growth of a self-sufficient village economy, on the other.¹⁷²

The growth of localism, centering around the self-sufficient village economy, was variously manifest. For one thing, the commands in the land grants to the effect that the artisans, peasants and merchants were to remain attached to their respective habitations as well as to obey their new landed beneficiaries were in themselves a good indicator of how localism was fostered. Generally speaking, the position of the artisans, peasants and others of their kind remained the same, even though their masters - princes, priests and other types of beneficiaries - continued to change. Social mobility, for all it was worth, was confined to soldiers engaged in fighting, to priests busy in acquiring new land, and to pilgrims visiting shrines for religious purposes.¹⁷³ There were other facets of rural localism that came in the wake of the development of self-sufficient village economy.

Although brāhmanas are permitted to undertake journey for performing sacrifices, they are not allowed long journeys on the ground that this would interfere with keeping their Vedic and domestic fires burning. The regulations regarding sea voyage are rather severe. The Auśanasa Smṛti states that those who undertake sea voyage are fallen from caste and not fit to be invited to funeral feasts (śrāddha). Even after a brāhmana performs the penance for going on sea voyage, intercourse with him is not considered desirable. ... The law-book of Brhatparāśara recommends that no man would give his daughter to one who lives at a great distance, and this is intended to cover persons of higher varṇas, especially the brāhmanas. Pilgrimages to very

distant holy places, beyond the sea or on the border of Bhāratvarṣa, are prohibited. All this makes sense in the context of feudal localism, which ruled out economic and other types of connection between one region of the country and the other. It is significant that the earlier texts talk in terms of deśadharmā or district customs, but several medieval works refer to Abhidhānacintāmani of Hemachandra (1088-1172), and some texts also mention grāmācāra and sthānacāra. They reflect the growing importance of villages as self-sufficient economic and administrative units.¹⁷⁴

This signifies the almost total victory of localism and ruralism, otherwise indicating the decay of urbanism, commodity production and trade in the early medieval Indian social formation. The localism and ruralism, as connected with feudalism, was reflected in addition in the emergence of fortified villages.

The importance of the forts, and their number, increased significantly during the second half of the first millennium A.D. This was, of course, in conformity to the spirit of the feudal era. At the same time the literary source materials of the said era testify to the emergence of fortified villages that were seats of the lesser sāmantas or petty feudal ranks. The term maṇḍala came to designate a fixed number of villages and, hence, the designation māṇḍalika or mahāmaṇḍaleśvara, for instance, would stand for a sāmanta of higher rank and status.¹⁷⁵ Devi Purāna, composed in the 9th century Bengal, states that the ruler should ensure the provision for food grains by resorting to direct cultivation of the adjoining lower regions of the fort. In this he should compel the villagers of the neighbouring villages to render service. It further recommends that the goods brought into the fortified area from outside should be received in exchange for unused or unusable goods in the fort. According to the Mānasāra a typical

fortified village, fit to be occupied by a feudal chief, was one that was surrounded by a wall made of bricks or stones and had moats encircling the whole area.¹⁷⁶

In any case, as I said earlier, the advent of the self-sufficient village economy based on the unity of agriculture and industry does not mean any empirical validation of Marx's AMP in terms of the Indian experience. This was due to several reasons. The above-mentioned self-sufficiency did not absolutely preclude, as Marx's AMP does, the production and exchange of commodities and, hence, the presence of merchants within the village. The growth of economic self-sufficiency was not even across the entire country, as is acknowledgedly clear in Marx's AMP. Again, the self-sufficient village economy that developed from the time of the Gupta began declining in the 11th and 12th centuries. Finally, the self-sufficient village economy was not stagnant, as Marx suggested, but dynamic in terms of the further development of different productive forces and relations. Let me briefly illustrate these points that squarely invalidate Marx's AMP and rule out its application to India.

That the production of commodities, market, trade, and merchants continued to exist is corroborated by elaborate rules and provisions which the Indian law-makers (e.g. Nārada, Bṛhaspati, etc.) prescribed in this regard.¹⁷⁷ For instance, Narada provides a catalogue of commodities which are forbidden to be sold by a Brāhmaṇa, who, being in distress, pursued a merchant's job. Apparently this meant that the Vaiśya was free to sell these forbidden commodities, viz. milk, sour

milk, clarified butter, honey, beeswax, lac, pungent condiments, liquids used for flavouring, spirituous liquor, meat, boiled rice, sesamum, linen, the juice of soma plant, flowers, fruit, precious stones, men, poison, weapons, water, salt, cakes, plants, garments, silk, skins, bone, blankets made of the hair of the mountain-goat, animals (whose foot was not cloven), earthen pots, buttermilk, hair, drugs, vegetables, fresh ginger, and herbs. But a Brāhmaṇa could sell dry wood, twigs of fruits, ropes, cotton thread, etc.¹⁷⁸ It is pretty clear that most, if not all, of these commodities were those of daily consumption. The epigraphic evidence also confirms the existence of merchants and their trading activities in certain other commodities (e.g. sugar, indigo, ginger, oil, textiles, articles in wood, iron or leather etc.) in the village.¹⁷⁹ There is little doubt that all this repudiates the assertion by the AMP of the non-existence of commodity production and exchange in the Indian village.

Neither was the pace of growth of this feudal economy even throughout India. For instance, in the first phase of feudal development (c.750 A.D.-1000 A.D.) the economy of the Pratihāras was not as closed and self-sufficient as that of the Pālas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas.¹⁸⁰ That urbanism and the market economy did not completely wither away in north India is indicated by the existence of three urban centers of commercial importance in the Pratihāra kingdom: Prthūdaka or modern Pehoa in the Karnal district of Haryana, Tattānanadapura or Ahar near Bulandshahar, and Sīyadoni near Lalitpur in Jhansi district. The last of the three, Sīyadoni, was primarily a commercial center.

Inscriptional evidence mention the existence in this town of a road belonging to the merchants (nanijoni jarathyā) of five market centres (hattas) comprising shops (vithis) owned by merchants and manufacturers, a customs house (sīyadonisatkamaṇḍapikā), and perhaps a mint.¹⁸¹ In Assam the self-sufficing village economy based on the unity of agriculture and industry apparently did not exist, "for the land grants mostly refer to big plots of land given away to brāhmanas in forest and hilly areas intersected by rivers, and hence not conducive to the formation of regular villages."¹⁸² Far more significant evidence concerning the existence of urbanism and its associated market economy and, hence, the negation of the AMP comes from south India. In certain places of this region commodity production and exchange, cash transactions, and accumulation of money reached significant proportion.¹⁸³ The post-Sangam period from the 6th to the 13th centuries A.D., roughly coinciding with the period between the establishment of the Pallava kingdom and the disintegration of the Cola empire, is characterized by the kind of merchant guild activities that contributed to the development of urbanism and a market economy in different places of south India.¹⁸⁴

The term `nagaram' designated "not only the town and its assembly but also the merchants and the merchant guilds."¹⁸⁵ The nagaram was a marketing town, and it was linked to the hinterland villages, on the one hand, and to the adjacent nagarams or comparable market places (e.g. mānogaram or literally `great' nagaram), on the other.¹⁸⁶ An example of the latter was Kāñcipuram, one of the most

important political and religious centres in south India that was also a vital economic center of internal and external trade from about the 6th to 12th centuries A.D.¹⁸⁷ A particular feature of the south Indian merchants was that they "had their own mercenary army, doubtless for the protection of the merchandise in their warehouses and in transit."¹⁸⁸ Another feature, worth noting in this context, is the establishment of erivirapattanams - fortified towns under the protection of mercantile armed forces - by the merchants. This is a gross repudiation of the AMP since the latter precludes any scope for the presence of commodity production and exchange and, hence, market towns and merchants in the Indian social formation. One of the epigraphic records contains a description of merchants who

made resolution (and converted) the village (called) Vetur alias Rajadhirajacadurvedimangalam in Padinad in Gangaikonda Sola-Valanad in Mudigonda-Solamandalam into an erivirapattanam (by the mercantile corporation, the tisaiaiyirattainurruvar or Ayyapolil) and (this organization) supplied clothes to the members of higher and lower ranks of merchant caravans, clothes for a swordsman, oil for the lamps of the God Kavarai - iswaramudaiyar, food for the merchant body-guards (Vanisaimakkal) during their stay and a pig for feeding in memory of the deceased heroes.¹⁸⁹

To be sure, there are other instances where merchants deliberately converted villages into marketing towns protected by armed regiments.¹⁹⁰

A more specific instance of an urban centre of commercial importance is the case of the Lokkigundi, which is one of the several cities and towns that grew in Karnataka between c.600 A.D. and 1200 A.D. Inscriptional evidence shows that in the 11th century this south Indian town became important earlier as a settlement of merchants and later as a capital

and mint town. Some of the activities of the merchants, as stated in the epigraphic records, could be summarized as follows:

First, the donations recorded in favour of the local religious establishments were all made by the mercantile community of the place, an indication of the fact that the chief support for the religious establishments came from the traders. Secondly, the merchants of Lokkigundi are stated to have been organized into separate guilds such as the guild of clothiers and the guild of jawar merchants. The importance of Lokkigundi as a market place can be seen from references to the organized bazaars of the town, presence of several merchant guilds and the variety of goods brought into the town for the purpose of sale. An inscription of the 13th century refers to sandalwood, camphor, pearls, rubies and the various garments which were to be found in the markets of Lokkigundi.¹⁹¹

Besides Lokkigundi there were other towns such as Sravana Belgola, Arsikere and Mangalore, which became important urban centers in the 11th and 12th centuries in Karnataka.

At about the same time the self-sufficient feudal economy in northern India both reached the climax of its development and began disintegrating. This included the survival of old cities and towns or the emergence of new ones.¹⁹² In other words, in the 11th and 12th centuries the Indian social formation was not simply based on the unity of agriculture and manufacture, which of course dominated pre-capitalist social formations everywhere, whether in the East or West. Inscriptional evidence confirms the prevalence of cash transactions as well as the existence of town or village markets as centers of local and inter-regional trade.¹⁹³ From the 11th century particularly the internal trade began involving commodities of popular consumption in the feudal economies of the Cāhamānas in Rājasthān, the Pāramāras in Malwa, the Caulukyās in Gujrat, the Candellas in

Bundelkhand (consisting in parts of modern Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh), and the Kalachuris in parts of modern Madhya Pradesh.

The Cāhamāna inscriptions show that Rājasthān had a good trade in wheat, mudga, resin, oil, betel-leaves, spices, pulses, etc. We also hear of merchants in bronze and cloth and also of distillers and weavers. ... The Pāramāra records also indicate considerable internal trade. An inscription refers to flourishing trade in the area round the town of Arthūnā in Rājasthān. Here trade was carried on in articles of daily consumption such as grain, especially barley, thread, cotton, cloth, salt, sugar and oil. ... The traders known as vaniks, seem to have been a very prosperous class in Gujrat. The great millionaires Vastupalā, Tejapāla and Jagadu are well known. They derived their wealth from both internal and foreign trade, and were obviously assisted by ordinary merchants whose economic activities touched the life of the common folk. A class of merchants known as pedaio sold grain, etc. (kan-ādi-vikretā-vanik). We also hear of an ordinary trader who sold only grain (canaka-vikraya-kara). This evidence would imply that even in the rural areas some people paid for their food. Uttar Pradesh gives poor indication of internal trade, although the use of the term pravanikara in the Gāhadavāla inscriptions signifies taxes levied from retail traders. Similarly Bundelkhand, which produced such cash-crops as indigo, cotton and sugar cane, may have developed considerable rural trade. The gifts recorded by a śresthī family show that traders formed a wealthy community in the Candella territory. Trade seems to have flourished more vigorously in Baghelkhand under the Kalachuris. Every town and village had its toll-house (mandapikā). The articles of sale in the markets of towns and villages included food grains, salt, pepper, liquor, oil, grass and vegetables.¹⁹⁴

The increasing prevalence of commodity production and trade was reflected in the revival of the use of coins in Central India, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Malwa and Gujrat. Numerous inscriptions refer to toll-houses and to transfers of cash income from shops. The Lekhapaddhati, a text that deals with fiefs and reflects the social conditions of Gujrat in the 12th and 13th centuries, bears ample testimony to the production of commodities for sale in the market.¹⁹⁵

The rise and development of the market economy in the urban areas, while contributing to the erosion of the economic self-sufficiency of the countryside, produced other effects also. One of them was the development of the tendency against the use of visti or forced labour, and this meant an easing off of the subjection of the peasantry in places nearby the market cities and towns. Likewise, there developed the tendency to use wage labourers. There also developed the tendency to assess the revenue of the village in cash.¹⁹⁶ Finally, I should point out that certain noteworthy agrarian and industrial changes occurred during the period of feudalism. Unquestionably they ruled out Marx's thesis of social stasis inasmuch as India is concerned.

Apart from the use of araghatta, the Persian wheel, the early Middle Ages saw several changes in agriculture. The importance attached to agriculture in this period is indicated by the fact that several texts were composed on it such as Krsiparasara in the north and Kamban's book in the south. Kasyapa's Krsisukti has been found in the south, but it may have belonged to some paddy producing area in either the north or the south. It prescribes three methods of lifting water (i.e. using the ghati-yantra), by men, oxen and elephants. That certain persons were engaged in working the 'Persian' water-wheel can be inferred from the use of the term arahattiyatra in a lexicon of the twelfth century. The Vrksa Ayurveda of about the tenth century recommends recipes for treating the diseases affecting plants. Apart from special attention being given to horses, because they were used by chiefs and princes, animal husbandry was improved because of care given to the treatment of cattle diseases. In addition, detailed instructions regarding agriculture appear in the Brhatsamhita of Varahamihira, the Agni Purana and the Visudharmottara Purana. Three crops, first mentioned by Panini, were known widely, and better seeds were produced. Meteorological knowledge, based on observation, was far advanced in the Krsiparasara. The knowledge of fertilizers improved immensely and the use of compost was known; and, more importantly, irrigation facilities were expanded. The law-books lay down severe punishments for those who cause damage to tanks, wells, ponds, embankments, and so on.¹⁹⁷

There is little doubt that the whole period of Indian feudalism was "an age of larger yield and of great agrarian expansion."¹⁹⁸ Much of it depended on irrigation which was promoted not only by the state or king, as in Marx's AMP, but also by the sāmantas and private individuals.¹⁹⁹ While several sources mention seventeen kinds of grain, the Pravacanasāroddhāra of Nemi Candra refers to as many as twenty-five kinds of grains. The Śūnya Purāna states that more than fifty varieties of rice were cultivated in Bengal.²⁰⁰ Another notable development took place in the iron and steel industry. The relevant source material (e.g. the Rasaratnasamuccaya, the Paryayamuktavali, etc.) classify iron and steel into several categories, indicating the high level of minute specialization reached by the industry. Iron and steel came to be used for both utilitarian and non-utilitarian purposes, i.e. in the production of beams used in the temples, arms and weapons, and utensils of common use like crucibles and water-vessels.²⁰¹

IV. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion makes it abundantly clear that Marx's AMP, when empirically tested, is misrepresentative of the actual reality of the Indian social formation in the period under review in this dissertation. Of course, a few features of the AMP, such as spatial isolation of the villages and their economic self-sufficiency based on the unity of agriculture and handicraft manufacture, may be traced to the Indian social formation. Then again, these features are not unique to India and, in fact, existed in all pre-capitalist social formations beyond the stage of primitive communism. What is more important is that

the other elements of the AMP - the absence of commodity production and exchange, the absence of merchants, the continued prevalence of the simple but natural division of labour, the lack of existence of cities and towns, and so on and so forth - are not supported by the concrete data that I have cited or analysed in my examination of the empirical reality of the Indian social formation. For the same reason the Indian social formation was not stagnant; neither was it at any time totally based on the self-sufficiency of a peasant dominated village economy.

It has been pointed out earlier that Marx did not have access to the same materials which we may utilize today. But this does not mean that Marx did not have then any access altogether to such data as could have demanded or necessitated abandoning or, at least, a revising of the AMP. Let me give a few examples. Before the rise of British colonialism in the 1750s India developed numerous productive forces and relations in varying degrees in different regions, e.g. a high level of the social division of labour marked by the separation of cities and towns from villages, considerable commodity production and internal trade, and so on. Numerous source materials, many of them written by Europeans, amply corroborate this.²⁰² More importantly, the emergence of British colonialism resulted, on the one hand, in large-scale destruction of the old indigenous productive forces and relations that grew over time. It also simultaneously held up or slowed down, on the other hand, the growth of new productive forces and relations. In the early decades of colonialism Bengal's market economy in particular began declining because of the intense monopoly and control exercised by the

British East India Company and its merchants over the internal trade of Bengal. This trade covered even commodities of daily consumption, e.g. oil, fish, straw, bamboos, rice, paddy, bettle-nut, salt, tobacco, dried fish, timbers, etc.²⁰³

The gravity of the situation can be aptly summarized in the words of the Ninth Report (1783) of the Select Committee of the British Parliament:

The servants, therefore, for themselves or for their employers, monopolized every article of trade, foreign and domestic: not only the raw merchantable commodities, but the manufactures; and not only these, but the necessaries of life, or what in these countries inhabit has confounded with them, - not only silk, cotton, piece-goods, opium, saltpetre, but not infrequently salt, tobacco, betel-nut, and the grain of most ordinary consumption. In the name of the country government they laid on or took off, and at their pleasure heightened or lowered, all duties upon goods: the whole trade of the country was either destroyed or in shackles.²⁰⁴

The decline of trade was not confined to Bengal only, but spread to other places such as Tanjore and Madras.²⁰⁵ The constraints on the growth and expansion of India's internal trade did not disappear later. For example, by the later 18th and early 19th centuries it came to be saddled with other restrictions such as internal duties, which were of two types: transit duties and town duties.²⁰⁶ Their combined effect, instead of creating one national market, was to split up India into a number of petty markets.²⁰⁷

The blockage of internal trade can be especially highlighted by the duties that were imposed invariably on all important commercial towns. In his famous Report Upon the Inland Customs and Town Duties of

the Bengal Presidency (1835) Trevelyan, a very high ranking colonial official, stated the following in regard to their negative impact on Indian towns:

It might be expected that towns, which are the natural seats of manufacturing industry, would enjoy some exemption; but instead of this, they are burthened with an extra duty. Thus, raw sugar pays on importation into a town five per cent. in customs and five percent. in town-duty, and on being exported (from the town -- BB) in a manufactured state, five per cent. more in customs; being in all 15 percent. Oil-seeds pay on importation 7 1/2 per cent. customs and five per cent. town duty, and when the oil is exported, it has to pay 7 1/2 per cent. more in customs; being in all 20 per cent. As might be supposed, this state of the law amounts to a virtual prohibition against any manufacture in taxed articles being carried on in towns, beyond the limited extent to which they are required for consumption on the spot. If the effect which these restrictions have in depressing its productive powers were properly understood, people would no longer wonder at the low state of Indian manufacturing industry.²⁰⁸

Furthermore, the most immediately affected by the whole system of duties were the small capitalists.²⁰⁹ All in all, Indian towns began declining as a necessary consequence. In 1840 Martin thus attested to a Select Committee of the British House of Commons: "The decay and destruction of Surat, of Dacca, of Murshedabad, and other places where native manufactures have been carried on is too painful a fact to dwell upon. I do not consider that it has been in the fair course of trade; but I think it has been the power of the stronger exercised over the weaker."²¹⁰ The process of de-urbanization spread to other parts as well.²¹¹

Marx was mindful of the fact that Indian cotton and silk manufactures remained excluded from the British home market for a great length of time during the 17th and 18th centuries and that this Indian

industry was ruined by the intrusion of British cotton yarns and goods into India.²¹² But, nowhere did Marx show any awareness of the fact of indigenous development of commodity production, internal trade, markets, towns, and merchants in pre-British, especially Mughal India. That the relevant empirical data, however inadequate they might have been, existed is beyond any shadow of doubt. This is clear in light of the sample data that I have presented here in connection with the devastation of indigenous trade and marketing towns by the actions and policies of British colonialism. And what is worse, Marx, instead of revising or dropping altogether his AMP in view of the contrary evidence from the data available then, proceeded to conceptualize the AMP even more drastically by magnifying the progressive role of British capitalism in breaking down the stagnant internal solidity of the Indian village economy.²¹³ One can hardly account for this. Thus, instead of remaining constantly on the real ground of Indian history and explaining the formation of his AMP from the material practices of real Indian history, as demanded by his own methodology and theory, Marx actually propounded an idealistic view of India's history and purported to explain the Indian reality in terms of his own "Idea", i.e. the AMP. Why Marx did so cannot be explained unless one does so in terms of the teleological and ideological considerations latent in Orientalism - the doctrine that divides humanity into Them and Us on the basis of what is basically a geographical divide between the East and West.

Footnotes

1. Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution, pp. 177-8. Emphasis in original.
2. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.
3. For thumbnail sketches of these civilizaions, see E. R. Service, Origins of the State and Civilization, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975).
4. Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis", p. 461.
5. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, p. 93.
6. Currie, "The Asiatic Mode of Production: Problems of Conceptualizing State and Economy", p. 261.
7. A. L. Basham, "Introduction", in Basham, ed., A Cultural History of India, p. 1. Emphases added.
8. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 479.
9. S. Asthana, History and Aracheology of India's Contacts with Other Countries from Earliest Times to 300 B.C. (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporations, 1976), n.1, p. 37.
10. Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution, p. 192. Emphasis in original; and Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 54 and 63.
11. See Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 96-165.
12. Fairservis, Jr., The Roots of Ancient India, p. 238.
13. See chapter 3, p. 182.
14. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 165.
15. See H. D. Sankalia, The Pre-history and Proto-history of India and Pakistan (Poona: Deccan College, 1974), p. 331; and his Pre-history of India (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1977), p. 89.
16. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 162.
17. Ibid., p. 349.

18. About 250 sites were traced in the early 1970s. See R. S. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 105; and Asthana, History and Archaeology of India's Contacts with Other Countries from Earliest Times to 300 B.C., pp. 38-9.
19. O. P. Jaggi, Dawn of Indian Technology (Delhi: Atma Ram, 1969), vol. 1, p. 48.
20. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 350.
21. Ibid., p. 202; M. Wheeler, The Indus Civilization (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), p. 136; and A. N. Chandra The Rig Vedic Culture and the Indus Civilization (Calcutta: Ratna Prakasan, 1980), p. 48.
22. A. Ghosh, The City in Early Historical India (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1973), p. 2.
23. Fairservis, Jr., op. cit., p. 299; and B. Lal, "The Indus Civilization", in Basham, ed., op. cit., p. 17; and C. Ramaswamy, "Monsoon over the Indus Valley During the Harappan Period", in G. L. Possehl, ed., Ancient Cities of the Indus (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979), pp. 243-4.
24. Lal, op. cit., p. 11.
25. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 172-3.
26. Ibid., pp. 175-6.
27. Ibid., pp. 177-9.
28. Ibid., p. 223; and Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p. 59.
29. B. Allchin and R. Allchin, The Birth of Indian Civilization (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 268.
30. A. N. Marlow, "The Cities of the Indus", HIST, 17 (September 1967), p. 603.
31. J. G. Shaffer, "Harappan Culture: A Reconsideration", G. L. Possehl, ed., Harappan Civilization (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 46.
32. Ibid., p. 48; and S. Ratnagar, "The Location of Harappa", in Possehl, ed., Harappan Civilization, p. 263.

33. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 183.
34. S. Piggott, Prehistoric India to 1500 B.C. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 175; and Wheeler, Indus Civilization, p. 84.
35. U. Thakur, Some Aspects of Ancient Indian History and Culture (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1974), p. 103.
36. R. S. Sharma, "Coins and Problems of Early Indian Economic History", in A. M. Shastri, ed., Coins and Early Indian Economy (Varanasi: The Numismatic Society of India, B. H. U., 1976), p. 1; and U. Thakur, "Early Indian Mints", JESHO, 16 (1973), p. 269.
37. See Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 184-6 and 223; and Ratnagar, Encounters, passim.
38. S. Asthana, "Harappan Trade in Metals and Minerals: A Regional Approach", in Possehl, ed., Harappan Civilization, pp. 278-9.
39. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 179-80.
40. M. Wheeler, Civilizations of the Indus Valley and Beyond (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 25-6.
41. See Ratnagar, Encounters, passim.
42. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 186.
43. Ibid., and Asthana, History and Archaeology of India's Contacts with Other Countries from Earliest Times to 300 B.C., pp. 55-6.
44. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 107; Wolpert, A New History of India, pp. 19-20; and Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 59-60.
45. Chandra, op. cit., p. 53.
46. Ibid., p. 54.
47. Lal, op. cit., p. 16.
48. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 223.
49. Piggott, op. cit., pp. 178 and 184.
50. See also Ratnagar, Encounters, p. 193; and Sharma, Perspectives, p. 108.

51. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 69. K. V. Soundara Rajan hypothesizes that private property in land existed in the Indus villages. See his "Motivations for Early Indian Urbanization: An Examination", in Possehl, ed., Harappan Civilization, p. 74. Kosambi argues that landed property was owned by the great "temple" and this monopoly of ownership was due to the fact that the Indus merchants did not write upon clay tablets, that they did not take over foreign tools, or that they did not use canal irrigation and deep ploughing. See Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 69. Palpably Kosambi's argument is very weak and speculative in nature. The existence of a great temple or any royal tomb is yet to be discovered. The writing on the seals is yet to be read, but the seals in themselves are a type of proof of ownership. Kosambi does not say what is the logical (or necessary) relationship between private ownership of land and foreign tools. Finally, neither does he establish such relationship between private ownership of land and the use of canal irrigation and deep ploughing. Against this, one only needs to recall Marx who says that Roman private property presupposes the town. A Roman is a landed proprietor because he is a member of his urban commune. See Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 475-7; and Phillips, Marx and Engels on Law and Laws, p. 175.
52. G. F. Dales, "The Mythical Massacre at Mohenjo-Daro", in Possehl, ed., Ancient Cities of the Indus, p. 294.
53. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 225.
54. See Ibid., pp. 224-5; and G. L. Possehl, "Editor's Introduction", in Possehl, ed., Ancient Cities of the Indus, pp. 287-8.
55. For details, see Asthana, History and Archaeology of India's Contacts with Other Countries From Earliest Times to 300 B.C., pp. 30-104; and Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 229-97.
56. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 72.
57. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 301.
58. Ibid., pp. 306-7; and Wolpert, op. cit., p. 29.
59. Wolpert, op. cit., pp. 25-7.
60. Thapar, Ancient Indian Social History, p. 214.
61. Piggott, op. cit., p. 260.
62. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 38.

63. Marx thought that war and conquest had positive effects, including that which stimulated the development of private property, only among Europeans (Romans). See Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 486-7, 491, and 493-4. At page 491 he says: "Warfare (author's emphasis - BB) is therefore one of the earliest occupations of each of these naturally arisen communities, both for the defense of their property and for obtaining new property". The discussion of the productive role of war is also discussed in Marx's letter of September 25, 1857 to Engels. See Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 118.
64. See chapter 4, pp. 208-9.
65. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 50.
66. See chapters 4, pp. 209-10.
67. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 28-9.
68. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 111.
69. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 42.
70. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 114; and "Later Vedic Phase and the Painted Grey Ware Culture", in D. Chattopadhyaya, ed., History and Society (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi, 1978), p. 133.
71. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 345 and 356; and N. R. Banerjee, The Iron Age in India (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1965), p. 224.
72. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 115.
73. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 61.
74. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p. 100.
75. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 86.
76. Cited in Habib, "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India", p. 26.
77. R. K. Mookerji, Hindu Civilization (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963), pp. 96-7.
78. D. W. Pearce, The Dictionary of Modern Economics (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 37. Emphases in original.
79. S. K. Maity, Early Indian Coins and Currency System (New Delhi: Munshiram, Manharlal, 1970), p. 20.

80. See B. Srivastava, Trade and Commerce in Ancient India (Varanasi: The Chowkamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968), pp. 16-27.
81. See V. K. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1981), p. 1; and Ghosh, op. cit., p. 2.
82. B. D. Chattopadhyaya, "Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview", Unpublished Manuscript, (1985), pp. 3-4.
83. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 89.
84. Thapar, From Lineage to State, passim; and A History of India, vol. 1, pp. 50-69; Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 104-8; and K. Damodaran, Indian Thought: A Critical Survey (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 96-129.
85. See Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 89-134; and M. D. N. Sahi, "Agricultural Production During the Early Iron Age in Northern India", in IHCP, 43rd session (Kurukshetra: 1982), pp. 95-101.
86. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 90-1; and Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 73, 157 and 188-90.
87. Ghosh, op. cit., pp. 53-4. Note that Manu was writer of a Dharmasāstra.
88. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 113; H. Lamb, "The Indian Merchant", in M. Singer, ed. Traditional India: Structure and Change (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1959), p. 27; and Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 66 and 73.
89. G. B. Upreti, "The Dharmasūtras on Trade", in D. C. Sircar, ed., Early Indian Trade and Industry (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1972), pp. 56-7.
90. See Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 69-70 and 97-8; N. Wagle, Society at the Time of the Buddha (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), pp. 145-50; S. G. Darian, "The Economic History of the Ganges to the End of Gupta Times", JESHO, 13 (1970), pp. 62-87; L. B. Keny, "Magadha, a Commercial Centre in Ancient India", in Sircar, ed., Early Indian Trade and History, pp. 23-35; N. N. Acharya, "The Trade Routes and Means of Transport in Ancient India with Special Reference to Assam", in Ibid., pp. 36-45; M. Chandra, Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1977), pp. 49-69; P. C. Prasad, Foreign Trade and Commerce in Ancient India (New Delhi: Abhinav, 1977), esp. pp. 26-9; and V. Mishra, "Sea and Land Trade Routes in India as Revealed in the Buddhist Literature", JIH, 32 (1954), pp. 117-27.

91. Bandyopadhyaya, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, vol. 1, pp. 260-1.
92. Wagle, op. cit., p. 149.
93. Ibid., p. 150.
94. S. Bhattacharya, A Dictionary of Indian History (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1967), p. 174.
95. J. K. Singh, "Coins as a Source of Early Indian Economic History", in Shastri, ed., op. cit., pp. 24-5; and Thakur, "Early Indian Mints", p. 267.
96. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 125.
97. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, p. 70.
98. For a general development of the sciences, including mathematics in Hindu India, see H. J. J. Winter, "Science", in Basham, ed., op. cit., pp. 141-61.
99. Lamb, op. cit., pp. 28-9. Emphases added.
100. B. Walker, Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968), vol. 2, p. 182.
101. U. Thakur, "A Study of Barter and Exchange in Ancient India", JESHO, 15 (1972), pp. 307-8.
102. Kosambi argues that "regular coinage had come into use before the end of the seventh century to judge by the coins found. The eastern standard weight for silver coins was the Kārshāpana of 3.5 grams weight in Magadha, while the solitary Kosalan hoard known is of $3/4$ - Kārshāpana standard". See his Ancient India, p. 124.
103. For sresthis, see Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 284-90; Lamb, op. cit., pp. 27-8; Prasad, Foreign Trade and Commerce in Ancient India, pp. 26-9; and R. Fick, The Social Organization in North-East India in Buddha's Time (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1972), pp. 257-66.
104. Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 100-1.
105. For details, see Jain, Labour in Ancient India, pp. 81-122.
106. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 68 and 81.
107. D. Desai, "Social Background of Ancient Indian Terracottas", in Chattopadhyaya, ed., History and Society, p. 145; and A. K.

- Chatterjee, "Industrial Professions in the Pāli Jātakas", in Sircar, ed., Early Indian Trade and Industry, p. 118.
108. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 99-100.
109. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 125.
110. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 253.
111. Fick, op. cit., pp. 280-2.
112. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, p. 68.
113. See Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, pp. 185, 193 and 233; and M. Muralidhara, "Janapada Settlements in the Arthaśāstra", IHCP, 40th session (Waltair: 1979), pp. 137-43.
114. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 55.
115. Bhattacharya, "Land, Soil, Rainfall, Irrigation - Some Aspects of the Backdrop of Agrarian Life in the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya", p. 211; and Sharma, Perspectives, p. 130.
116. Kangle, The Kautilya Arthaśāstra, p. 172.
117. Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 154 and 157.
118. Ibid., pp. 152 and 155.
119. Thakur, Urbanisation in Ancient India, p.79; and Sharma, Perspectives, pp. 133-4.
120. Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 156-7; and Nath, A Study in the Economic Ckondition of Ancient Indea, p. 86
121. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 153
122. Kangle, op. cit., part 3, p. 172. See also R. Thapar, Asoka and the decline of the Mauryas (Lodon: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 73-4 and 89
123. Sharma, Perspectives, p.145; and Thakur; Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 80-1.
124. For details, see C. Margabandhu, "Trade Contacts between Western India and the Graeco-Roman World in the Early Centuries of the Christian Era: An Archaeological Restatement", JESHO, 8 (1965), pp. 316-22; H. Chakraborti, Trade and Commerce in Ancient India (Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1966), pp. 212-56; M. Wheeler, Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers (Connecticut: Greenwood Press,

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125. See Maity, Early Indian Coins and Currency System, pp. 27-9; G. M. Srivastava, "The Bearing of Sātavāhanā Coins on the Economic Conditions of Western India", in Shastri, ed., op. cit., pp. 114-20; and Darian, op. cit., pp. 78-81.
126. B. Lahiri, "Indian Economy and the Local and Tribal Coins", in Shastri, ed., op. cit., pp. 79-84.
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132. Ghosh, The City in Early Historical India, p. 45.
133. B. Srivastava, "Trade and Commerce in the Amarkosa", in Sircar, ed., Early Indian Trade and Industry, pp. 74-5. For general details of internal and external trade, see Maity, Economic Life in Northern India, pp. 157-82.
134. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 56.
135. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 189 and 206-9.
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139. See Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Age", p. 31; and R. S. Sharma, "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis", in Mukherjee, ed., India: History and Thought, pp. 187-8. Note that the accounts of the Kali age were forthcoming in later times too.

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143. For details about the mleccchas, see R. Thapar, "The Image of the Barbarian in Early India", in her Ancient Indian Social History, pp. 152-92; and D. Mitra, "Foreign Elements in Indian Population", in S. K. De, et al., eds., The Cultural Heritage of India (Calcutta: The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1962), vol. 2, pp. 610-26.
144. Sharma, "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis", pp. 191-2.
145. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, vol. 3, n. 1747, p. 890.
146. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", p. 61.
147. Ibid., p. 62.
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149. Sharma, "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis", pp. 194-5.
150. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India During the Saka-Kuśāna Age", p. 78.
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152. Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval Indian History", pp. 5-6; and Social Changes in Early Medieval India, p. 11.
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163. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 7.
164. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", p. 32.
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CHAPTER EIGHT

ORIENTAL DESPOTISM OF THE CLASSLESS STATE: A METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways. The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations formed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western communications, and later, Western empire. If this definition of Orientalism seems more political than not, that is simply because I think Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities...

For the Orient idioms became frequent, and these idioms took firm hold in European discourse. Beneath the idioms there was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental Despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like. ...Writers as different as Marx, Disraeli, Burton and Nerval could carry on a lengthy discussion between themselves, as it were, using all those generalities unquestioningly and yet intelligibly.¹

One of the core assumptions of Orientalism is the epistemological concord among both its idealist and materialist adherents in regard to the fact that the political character of India or, for that matter, the Orient is essentially and inevitably different from that of the Occident. This essentialist dichotomy is invariably conceptualized in terms of a set of ideal typical contrasts between the

Orient and Occident. These contrasts, on the one hand, draw upon and are fed by a cluster of negative or regressive political attributes making the Orient the land of nod; at one and the same time, on the other hand, they are counterposed to another cluster of positive or progressive political attributes making the Occident a land fit for heroes to live in.

For instance, if the West is portrayed as the locus classicus of social classes, class antagonisms, revolutionary politics, and cumulative political development, the East is considered the terra firma of socially undifferentiated clans or tribes of peasant masses, namby-pamby politics of mindless coups d'état and palace revolutions, and repetitive political undevelopment. The inexorable aftermath of pitting one set of attributes against another is that each of their geographical locuses (i.e. the East or West) is thereby turned into an autonomous, coherent, homogeneous, and global entity. The geographical divide between the East and West becomes once more an epistemological and ontological point of departure for the production and dissemination of the "knowledge" of politics of what is essentially made into a dualistic reality. There is, however, one exception to this generalization. Since the East is incapable of bringing about its own political development and salvation, it is the Chevalier of the Capitalist West that does the job on its behalf, just as the West also broke down the vicious spiral of economic self-sufficiency and stationariness of the East.

In light of this, my main objective in this chapter is to

undertake a methodological and theoretical assessment of the political dimensions of the AMP, which makes the same political differentiation between the East and West as is characteristic of Orientalism. In this connection I also focus on a few of Marx's own predecessors and contemporaries. The purpose is to show that, if it comes to the push (i.e. showing the politically differential character of the Orient), Marx remained in fundamental agreement with his predecessors and contemporaries even though the latter's methodological and theoretical orientations were utterly antagonistic to those of his own. What unified these strange bed fellows, as I have stressed repeatedly, was Orientalism--the divining doctrine of Them and Us.

II. A Methodological and Theoretical Review: Predecessors and Contemporaries of Marx

The idea that Asia occupied its own separate historical category came to Marx from the thinkers of the Enlightenment, and in particular from Montesquieu, who was well known to Marx as to most of his educated contemporaries who studied law and is frequently quoted by Marx, even in his earliest works. Though Hegel undoubtedly provided the main initial inspiration, Marx himself realized and admitted that Hegel's own Source was the French and English Enlightenment. The final influence came from the British economists... He also collected important material from parliamentary records and the reports of British officials, from the original writings of European travellers or references to them by other authors, and lastly from historical, geographical and ethnographical works on the Middle and Far East.²

Melotti's observation on the roots of Marx's thinking on the Orient applies as much to the political as to any other component of the AMP. But no where is their impact on Marx so stark as in the political dimension--Oriental despotism of the classless state--of the AMP.

Simply put, Marx makes himself vulnerable to the same methodological and theoretical problems that are also found in his source materials, especially the writings of his predecessors and contemporaries. This does not mean, however, that Marx had no problems of his own; rather, as I shall show, Marx aggravated them by adding to what he borrowed from his predecessors and contemporaries.

One of them was Montesquieu who gave classic expression to what was ab origine one of the first principles of the Occident in regard to the Orient.³ This pertains to, in the words of Lubasz, "the established European common-place about the despotism of the Orient."⁴ Montesquieu's significance consists precisely in the fact that by publication of The Spirit of Laws (1748) he became the first among the moderns to propose "a full-scale comparative theory" of Oriental despotism.⁵ As I stated earlier, the rationale for this differential character of the Oriental political systems and state was entirely geographical. The climate and topography determined the pervading spirit of servility and unfreedom of the masses subjected to one despotic ruler.⁶ Hence, Montesquieu laboured the point as follows:

In Asia they have always had great empires; in Europe these could never subsist. Asia has larger plains; it is cut out into much more extensive divisions by mountains and seas; and as it lies more to the south, its springs are more easily dried up; the mountains are less covered with snow; and the rivers being not so large, form small barriers. Power in Asia ought then to be always despotic: for if their slavery was not severe, they would soon make a division, inconsistent with the nature of the country... There reigns in Asia a servile spirit, which they have never been able to shake off; and it is impossible to find, in all the histories of this country, a single passage which discovers a free soul: we shall never see anything there but heroism of slavery.⁷

But this is not all insofar as India is especially concerned. Of all despotic governments none is worse than that wherein the ruler is the proprietor of all lands. India is prima facie such an example of Oriental despotism, because there the laws were alleged to make the ruler the proprietor of all lands.⁸ Finally, in terms that smack of the definitiveness of geographical determinism Montesquieu affirms that "liberty in Asia never increases; whilst in Europe it is enlarged or diminished according to particular circumstances."⁹

My own criticism of the gross inadequacy and unreliability of Montesquieu's data sources need not be repeated here.¹⁰ To be sure Montesquieu's picture of Oriental despotism, making only the Orient a political Aunt Sally, is not factual; veritably, it was the product of a teleology and ideology that had nothing to do with the Orient, its social formations and peoples. That is to say, Montesquieu simply wanted to warn his countrymen of the dangers of Oriental despotism.

He wished to see in France the retention of the feudal monarchy, in which the central power was held in check by the independent power of the nobility. Should the power of the feudal nobility continue to be whittled away, Montesquieu believed that one would arrive at despotism--a system which thrived where the political scenery consisted only in the King on the one hand, and an atomised mass of social nothings on the other... His model of Oriental Despotism was intended as a negative example for home consumption, rather than as a systematic explanation of the principles of Asiatic government.¹¹

In any case, Montesquieu's ideas were taken as gospel-truth by all subsequent mainstream thinkers including Marx. What is even more striking is that the expression "enlightened despotism", which arose in the 18th century and indicated positive values, was invariably applied

to the Occident.¹² Despotism per se, insofar as it stands for negativeness, continued to remain reserved, even to modern times, for the Orient. This is in spite of the fact that, as Kosambi rightly observes, "Nero and Caligula were certainly more powerful and more despotic than any oriental despot."¹³

That is as it may be, but Montesquieu's invocation of the Europeans' "genius for liberty,"¹⁴ invariably heightened by the Orientals' proneness to slavery, seems to have stood in good stead. The reason is that within a few decades after his death the French Revolution(1789) swept away serfdom and feudalism and created absolute private property in land. In brief, the Revolution, being mainly a bourgeois Revolution, cleared the way for the development of both capitalism and political democracy in France.¹⁵ It is the same French Revolution that inspired another intellectual stalwart, Hegel, in whom the concept of Oriental despotism became further conceptualized, as well as stereotyped, as an integral component of the Orient in the Orient-Occident dichotomy. On his part, Hegel himself spoke highly of Montesquieu.¹⁶ Hegel could not, indeed, find the spirit of individual freedom and its consciousness in the Orient, just as Montesquieu failed to trace the libertarian spirit, especially of the laws, amongst the Orientals. However, while both contributed to the making of the geographical divide between the East and West as the epistemological and ontological point of departure in respect of the production of knowledge, Hegel added a new dimension to this emergent Orientalism.

Hegel explicitly linked the primitiveness of the Oriental social

formations to the primitiveness of politics of the Oriental peoples. Marx reproduced this when he established the linkage of primitive communism to the primitive politics of Oriental Despotism in the AMP. In any case Hegel argued, on the one hand, that it was in the Orient that the World Spirit (or History) had its primitive physical (natural) beginnings.¹⁷ But realistically, on the other hand, "the true theatre of History is (therefore) the temperate zone" since the locality of "world-historical peoples" cannot be found in the frigid or torrid zones or outside of the Occident.¹⁸

The Orientals have not attained the knowledge that Spirit-- Man as such is free; and because they do not know this, they are not free. They only know that one is free. But on this very account, the freedom of that one is only caprice... That one is therefore only a Despot; not a free man. The consciousness of Freedom first arose among the Greeks, and therefore they were free; but they, and the Romans likewise, knew only that some are free--not man as such. Even Plato and Aristotle did not know this. The Greeks, therefore, had slaves; and their whole life and the maintenance of their splendid liberty, was implicated with the institution of slavery... the German nations, under the influence of Christianity, were under the first to attain the consciousness, that man, as man, is free: that it is the freedom of Spirit which constitutes its essence... The East knew and to the present day knows only that One is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that some are free; the German World knows that All are free. The first political form therefore we observe in History, is Despotism, the second Democracy and Aristocracy, the third Monarchy.¹⁹

In short, the favourable natural conditions in the river valley plains that generated the conditions of agriculture and settled life also generated "the basis and foundation of the State."²⁰ But no sooner does this political development take place than it becomes its opposite, i.e. political undevelopment, in view of the fact that the individual in the

Orient somehow does not acquire consciousness of freedom and, hence, continues to vegetate passively as "mere accidents" around the central power--"only revolting caprice". This central power, in its turn, "moves at will without purpose or result" but at the same time represents "the unity of despotic power."²¹

Insofar as India is specifically concerned, Hegel argued that à la rigueur India did not even graduate to develop the state.

Freedom both as abstract will and as subjective freedom is absent. The proper basis of the State, the principle of freedom is altogether absent: there cannot therefore be any State in the true sense of the term. This is the first point to be observed: if China may be regarded as nothing else but a State, Hindoo political existence present us with a people, but no State.²²

In other words, India's political development was so primitive and its political undevelopment so over-riding that it had at bottom no politics (including the state), except of course that politics which is immanent in the subjection of the atomized mass of nothings to one overarching despot. For the same reason Indian politics, for what it was worth, was nothing but "the most arbitrary, wicked, degrading despotism". In addition, it was a "normal" form that separated India from other benign forms of despotism, accidentally existent in other parts of the Orient.²³

All these foregoing Hegelian ideas were later echoed, in one form or another, in Marx's AMP inasmuch as they formed its political component. By this I do not suggest, however, that Marx did not have his own axe to grind. In any event, there is no need to redo all the methodological and theoretical drawbacks of Hegel, which I have

discussed already in Chapter 6, but which apply here as well. Instead, let me concentrate on a few of them that need emphases in the present context.

First of all, Hegel's identification of the Orient, especially India, with despotism conformed more to the traditional mainstream Europocentric thinking on the Orient than to the scientific requirements of objectivity, which demanded careful reappraisal of the evidence from contending data sources. To illustrate, Hegel's assertion to the effect that India's despotism was the worst kind of Oriental despotism is not corroborated by Jones, whom he mentions in his own analysis. True, Jones too did not find such individual freedom or scientific and legal developments as he found in Europe.²⁴ Even so Jones, one of the most competent observers, did not buy this popularized notion of worst despotism. Mukherjee argues:

For Jones the territorial conquests, the ravaging, the killing and the destruction were not a specifically Eastern characteristic. These were common to any power anywhere, in Europe and Asia... Jones could not agree with Bernier and Montesquieu that Asia never experienced feudalism and private property... He had never supported the theory of Oriental Despotism as developed by Bernier, Montesquieu and Dow. He still shared Voltaire's enthusiasm for Asian civilization and Eastern wisdom and believed that the Asians could not have flourished if they were ruled according to the whims of their monarchs and had no experience of private property. The Indian princes had never been above the control of law.²⁵

Hegel did not accept this point of view, just as he did not accept a similar one advanced by Voltaire (1694-1778). In a spirit that really conformed to the spirit of Enlightenment Voltaire, to summarize in the words of Embree,

suggested that a possible explanation of the conflicting statements about Indian kingship were to be explained by referring to actual conditions under particular rulers. The despotism that was noted by travellers during Aurangzeb's time, for example, might, he urged, be peculiar to his reign, but in general Indian Kings did not seem to be able to maintain their power for long. Once the king's control of the army weakened, regional kingdoms reappeared; that their local powers had managed to survive was in evidence, he thought, that the emperors had not had the kind of absolute authority that Bernier had ascribed to them.²⁶

At any rate, Hegel uncritically magnified the Oriental negative in order to bring out, as sharply as possible, the Occidental positive, which is the attainment above all of (bourgeois) individual freedom.

What Hegel looked for and did not find in the Orient was in all probability a set of capitalist values which the French Revolution symbolized. For Hegel the French Revolution was the enunciation and affirmation of "reason's ultimate power over reality".

As the German idealists saw it, the French Revolution not only abolished feudal absolutism, replacing it with the economic and political system of the middle class, but it completed what the German Reformation had begun, emancipating the individual as a self-reliant master of his life. Man's position in the world, the mode of his labor and enjoyment, was no longer to depend on some external authority, but on his own free rational activity.²⁷

Accordingly, in Hegel's anthropological historicism the epistemology was geared to emphasizing the values of (bourgeois) individualism that emanated from the French Revolution.²⁸ The world history to Hegel was "none other than the progress of the Consciousness of Freedom."²⁹

There is little doubt that the social formations of the Orient did not keep pace with those of the Occident in the matter of the development of capitalist values, especially bourgeois freedom. Hegel took this non-development at this point of time as innately given and

providentially ordained among the Orientals, and absolutized it in such a way as to accentuate the geographical divide between a politically regressive Orient and a politically progressive Occident. His version of anthropological historicism generated idealist Orientalism by rationalizing the appearance of the Orient as the determinate locus of a hierarchy of political unfreedoms and undevelopments, and then by contrasting it with the Occident as the corresponding locus of a hierarchy of political freedoms and developments. One could well recall Hegel's statement that Europe is "absolutely the end of History" or that the aim of the German spirit is "the realization of absolute Truth as the unlimited Self-determination of Freedom."³⁰ The truth of the matter is that when Hegel was harping on the thematic of Oriental despotism, making the Orient a political whipping boy, nothing took place up to that time in Germany that was comparable to either the English Industrial Revolution or the French Revolution.³¹ Besides, "serfdom was still prevalent, the peasant was still a beast of burden. Some princes still hired out or sold their subjects as mercenary soldiers to foreign countries."³² If this was the situation right inside Germany then it was a bit too much for Hegel to expect the universal prevalence of capitalist values in any of the Oriental social formations, which were yet to develop material conditions conducive to the growth of capitalism. The identification of despotism and political undevelopment only with the Oriental social formations, and making them an indispensable condition of the mode of existence of those formations, is quite unwarranted, not because it heightens the East-West dichotomy,

which it of course does, but primarily because it is both teleological and ideological in both intent and purpose.

As I stated earlier, the transformation of the Orient into an epistemological and ontological category of despotism and political inertia is integrally connected with, as well as predicated on, the simultaneous transformation of the Occident as an epistemological and ontological category of democracy and political development, which is then invested with double tasks. In addition to positing its own political development of higher rationality and freedom, the Occident has to liberate the Orient by negating the latter's vicious spiral of despotism and political undevelopment before it can bring out the realization of the (European) world Spirit. That is why in Hegel's determinism "it is the necessary fate of Asiatic Empires to be subjected to Europeans."³³ This is so because, in the Hegelian scheme of things, political revolutions brought about by indigeneous ruling dynasties do not cause thrills and spills anymore but are matters of indifference to any Oriental Tom, Dick or Harry for their lots remain unchanged.³⁴ This being the case, they do not care whether the ruler is British or Indian. Thus, it could now rationalize and legitimate all imperialist interventions and exploitations as summum bonum for the colonized.³⁵

Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron, a French observer in India between 1755 and 1761, pointed precisely to this aspect in his Legislation Orientale (1778). It was also, at the same time, a scientific critique of both Bernier and Montesquieu. In his book he tried to show that,

although there was certainly no lack of tyrannical spirit in the East, one could not with justice designate these governments as despotic in the true sense of the word; that is, without laws and without property rights... Anquetil-Duperron quoted laws, provisions, and contracts, and described customs and habits in order to demonstrate the actual existence of property rights. He went further in fact, pointing out that just as the idea of despotism had served to justify the violent intervention of Europeans in the East, so the conviction that no private property existed there had proved of considerable use in supporting the claims of those who favored the confiscation of all native territory.³⁶

But unlike Hegel and Marx, both of whom uncritically accepted and elaborated the mainstream view of Oriental despotism, Anquetil-Duperron was predictably in the minority. As I said, this does not mean that Anquetil-Duperron was wide of the mark.

That the notion of Oriental despotism was a legitimating and rationalizing manoeuvre for imperialist exploitation and domination, denying the colonized peoples any opportunity of participation in the political process, can be illustrated from the Indian colonial experience. W. W. Hunter thus characterizes the nature of the British-Indian regime in a way that remarkably reminds one of what is implicit in Marx's AMP:

The Indian government is not a mere tax-collecting agency, charged with the single duty of protecting person and property. Its system of administration is based upon the view that the British power is a paternal despotism, which owns, in a certain sense, the entire soil of the country, and whose duty is to perform the various functions of a wealthy and enlightened proprietor.³⁷

James Mill preferred British despotism to India's Oriental despotism,³⁸ because the Indians then were incapable of ruling themselves. He thus emphatically argued in 1810:

Is a legislative assembly to be convoked in India? Certainly not. The stage of civilization, and the moral and political situation in which the people of India are placed, render the establishment of legislative assemblies impracticable. They would be productive of nothing but confusion ... A simple form of arbitrary government, tempered by European honour and European intelligence, is the only form which is now fit for Hindustan.³⁹

Like many others (e.g. H. S. Maine, J. F. Stephen, Viceroy Dufferin, etc.) Charles Wood, secretary of state for India, stated in 1861 that Indians are incapable of conducting their own representative government.⁴⁰ "The Government of India must be a despotism."⁴¹

Generally speaking, for the younger Mill even a good despotism is "an altogether false ideal", which practically becomes "the most senseless and dangerous chimeras."⁴² But this does not apply to barbarous nations like India that are at a good distance from the stage when a people are "capable of, and ripe for, representative government."⁴³ Hence, despotism is legitimated. He wrote:

Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. ... Under a native despotism, a good despot is a rare and transitory accident: but when the dominion they are under is that of a more civilized people, that people ought to be able to supply it constantly.⁴⁴

In the utilitarian scheme of things as envisaged in Mill, the preaching of democratic liberty in the home-front was suitably counter-balanced by the prescription of despotic imperialism abroad in the colonies.⁴⁵ In the 20th century this thematic continued almost down to the end of colonialism in India. In 1907 Viceroy Minto(1905-1910) justified Britain's despotism in these words:

No one believes more firmly than I do that the safety and welfare of India depends on the permanence of British administration, but I equally believe that the permanence of that administration depends upon a sound appreciation of the changing conditions which surround it. I am no advocate of 'representative government for India' in the Western sense of the term. It could never be akin to the instincts of the many races composing the population of the Indian Empire. It would be a Western importation unnatural to Eastern tastes. From time immemorial in India the power of the state has rested in the hands of absolute rulers. ... The Government of India must remain autocratic; the sovereignty must be vested in British hands and cannot be delegated to any kind of representative assembly. No such assembly could claim to speak on behalf of the Indian people so long as the uneducated masses, forming nearly ninety percent of the adult male population, are absolutely incapable of understanding what 'representative government' means and of taking any effective part in any system of election.⁴⁶

The argument is as complete as it could be. Not only was Oriental despotism made a rationalizing and legitimating manoeuvre (both to sanctify British despotism in India and to drum the geographical divide between despotic Orient and democratic Occident), but it actually enabled the imperialist ruling class to prolong their colonial domination and exploitation on grounds that were precisely their own creation. That is to say, the thesis of Oriental despotism was, in the first instance, built on the assumption that the rural folks in the Robinson Crusoe villages were indifferent to political revolutions or that they remained untouched by storm-clouds of Oriental political skies. This assumption was now turned around to project an aura of legitimacy onto what was basically an alien regime, because it began to claim to represent the same masses who were earlier politically de-activated to begin with. Thus Oriental despotism, together with its correlated component of the village community, was so resilient that it

could cut more ways than one. Either way, the end product was really and truly to the advantage of the colonial ruling class.

III. Marx: A Methodological and Theoretical Critique

While it is obvious from the structure of the Marxian system that three familiar modes (the ancient, the feudal, and the capitalist - BB) are dialectically related, the "Asiatic" mode of production seems to stand apart from the others... Despite the explicit dynamism of Marx's dialectical model, it seems to be an uneasy combination of two sets of disparate elements: a sophisticated, carefully worked out schema describing the historical dynamism of European societies, rather simple-mindedly grafted upon a dismissal of all non-European forms of society under the blanket designation of a mere geographic terminology of the 'Asiatic mode of production' which appears static, unchanging and totally non-dialectical. ... In Asia state power assumes autonomous proportions; Oriental despotism, to Marx, does not reflect the distribution of economic power in society. It is another instance in which non-European society presents a model different from the traditional Marxian model of the relations between economics and politics. ... With all his understanding of the non-European world, Marx remained a Europe-oriented thinker, and his insights into Indian and Chinese society could never be reconciled with his general philosophy of history, which remained - like Hegel's - determined by the European experience and the Western historical consciousness.⁴⁷

The above-mentioned statement of Avineri correctly summarizes how the AMP as a whole or its political component of Oriental despotism hovering as unity over insular villages stands out as a particular uniqueness of the Orient in contrast to the general (and, hence, universal) uniqueness of the West.

In this differentiation of the East from the West Marx was not a sceptic who would, before anything else, scrutinize the methodological and theoretical deficiencies of the findings of his predecessors or the data sources on which those findings were based. Marx continued to hang

on to the thesis of Oriental despotism to the last days of his life.⁴⁸ Even in 1882, a year before his death, he reaffirmed once again what he said many times before. In a manuscript on the Frankish epoch in Western European history he said:

There where the State arises in an epoch when the village community cultivates its land in common, or at least merely allocates it temporarily to different families, and where consequently no private property of the soil has yet emerged, as with the Aryan peoples of Asia and the Russians, State power assumes the form of a despotism.⁴⁹

There is not any question that Marx's own purpose was altogether different from that of his preceeding and contemporary intellectual influences, i.e. demonstration of the antecedent and opposite of the ancient, feudal, and, especially, capitalist modes of production with a view to establishing socialism and communism throughout the world. Even so, Marx agreed with them on the point that the nature of politics and the state in the Orient was altogether different from the same in the Occident in view of the latter's development of capitalism. There was, however, one crucial difference between Marx and his predecessors. Montesquieu and Hegel were idealist Orientalists in that they sought to epistemologize and rationalize the geographical divide in terms of their focus on the presence or absence of a given set of values (i.e. spirit of the laws or freedom) in the social formations of the East and West. In contrast to this standpoint, Marx was apparently a materialist who, however, reached essentially the same conclusion as that of Montesquieu and Hegel. In any case, his formulation of the AMP was like opening a Pandora's box in view of its built-in contradictions with the general tenets of Marxism. For the same reason, Marx fared worse because he

went further than did his predecessors and contemporaries. Let me illustrate.

To start with, if there is anything that defines "the Orient" in the thumbnail sketch of the AMP, so argues Lichtheim, it is the dominance of the state, so much so that such dominance excludes the growth of "genuine private ownership of land."⁵⁰ As I stated earlier, this association of state dominance (or despotism) without the presence of private ownership of land represented the mainstream Eurocentric Weltanschauung which Marx took as gospel truth. If Marx really wanted to, he could have found adequate source materials (e.g. those of Voltaire and Anquetil-Duperron, etc.) that would have enabled him to reconstruct the Indian social formation more realistically. Among other things, he would have "learnt" that:

All-Indian centralized empires have existed very infrequently and few of them survived even two centuries. Behind the apparent might and magnificence of the imperial houses stood the hereditary feudal chiefs who exercised immense power, by virtue of the surplus they extracted from the peasants of their estates and the private armies that they maintained. They (Marx and Engels - BB) would have also found out that the standing army of the king was very modest - considering the vastness of the empire and that he depended on the feudal chiefs and jagirdars for men to enable him to conduct his military campaigns effectively... It would have come to their knowledge that numerous peasant uprisings occurred in India - even in the vicinity of the capitals - Agra and Delhi - rather than there being a picture of a passive peasant population. They would have learnt of large-scale desertions of disconnected peasants particularly in the Doab area.⁵¹

Furthermore, the Indian social formation was too large and its different regions too varied, owing to uneven developments caused by geographical and historical factors, to generate such a type of centralized despotism

that Marx had in mind.⁵²

There is no question that Marx's failure to consult available sources, which could have provided him with countervailing and critical evidence, raises serious doubts as to the scientificity of his political assertions in the AMP. It also strictly limits the validity of Marx's generalization which, instead of reproducing reality, merely idealizes the non-existent. This actually violates Marx's own general methodological postulate to the effect that "abstractions in themselves, divorced from real history, have no value whatsoever" or that "empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production."⁵³

Similarly, from a methodological point of view, Marx's handling of the data sources he read and the mode of their interpretation leave out much that bears on his political generalizations about the AMP, especially Oriental despotism. For instance, let me refer to Campbell's Modern India. True, Campbell refers to "Oriental despotisms."⁵⁴ But his discussions of different aspects of the pre-British Indian social formation virtually contradict the tenet of Oriental despotism. Thus, his description of the proprietary body of the villages - the democratic form of village communities - in certain places of northern and southern India refutes the tenet of Oriental despotism in so far as it is a product of, and is associated with, the absence of private property in land. Again, in connection with his discussion of the role of the Hindu and Muslim laws he says the following, which directly contradicts

Oriental despotism:

Generally speaking, the laws prevailing in India were singularly free from impolitic restrictions and over interference in trade, currency, and such matters. Things, therefore, took very much their natural and proper course, and a great deal of personal freedom was enjoyed by all classes. All imposts were for revenue and with no other object. ... The state of property and general rules affecting ordinary transactions are much the same as in most civilized countries.⁵⁵

Ironically, Marx did not take care of these contradictions.

Marx himself was no less teleological and ideological. For instance, if AMP was to represent primitive communism, as Marx in fact intended,⁵⁶ then Oriental despotism had to be there as some primitive form of political domination. This linkage between primitive communism and Oriental despotism served, at the same time, as the example of societal non-development in his illustration of how societal development (in the Occident) proceeded in historically specific stages, as in the ancient, feudal, and capitalist modes, thus culminating eventually in the generalization of individual private property and individual freedom. In this process of illuminating the contrast, Marx accepted uncritically the thesis of Oriental despotism, regardless of the serious methodological and theoretical problems that it carried with itself. What is more, his uncritical acceptance of Oriental despotism heightened the geographical divide between the Orient and Occident - the essence of Orientalism - by identifying only the former as the original locale of repetitive political unfreedom and undevelopment.

This is substantiated by Marx's espousal of the Hegelian expression of "the general slavery of the Orient", which is structurally

a correlated proposition of Oriental despotism.⁵⁷ To summarize Marx's arguments in the words of Lubasz:

The human being is in completely general terms a slave: the slave of the material conditions which afford his sustenance, the slave of the communal entity within which he lives almost like a bee within a hive, and the slave, finally, of the despot who rules over all. A slave lacks individual personality and will. He is therefore incapable of deliberate action beyond routine activity, incapable of initiative, enterprise, voluntary cooperation. Every Oriental's non-routine activity is an act carried out at the command of the master, the despotes. That is Marx's notion of the 'general' slavery of the East, in contradistinction to the particular slavery of ancient Greece and Rome. Thus, in Marx's thinking, do primitive communism and Oriental despotism go hand-in-hand.⁵⁸

The Graeco-Roman social formations were class-divided social formations. Here, the class of slaves, who were neither owners nor possessors, were themselves chattels owned by a class of free men.⁵⁹

But what are the factors that bound despotism or the general slavery of the undifferentiated masses primarily to the soils of the Orient? Here Marx's answer is the same which he suggested also when he attempted to account for the absence of private property and the continuing economic stagnation in the Orient. In other words, either he refers to the same set of factors - the absence of individuation and individual private property, the unity of agriculture and industry, the lack of social division of labour, the non-existence of the positive effects of population growth or war and conquest, and so on and so forth;⁶⁰ or he does not really give any reason whatsoever for the peculiarities of the Orient. That is, on the one hand, even if he gives a reason - for example, the unity of agriculture and industry to account

for the absence of private property or economic stagnation - it is not really a reason because it is not unique to the Orient but pervades the Occident as well. On the other hand, he is simply incapable of explaining why one causative factor - for instance, population growth or war and conquest - that is positive in its impact in the Occident loses its positive role and becomes negative as soon as it steps out of the territorial limits of the Occident.

Thus, the Graeco-Roman social formations overcame their primitive communisms and advanced politically for reasons precisely denied to India or, for that matter, the Orient. In the former, unlike in the latter, the reproduction of the primitive community meant not only its simple reproduction but also, simultaneously, the dissolution of the old community as well as the reproduction on an ever-increasing scale.⁶¹

The survival of the commune as such in the old mode requires the reproduction of its members in the presupposed objective conditions. Production itself, the advance of population (this too belongs with production), necessarily suspends these conditions little by little; destroys them instead of reproducing them, etc., and, with that, the communal system declines and falls, together with the property relations on which it was based.⁶²

Elsewhere, in connection with Rome, he wrote:

For example, where each of the individuals is supposed to possess a given number of acres of land, the advance of population is already under way. If this is to be corrected, then colonization, and that in turn requires wars of conquest. With that, slaves etc. Also, e.g., enlargement of the ager publicus, and therewith the patricians who represent the community etc. Thus the preservation of the old community includes the destruction of the conditions on which it rests, turns into its opposite. If it were thought that productivity on the same land could be increased by developing the forces of production etc. (this precisely the

slowest of all in traditional agriculture), then the new order would include combinations of labour, a large part of the day spent in agriculture etc., and thereby again suspend the old economic conditions of the community. Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of reproduction, e.g. village becomes a town, the wilderness a cleared field etc., but the producers change, too, in that they bring out new qualities in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language.⁶³

This dialectic of the antagonistic relationship between productive forces and relations of production was not applied to India or the East. What is worse is that now Marx had compulsively to take recourse to differential causative factors for explaining the same phenomena, especially to bring out the differential character of the pre- or a-historical Oriental non-development vis à vis the Occidental development as a historical process of logically connected modes of production. This meant as well differential explanations for the same set of political phenomena. In the end, Marx accentuated the hiatus between the East and West.

This is evident, for instance, in the way Marx accounts for the differential origin of the state and politics in the West, where causative factors include the growth and expansion of social division of labour, antagonism between town and country and, above all, private property. In the German Ideology Marx says, among other things:

The greatest division of material and mental labour is the separation of town and country. The antagonism between town and country begins with the transition from barbarism to civilization, from tribe to State, from locality to nation, and runs through the whole history of civilization to the present day (the Anti-Corn Law League). The existence of town implies, at the same time, the necessity of administration, police, taxes, etc.; in short, of the multiplicity, and thus of politics in general. Here first

became manifest the division of the population into two great classes, which is directly based on the division of labour and on the instruments of production. The town already is in actual fact the concentration of the population, of the instruments of production, of capital, of pleasures, of needs, while the country demonstrates just the opposite fact, isolation and separation. The antagonism between town and country can only exist within the framework of private property.⁶⁴

What was the basis of the medieval state and politics in the Occident? Just as the secret of the history of the Roman Republic was the history of "its landed property", so the secret of medieval feudalism was "the rule of landed property."⁶⁵

That is to say, in the Middle Ages property, trade, society and man were political; the material content of the state was defined by its form; every sphere of private activity had a political character, or was a political sphere, in other words politics was characteristic of the different spheres of private life. In the middle Ages the political constitution was the constitution of private property, but only because the constitution of private property was political (my emphasis - BB). In the Middle Ages the life of the people was identical with the life of the state (i.e. political life). Man was the real principle of the state, but man was not free. Hence there was a democracy of unfreedom, a perfected system of estrangement.⁶⁶

To summarize, "Property, etc., in short the whole content of law and the state, is broadly the same in North America as in Prussia."⁶⁷ However, judged by all these criteria, as drawn upon the above-mentioned generalizations, there is no reason by which Marx could explain the origin of the state and politics in India, where individual private property did not develop and where the natural division of labour expanded neither into social division of labour nor into antagonism between town and country. What rather follows from such a differential development of the Oriental state is even more serious, causing the

whole of Marxism to stand on its head rather than on its feet. This inversion, though counterposing the general uniqueness of the dynamic West to the particular uniqueness of the stagnant East, is due to the fact that development of the Oriental state sharply contradicts the general Marxist principle of political evolution: no private property, no social classes, no class antagonism, and no state.

According to the Marxist methodological and theoretical principles of dialectical and historical materialism, the invariant condition of the rise and existence of the state lies in the rise and existence of social classes and in irreconcilable class antagonisms between them at a certain point of the development of the social formation, i.e. when the latter is no longer a primitive communism of an undifferentiated mass of producers.⁶⁸ Here is an outline of what Levitt calls "diamond-in-the-rough theory"⁶⁹ of the state, which Marx developed in his critique of Maine:

Maine ignores the much deeper point: that the apparent, supreme, independent existence of the state is itself only apparent and that in all its forms is an excrescence of society; just as its appearance itself first comes forward at a certain stage of social development, so it disappears again as soon as society reaches a stage which it at the present has not yet attained (my emphasis - BB). First the tearing-loose of individuality from the originally non-despotic fetters (as blockhead Maine understands it) but rather the satisfying and comfortable bonds of the group, of the primitive community,- there with the one-sided extrication of individuality. However, the true nature of the latter is shown only if we analyse the content - the interests of the `latter`. We then find, that these interests themselves are again common to certain social groups and characterizes them, that they are class-interests etc. Hence, this individuality is itself a class etc. individuality and these in the last instance all have economic conditions at base. Upon these bases the state is built up and it has these conditions as a pre-requisite.⁷⁰

In brief, the kernel of the Marxist concept of the state is that it is, in the words of Krader, "an institution of society, hence it is neither extra-social nor supra-social. It is an institution of an internally divided and opposed society, hence it is not universal in human society, since some are primitive and more homogeneous."⁷¹

Related to this view of state development is the corollary principle that politics, defined as activities of antagonistic social classes battling each other for the seizure of state power,⁷² is not negative in nature but rather positive in effect. In The Poverty of Philosophy, Marx reminded Proudhon of this:

The very moment civilization begins, production begins to be founded on the antagonism of orders, estates, classes, and finally on the antagonism of accumulated labor and actual labor. No antagonism, no progress. This is the law that civilization has followed up to our days. Til now the productive forces have been developed by virtue of this system of class antagonisms... Political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society.⁷³

In Capital (vol. 1), while discussing the revolutionary role of Modern Industry, Marx said this to the same effect:

The historical development of the antagonisms, immanent in a given form of production, is the only way in which that form of production can be dissolved and a new form established.⁷⁴

A mode of production, if exploitative, is necessarily contradictory in the sense that "it is at the same time both a specific unity of opposing classes, of immediate producers and appropriators of surplus labour and a conflict and struggle of these opposing classes."⁷⁵ In the same spirit Marx regarded in 1848 that the history of all existing society amounts to the history of class struggles.⁷⁶ In 1879, he reaffirmed it

again: "For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the immediate driving power of history."⁷⁷

When weighed against all these considerations that determine the causation and nature of the state in the Marxist methodology and theory, there is no reason why there should be a state in the AMP for it arises only as a consequence, but not in the absence, of pre-existing class antagonisms and exploitations. If the social formation based on the AMP presupposes in it the existence of "general slavery", then this surely rules out antagonistic class divisions in the Oriental social formations; this is more so, for Marx has decisively foreclosed the scope for the development of either individuation or individual private property in the AMP. The despot does not constitute himself into a class, even though he might represent the state. Neither do his subordinates or satraps form a class, for they could be hired and fired at will ("private caprice")⁷⁸ by the despot, and this is why he is a despot. The entity actually and legally appropriating surplus labour is the state, which cannot be called an antagonistic class by any stretch of imagination. Neither does the undifferentiated mass of direct producers (primarily and mainly peasants) form a class as such, since the concept of class carries with it the notion of the existence of another antagonistic class.⁷⁹ The latter exists neither in the state nor in the despot, nor even in the fleeting body of a few official subordinates.

Playing the devil's advocate, if the despot and his subordinates are postulated as forming an exploitative "ruling class" then it would

raise more questions than solve the problem of abnormality of the Oriental state due to the absence of classes and class antagonisms in the AMP. For instance, what is the basis of the power by virtue of which they rule? In the Marxist methodology and theory, the concept of power is not an independent criterion of class affiliation; rather it refers back to the class since it means "the capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interests."⁸⁰ If the basis of their rule is purely conquest or force, then this too is contra Marxist methodology and theory.⁸¹ More will be said later. Again, the postulated dichotomy between the so-called "ruling class" and the ruled "masses" is not really a worthwhile criterion that brings out the specificity of a class situation, i.e. class antagonism and exploitation. It is a false criterion that does not enable us to separate, for instance, the Graeco-Roman, feudal, or capitalist social formations from each other, even though all or any of them can be dichotomized into ruling and ruled "classes". In other words, it is a general abstraction that does not bring out the specificity of any social formations including those in the Orient. The first important consideration, above all, is the fact that Marx himself also "did not describe the office-holders of the East as a ruling class. He regarded Oriental society as being antithetical to the real development of the private ownership of the means of production, in which the definition of class rested."⁸² Besides, the mass of producers are no where presented by Marx in his AMP as politically conscious elements; they have not even graduated to become individuals as such. For Marx explicitly states

that the individual in the AMP "has no more torn himself off from the navel-string of his tribe or community, than each bee has freed itself from connexion with the hive."⁸³

Because of foreclosure by Marx's vicious spiral of reason (e.g. unity of agriculture and industry, etc.), the Oriental individual becomes neither proprietor of land nor independent of the commune.⁸⁴ Given this irresistible bondage to the natural division of labour, towns could not develop, except as "wandering encampments" of the rulers for receiving their revenues (surplus labour) or as extraordinary locations of external trade.⁸⁵ Similarly, the production and exchange of commodities almost did not develop and, hence, there was no individuation of the individual, let alone the growth of individual private property. As a result, the Oriental individual was incapable of severing his connection with the community, "except by means of altogether external influences, since the individual member of the commune never enters into the relation of freedom towards it in which he could lose his (objective, economic) bond with it. He is rooted to the spot, ingrown."⁸⁶ In the AMP the individuals are "mere accidents" or "purely natural component parts" of the community.⁸⁷ In such circumstances it is difficult to imagine how the Oriental individuals could constitute themselves, if at all, into a class. Marx explicitly ruled this out, for this situation fitted in with what he called "the general slavery of the Orient."⁸⁸ At the same time, it is difficult to imagine why they (i.e. the Orientals) should ever need the state at all in the absence of class stratification. The whole point becomes clear

when one compares, as Marx did, the Oriental commune with the Roman commune. There, on the one hand, the Romans, being Romans, were individual private proprietors and, as such, members of the commune. On the other hand, they themselves were the urban commune (of Rome) and proprietors of the commune's territorium.⁸⁹ As a result, the commune itself was the state. Hence, in the absence of these criteria (the ownership of property in land, the city, and the nexus between the two) which Marx applied to Rome, one wonders how he could speak of the state in India or, for that matter, in the Orient. At bottom, there was not a congenial class situation in the latter where the individuals, far from constituting themselves into antagonistic classes, remained a sack of potatoes vis á vis the sadsack despot presiding over their general slavery.

Likewise, when judged strictly by the criteria that follow from Marx's general methodology and theory, politics in the AMP is not actually politics if it is defined as the practices of, and struggles between, contending social classes for state power. In the AMP politics is a linear relationship of despotism from above to the subjection of the people at the bottom. Furthermore, this politics is unproductive leading to nowhere. It is in contrast to the creativity and productivity of Occidental politics, in which contending classes are inevitably advancing to create such productive forces and relations as to liberate not only themselves, but also those outside of Europe. Thus, if Oriental politics is dependent, Occidental politics is independent in nature. The former is collective unfreedom whereas the

latter is individual freedom in essence. If one is despotism of unfreedom the other is the democracy of unfreedom.⁹⁰ In a profound sense, the Orient does not need and cannot even have politics if politics implies the existence of towns, because these cannot develop in the Orient as private ownership of land is absent there.⁹¹ If the individual never tastes what freedom is and if he is too ingrown to taste it, why should there even be a politics of despotism in the first place, unless the ruler is assumed to be of abnormal psychology? The point is that despotism is redundant since the ruler could achieve his ends without resistance from the undifferentiated masses at the bottom.

The development of the state and politics despite the absence of private property and class antagonisms in the Orient is one facet of the AMP's wholesale violation of the Marxist methodological and theoretical principles. Its other facet is the plenary negation of what Marxism holds for humanity. That is to say, if a (despotic) state could arise in a social formation not yet divided into antagonistic classes, then what guarantee, if any, is there that such a state shall not pop up in the future classless communist social formation that has emerged from capitalism? In other words, the state in the AMP is a destroyer of the anti-statism - the death of the state (i.e. class state) and hence universal emancipation - that is a logical corollary of the Marxist theory of the state. If the state turns up in classless communism, how can man become his own master by winning freedom - "freedom from the state, not of the state, not merely in the state?"⁹² Thus endorsing Nikiforov on the point, Gellner rightly states that

there is indeed no room for the AMP in a Marxism that requires the state to be endogenously generated by class conflict, nor in one that is to give us faith in the state's eventual disappearance under conditions of classlessness. In other words, the very notion of the AMP contradicts both the story of the Fall and the scope of salvation.⁹³

To tell the truth, that is not all in the Pandora's box of the supra-class or class-transcending state especially devised for the Orient.

What remains still an open question is this: what is it that generates both the state and its despotism personified in the ruler in league with his subordinate officials? To ask this is also to ask in whose interests does this repressive machinery of the state arise and just whose interest does it represent?

Its own? Or that of the peasants who compose the dominated communities? Or both? One of these three answers has to be the right one - for there simply is no one else in the list of available *dramatis personae*, with which the formula for this mode has provided us, whose interests could conceivably be considered. No one else is present!⁹⁴

The first explanation is the hydraulic argument based primarily on geographical determinism.⁹⁵ Marx argued that in the vast arid and semi-arid regions of the Orient, whose civilization was too low, the conditio sine qua non of material production and reproduction of life, especially the provision of irrigation for agriculture, could not be supplied by any individual or a group of individuals, but necessarily by a centralized state. In Capital (vol. 1), Marx wrote: "One of the material bases of the power of the State over the small disconnected producing organisms in India, was the regulation of the water supply."⁹⁶ At bottom, all this explanation becomes a Trojan horse for Marx's own materialist methodology and theory.

To begin with, it has been argued by Currie that Marx did not establish a causal link between irrigation agriculture and the emergence of the Asiatic state. What Marx did was to suggest "a link between conditions of irrigation agriculture and the extension of state control."⁹⁷ Insofar as the compulsive intervention is not a causative factor of the emergence of the Oriental state, as Currie alleges, then Marx is still in need of a theory of origin of the Oriental state. But, inasmuch as it provides an account of the origin of the Oriental state by relating it to the functional necessity of providing the essential condition of production and simple reproduction (i.e. large-scale waterworks), there is no question that such account is plainly teleological rather than scientific. It is teleological because this functionalist explanation supposes something it has not yet proved, that is, the need for large-scale irrigation work implies only the state rather than some other entrepreneurial agencies or organizations. Besides, the need itself does not automatically bring the state into existence. There remain many other conditions (e.g. conditions for the rise of social class, class consciousness and antagonism, etc.) that act towards the same.⁹⁸ In brief, the alleged functionalist explanation which links the particular form of the state to a particular form of production is doubly teleological from a logical (theoretical) standpoint: "complex irrigation agriculture is supposed to require the state as its condition of existence, it cannot, therefore, provide the material conditions of existence of the state; while the state supposes irrigation agriculture as its foundation and raison d'être."⁹⁹

Marx's functionalism in this regard is a fortiori ideological, because he mystifies the reality of the Orient by deliberate methodological manipulation of the available data for his pre-determined objective of showing repetitive undevelopment in the Orient vis à vis cumulative development in the Occident. Lubasz draws attention to Marx's ideological ends in these words:

In order to present the contrast between capitalist dynamism and pre-capitalist stagnation in as sharp a light as possible, Marx made the Indian villages utterly incapable of any form of enterprise - in particular, incapable of providing even for their own most basic need, the need for water. That, at any rate, is the only explanation I can think of for the fact that, though Marx had available to him, at the time he wrote the article, information supplied a day or two earlier by his friend Engels, to the effect that the provision of artificial irrigation was the concern either of the communes, the provinces, or the central government, Marx asserted that central government alone provided for waterworks. This seems to me an interesting example of how Marx could allow his preconceptions to dominate even the information available to him - to the point not only of ignoring certain information, but in effect 'demonstrating' that this information could not possibly be sound. (For that is the effect of his contrast between the enterprising West and the unenterprising East).¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, as I stated in chapter 6, Marx's ideological purpose would have remained unfulfilled if he had not omitted Engel's vital information, because the European village community also performed hydraulic responsibilities.¹⁰¹ Be that as it may, the methodological and theoretical absurdities on which the AMP was built made the AMP an unserviceable theory.

One such absurdity is Marx's identification of the Oriental state, not the Occidental state, with the base (economic structure) of the social formation. It is in gross violation of Marx's own

methodological postulate:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.¹⁰²

In the face of this deterministic methodological requirement, it is well nigh impossible to ferret out why Marx formulated a concept of the state which remained ab origine a part of the economic structure of the Oriental social formation. If anything, it is only by recourse to materialist Orientalism that Marx's differential treatment of the Oriental state could be explained.

That this is so can be illustrated by Marx's own glaring contradictions - which are also internal contradictions of the AMP - precisely in this respect. I have already stated that in connection with his discussion on the functions of the state as well as the absence of private property in India, Marx transforms the state into an integral component of the economic base. This criterion is simply thrown away, regardless of the damaging consequences that eat into the AMP, when Marx pinned down the mechanism of systematic natural division of labour as well as the secret of the unchargeableness of Asiatic Societies. Then, in a sweeping generalization Marx brushed aside the role of the political in India. He made no bones about separating it altogether from the economic: "The structure of the economic elements of society

remains untouched by the storm-clouds of the political sky."¹⁰³ This generalization absolutely raves against Marx's own methodological principle making the development of the superstructure dependent upon "the different forms of property" or "the social conditions of existence."¹⁰⁴ To no less degree does the same generalization also absolutely contradict Marx's own transformation of the Indian (or the Oriental) state into an integral part of the economic structure inasmuch as the state functioned as the organizer and manager of water-control works.

Finally, by asserting that the storm-clouds of the political sky or the constant dissolution and founding of the Asiatic states do not have any impact on the economy in view of the politically autonomous character of the spatially separate village communities, Marx uncritically accepted what was a banality in imperialist historiography. That is to say, Indians or, for that matter, the peoples of other colonies and semi-colonies couldn't care less who became the conqueror of state power. To all intents and purposes, this legitimated imperialist intervention in the colonies on the ground that the apathetic peasant masses could now hope for some pie in the sky, i.e. "the only social revolution" laying "the material foundations of Western society in Asia."¹⁰⁵

In any event, the factor of conquest, insofar as it is an integral component of the AMP, brings into being a whole labyrinth of insoluble problems that have disastrous implications for anything scientific Marxism stands for. The AMP explicitly authorises salvation

through the external Knight from the West - a conqueror - who breaks the chain of cyclical undevelopment flowing from the inertia and immutability of the Oriental social formations. Besides, conquest is connected with the basis of property in the AMP, "where private property is presumed not to exist. The ruler in Asia cannot claim property in all the land on any basis other than conquest. And Marx acknowledges this in a footnote."¹⁰⁶ Now, it may be advanced that the state in the AMP originates in conquest, and that it represents the interests of the conqueror and his aides-de-camp. The functionalist/hydraulic explanation may a fortiori be combined with this conquest/despotic explanation. That is, the state is there in the interests of both the peasants, who benefit by irrigation works, and the ruler and his subordinates, who continue to consume the agrarian surplus by direct use of force and repression.

But this eclecticism does not solve the methodological and theoretical problems which the AMP suffer from. Gellner rightly points out that "either of these explanations (and a fortiori their conjunction) is quite incompatible with the theoretical requirement that the state can only emerge as the consequence of reflection of pre-existing class antagonism and exploitation."¹⁰⁷ The conquest theory as an explanation is grossly inadequate because, as Krader points out, "it introduced only external factors, and failed to take into account internal processes in the formation of a given state."¹⁰⁸ Hindess and Hirst provide a searching critique of the theory of conquest immanent in the AMP. Conquest, they argue,

does not explain the formation of the state in general and it does not explain the formation of a state corresponding to tax/rent couple. Conquest does not of itself produce state domination. The conquering people are not phantoms, they existed prior to the conquest and they must have a social organization and a mode of producing the means of subsistence. ... No state is formed by this relation, dominant people/subject people ... The fact of conquest does not produce either class society or the state. The conditions of transition to class society, of the conversion of the conquerors into a non-labouring ruling class, are not given in conquest as such. If such a transition does take place then it is on the basis of class society and irreconcilable class antagonisms that the state is formed, not on the basis of conquest. Conquest only explains certain conditions under which the state may be formed, it does not explain the mechanism of the formation of the state. This failure of the conquest theory to explain the formation of the state shows that it cannot explain the formation of a state corresponding to tax/rent couple.¹⁰⁹

Even worse is the disastrous implication that it is force from above that keeps the state going all the time.

As I stated earlier, it is difficult to explain why the state/ruler need to be despotic and use force when the undifferentiated mass of peasants, artisans and others in the spatially insular and politically autonomous villages are in the condition of general slavery. They are hardly in a position to constitute themselves into antagonistic classes, let alone into rebellious ones. In addition, the acceptance of conquest and so of force in the AMP has necessarily ominous implications:

The supposition that human society can be based on violence is but the general form of an error of which the AMP is the most significant single example. ... If force is ever allowed to be a prime mover in history, and not merely an echo of prior class antagonism, the whole Marxist system becomes faulty. If violence came spontaneously and independently, why should it ever leave us - and why should it not return if expelled?¹¹⁰

From this standpoint, Marx's own argument - i.e. the necessity of Western imperialist intervention in the rest of the world for the sake of establishment therein of material foundations of civilization - can be easily stretched to justify any and all Occidental interventions so long as socialism or communism is not established throughout the world. According to Marx's logic, socialism or communism is after all a logical outcome of capitalism of the West.¹¹¹

That is as it may be, but it does not exhaust the seamy side of the AMP. A very important problem springs from the explanation of conquest, which Marx took to be the basis of the ruler's claim to property in land and possibly of the state as well. This being the case, how does it then square with Marx's assertions that "forms of domination arise from the economic base of society" or that "the Asiatic village commune is the foundation of Oriental despotism?"¹¹² Marx attempts to overcome the internal contradiction here by asserting that "the specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element."¹¹³ But, as Lubasz incisively points out, this does not help remove contradictions that transform the AMP into an ineffectual concept. In the context of Marx's aforementioned attempt, Lubasz argues:

For my own part, I can make no sense of the proposition that the combined form of tax/rent which the 'state in Asia' exacts, determines the relation of despot to subjects. Marx himself, after all, has just said - in the preceding paragraph (in Capital, vol. 3 - BB) - that it lies in the

nature of Asiatic domination (the landlord - state) that here the economic form in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of the immediate producers is the distinctive one in which rent and tax coincide. But if the form of domination determines the form of surplus - extraction, then the form of surplus - extraction doesn't determine the form of domination. If, however, it is the case that the form of domination in Asia is the determining factor (rooted in the 'right' of conquest or some other political 'right'), then Marx's thesis that despotism rests upon the village commune type of economy falls to the ground. In which case there is no point in laying the blame for Oriental despotism on its principal victims.¹¹⁴

The dead weight of internal contradictions, which Marx did not or could not resolve, is obviously what makes the AMP a sitting target.

For instance, Marx's description of the relationship between the despotic state and the cluster of insular village communities remains inadequate and untenable. It is inadequate because Marx does not make it clear how the village communities, themselves being both economic and political units of self-sufficiency, stand to a common Juggernaut of despotism - the state - that also combines both economic and political roles. If it is a cooperative relationship, there is no need for the state to become despotic. If the extraction of surplus labour requires despotism of the state, then by the same criterion the ancient, feudal and capitalist states would have to be called also despotic states in the "Asiatic" sense - a position that Marx would hardly take on. If the relationship is antagonistic, then the state can hardly be called despotic because the village communities would constitute continuing limitations to the despotic exercises of the state power. Again, as Anderson correctly points out, the positions assigned to the state and to the village communities in the AMP are quintessentially

contradictory:

For the presence of a powerful, centralized state presupposes a developed class stratification, according to the most elementary tenets of historical materialism, while the prevalence of communal village property implies a virtually pre-class or classless social structure. How could the two in fact be combined? Likewise, the original insistence by Marx and Engels on the importance of public irrigation works by the despotic state was quite incompatible with their later (or contemporaneous? - BB) emphasis on the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the village communities: for the former precisely involves the direct intervention of the central state in the local productive cycle of the villages - the most extreme antithesis of their economic isolation and independence. The combination of a strong, despotic state and egalitarian village communes is thus intrinsically improbable; politically, socially and economically they virtually exclude one another.¹¹⁵

Finally, let me turn to the particular composition and nature of the Indian village community which was blamed by Marx, at one point, as the cause of Oriental despotism. As I shall show, Europe too had similar village communities but Marx did not blame them for any 'Occidental despotism'. Here, for our purpose, we can ignore the role of private landed property and feudal lordship, whose existence in India was altogether denied by Marx. In chapters 4 and 5 I have shown that they existed in fact in India.

At all events, the European village community had its company of officials, just as the Indian village community had its own. In addition to the village assembly, village council, and village headman, there were indeed many other officials and employees in the European village community.

Their number and their duties depended upon the size of the village and the needs and demands of its residents and its seigneur. They were chosen by the village assembly, the headman and council, or the seigneur or his representative.

They included such posts as herdsman, watchman, keeper of the village pound, schoolmaster, clerk, and tax collector, to name some of the more usual jobs. Some of these functionaries were paid out of the village treasury, some like the poundkeeper or the midwife, could charge a fee for their services, and sometimes they were given a house or additional land, or were excused from certain obligations, or were allowed special privileges (for example, the village cowherd in the Kiltullagh, Country Galway, could pasture two more cows on the common than his normal stint).¹¹⁶

The diversity of offices was, of course, related to the diversity of functions that the European village community was called upon to discharge.

Among other functions it performed, the European village community was a "corporate entity" which could go into "court to seek redress for alleged wrongs done it by its seigneur, by other lords, by townsmen, or by other peasants. All too often these suits dragged on, sometimes for decades, while the costs of litigation piled up to the serious detriment of the villagers. In France the court calendars were clogged with thousands of cases involving village communities."¹¹⁷ It is difficult, if not impossible, to find an Indian parallel to this sort of corporate role of the village community. There is, however, more.

One of the broadest areas of communal responsibility concerned the maintenance of internal order and the enforcement of compliance with communal regulations. Communities appointed constables to serve as peace officers and watchmen to guard their fields and commons; levied punishments against wrongdoers; maintained a pound for stray animals; apprehended trespassers; saw to it that residents kept their drainage ditches clean; and made sure that everyone understood and observed the rules concerning the use of plowland, pasture, forest, and all other resources of the village. Often the community supervised the moral and religious life of its people, requiring them to observe the Sabbath, attend Church, and take the sacraments, and it punished drunkenness, gambling, and prostitution... The community assumed certain public responsibilities, too, such

as the maintenance and repair of roads, bridges, dikes, water courses and hedges. ... To meet the costs occasioned by its many activities, the community itself made regular levies upon its members or required them to perform certain services for it without pay.¹¹⁸

And last, but not least, the management of these rural communities was largely not in the hands of the estate officialdom of steward, bailiffs and the like (the lord's representatives), but in the hands of the richer sections of the peasantry. Hilton points to this aspect in the following words:

The manorial or seigneurial courts were largely in the hands of the well-to-do villagers, who declared custom, adjudicated in disputes, formulated communal regulations, promulgated by-laws, kept out strangers, and generally speaking provided the essential lines of communication between the estate officialdom, or the lord himself, and the community of peasant householders. It must also be emphasized that element of the agrarian economy over which the lord might seem to have complete control, namely the demesne, was also entangled in the customary practices of the peasant community. ... In any case, the demesne was almost certainly a minority feature of the medieval agrarian economy.¹¹⁹

In substance, therefore, it is difficult to explain, unless one does so in terms of his materialist Orientalism, why Marx made so much of the political autonomy of the Indian village community, converting it into a whipping boy in his illumination of the political dynamism and development of the Abendland.

IV. Conclusion

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the

ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.¹²⁰
If this statement of Marx in the German Ideology is considered a methodological and theoretical pre-condition for the explanation of reality then his AMP, particularly its political component, is certainly a definite violation of the same. In light of what I have discussed so far, one can hardly arrive at any other conclusion than this.

The fact is that Marx's class-transcending concept of the state and politics in the AMP is au fond without any real causation. Insofar as it rests on alleged hydraulic functions, it is pseudo materialism for the AMP asserts, rather than demonstrates, the actual origin of the Oriental state and politics. Insofar as it rests on conquest and force, which Marx apparently endorsed in the case of the Orient, it is a pseudo causation in that the state and politics are made to hang constantly on the air. That is to say, the state and politics oscillate from one moment to another in accordance with the unceasing cavalcade of the horde of conquerors, with the result that the Oriental state never takes on the form of an organizational structure that has arisen out of the politics of social antagonism between competing classes. It is important to note, however, that Marx in a way comes very close to calling the Indian (or Oriental) social formation an exploitative social formation based on class division, since the despot and his aides-de-camp consume the surplus labor they extract from the subjugated mass of peasantry. Then again, had Marx said so, this would have amounted to opening Pandora's box once more.

Marx could on no account regard the Indian social formation as a

class-divided social formation precisely for overriding teleological and ideological reasons. Expressed otherwise, Marx's idée fixe was to conceptualize the differential development in the Orient, no matter if in the process the Orient was turned into a conceptual scapegoat or the AMP into a lame duck. This is why Marx read into the Orient every antecedent, and every opposite, of all that characterized the Occident in terms of the latter's modes of production. It was in conformity with this that he explicitly spoke of the AMP as primitive communism,¹²¹ characterized by the absence of a whole set of criteria of any farther development: the transformation of natural division of labour into social division of labour, the growth of exchange and trade, the beginning of the process of individuation and hence the emergence of private property, the rise of antagonism between town and country, the growth of social classes and antagonism between them, and the crystallization of the state as condensation of conflictual class relations. Summarily speaking, if the nadir of undevelopment is the Oriental social formation based on nature, the apogee of development is the European social formation based on Capital's mastery over nature.¹²² By virtue of its monopoly of landownership the state in the Orient prevents the growth of social classes and antagonism between them, whereas it was precisely the existence of the antagonistic social classes that led to the origin and development of the state in the Occident.

In such circumstances it is not difficult to find out Marx's problems with respect to his theory of the AMP. On the one hand, Marx

uncritically followed in the footsteps of his predecessors and contemporaries in accentuating the geographical divide - the core of Orientalism - between the East and West. This Orientalism would explain why Marx manipulated the empirical data (e.g. omission of the role of the village community as provider of public works) and deliberately read things into the Orient. Apparently, Marx was not ascending from earth to heaven but in fact descended from heaven to earth in the company of Hegel, among others. Marx remained, like most others, essentially a geographical determinist when it came to the question of "differing development of East and West."¹²³ One may as well remember that it was Marx who, with distinct Hegelian overtones, said that "it is not the tropics with their luxuriant vegetation, but the temperate zone, that is the mother-country of capital."¹²⁴ Hence, this characterization of the differential political development of the Orient was completely consistent with Marx's emphasis on making the AMP "a generic residual category for non-European development."¹²⁵

On the other hand, what is even worse is that the AMP contains such horrid social implications that they call for its instantaneous and total burial. As I stated earlier, if the state could show up in a classless social formation as is envisaged in the AMP, it might not die away in a future socialist or communist social formation, which is supposedly also a classless social formation. No less frightful is the implication that inevitably flows from an AMP, which assigns a Messianic role to the West for breaking the vicious circle of socioeconomic stationariness and political undevelopment and despotism in the East.

This liberation may even involve inflicting violence on the latter.¹²⁶ Thus Marx, like most of his predecessors and contemporaries, could justify Western imperialism and colonialism on the grounds of "laying material foundations of Western society in Asia."¹²⁷ The truth of the matter is that Marx failed to properly realize the predominantly baneful effects of Western intervention, and the actual extent of social development in India. Thus, for instance, Marx exaggerated the extent of political unity promoted by Britain in India. Akbar rightly points out recently that the argument of unity by the courtesy of the British falls flat on many counts. The simplest is that nearly half of India was not directly ruled by them. More importantly, before India was really unified a separate accession treaty from each one of the 565 princely states had to be obtained after the departure of the British. In addition, Marx grossly underestimated the overwhelming "geographical and cultural sense of unity" among Indians across barriers of languages and castes.¹²⁸ There is no reason why the railways, the free press, and similar other things that he listed as the material results of "The British Rule in India" could not be established in or transferred to India without the British rule therein.

The Europocentrism immanent in the AMP has graver implications than the legitimation and rationalization of a bygone Western imperialism and colonialism. Indeed, the AMP may provide carte blanche even to future European intervention, yet from another point of view. To elaborate, Marx regards that socialism or communism emerges, generally and logically speaking, from "the capitalist society."¹²⁹

This being the case, the raison d' être that approved of Western intervention in the East before would now do the same, even more so because of a more sacred and humane reason, i.e. the establishment of socialism or communism throughout the world. From this point of view, the AMP institutionalizes not only the geographical hiatus between the West and East but also, more importantly, a perpetual dominance of the former over the latter. This too is what characterizes Orientalism. To conclude, therefore, in the words of Said:

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying 'us' Europeans as against all 'those' non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter.¹³⁰

Footnotes

1. Said, Orientalism, pp. 202-3 and 102. Emphases added.
2. Melotti, Marx and the Third World, p. 50.
3. See Chap. 1, pp. 7-8.
4. Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis", p. 461.
5. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p. 400.
6. See Chap. 6, p. 296-8.
7. Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws, Bk. XVII, ch. 6(1-2 and 5), pp. 278-9. Emphases added.
8. Ibid., Bk. V, ch. 14(17), and Bk. XIV, ch. 6, pp. 145 and 170.

9. Ibid., Bk. XVII, ch. 3(4), p. 277.
10. See chap. 3, pp. 134-6; and chap. 6, p. 297-8.
11. Sawer, Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 13-4. Emphases added.
12. See R. Wines, ed., Enlightened Despotism (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1967), passim.
13. D. D. Kosambi, "The Basis of Despotism", EW, 9 (November 2, 1957), p. 1417.
14. Montesquieu, op. cit., Bk. XVII, chp. 6, p. 278.
15. See Marx, The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850, pp. 43 and 109; Knight, Economic History of Europe, vol. 1, pp. 480-1; Sobul, "The French Rural Community in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", pp. 83-5 and 88-93; and T. Skocpol, States and Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 118 and 179.
16. Therborn, Science, Class and Society, pp. 184-5.
17. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, pp. 104 and 109.
18. Ibid., pp. 83-4.
19. Ibid., pp. 18-9 and 110. Emphases in original.
20. Ibid., p. 93.
21. Ibid., pp. 111-2 and 151.
22. Ibid., p. 168. Emphases in original.
23. Ibid., pp. 168-9.
24. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones, pp. 120 and 125.
25. Ibid., pp. 40 and 126.
26. Embree, "Oriental Despotism: A Note on the History of an Idea", pp. 267-8.
27. Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 3.
28. Ibid., p. 18.
29. Hegel, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

30. Ibid., pp. 109 and 354.
31. See Therborn, op. cit., pp. 321 and 325.
32. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 13.
33. Hegel, op. cit., p. 149.
34. See ibid., p. 161.
35. See Knorr, British Colonial Theories 1570-1850, passim; and Hutchins, The Illusion of Performance, passim.
36. Venturi, "Oriental Despotism", p. 139.
37. Cited in E. Whitcombe, Agrarian Conditions in Northern India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), vol. 1, p. 234. Emphases added.
38. Mill, The History of India, vol. 1, p. 141.
39. Cited in Barber, British Economic Thought in India 1600-1858, pp. 138-9. Emphases added.
40. Phillips, The Evolution of India and Pakistan 1858 to 1947, pp. 40-1, and 56-60; Misra, Administrative History of India 1834-1947, pp. 29 and 44-5; and Seal, The Emergence of Indian Nationalism, pp. 140-1 and 185.
41. Cited in Misra, op. cit., p. 29. Emphases added.
42. John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, Representative Government, The Subjection of Women: Three Essays (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 185.
43. Ibid., p. 402.
44. Ibid., pp. 16 and 409.
45. Turner, "The Concept of Social 'Stationariness' Utilitarianism and Marxism", p. 11.
46. Mary, Countess of Minto, India: Minto and Morley 1905-1910 (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 110. Emphases added.
47. Avineri, "Introduction", pp. 5-6 and 29-30. Emphases added.
48. See Sawyer, op. cit., p. 49; and Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, vol. 1, p. 637.

49. Cited in Anderson, op. cit., pp. 481-2. Emphasis added.
50. G. Lichtheim, "Oriental Despotism", in his The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 73.
51. Naqvi, "Marx on Pre-British Indian Society and Economy", pp. 407 and 409.
52. Ibid., p. 411.
53. Cited in P. Corrigan, H. Ramsay and D. Sayer, "The State as a Relation of Production", in P. Corrigan, ed., Capitalism, State Formation and Marxist Theory (London: Quartet Books, 1980), p. 6.
54. Campbell, Modern India., p. 76.
55. Ibid., p. 107. Emphases added.
56. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, part 3, pp. 422-3; and Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 127.
57. Melotti, op. cit., p. 48; Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution, vol. 1, pp. 534-5; and Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 493 and 495.
58. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 463. Emphases added.
59. S. H. Baron, "Marx's Grundrisse and the Asiatic Mode of Production", Survey, 21 (1975), p. 142.
60. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 486-7 and 493.
61. Quaini, Geography and Marxism, p. 87.
62. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 486.
63. Ibid., pp. 493-4. Emphases added.
64. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 68-9. Emphases added.
65. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, n.1, p. 82; and The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 101.
66. Marx, Early Writings, p. 90. Emphases in original.
67. Ibid., p. 89. Emphases added.
68. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 222.
69. C. Levitt, "Karl Marx on Law, State and Collectivity", Catalyst, 12

- (1978), p. 13.
70. Cited in Ibid., p. 14. Emphases added.
 71. Krader, The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx, p. 19.
 72. This is based on two statements of Marx: "The struggle of class against class is a political struggle", and "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another". See Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, p. 173; and Marx and Engels, The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 352.
 73. Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, pp. 61 and 174. Emphases added.
 74. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 488.
 75. Therborn, op. cit., p. 394.
 76. Marx and Engels, The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 335.
 77. Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 395.
 78. Marx, Early Writings, p. 91.
 79. See Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 106. Here Marx says: "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class". See also Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, p. 82.
 80. N. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes (London: Verso, 1978), p. 104. Emphases in original.
 81. See, for instance, Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, p. 199; and Sawyer, op. cit., p. 47.
 82. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 62.
 83. Marx, Capital., vol. 1, p. 334.
 84. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 486 and 493.
 85. Ibid., pp. 467, 474 and 477.
 86. Ibid., p. 494. Emphases added.
 87. Ibid., p. 474.
 88. Ibid., p. 495.

89. Ibid., pp. 475-6 and 494.
90. Cf. ibid., p. 473.
91. See Melotti, op. cit., p. 66; and Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 68-9.
92. H. Draper, "The Death of the State in Marx and Engels", in R. Miliband and J. Saville, eds., The Socialist Register 1970 (London: The Merlin Press, 1970), p. 306.
93. Gellner, "Soviets Against Wittfogel; Or, The Anthropological Preconditons of Mature Marxism", p. 359. Emphasis in original.
94. Ibid., p. 350. Emphases in original.
95. For details, see chap. 2, pp. 115-6.
96. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, n.2, p. 514.
97. Currie, "The Asiatic Mode of Production: Problems of Conceptualizing State and Economy", p. 259. Emphasis in original.
98. Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., pp. 198-9.
99. Ibid., p. 207.
100. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 471. Emphases added.
101. See chap. 6, p. 336-7.
102. Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, pp. 20-1. Emphases added.
103. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 358. This was actually what he said in "The British Rule in India" (1853). See his On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 89-90.
104. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, p. 37.
105. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, pp. 93 and 133. Emphasis in original.
106. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 476.
107. Gellner, op. cit., p. 351. Emphasis in original.
108. L. Krader, Formation of the State (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 45.

109. Hindess and Hirst, op. cit., p. 199. Emphases in original.
110. Gellner, op. cit., pp. 356 and 361-2.
111. See Marx and Engels, The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 386; and their Selected Correspondence, pp. 411-2.
112. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 476.
113. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 791.
114. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 477. Emphases added.
115. Anderson, op. cit., p. 490. Emphases added.
116. Blum, "The Internal Structure and Polity of the European Village Community from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century", p. 562.
117. Ibid., p. 545. Emphases added.
118. Ibid., pp. 545-7.
119. Hilton, "A Crisis of Feudalism", pp. 9-10. Emphases added.
120. Marx, Economy, Class and Social Revolution, p. 93.
121. Marx, Theories of Surplus Value, part 3, p. 422; and his letter of April 2, 1858 to Engels, in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 127.
122. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 409-10.
123. Sawyer, op. cit., p. 107.
124. Marx, Capital., vol. 1, p. 513.
125. Anderson, op. cit., p. 494.
126. Gellner, op. cit., p. 349.
127. Marx, On Colonialism & Modernization, p. 133.
128. See M. J. Akbar, India: The Siege Within (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 18.
129. Marx and Engels, The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 386. See also Marx's letter to V. I. Zasluch of 8 March, 1881, in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 411-2.
130. Said, op. cit., p. 7.

CHAPTER NINE

ORIENTAL DESPOTISM OF THE CLASSLESS STATE: AN EMPIRICAL CRITIQUE

I. Introduction

Since in this form (i.e. 'Asiatic' variety of primitive social formation - BB) the individual never becomes a proprietor but only a possessor, he is at bottom himself the property, the slave of him in whom the unity of the commune exists, and slavery here neither suspends the conditions of labour nor modifies the essential relation. ... Where (as in ancient Rome - BB) there is already a separation between the commune members as private proprietors (on one side,) and they themselves as the urban commune and proprietors of the commune's territorium (on the other), there the conditions already arise in which the individual can lose his property, i.e. the double relation which makes him both an equal citizen, a member of the community, and a proprietor. In the oriental form this loss is hardly possible, except by means of altogether external influences, since the individual member of the commune never enters in relation of freedom towards it in which he could lose his (objective, economic) bond with it. He is rooted to the spot, ingrown.¹

The concepts of classes, class relations and class struggles are "central to everything which Marx wrote."² In perfect consonance with this, it has been observed that the Marxist concept of state implies above all "the concentration of the class relationships of a given territory in a special organization" or that the "state power is a concentration of class power."³ In illustration of the determination of the political by the economic base, Marx, in the Preface to his The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, states this: "I show how ... the class struggle created circumstances and conditions which allowed a

mediocre and grotesque individual to play the hero's role."⁴

All these, however, have one generalized exception insofar as they do not apply to the "Asiatic" or "Oriental" social formations. In Marx's scheme the AMP is not characterized by class stratification, but by primitive communism.⁵ As shown elsewhere, not only did the state in the Orient arise in spite of the antagonistic social classes, but it prevented their very formation as well by virtue of its unique monopoly of ownership over all lands within its jurisdiction. In sharp contrast to this it was precisely the prior existence of social classes and the antagonisms between them that led to the origin and development of the state in the Occident.⁶ What is at stake here is the empirical validity of the (non) class and political components of the AMP insofar as it concerns India - an empirical validity that is an integral component of Marx's own methodology and theory:

Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are; i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.⁷

In light of this clear requisite the main objective of this chapter is to test the empirical validity of the AMP inasmuch as it asserts, among other things, the absence of social classes and the existence of a class-transcending despotic state in the pre-Muslim Indian social formation.

II. Formation and Development of Social Classes

The division of labour inside a nation leads at first to the separation of industrial and commercial from agricultural labour, and hence to the separation of town and country and to the conflict of their interests. Its further development leads to the separation of commercial from industrial labour. At the same time through the division of labour inside these various branches there develop various divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour. ... The antagonism between town and country can only exist within the framework of private property. ... The separation of town and country can also be understood as the separation of capital and landed property, as the beginning of the existence and development of capital independent of landed property - the beginning of property having its basis only in labour and exchange.⁸

The extent to which the social division of labour expanded and advanced in India's first urban civilization in the Indus cities strongly repudiates the simple division of labour thesis contained in the theory of the AMP. For the same reason, the complexity of the class structure existing in the prime Indus cities is strongly suggestive of the empirical invalidity of the AMP, which is characterized by the absence of any class stratification. Even though the current archaeological evidence is still inadequate, the evidence against the existence of the AMP in the overall context of the Indus social formation is overwhelming.

To begin with, Indus urbanism is characterized by a clear differentiation of the social division of labour into agriculture, industry, and commerce - a differentiation that is absent in the AMP. The existence and survival of Indus cities and towns (2500/2300 B.C. - 1500/1750 B.C.) presupposes the existence of a nexus of supporting villages that produced adequate agrarian surplus which, was able to

support the urban residents, such as the priests, and/or officials, merchants, artisans, and others. This would also imply the existence of a concomitant class stratification - that between a class of appropriators or non-labourers who appropriate and consume the social surplus, on the one hand, and a class of direct producers who produce such surplus, on the other. Put differently, the Indus social formation was an exploitative, rather than a communistic, social formation resting prima facie on the class division between the rulers and the ruled.⁹ Even if we ignore this simple dichotomy the class structure in the Indus social formation is complex nevertheless. This follows from the wide diversity of professions and occupations that were pursued throughout the vast expanse of the Indus, and which in fact contributed to the survival of the carefully planned Indus cities and towns for at least six successive centuries.¹⁰ Thus, a glance at the archaeological finds from the city of Mohenjo-daro alone "will suffice to recognize the presence of specialized groups of potters, copper- and bronze workers, stone workers, builders, brick-makers, seal-cutters, bead-makers, faience-workers and so on; while that of scribes and priests, administrators, traders and caravan leaders, farmers, and such menial groups as sweepers is implicit."¹¹

The existence of the economic inequality is corroborated by the presence of considerable variation in the sizes of the dwellings, "which range from single-roomed tenements to houses with courtyards and upward of a dozen rooms of varying sizes, to great houses with several dozen rooms and several courtyards. Nearly all the larger houses had private

wells."¹² The existence of barrack-like groups of two-roomed tenement houses, which perhaps constituted the workers' quarters or coolie lines, suggests the possibility of the existence of servile and semi-servile labour.¹³ What, however, directly questions the empirical validity of the AMP is the presence in the Indus of "a considerable merchant class" or "a substantial middle class financed from trade and industry."¹⁴ It has been argued in chapter 7 that this class owed its existence to the prevalence of extensive external and particularly internal trade as the most important integral component of the market economy of the Indus. If both the cities and the villages shared the same artifacts as a whole, as has been argued, it was possibly because of the trading activities of the merchants.¹⁵ In the context of the external trade between the peoples of the Indus, Dilmun and Mesopotamia, Ratnagar suggests that the trading expeditions were either sponsored by the state or undertaken by individual merchants. Further, it was possible that the state itself might have reserved its right to trade in certain commodities, leaving others in the hands of the private merchants.¹⁶

Compared with the Indus social formation, the Vedic social formation (c.1500 B.C.-600 B.C.) was basically rural in character. If the former was characterized by a class division or a complex class structure the latter, particularly the early Vedic social formation (c.1500 B.C. - c.1000 B.C.), remained essentially communal in the sense that class formations on the basis of individual ownership or non-ownership of land were yet to become marked and dominant. While references to fights over cows are numerous, those over lands are less

frequent in the early Vedic social formation. But they existed nevertheless. Such terms as urvarā-jit, urvara-sā, kṣtra-sāt, etc. signify beyond doubt that arable lands were bones of contention in wars among the Vedic people of both Aryans and indigeneous tribal groups. For the same reason they confirm the emergence of private property in land. It was at this time that terms distinguishing mine from thine also came into existence.¹⁷ But this should not be taken to mean that the early Vedic social formation was divided between the class of those who owned land as the main means of production and those who were altogether excluded there from. One important reason that such class differentiation had not become dominant, was due to the fact that the social formation was till then not completely based on settled agricultural life. Again, despite the emergence of the private ownership of land, the desire (animus) to own immovables was yet to become a dominant ideology. Sharma explains:

Possibly the Rg Vedic Aryans lived in fortified villages, the identity of which has proved illusive. But the terms sadma and dama used for house indicate that it was treated as property. Both wife and husband came to be regarded as the master of the house or dama, and hence they came to be called dampati. That the Indo-Europeans lived in houses is evident from the corresponding words for dama in their languages. However no desire is expressed in the Rg Veda for obtaining houses, which shows that sedentary life was not still very strong. In contrast to it in the post-Vedic period we have a large body of literature called the Grha-sūtras, dealing with domestic rites, which presuppose permanent houses. Similarly priests rarely pray for obtaining lands from the gods in the early Vedic period, although conquests of fields (kṣetra) and fertile lands are mentioned.¹⁸

In addition, the Rig Veda does not have any word for wages, wage earners, or beggars.¹⁹ This points up still further the lack of any

clear-cut class differentiation in the early Vedic times.

The process of formation of antagonistic classes and, accordingly, of the state systems was consolidated in the later Vedic period (c.1000 B.C.- c.600 B.C.). Of course, this presupposed the prior establishment of settled agriculture and a full-fledged agrarian social formation which produced the necessary agrarian surplus that would support the non-producing ruling class of priests and princes. The later Vedic texts as well as archaeological evidence (i.e. painted grey ware finds and the use of iron) point out that the peasants now produced more than they consumed, so that the later Vedic economy was more than a 'subsistence economy'.²⁰ For one thing, a few developments affected especially the property relations in respect of agrarian land, the main means of production. The source materials confirm the growth of private property and, hence, of the landed class.²¹ The social formation thus contained a segment of independent producers who cultivated the land they owned. Towards the end of this period donations of wealth including houses and fields became frequent.²² Fields became an index of one's wealth, suggesting thereby the existence of large landed possessions and, accordingly, of landlords who got their fields cultivated by a class of servile labourers (e.g. Śūdras), or by peasant producers (e.g. Vaiśyas) whose position as owners might have deteriorated to that of tenants. In addition, conquest might have created landownership and/or lordship over conquered territories or villages.²³ This last aspect of class formation may be put in the words of Rai:

While wars provided opportunity for the emergence of tribal chiefs over and above the commoners (i.e. the Viś or Vaiśyas - BB), they also brought cattle and land which were bound to aggravate economic and social inequalities. As the communal proprietary right had been displaced by the emergence of smaller social units such as families, the tribal chiefs and their relations formed a separate class of nobles enjoying the lordship of the villages which were inhabited by all sections of the people. As there is no reference to the nobles being agriculturists themselves it may be surmised from the epithets 'grāma-kāma' or 'desirous of a village' that the nobility received tributes from the villages which were inhabited by commoners (Viś) who were the actual cultivators. The village lordship enjoyed by the nobles tended to reduce the members of the Viś to the position of tenants, which is confirmed by the ... Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.²⁴

At the other end of the scale were the Sūdras and Vaiśyas who provided the bulk, if not all, of servile labour. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa considers the Sūdra 'the servant of another', 'to be expelled at will', and 'to be slain at pleasure'. The Vaiśyas is treated as 'tributary to another', 'to be lived on by another' and 'to be oppressed at will'.

The Panchavin-śa Brāhmaṇa and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa proclaim the subservience of the peasants, mainly belonging to the Vaiśya varṇa, to the landed and/or ruling nobility. The peasants are described as "food" for the nobility.²⁵

Another class that made its appearance in the wake of the continuing social division of labour and specialization of functions was that of the merchants. They served the social function of linking the producers - industrial or agrarian - to the consumers in different parts of the social formation.²⁶ In the Atharva-Veda

the early merchant was an adventurous wanderer, who, moving from place to place, risked not only his goods, but his life also, for the sake of gain. He had to travel from one part of the country to another. His life was often jeopardized

owing to the depredations of wild beasts on the way, and owing to the presence of the robbers who scrupled not to take the life of such people. Consequently, before starting, the merchant prayed to Indra, the merchant 'par excellence', so that he might be his 'guide and leader, chasing ill-will, wild beasts and high way robbers'. After his prayer for security he is described as turning to Agni and praying for 'a hundred treasures' and craving pardon for 'this stubbornness'. He is then made to speak of 'the distant pathway which his feet have trodden', and to call upon the gods to be propitious to him in order that there may be success in 'sale (Vikraya), barter (Prapana) and exchange of merchandise (Pratipana)' that his invested capital (Dhanam) may grow more for him and his ventures may be prosperous.²⁷

But, as I said in chapter 7, the presence of the merchants does not automatically imply that they were a dominant class in the Vedic social formation which was basically agrarian, rather than industrial in character.²⁸ However, from 600 B.C. they became dominant, since the Indian social formation became a social formation fundamentally based upon the differentiation between social classes. It was also from about this time that one can witness both the formation and the subsequent maturation and development of state systems throughout India. Since more will be said about this later, let me now turn to a discussion of the major social classes in the period between c.600 B.C. and c.1206 A.D.

Landed Proprietors

In this class category I include all those who owned and controlled land and its uses, but exclude those, particularly peasants, who were merely possessors of land. The former cannot be accounted for in the AMP, whereas the latter is implicit in it. Further, the concept of class fraction may be utilized in the depiction of the landed class.

By the term class fractions, we will refer only to those divisions within a class which are rooted in the differential position occupied by certain of its sections within the relations of production. Examples of such layers are: the upper aristocracy and the gentry within the feudal hierarchy; sections of capital differentiated with respect to their level of concentration (big, or monopoly, small or competitive); strata exhibiting various degrees of dependence upon imperialist monopoly (comprador and national bourgeoisie); different kinds of capital (mercantile, industrial, financial).²⁹

Thus, in the Indian context the different fractions of the landed class would include, for instance, (a) self-sufficient peasants who cultivated their own lands, (b) larger landowners who had their lands cultivated either fully or in part by others, and (c) (feudal) landlords who succeeded in combining privileges and immunities of both landownership and political power.

The formation and increasing prominence of the independent peasant proprietors as a distinct social class is particularly characteristic of the Indian social formation during the time of the Buddha and the Mauryas (c.600 B.C.-200 B.C.). Their presence is attested in the literary sources as gahapati or grihapati. Though literally, a 'lord of the house', the term in the Buddhist times generally came to mean

the head of a large patriarchal household of any caste who commanded respect primarily because of his wealth, whether gained by trade, manufacture, or farming; but no longer wealth measured simply in cattle. The gahapati, as the executive member of the new propertied class, could do what he liked with the riches at his disposal, though obliged to support members of the household and bound by the inheritance laws of his kinship group; but he was no longer bound by tribal regulations.³⁰

While gahapati signified a person of wealth or property most of them seem to have been peasant proprietors, along with the kutumbikas (i.e. well-to-do peasants). The ideal economic holding sufficient to support a family, according to Baudhayana, was one that measured six nivartanas or six modern bighas of fallow land.³¹ In Kautilya's Arthaśāstra, a normal grhapati "whose means of livelihood was not 'depleted' (vrttikṣī-nah) appears to have been a prosperous landowning cultivator."³²

Inscriptional evidence also attests to the existence of peasant proprietors. Thus, in one instance the fields that were owned by the cultivators themselves were described as Kautamba-Ksetras. Such evidence for differentiation of an owner cultivator (satka) from one (prakṛsta or krṣt) who is merely a tiller of land also exists.³³ In South India the cultivator's and landlord's rights corresponded to rights of kārānmai and mīyakāṭci (or mīyāṭci) respectively. Since the landowner himself could be a cultivator, he was separated from the occupant cultivator sometimes called Kīl. -Kārānmai-udaiya-kudigal, i.e. the occupants with subordinate cultivation rights.³⁴ In any case, not all peasant proprietors were wealthy or gahapatis and kutumbikas. Source materials indicate that there were petty landowners who found it difficult to make both ends meet.³⁵ Thus, "we read of a Brāhmaṇa who goes along with his son to the field and ploughs it, whilst the boy collects the weeds and burns them; another Brāhmaṇa unyokes his oxen after ploughing and begins to work upon his land with a spade. The poor Brāhmaṇa farmer of the Somadatta Jātaka who ploughs with two oxen complains, as one of his oxen is dead, that he cannot any more drive his

plough."³⁶

Above the self-sufficient peasant proprietors stood the fractions of landed nobility and large landowners. The presence of landed nobility can be traced in the tribal republics of the Lichchhavis, the Koliyas, the Sākyas, the Mallas, the Bhaggas, and others. Here, the land was owned by the families that comprised not only the given tribe but also the (political) ruling class of the state. The land was tilled on their behalf by slaves and hired labourers.³⁷ A specific example is the case of the republican state of Vaiśāli which had a population of about 168,000. The number of rājans, who owned large landed estates, was about 7,707. All state officials were recruited from this landed nobility of the rājans.³⁸ The same Buddhist source materials attest also to the existence of larger landowners who had their lands cultivated "by their slaves or by day-labourers."³⁹ In addition to what has been stated in chapter 4, let me provide a few illustrations of this class fraction.

In the Uvāsagdasāo, we find Ānanda limiting his land under cultivation to five hundred ploughshares. ... The Mahāvagga refers to Mendaka, the gahapati (householder) of Bhaddiyanagara, owning an immense granary, servants and slaves. He could advance six months wages at a time, gave command to his slaves and servants to load huge quantities of salt, oil and rice, and kept at his disposal 1250 cow-keepers and cows. But as he himself lived in Bhaddiyanagara, he could have only a remote control over his land. ... Another Jātaka story refers to the two sons of a landed proprietor who wanted to arrange the business after the death of their father. This necessitated their visit to a village where they were paid a thousand pieces of money. Such references point to the well-established institution of absentee landlordism. ... The Sālikedāra-Jātaka informs us about a Brāhmana, named Kosiyagotta, a resident of Sālinḍiya near Rājagaha. Kosiyagotta ... held an estate of one thousand acres, where he grew rice. He had given to his own

men the charge of about five hundred acres of his landed estate. For the other five hundred, he had hired a man for a wage to look after the land, living in a hut nearby. ... In the Satapatta Jātaka, we find a landowner giving a thousand pieces of money on loan to some one.⁴⁰

In the Arthasāstra one also comes across big landholders who got their estates cultivated either directly by wage labourers (Karmakaras) or by slaves (dāsas).⁴¹ In the case of the Cōlas (c.850 A.D.-1280 A.D.) in south India, a recent analyst attests to this: "Many landowners had grown rich (whether by official service or plunder or farming) and bought land either to cultivate themselves or to lease out. Whatever the earlier restrictions on sales had been - pre-emption rights of other villagers, a general ban on sales (though there is no evidence for this), or merely lack of buyers - they had broken down. With the growth of prosperity, the buyers came from various occupations - weavers, toddy palm tappers merchants, and others".⁴²

The formation and consolidation of the landed class gathered unprecedented momentum with the rise of the process of feudalization of the state apparatus, particularly from the time of the Guptas (c.320 A.D.- c. 550 A.D.). A historically specific feature of the feudal landed class is that members of this class simultaneously exercised political power in their estates, just as the kings exercised political power in their kingdoms.⁴³ As Marx stated, "in feudal landed property the lord at least appears as the king of the estate". The lord's relation to those working in his estate, including those called serfs, is "directly political."⁴⁴ In early medieval India (c.550 A.D.- c.1206 A.D.), similarly, land became the dominant source of power and status,

so much so that the description of the Indians mainly in terms of their varna particularities would be erroneous.⁴⁵

It was an age when landed property acquired special significance. The social status of the expanding landed aristocracy, which could not be confined to one particular varna or even to the first two upper varnas, clearly shows that the ascriptive lines of the fourfold varna system, connected with different social, economic, religious and legal privileges and disabilities, began to be cut across when landed property, along with the sāmanta relations, emerged in this age as the most tangible basis for the differentiation of social and political status.⁴⁶

The complex of feudal developments included, among other things, an increasing number of landgrants and sub-infeudation, the emergence of localized centres of administration based on the control and possession of land, the fragmentation of political authority, and the lord-vassal hierarchical relationships. In this context a noteworthy development is the emergence of the Brāhmanas as secular functionaries of the feudal state apparatus. A segment of this varna "began to function as secular chiefs and became involved in a sort of vassalage, so characteristic of the age. In a number of Gāhadavāla, Candella and Cedi inscriptions the Brāhmaṇa donees are known as thakkura which was a feudal title borne chiefly by the Kṣatriyas. The other feudal title rāuta (prakrit form of rājaputra) is also mentioned along with the names of the Brāhmaṇa donees in the records of these dynasties. In some inscriptions the title rāuta is applied to the son, and the father and the grandfather are called thakkura."⁴⁷ Another related development is that agricultural occupation no longer remained confined to the Vaiśyas, as it had been scripturally prescribed earlier. In the feudal period "it was sanctioned unreservedly for the Brāhmanas also, which was partly with a

view to providing means of livelihood to the poor Brāhmanas, but mainly for the benefit of the landholding priestly aristocracy. Some went to the extent of regarding agriculture as the sāmānya-dharma of all the varnas."48

In any event the feudal landed aristocracy, exhibiting its distinctive character, status symbols, ethics, and styles of life on the one hand and wielding power and authority on the other, was not a homogeneous class. Rather, it contained many hierarchical gradations, at the top of which stood of course the upper echelons of the sāmanta hierarchy. In chapter 5, I showed that at the top of the sāmanta hierarchy stood the great territorial lords or rulers of principalities who owed nominal allegiance to the king(s) as the feudal sovereign(s).49 Both of them created a chain-like intermediary (feudal) class by means of endowing them not only with grants of land but also with sovereign powers to be exercised over such land. An example of the extent of such privileges and immunities of both landownership and state power, as conferred by the Candella King Paramardin (1166 A.D.-1203 A.D.) upon certain Brāhmanas, has been provided in chapter 5.50 Although the actual extent of their powers, privileges and immunities varied from one land charter to another,51 there is sufficient indication that the general position of the landed beneficiaries was quite comparable to that of their counterparts in Europe.

An important factor which gave the beneficiaries general control over the means of production was the conferment of seigniorial rights on them. The charters authorized the beneficiaries to punish people guilty of ten offences, including those against family, property, person, and so on,

and to try civil cases. Further, royal officers were not allowed to enter their territory and cause any kind of obstruction in their functioning. All these are as good as manorial rights, and might even enable the beneficiary to force the peasant to work in his field. It would appear that the right to try cases on the spot involving the imposition of fines could seriously interfere with the process of production. It is therefore obvious that the political and judicial rights, which were non-economic rights, helped the beneficiaries to carry out effectively the economic exploitation of the peasants living in his estate. ... It may further be noted that in many cases the beneficiary was empowered to adopt all measures to enjoy the village, and the term used for this sarvopaya-samyuktam. He was also authorized to enjoy the fruits according to his sweet will. If we carefully examine the phrase sambhogya yavadichcha Kriyaphalam it would mean that the donee could even intervene in the process of production. If a person is entitled to the enjoyment of the fruits of the process of production according to his discretion, he may develop a natural tendency to control the process (Kriya) itself on which the nature and the amount of yield depend. Sometimes, whatever belonged to the village (svasambhoga sametah) was to be enjoyed by the beneficiary. The beneficiary was also granted the village along with all its products (sarvotpattisahitah).⁵²

The ten offences alluded to in the above passage are in all probability identical with the ten sins enumerated in the Sukranītisāra and in the Ashtāṅgahridaya of Vāgbhata. They are: murder, theft, adultery, slander, harsh language, lying, divulgence of secrets, evil design, atheism, and perverseness.⁵³ The wide ranging political and juridical autonomy enjoyed by the Indian feudal lords of the land invalidates Marx's objection to calling India feudal on the ground of the alleged absence of patrimonial jurisdiction in India. However, I should point out that, when he raised this objection, Marx had in mind the state of affairs in Mughal India.⁵⁴ Then again, the distinction between ancient and medieval or, for that matter, Hindu India and Muslim India is of little significance to Marx, for whom the AMP characterized India's only

mode of production from time immemorial to the rise of British colonialism in the 1750s.

The bedrock of Indian feudalism, argues Yadava, consisted of local landholders in individual villages or groups of villages. They emerged "either through the system of religious and secular landgrants not different in essence from fiefs or as a result of the rise of chiefs and village lords holding their estates outright rather than through landgrants but often getting subsumed under the Sāmanta system."⁵⁵ The extension of the chain of landed aristocracy to the village level was clearly reflected in the commentary on the Brhatsamhita by Bhaṭṭotpāla, who wrote in the 10th century A.D. He draws attention to

the rural magnates who were lords of villages held more or less as their estates. Such magnates are represented as enjoying the rural folk (lokan), obviously by extracting dues and services from them on account of their superior position which enabled them to dominate over the people (janan). This evidence suggests that the terms jana and loka connote in this context both the dependent and non-dependent rural folk. The reference to their enjoyment by the landlords indicates that even the non-dependent people began to fall under the control of the village lords, which, however, must have been lesser in degree than that to which the humble folk were subjected. These village lords, ... belonged to the rural landed aristocracy and constituted the lowest subordinate level of the samanta hierarchy.⁵⁶

Furthermore, these rural magnates (bhogins), according to Bhaṭṭotpāla, enjoyed the villages (bhogas) as their own estates. On the one hand, they acted as though they were the kings (nrpatulya) within their estates. On the other, they themselves had to pay tributes to the king as a sort of liege lord.⁵⁷ Finally, I should point out that during the early medieval period, coinciding with the consolidation and decline of

the feudal mode, it was particularly the temples and religious establishments on the one hand, and the Brāhmanas on the other, that emerged as notable landed intermediaries. In this regard the landgrants, together with their fiscal and political privileges and immunities, actually exacerbated the economic bondage of the peasants more than ever before. This was especially true of early medieval south (c.700 A.D.-1300 A.D.).⁵⁸

Unfree and Free Labour

The polar opposite of the landed class was the class comprising both unfree and free labour. The category of unfree labor consisted of persons in varying degrees of servitude, of which three types may be dealt with here. They are slavery, serfdom and forced labour.

Generally speaking, the role of slavery in the ancient and medieval period has been subject to contradictory evaluation. Thapar states that "what was immutable in Indian society was not freedom or slavery, but caste."⁵⁹ In contrast, Dange recognizes the distinct importance of slavery till about the rise and growth of Buddhism. However, he considers that Indian slavery was mainly 'domestic slavery'. The dominant form of production in India was not like that in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, where agricultural production was carried on by gangs of slaves on large-scale farms owned by slave-owners.⁶⁰ Chanana recognizes the employment of slavery in domestic service, agriculture and even the army in India. But this does not mean that slavery in India resembles "slavery in Greece or Rome of the classical period, where slaves furnished the predominant part of labour in certain

branches of production, such as agriculture, mines etc., and where they have been employed in liberal professions and also as artisans".⁶¹

Here, what is to be noted is the fact that slavery did not completely dominate Graeco-Roman social formations before the rise of feudalism. A recent analyst, Geoffrey De Ste. Croix, has this to say in corroboration:

In modern times some Marxists, knowing that Marx and Engels consistently regarded the Greek and Roman world as a 'slave society', have thought it necessary to maintain that in that world most of the actual production was done by slaves. But this opinion is demonstrably false: the greater part of production, especially in agriculture (by far the most important sector of the ancient economy), was done by peasants who were at least nominally free, even if, from the early fourth century of the Christian era onwards, more and more of them were brought into forms of serfdom; and much manufacture also was always done by free workers (my emphasis - BB). ... In at least the most developed parts of the Greek and Roman world, while (as I have said) it was free peasants and craftsmen who were responsible for the bulk of production, the propertied classes obtained the great bulk of their regular surplus from labour which was unfree. The propertied classes, in my terminology, are those who can, if they wish, live without actually working for their daily livelihood: they may work or not, but they do not have to.⁶²

Elsewhere, he argues: "In my opinion, the combined production of free peasants and artisans must have exceeded that of unfree agricultural and industrial producers in most places at all times, at any rate until the fourth century of the Christian era, when forms of serfdom became general in the Roman empire."⁶³ The analysis of De Ste. Croix draws upon Marx's own. Although Marx refers to 'slavery' and 'serfdom' as forming 'the broad foundation' of social production in European antiquity and Middle Ages, he regarded their modes of production as

ancient and feudal in his schema of the stages of social development.⁶⁴ The predominant basis of production in European classical antiquity and feudalism almost invariably rested on small-scale agriculture and manufacture. Thus Marx says: "Peasant agriculture on a small scale, and the carrying on of independent handicrafts, which together form the basis of the feudal mode of production, and after the dissolution of that system, continue side by side with the capitalist mode, also form the economic foundation of the classical communities at their best, after the primitive form of ownership of land in common had disappeared, and before slavery had seized on production in earnest."⁶⁵

In light of the above discussion, let me point out a few aspects of Indian slavery inasmuch as slaves continued to exist as a class, whose surplus labour, whether in agricultural or industrial production, continued to be extracted by the other class(es) and its fractions, e.g. rulers, priests, and merchants. First, the Indian words for male and female slaves are dāsa and dāsi respectively. Legally speaking, from the Vedic to the Mauryan period (c.1500 B.C.- c.185 B.C.), the slave was considered legally the property of his master. Implicit in this is the fact that the slave was completely under the control of his master.⁶⁶ The Buddhist source materials define slavery in its most accentuated form, a form that resembles slavery in the classical West.

From the legal point of view, the slave is not a human being, but an object. Everything possessed by him, whether it be small or big, is the property of the person who owns him, as the slave (who - BB) 'neither possesses his own self, nor any goods; these latter belong to his master'. In fact, a commentator includes the dasas among movable goods like the livestock.⁶⁷

Second, the status of rightlessness changed roughly from about the end of the Mauryan period onwards. The slave then gradually acquired certain rights, and this is corroborated by the Smritis of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada and Brhaspati. For example, Manu argues that a slave who is guilty of certain faults may be beaten only on the back part of his body; if his master strikes him otherwise, the master becomes guilty of the crime of theft.⁶⁸ Kautilya, Yājñavalkya, and Kātyāyana appear to give the slaves varying degrees of right to acquire property.⁶⁹ Third, it appears therefore that slavery developed in its most accentuated form particularly in the Buddhist age (c.600 B.C.-322 B.C.), which witnessed significant urban and commercial developments in the middle Gangetic region. While slavery was in vogue in both monarchical and republican forms of the newly-arisen states, it was, however, in the latter that there was the clearest division between the oligarchic nobility, who owned all land within the state, and the slaves who, along with the hired labourers (kammakaras), tilled that land.⁷⁰ It is to be noted that it was not only the big landowners but also the 'middle' peasants who employed slaves in agrarian production. Similarly, the merchants also engaged slaves in operations that yielded up profit to them. Moreover, the slaves were engaged in domestic work, enabling the richer householders to pursue different activities that would not have been otherwise possible.⁷¹

How intense and omnipresent slavery had become psychologically and otherwise can be indicated by the fact that both the nobility and the slaves rigidly distinguished manual labour from mental labour. Both

were also in agreement in their common dislike of manual work, although in reality it was the nobility who succeeded in escaping it. The consciousness of the slave about manual labour as an imposition was illustrated by the question that he asked in regard to why there was a difference between himself and his master: "Here is this king, Ajatasattu - he is a man, so am I. But he lives in the full employment of his senses whereas I, his slave, work for him, rise before him to carry out his orders."⁷² Kosambi apparently argues for the decline of slavery with the rise of the Mauryas (c. 322 B.C.). In contrast, Chanana suggests the exact opposite.⁷³ According to the latter, the political unification under the Mauryas facilitated commodity production and commerce which, in its turn, enabled merchants, bankers (setthis) and others to use slaves in agrarian as well as in non-agrarian sectors.

We know that the Setthis had interests both in the countryside and in towns. They owned land, sometimes entire villages - these latter being under the charge of their slaves or were given on lease to tenants. It is quite logical to think that this method of land-cultivation by means of slave labour became normal. Besides we know that this institution was not abolished under the Mauryans and that it continued to flourish. Therefore, debt-slavery, slavery due to famine, slavery due to war and that due to inheritance, etc. continued to exist although slavery due to raid was no longer tolerated. During the reign of Asoka, the war on Kalinga supplied thousands of soldiers and at least a part of them must have reached the Magadhan market.⁷⁴

That slavery continued to exist later as an integral component of the ancient and, to certain degree, also of the feudal Indian social formation is indicated by the fact that the kinds of slaves increased in number from about three or four to fifteen between the 6th century B.C. and the 6th century A.D.⁷⁵ Let me now pass on to the discussion of

serfdom in India.

In chapter 5 it was stated that it was the fief, rather than serfdom, that was most closely identified with feudalism, for feudalism stands for phenomena basically associated with the fief (feudum or feodum).⁷⁶ One might suggest that "serfs, who were not free and thus could not enter into the feudal contract, should therefore be excluded from consideration under the feudal rubric. To write 'feudal' is necessarily to think of an aristocracy."⁷⁷ Indeed, Neubauer argues that "Bloch did not consider the mass of serfs to be members of feudal society."⁷⁸ Bloch, however, spoke of "a subject peasantry."⁷⁹ The treatment of serfdom as the quidditas of feudalism is fallacious because, so contends Anderson, "the end of serfdom did not thereby mean the disappearance of feudal relations from the countryside. Identification of the two is a common error."⁸⁰ As a matter of fact, Marx can be cited to this effect. In the context of the genesis of the industrial capitalist in Capital (Vol. 1), Marx still mentions "the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode" apparently when serfdom had already disappeared, especially in England in the last part of the fourteenth century.⁸¹ In his article on "The Chartists" (1852), Marx spoke of the role of free traders in the eradication of "the last arrogant remnants of feudal society."⁸² Interestingly enough, when it came to considering whether or not India was feudal Marx insisted on using the criterion of the presence of serfdom as a component of feudalism.

At any rate, the complexity involved in their identification (i.e. feudalism/FMP and serfdom) may be highlighted from yet another point of view. In the words of Pierre Dockès:

If the presence of the social relation generally known, for the sake of simplicity, as serfdom - or, in other words, the presence of a particular type of exploitation of men and land - is taken as the defining characteristic, then it would seem that all the essentials were in place at the beginning of the Middle Ages, indeed, even earlier, in the late empire with the colonate. If, on the other hand, the accent is placed on the feudal system as a whole, with its hierarchy of persons and its abandonment of the Roman notion of property and Roman forms of government and religious ideology, then we must wait at least until the end of the eleventh century, if not until the end of the thirteenth and the crises of the fourteenth century. The problem is that serfdom was no longer the dominant relation of production when feudalism took hold at the superstructural level. ... If we must continue to speak of a feudal mode of production, therefore, it would seem that at the very least we need to recognize two such modes, the first (F.M.P.₁) being characterized by the prevalence of serfdom and the manorial system, whereas the second (F.M.P.₂) saw the emergence of a free peasantry (claiming rights over property, household and person), from which labour was extracted chiefly by way of banal seignior, or monopolies and feudal dues associated with political and judicial power, which often emerged in the wake of commutation of such old servitudes as corvées and natural rents. The economic formation of medieval society is characterized by the predominance first of one, then of the other, of these two types of social relations.⁸³

In light of the above one can understand why the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England, for instance, took over 900 years, i.e. from the 11th to the mid 19th century.⁸⁴

There remain still other problems. Serfdom, strictly speaking, is not historically specific to feudalism. As Engels in one of his last letters informed Marx, "it is certain that serfdom and bondage are not peculiarly (spezifisch) medieval-feudal form, we find them everywhere or nearly everywhere where conquerors have the land cultivated for them by

the old inhabitants."⁸⁵ Hill points out that "if feudalism is abolished with serfdom, then France in 1788 was not a feudal state; and there never has been a bourgeois revolution in the sense of a revolution which overthrew the feudal state."⁸⁶ Above all, there remains the problem of conceptualization. It has been stated that serfdom - glèbae adscripti - is characterized by labour being bound to the soil or earth.⁸⁷ At the opposite pole, Bloch points out in the French context that "bondage to the soil was in no sense characteristic of the serf; his distinguishing feature, on the contrary, was that he was so strictly dependent on another human being that wherever he went this tie followed him and clung to his descendants."⁸⁸ Critchley states that "a serf is dependent upon his lord, is obliged to work for him and is unable to leave him or the land. This condition may be the result of legislation, of conquest, of indebtedness, or, as most frequently in the modern world, of the uneven distribution of land."⁸⁹ Engels, in his letter of December 16, 1882 to Marx, speaks of "the degrees of servitude and serfdom" in the German context.⁹⁰ Bloch informs us that, because of the intervention by the strong centralized state and due to availability of the institution of 'frankpledge' (suretyship), "the English lord was much more successful than his continental neighbour in retaining his serfs and even his ordinary tenants on his estate."⁹¹ Finally, I refer to Hilton who regards serfdom as essentially an exploitative relationship - "the exploitative relationship between landowners and subordinate peasants, in which the surplus beyond subsistence of the latter, whether in direct labour or in rent in kind or in money, is transferred under coercive

sanction of the former."⁹² No less important is the fact that "fully fledged juridical serfdom, where the servile peasant was totally unfree in the eyes of the public law" was only the extreme pole of peasant dependence. At the other extreme stood the free peasant holding or allod. "In between was a considerable range of obligations reflecting dependence, the most important of which purported to restrict personal mobility, to restrict the free alienation of product or land, and to control inheritance."⁹³

In the background of the complexities of serfdom, as outlined above, the gradual development of the tendencies towards the rise of serfdom in India can be traced. In chapter 7 I drew attention to several dimensions of the social crisis, or rather of the social transition from the ancient to medieval period, that took place in the third and fourth centuries A.D. One dimension of this social transition was the refusal of the Vaiśyas and Śūdras to pay taxes to the ruling class consisting largely of the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas. This refusal necessitated alternative political arrangements. In this case it initiated the fragmentation of state power in the form of granting lands to religious and secular beneficiaries who were simultaneously vested with the rights, privileges and immunities of political authority. Implicit in this was the tightening up of danda, the coercive (state) power, at the local level, so much so that it was enough to help extract surplus from the recalcitrant Vaiśya and Śūdra peasants. Another dimension of the Kali Age, particularly in the wake of de-urbanization as well as the decline of commodity production and trade, was the

emergence of the Vaiśyas mainly as peasants. They now became increasingly bracketed with the Sūdras. The latter apparently gained in status because of their association with the Vaiśyas, one of the three twice-born varṇas (the other two being the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas). By the 11th century the Vaiśyas came to be treated legally and ritually as Sūdras.⁹⁴

Since the Sūdras constituted the bulk of the slaves (dāśas), they also gained inasmuch as slavery was in the process of decline or liberalization. The literary and legal sources following Manusmṛiti, which imposed greater disabilities and stricter bondage on the slaves, attest on the whole to the weakening of the process of slavery. The tendency against forcible enslavement is noticeable in the Śāntiparva of the Māhabhārata, and in the Yājñavalkyasmṛiti and Nāradaśmṛiti. Both Nārada and Brhaspati denounced the wretch who, although independent, sells himself as a slave.⁹⁵ Yājñavalkya declares that no one can be reduced to slavery without his permission. For the first time Nārada formulates detailed rules regarding the emancipation of the slaves.⁹⁶ In the wake of the rise of the Sāmanta (lord-vassal) hierarchy and feudal landed aristocracy, many of the erstwhile slaves entered into different degrees of protection and dependence on their feudal masters. In extreme cases they became transformed altogether into serfs bound to the soil or lord, or to both.⁹⁷ The general subjection and degradation of the peasantry, consisting of both Vaiśyas and Sūdras is clearly attested by Milindapañho, which shows that the peasantry had no voice in the vital affairs of the village and were regarded so inferior as to be

classified in the same category along with slaves, servants and hired labourers.⁹⁸

Let me highlight the different but relevant aspects of the subjection and dependence of the medieval Indian peasantry. First of all, it is needless to point out that in the circumstances in which different members of the sāmanta hierarchy and landed aristocracy made increasing, and often conflicting claims of greater rights over land, many of the peasants suffered varying degrees of curtailment of their own rights.

A number of them may have even been reduced to tenants, having a mere occupancy right or the right to only use the land. The free peasants may also have descended to a lower status on account of impoverishment caused by an increase in the size of the family, indebtedness, etc., or by adventitious factors such as extra-economic coercion, overtaxation, plunder in wars and famine. The grants of villages to the individuals and religious institutions, along with the inhabitants thereof, must have sometimes adversely affected the liberty and land rights of the peasants. Then again, many peasant proprietors may have either lost or surrendered their superior land rights to powerful individuals or chiefs, for it was an age when protection has become a serious problem, and the common maxim was: na hi kulāgatā kasyāpi bhūmih kintu virabhogyā vasundharā. Some sources indicate that the majority of the free peasants may have been only petty peasants.⁹⁹

The growth of the bondage of dependence of those freed of slavery is implicitly referred to in a verse of the smṛiti of both Nārada and Brhaspati. It states that "after manumission the freed man should be regarded as nourished or protected by the favour of his former master. This suggests that the masters often provided for the sustenance of their ex-slaves, which could easily have been done by making them dependent peasants and farm-hands."¹⁰⁰ The Ādi Purāna of Jinasena (in

the ninth century) asked the landlord cultivator to protect his dependent peasants - sharecroppers or temporary tenants - in the same manner as a ruler protects his subjects.¹⁰¹ The Yuktikalpataru of Bhoja in the 11th century stresses "the necessity of protecting or rather preserving the kṛṣīvalas (peasants) in every village on the ground that agriculture, the source of all wealth, depends upon their labour. This kind of attitude must have reinforced restrictions on the movement of the peasants and their subjection."¹⁰²

At a certain point in time, the relationship of dependence of the peasant on his local lord led to the development of the attachment of the former to the latter. It then became serfdom, if it could be defined in terms of the dependent peasant's attachment to his lord. The term dasakarmakara found in certain Buddhist texts and in the commentary of Bhaṭṭotpāla seems to have been used for a dependent worker attached to his master. The worker was technically neither a slave (dāsa) nor a servant (karmakara).¹⁰³ This relationship of dependence or rather of attachment to the lord is also attested by the commentary of Medhatithi (c. 900 A.D.) on Manusmṛiti. As Yadava summarizes:

It was created between a weak or poor man belonging to the śūdra varna and a master, when the former approached the latter and submitted to him with the following words: 'I shall reside here depending on you and placing myself under your protection. ... This is the work that I shall do under you either as my duty or for some other purpose, such as saving myself from being pressed for service at the royal palace and so forth'. The tangible object with which these people submitted to strong men was to gain means of livelihood and/or protection. But religious merit has also been mentioned as the intangible object for the śūdra. These dependent workers became thus attached to their masters and were under the obligation of residing near them.

In the Laghu-visnusmṛti it is obviously this kind of submission (ātma-nivedana) which is recommended as samskāra for the śūdra. We have other pieces of evidence relating to such contracts establishing ties of dependence between man and man, in which people other than the śūdras were also involved. Owing to political and economic insecurity during the early medieval period, this trend appears to have increased; sometimes the humble people may have been subjected to this state of dependence.¹⁰⁴

The tendency toward localizing the peasant for purpose of extracting surplus labour from him is also evident in terms of the growth of debt bondage. In ancient times the failure of the debtor to repay debt resulted in his slavery. In the early medieval period it resulted in debt-bondage, which was apparently not slavery. Thus Kātyāyana emphasized the desirability of making the Karsaka (petty peasants and ploughmen), among others, to repay their debts by manual labour. This was also true of Bharuci and Medhatithi. Furthermore, that debt-bondage was intensified may be inferred from the fact that rates of interest on loans in cash or kind became exorbitant.¹⁰⁵

The relevant epigraphic and literary sources refer as well to serfdom, when it is defined primarily as attachment of the dependent peasants (and artisans) to the soil. Indeed, it became "fairly common" by the 8th century.¹⁰⁶ Argues Sharma: "If serfdom is understood as compulsory attachment of the peasants to the soil, it prevailed in good parts of Madhya Pradesh, eastern India, Chamba and Rajasthan. In many cases the charters clearly transfer the peasants, artisans and even traders to the beneficiaries. In most charters they ask the villagers, the peasants and other inhabitants of the villages to stay in their villages and to carry out the orders of the beneficiaries. This fact of

immobility of peasants and artisans has not been contested by anybody so far."¹⁰⁷ This entire aspect of the rise and maturation of serfdom in early medieval India can be summarized in the words of Jha, who said the following in his Presidential Address (1979) in the section on ancient India:

Judging from the epigraphic material, the practice seems to have begun in south India where a third century Pallava grant for the first time speaks of four sharecroppers who remained attached to a plot of land which was given away to the brahmanas. Gradually the practice came to embrace independent peasants. Thus a sixth century grant from the Bijapur district of an early Chalukya King of Badami records a grant of land along with, among other things, nivesha (house), which apparently stands for cottages in which the peasants lived. In Orissa and central India the practice seems to have begun in about 6th century when it appeared also in Gujrat. Although the practice of transferring peasants along with land may have begun first in mountainous and backward regions to tide over the shortage of agricultural labour force, it seems to have been fairly common in several parts of India around the 8th century as may be gleaned from, repeated reference to it in a Chinese account of 732 A.D.. Some Indian literary texts also give the impression that the practice came into wide vogue in the second half of the first millennium. Although only the correlation of the literary testimony with epigraphic evidence will furnish a clear picture of the chronological and geographical limits of the practice, it seems to have continued in certain areas even after the first millennium A.D.. Several epigraphs from Karnataka and south India, for example, indicate that donations of land or village were often accompanied by transfer of peasants and artisans. Recent research has shown that even when there is lack of clear evidence of making the cultivators stick to the soil in specific cases of land transfer, the general tendency was to impose restriction on their personal freedom and mobility.¹⁰⁸

In the literary texts some noteworthy terms that signify the forcing of the dependent peasants to stick to the soil or to their work are pratibandhena yojitāh (i.e. tied down to the village grant), baddha-hālah (i.e. man attached to plough), and danda-tādanam (i.e.

beating with stick) and avarodhanam (i.e. confining) employed in connection with these "ploughmen and dependent peasants who leave the agricultural work on the lands of their masters and run away."¹⁰⁹ In the Upamitibhavaprapañcakathā, a text of the 10th century in which the feudal hierarchy is clearly indicated, the bondage of samsāra (i.e. the mundane existence) is likened to that of the estate of a chief or ruler. Some verses in this text suggest that "the miserable people living in the principality of a ruler were dependent upon him for their means of subsistence and only death could take them out of the closed set-up and liberate them from servitude."¹¹⁰ In an inscription dated 1173 A.D. serfdom is specifically mentioned: "Those who engage themselves in these services beyond the village will be considered to have transgressed the law, to have committed fault against the great assembly and to have ruined the village."¹¹¹ When the peasants and others on the granted pieces of land or in villages are specifically asked to listen to and obey the commands of the landed beneficiaries,¹¹² such instruction in and of itself was clearly legal and real enough to attach and subject the former to the latter in the locality concerned.

In the wake of increasing landgrants to religious and secular beneficiaries one factor which expedited the development of serfdom was the extension of the practice of visti or forced labour.¹¹³ Though the meaning of the word visti changed from time to time, from about the first century A.D. it came to mean generally 'involuntary unpaid labour' and, sometimes, 'forcibly recruited labourer'. It came to be practiced on a wide scale between the 2nd and 6th centuries A.D. By the 8th

century it became 'a India wide practice', and was not on the wane even in the 11th and 12th centuries.¹¹⁴ Sharma argues that

in no area and in no period does forced labour seemed to have been as extensive as it was in Gujrāt and Mahārāstra under the Prathihāras and the Rāstrakūtas. Surprisingly enough it prevailed precisely in the areas in which the donees were granted the right to cultivate the land, to get it cultivated, to enjoy it and to get it enjoyed.¹¹⁵

The practice of forced labour is not corroborated in the records of such feudal monarchies as those of the Paramāras, the Caulukyas, the Cāhamānas, the Gāhadavālas, and the Candellas. While this clearly indicates that the practice was on the wane in territories under those monarchies, it was certainly not extinct.¹¹⁶

How free the free labourers really were in ancient and early medieval India in view of the size and prevalence of slavery, serfdom and forced labour is a question that is yet to be answered. But there is little doubt that the presence of different servile classes (e.g. slaves, serfs, etc.) to a very significant extent in the pre-Muslim Indian social formation directly contradicts Marx's AMP. This is more so because the source materials at our disposal also permit us to trace the existence of another class, i.e. that of 'free' wage labourers. The Buddhist and Jain source materials refer abundantly to their employment by landlords and bigger peasants. For instance, the Mahāvagga refer to gahapati Mendaka as an employer of wage workers. In the Sālikedāra-Jātaka, Kosiyagotta is seen as employing a man for wages to look after five hundred acres of his landed estate. The Takkala-Jātaka mentions a person who sustained himself by working for wages in the fields.¹¹⁷

Similarly, elaborate rules concerning wage labour are found in the Arthasāstra and the Dharmaśāstras.¹¹⁸ An interesting example concerning the enforcement of wage contracts in Brhaspati is worthy of mention: "Should a hired servant fail in the performance of ever so small a part of his master's work, he forfeits his wages, and may be sued in court for his offence."¹¹⁹

Artisans, Merchants and Bankers

I have already indirectly mentioned the presence of artisans, merchants and bankers in the context of the rise, consolidation and decline of the urban market economy as an integral component of the Indian social economy from the time of Indus urbanism to that of the early medieval phase of feudalism. In this section I concentrate on evidence that bring out the complexity of the Indian class structure.

To start with, Marx does not question the empirical presence of the artisans or handicraftsmen in the village economy of India, and assigns to them a particular role based upon the exchange of their services with those of the peasants, thereby making the village economy a self-sufficient one. In my discussion in chapter 7 and here, I have shown that Marx's assessment is severely limited. It is also grossly misrepresentative of the Indian reality. There are several reasons for this. First of all, the existence of a very strong urban component in the Indian social economy, as shown in chapter 7, presupposes the existence of urban artisans. Indeed, the source materials such as the Jātakas, the Milindapañho, the dramatic works of Asvaghosa (Buddhacarita and Saurdarananda), the Kāmasūtra, and a host of other works, quite

frequently corroborated by inscriptional and archaeological evidence as well, clearly confirm the presence of urban artisans in the pre-Muslim Indian social formation.¹²⁰ The distinction between the rural and urban artisans figures in the work of Patanjali, who wrote in the middle of the second century B.C. He refers to five types of village artisans, popularly known as pañcakārūkī, which include the potter, the artificer or blacksmith, the carpenter, the barber, and the washerman.¹²¹ In the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana the reference to urban artisans is implicit in the sense that they are mentioned as possible friends of the nāgarka, the typical Indian urbanite, who himself is depicted as a great patron of multifarious arts and crafts.¹²² The Amarakośa, a work written around the 6th century A.D., mentions that some of the handicraftsmen lived in the cities, while (e.g. the potter, the blacksmith etc.) worked in both cities and villages.¹²³ When they did not live in the cities the handicraftsmen lived in what is variously called a tradesman's village, professional village, or industrial village. This was particularly true of the pre-Mauryan social economy (c.600 B.C.-320 B.C.).¹²⁴ In any case, this was not the traditional economically self-sufficient village, which Marx had in mind. The available source materials also repudiate Marx's simplistic view of the division of labour in India. The post-Mauryan text, Milindapañho lists as many as 75 occupations out of which about 60 were connected with different crafts. Another later text, the Kāmasūtra lists as many as 64 arts that give an idea of the crafts pursued in the cities and towns.¹²⁵ All in all, the division of labour that gradually unfolded in India was

certainly far more extensive and diversified than is allowed in the AMP. Again, Marx does not draw attention to the differential statuses enjoyed or claimed by groups of artisans. The Buddhist source materials, for instance, classify certain crafts (sippa) as high (e.g. counting coins (mudda), accounting (gaṇāna) and writing (lekhā)) and low (e.g. leather worker (cammakara), the reed-worker (nalakara), the potter (kumbhakara), the tailor (pesakara), and the barber (nahapita)).¹²⁶

Yadava suggests that four types of artisans and craftsmen existed in pre-Muslim India. They are "those of single villages who receive fixed wages in kind, those settled in separate villages of their own, those settled by kings, chiefs and religious institutions in their seats of authority, and lastly the independent artisans residing in definite areas of a city."¹²⁷ It appears that the first category, which comprised artisans exchanging their services for the surplus of the peasants, figures in the main in Marx's AMP. More importantly, the presence in India of independent artisans negates Marx's AMP. This is particularly true of the independent producer who worked in "his own shop and then sold his wares in the market."¹²⁸ Some inscriptions from south India, for instance, "classify the Kaikkōla weavers themselves as 'Kāsāya-vargattār pala paṭṭādiyār', that is, the merchant community."¹²⁹ Finally another aspect, which points to the independence and strength of the (urban) artisans but which negates Marx's simplistic portrayal of the Indian artisan only as rural artisan, concerns the rise of the guilds or corporate bodies from about 600 B.C.¹³⁰ The epigraphic evidence suggest that the artisan (and merchant) guilds became

particularly marked in the beginning of the Christian era, by which time almost all important handicraft industries came to be organized on the basis of the guilds.¹³¹

There is no better single invalidator of Marx's AMP in the Indian context than a strong body of merchants and/or bankers, whose presence in India is attested by a huge mass of data consisting of literary, inscriptional, and numismatic source materials. If "India has long been famous for its cities" it was the merchants "who sparked this urban development" in the first place. It was thus not without reason that Lamb, while speaking of the survival and achievements of the Indian merchants despite different adversities, argues that "by 600 B.C. Indian traders had scattered far and wide throughout India and abroad."¹³² Indeed, it was during this pre-Mauryan period that the mercantile and banking class had their first classical heyday in the Gangetic plane where India's second urbanism started. The market economy that characterized the Indian social formation at the time of the Buddha onwards contained not only big merchants and/or bankers but also small traders and peddlers.¹³³ In chapter 7 I have already drawn attention to the latter category of the petty bourgeoisie, the small traders and peddlers.¹³⁴ In contrast to them, there existed bigger merchants and bankers, called setthi in Pali or śresthin in the Buddhist and Sanskrit literature. The setthi, being merchants and bankers of considerable means and business ability, supplied the requirements of great cities (e.g. Benares, Rājagaha, Mithila, etc.) and operated in both towns and villages. They also especially managed "the exchange of goods between

town and country and thus the setthi of the town had a business friend in the province. With him he exchanged the products of the town artisans for various products from the provinces."¹³⁵ Unlike the small traders or peddlers, the setthis conducted their operations through subordinate staff in their employ. Thus in a typical Jātaka story it is revealed that

the setthi employed business-agents (Kammantikamanussā), assistants who carried on business for him and who accomplished all the duties connected with it. They were headed by a mahākammantika - the business manager who was their chief and the setthi's proxy acting on behalf of his master whenever the need arose and in the setthi's absence. His powers were probably extensive, as we can judge from a note stating that those who wanted some favour of the setthi, applied to him first. He thus acted as a kind of personal secretary to the setthi. To complete the picture of a setthi it is necessary to mention another group of people who worked for him. They are called 'slaves and servants' (dāsakammakarā), who appear only as domestic servants. Their position was very bad; very often they were struck merely because of their master's being out of temper. They were treated with contempt as chattels - a part of the Setthi's property.¹³⁶

The Buddhist sources frequently refer to setthis who were 'multimillionaries' or rather financially very much well off, so much so that many of them became influential in politics as well as in social life.¹³⁷

To be sure, the growth of the mercantile community was not limited only to the Buddhist era. As Thapar rightly states, "through all the political vicissitudes of the Sungas, Satvahanas, Indo-Greeks, Shakas, Kushanas, Cheras and Cholas, the merchant continued to grow from strength to strength."¹³⁸ Between 1000 A.D. and 1600 A.D., for instance, the Vaiśyas constituted the main trading community in medieval

Andhra. Inscriptions from the Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts from the 11th century onwards refer to the most enterprising and influential of them as Lords of Penugonda (Penugonda puravaradhisvarulu).¹³⁹ A 12th century record describes the Penugonda merchants as follows: "They were the followers of Dharma and obtainers of the grace of the wise (Dharmaparayanulu, Budhajannasirvadavantulu). They were endowed with kindness and pleased all by their acts (Dayadhamulu, Sarvajanaraktulu). They possessed a soul capable of dispelling sin (Aghavidhvastatmulu). They belonged to the race of Kubera, (i.e. god of wealth - BB) with fame spread all over the world (Kubera Prabhavulu, Jagat Prakhyata tejodhikulu)."¹⁴⁰ Another merchant group in Andhra consisted of those who styled themselves as protectors of Vira Balanja Dharma (Vira Balanja Dharma Pratipalanulu). Actually there were Balanja merchants in other regions (e.g. the Deccan, Karnataka, and Tamilnad) of south India. Although they professed to be the protectors of Vira Balanja Dharma in the inscriptions, they operated under different names in different regions, e.g. Ainnurruvar or Nanadesitisai - yayirattu - ainnurruvar in Tamilnad, Burma and Sumatra, and the Five Hundred Svamis of Ayyavole, Ubhaya Nanadesi, and Mummaridandas in the Karnataka area.¹⁴¹

A characteristic feature of the medieval Indian merchants is that they made numerous gifts, both in cash and in kind, to the temples. This is corroborated by a host of inscriptions to that effect.¹⁴² What needs to be stressed is that "religious consideration alone cannot fully explain the large numbers of donations by the commercial class. This

phenomenon might have something to do with the desire of the newly-emergent merchant class to gain social status and prestige. The members of the merchant class are represented in some inscriptions to have descended from Kubera."¹⁴³ Another important factor that strengthened the position of the merchants was their organization into corporate bodies or guilds which, in their turn, came to be invested with a broad range of social and legal functions by the Mauryan times.¹⁴⁴ Of the guilds in the south the most prominent seems to be the guild of the "500 - svāmis of Ayyāvōḷe", evidenced by numerous inscriptions ranging from the 8th to the 17th centuries.¹⁴⁵ However, the most remarkable feature of the medieval Indian merchants during the feudal era was the increase of their authority and control over the artisans. This included the merchant's right to extract forced labour from the artisans.

A charter granted to a group of merchants (vanig-grāma) in Western India in A.D. 592 shows that impressed labour had to be performed by the artisans not only for the king but also for such merchants as were granted the royal charter of immunity. Thus the blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers, potters, etc., are to be subjected to corvée by the merchants acting as elders (vārika). The workers engaged in pressing sugar and those at indigo vats are exempted from forced labour, apparently for the king, because their establishments are taxed. Further, water-porters and milkmen, apparently working for the merchants, are not to be apprehended for free labour for the sake of the king. Evidently the object of these concessions granted to the vanig-grāma was to reserve the service of the artisans and unskilled workers for the merchants, a feature typical of the closed economy of medieval times.¹⁴⁶

It is significant to note that in Western India it was not the artisans, but the merchants, who were granted charters containing privileges and immunities.¹⁴⁷ A specific example of the extent of control exercised by

the merchant guilds over the artisans can be illustrated in terms of an inscription dated 1538 A.D. from Tirupati in Tamilnad. Ramaswami summarizes:

It records certain guidelines for the weavers laid down by the cloth and yarn merchants of Tondaimandlam, Paramandalam and Ulmandalam. The merchants specify a particular type of cross-wise weaving on a special jacquard loom and say that this kind of weaving should be done only by the Muslims; for this purpose the Muslim weavers were allotted the income from certain lands. A fine of twelve gold varāhas was to be imposed on any weaver violating this rule. Finally, the inscription concludes that the order is to be communicated to every Hindu village and Muslim dwelling, every cloth merchant and agent (broker) for strict observation and application in Tirupati, Kanchipuram and other parts of the South. This inscription is invaluable, for it proves the continued existence of the powerful and specialized merchant guilds like that of the cloth and yarn merchants right into the sixteenth century and also demonstrates the nature of the complete control exercised by these merchants over the weavers (this extended even to the technique of production). 148

Although the inscription belongs to the period later than one under study, it nevertheless precisely portrays the reality of the merchants' predominance in the medieval south Indian social formation.

This predominant role of the merchants severely challenges the relevance of Marx's AMP for pre-Muslim India. Indeed, the traders, merchants and/or bankers were part and parcel of the Indian social structure not only because they existed in reality but also because they occupied institutionalized positions in the sacred legal sources of the Hindus. For instance, "the Laws of Manu - and here the Laws are not invoking normative precepts from an ancient religious tradition, but merely registering current practices in the work-a-day world - advise people to pick their banker with great care and to make deposits only

with bankers of good repute, good family, and good conduct, who possess truthfulness, a knowledge of the law, many relatives and great wealth."¹⁴⁹ Nārada's rules concerning the business company ("partnership") precisely point to how the merchant had become a personage of prominence. He thus lays down that if a travelling merchant comes to his country and dies suddenly, the king shall preserve his goods till the legitimate heir comes forward to claim them. If there is no such heir, then the king must make the goods over to the merchant's relatives and connections. On failure of the latter, the king must keep the goods well guarded for at least ten years within which a lawful heir may claim them back. However, if the king appropriates them for himself after the expiry of ten years, he will not violate the sacred law.¹⁵⁰ Besides these, the Indian law makers formulated detailed rules in regard to commerce especially in movable commodities - rules which clearly prove the existence of traders, merchants and bankers in the pre-Muslim Indian social formation.¹⁵¹

III. Aspects of Political Development: The Nature and Functions of the State in Ancient and Early Medieval India

It has been pointed out earlier that there is no doubt as to the existence of a complex class structure in the Indus cities. This includes a primary class division between the ruling class - those who occupied positions of political power and who consumed the surplus not produced by them - and the ruled - those who were subjected to the authority of the ruling class and who produced the surplus for the ruling class.¹⁵² Beyond this, there is little agreement among concerned

analysts over the precise nature of the state and politics in the Indus cities. This is so in spite of the fact that there certainly existed some sort of state and politics there. Indeed, any concept of city or town carries with it the concept of municipality, state and politics.¹⁵³ Allchin, for example, point out that "altogether the extent of the drainage system and quality of the domestic bathing structures and drains (in the lower city of Mohenjo-daro - BB) are remarkable, and together they give the city a character of its own, particularly in its implication of some sort of highly effective municipal authority."¹⁵⁴ In fact the existence of some kind of municipal authority is strongly suggested by the most sophisticated planning that the Indus cities and towns display. This implies centralization of power in a given locus of authority. It is evidenced by the standard sizes of streets and blocks as well as of bricks, or by the presence here and there of small 'sentry boxes' for 'the civic watchmen'.¹⁵⁵

More specifically, with respect to the state in the Indus civilization, Piggott hypothesizes that the state was possibly "ruled over by priest-kings, wielding autocratic and absolute power."¹⁵⁶ Put alternatively, it was a "strong system of centralized government, controlling production and distribution and no doubt levying a system of tolls and customs throughout the territory under its rule."¹⁵⁷ While this hypothesis tends to support Marx's political component of the AMP to a certain extent, Piggott's other findings do just the reverse. The reason is that Piggott ruled out any system of "artificial irrigation" organized by the state, and confirms the presence of "a considerable

merchant class" in the Indus cities.¹⁵⁸ In any case, Shaffer criticizes Piggott's hypothesis, including one on the centralization of political authority, as "highly subjective". He argues that "recent excavations and reinterpretations of existing data on the mature Harappan clearly indicate that the Mesopotamian models, even when adjusted for local factors, are not applicable to the south Asian context. The application of such models rests on a conceptualization of the nature of the Mature Harappan culture unsupported by the data."¹⁵⁹ However, his own hypothesis is equally anti-Marxist inasmuch as it envisages urbanism without the state or politics. "It could be that in the Indus Valley, a technologically advanced, urban, literate culture was achieved without the usually associated social organization based on hereditary elites, centralized political government (states, empires) and warfare."¹⁶⁰

The hypothesis of any kind of (Oriental) despotic state structure in the person of the king, as is envisaged by the AMP, is completely repudiated by Ray. She argues:

Despite there being a king who seems to have been the nucleus of the Harappan social hierarchy, just as in other West Asian societies, it is curious that neither at Harappa nor at Mohenjodaro is there any evidence of what one might call a royal palace, indeed of any structure where the king could make an appearance from or give audience to his people or receive homage or tributes. There certainly existed a separate fortified area adjacent to the best group of houses, but this area does not seem to have dominated the entire city complex. In fact, the Harappan king and the royal authority do not seem to have enjoyed such total domination over Harappan society as did their counterparts in contemporary West Asian societies. The Harappan King's spiritual and temporal authority made but little impact on the total life complex; hence there was no impact on art either. This would explain why there was no monumental architecture or sculpture at either Harappa or Mohenjodaro while West Asian cities could boast of both. We have

evidence of enormous accumulation of wealth in the form of gold, silver and precious stones recovered from both the Indus cities, but this wealth does not seem to have been used for making any monumental residential palace or temple or any other structure which could impress and overawe the populace. ... Nor do the artists and craftsmen seem to have been commissioned to work within the acropolis in the service of a monarch, which would perhaps explain why objects of sculptural art of any significance are so scarce.¹⁶¹

Kosambi suggests, among other things, that kingship was not necessary in the Indus region; neither was the mechanism of violence much in use there. The weapons found at Mohenjodaro are weak as compared with its tools. Swords have not been found at all. Religion, not prowess or violence, might have served as the essential ideological force in the Indus social formation.¹⁶²

The main political ingredients of the AMP do not find corroboration in the next historical phase, i.e. the Vedic social formation (c.1500 B.C.-c.600 B.C.). In the early Vedic phase the people, still not permanently settled on the land, were incapable of developing "any advanced political structure which can be called state."¹⁶³ In general, they failed to develop "a large administrative machinery", "a regular standing army", or "the system of taxation."¹⁶⁴ The Rig Vedic people developed, however, the institution of kingship, for the word rājan symbolized the king. Another word is viśpati, head of the viś (i.e. tribe), which also stood for the king. The use of other terms, such as samrāt, ekarāt, and adhirāt, indicates the existence of different gradations of the institution of kingship.¹⁶⁵ What is more important is that the royal authority in the early Vedic period was severely restricted especially by the authority of numerous

tribal assemblies - Sabhā, Samiti, Gana, and Vidathā -, of which the king was a constituent component.¹⁶⁶

These tribal bodies practised some kind of direct democracy in which members made speeches and reached unanimous decisions. The one anxiety that dominated their deliberations was the need for organizing successful wars. Every member was obviously a fighter who provided his own equipment and lived on a share of the spoils of war. Fighting wars was evidently the most important function of tribal assemblies, and Rg Vedic terms for several other institutions such as grāma, grāmani, senā, senānī, etc., also underscore this aspect. ... In spite of primitive equipment and lack of standing army the Rg Vedic society was predominantly military in character.¹⁶⁷

In chapter 7, attention was drawn to the fact that the Rig Vedic people formed a belligerent natural community.¹⁶⁸ It appears that wars of conquest laid down conditions of its (communal) survival, led to the integration of different Aryan and indigenous tribes, and caused the development of private property especially in movables. By doing all this they generated the conditions of its own dissolution inasmuch as they created conditions for the further development of both class and certain components of the institutional structure of the state. In this dialectic of development the natural community of the Rig Vedic people bore a striking resemblance to the ancient Romans.¹⁶⁹

Thus, in the later Vedic period (c.1000 B.C.-c.600 B.C.) the component of territorial consciousness increased as the tendency toward settled agriculture gained ground in the same period. The territorial consciousness rose to such a pitch that a particular territory became identified with the tribe that claimed sovereignty over it. Thus territories of Gandhāra, Madra, Kekeya, Kura, Pāñcāla, Matsya were named

after the tribes that claimed sovereignty over them.¹⁷⁰ The emphasis on the territorial component is implied when the Atharva Veda, in the context of a song of election, wishes that "the rāṣṭra or the territory be held by the king and be made firm by the king Varuṇa, the god Brhaspati, Indra and Agni."¹⁷¹ To cite another instance of the growth of territorial consciousness, the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa enumerates "ten forms of government prevalent in different parts of the country, which shows that government was established in fixed areas."¹⁷² The elaborate ceremony prescribed for the coronation of the king, which might extend to over two years, also emphasized the fixity of the territorial component in the evolution of the state.¹⁷³ In this connection it is relevant to point out that several elaborate sacrifices (the Vājapeya, the Aśvamedha, and the Rājasūya), designed to consecrate royalty, appear in the later Vedic texts and they clearly attest to the growing importance of the king in the social formation.¹⁷⁴

The growth in the power and pretensions of the king was not an isolated aspect of ancient Indian political development; at bottom, it was an integral aspect of the growth of class stratification or rather of the division of the social formation into dominant and propertied class(es), on the one hand, and subordinate and non-propertied class(es), on the other. In the Indian context the dominant class consisted of some, but not all, members of the two upper varṇas (i.e. the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas). One fraction of this dominant class was that which directly ruled, i.e. the ruling class comprising the Kṣatriyas. The other fraction, which legitimated the evolving machinery

of state by their priestly functions, consisted of the Brāhmaṇas. At the other extreme, the subordinate class comprised many, but not all, members of the other two varnas, the Vaiśyas and Sūdras who provided the surplus labour for the maintenance of the dominant class.¹⁷⁵ By the later Vedic period the Indian varna system was fully developed. Although it apparently cloaks the exploitation of one class by another, this cloak disappears and class stratification as well as exploitation becomes clear when one defines classes in terms of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production (land, cattle, etc.), on the one hand, and discovers who produce or who consume the social surplus, on the other. By envisaging this primary class division between the propertied haves and non-propertied have-nots I do not, however, underemphasize the independent peasants and artisans, who probably constituted a significant class component in all pre-capitalist class structures, especially in that of India.

In the later Vedic period there was characteristic development of the rituals, which represented an indispensable superstructural component of the process of evolution of the state. Included in this was the further strengthening of the institution of kingship. Sharma summarizes:

The mechanism of rituals was developed to establish the fiscal and administrative control of the tribal chief and his priestly ideologues over their kinsmen, who had now become mainly farmers. The main objective of the rituals, in which cakes were offered to the Maruts who symbolized the peasant order in the divine world and who were the gods of the viś or peasants, was to assert the authority of the king over the peasants and kinsmen, if necessary, by using force against them.¹⁷⁶

This growth in dominance of the class, some of whom were landowners exploiting servile labour, implied of necessity their maintenance by the surplus labour which, in its turn, was raised in the form of taxes. This involved the creation or expansion of the state apparatus, because the collection of taxes necessitated employment of administrative and military officials.

The later Vedic source materials thus attest to the development of two other additional elements of the institutional structure of the state: the taxation system, and an administrative cum military state apparatus.¹⁷⁷ But neither element was very strong. On the one hand, the regular machinery of tax collection was yet to evolve, for "there did not exist collectors of taxes apart from the kinsmen of the prince, and the difference between tax and sacrificial offering called bali had not been completely blurred."¹⁷⁸ Likewise, the regular military apparatus, keeping soldiers in the permanent employment, was yet to evolve.¹⁷⁹ There are other constraints in the way of the full-fledged formation of the state. The element of kinship remained strong and peasants were not yet completely separated from the emergent dominant class of the ruling princes and the ideologue priests. The territorial idea was yet to submerge the tribal bonds. Above all, the peasants did not produce surplus enough to maintain the ruler(s) and priests, merchants and artisans.¹⁸⁰

But all these constraints disappeared in the next phase commencing from the second half of the first millennium B.C.¹⁸¹ From this point of view, the later Vedic period was a transitional phase - a

phase in which the social "transition to class and territorial government" took place.¹⁸² Thus, in the following period one witnesses the full-fledged development of the state systems in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. This is corroborated by archaeological evidence showing urban settlements and commodities like North Black Polished Wares of about 6th century B.C., on the one hand, and by numismatic evidence in the form of the punch-marked coins of about the same time, on the other. The latter attested to the presence of commodity production and exchange, markets, traders, merchants and bankers in addition.¹⁸³ Put otherwise, the formation of the state coincided with the full-fledged development of a "class divided social order in the sixth century."¹⁸⁴ The relevant literary source materials, including those of Alexander's historians, refer to the existence of more than 50 states, most of which were located in northern India. They were principally of two types: monarchies and republics. Apparently, the varna element dominated in the former, whereas the latter still retained certain amounts of tribal tradition as well as the idea of government through tribal assembly.¹⁸⁵ The latter, to be sure, were "class divided republics."¹⁸⁶ Further, once formed the states, whether monarchies or republics, eventually came to contain population of different ethnic groups.¹⁸⁷

No sooner had the states arisen than their raison d'être began to be formulated. The most plausible is one which describes the causes of origin of the state as well as its functions in materialist terms. It does not corroborate Marx's AMP but his general theory of state

development, on the one hand, and the empirical genesis of the state in India, on the other. And in this sense, the materialist explanation is curiously Marxist although it was formulated much earlier. I refer to the Buddhist sources which point out emphatically "the importance of private property in the origin of the state" in ancient India.¹⁸⁸ In particular I refer to the Dīgha Nikāya, which describe social conditions between c.600 B.C. and 322 B.C., the pre-Mauryan period. This source proposes the setting up of the state by means of social contract in which the people elect the king in order for the protection and preservation above all of private property.¹⁸⁹ In the words of Saleatore:

There was a long period of perfect happiness when man had nothing corporeal about them, and when the ethereal beings shone in splendour, enjoyed peace and effulgence. At last this age of pristine purity declined, the differences in sex and colour manifested themselves, mankind descended from the ethereal to the physical plane, and the age of rottenness began. The questions of food, drink, and shelter cropped up; there was the need of some order; and people entered into agreements among themselves and formed the family and private property, two of the greatest human institutions. With these there appeared greed, selfishness, and theft; and in order to maintain the social order, once more the people assembled and agreed to choose a chief who was to maintain social order and judicially inflict punishment. In return they would give him a part of their paddy. Thus arose the institution of kingship, and the rise to power of the Great Elect or the mahāsammata. He was the rājan, one who delighted the people, the leader and guide of the people.¹⁹⁰

This evolution of the state from a pre-political state of nature, wherein the preservation and enjoyment of private property becomes uncertain and which is otherwise known as mātsya nyāya (literally 'logic of the fish' implying anarchic conditions in which the greater fish devours the small ones), is confirmed in another Buddhist text (e.g. the

Dulva).¹⁹¹

The class origin of the state inasmuch as it protects private property, rather than monopolizes it as in Marx's AMP, can also be found in the literary (and historical) source materials of the Hindus.¹⁹² The Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, an epic whose "core probably reflects Indian life at about 1000 B.C.,"¹⁹³ thus says:

Nobody then, with references to any article in his possession, would be able to say, 'this is mine'. Wives, sons, food, and other kinds of property would not then exist. ... If the king did not protect, all persons possessed of wealth would have to encounter death, confinement, and persecution, and the very idea of property would disappear.¹⁹⁴

The same connection between the state and private property in the Hindu social system may be emphasized in another way, as does Sarkar.

In what manner does it make itself felt among the people? In Hindu theory the state, as soon as it crystallizes into shape, conjures up mamatva ('mine'-ness, Eigentum proprium) or svatva (suum) i.e. property, and dharma (law, justice and duty) out of primitive chaos or socioplastic anarchy. Both these institutions are creations of the state. The state functions itself by generating them, and people recognize it in its activities fostering their nurture. Mamatva and dharma are therefore two fundamental categories in the political speculation of the Hindus. Property does not exist in the non-State (mātsya-nyāya) i.e. in the condition of men left to the pursuit of their 'own Sweet will'. In the non-state, of course, men can possess or enjoy, but they do not 'own'. Property, however, is not mere bhoga i.e. enjoying or possessing, its essence consists in mamatva or svatva i.e. ownership. It is 'one's own'-ness that underlies the 'magic of property'. To be able to say mamedam (This is mine) about something constitutes the very soul or owning or appropriation. This proprietary consciousness is created in men for the first time by the state through its sanction, the danda (i.e. punishment or sanction - BB).¹⁹⁵

The same connection between the state and private property is envisaged

in the Ayodhya Kanda of the Rāmāyana, another epic which was presumably composed sometime before 500 B.C.¹⁹⁶ It says that in the conditions of arājaka (anarchy or kinglessness) or mātsya nyāya there will be, among other things, "no private property" or "no sleep for the rich even with doors shut". In such a territory, where there is no king and hence no state, "nothing is one's own. The people swallow one another like fishes."¹⁹⁷ It is needeess to add that the connection between the state and private property continued to be emphasized in different Hindu texts down to the medieval times.¹⁹⁸

The same connection may be discovered from yet another point of view. In Indian thought there is no concept more important than that of Dharma, the subject matter of the Dharmaśāstra. The meaning of the word Dharma is variable but mostly ethical in significance. It may mean "virtue, right action, the law of nature, accordance with what is proper, universal truth, a code of customs or traditions, righteousness, the eternal, unchanging order, law, and sanctions of all these."¹⁹⁹ The word Dharma is derived from the root dhr meaning to sustain or uphold. Further, "just as dharma upholds the world, the king is called the upholder of dharma."²⁰⁰ More relevant in this regard is the fact that in the Indian context the content of Dharma is absolutely and integrally connected with private property, among other things.

The Śānti Parva, which describes dharma as resting upon the king, refers to the consequences of its disappearance in these words: `When the sinfulness is not restrained no one can, according to the rights of property as laid down in the scripture, say - this thing is mine and this is not mine. When sinfulness prevails in the world, men cannot own and enjoy their own wives, animals, fields and houses'. ... The dominant ideal that moved the kings in ancient India was the

attainment of dharmā, artha and kāma. If the term artha is taken in the sense of enjoyment of property, the term kāma in the sense of the enjoyment of family life and the term dharmā in the sense of the maintenance of the legal system, it would be clear that in the trivarga ideal also the conceptions of property, family and caste dominated. It may, however, be noted that according to some ancient Indian traditions artha (property) lay at the basis of the trivarga ideal, and without this it was not possible to achieve the other two objectives.²⁰¹

Thus with respect to the question of the origin of the state it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that private property (along with the family and the varṇa system) played a very significant role in the formation of the state in India, no matter whether one studies this from the standpoint of the circumstances in the state of nature (mātsya nyāya), from anarchic conditions prevailing in a kingless community (arājaka), or from the standpoint of the moral and legal obligation of the Hindu king to uphold Dharma.

Just as the source materials refute Marx's theory of the AMP in regard to the origin of the state in India, so do they repudiate the AMP's overly simplistic version of the structure of the state. The source materials at our disposal neither reduce the institutional structure of the state to the king, nor do they theoretically empower him in such a way as to make him a despot in practice. Let me elucidate.

That the state is not the king per se was pointed out by the Arthaśāstra that reflects the socio-political conditions of the Indian social formation during the reign of the Mauryas. For the first time it enunciated a definition of the state (rājya) as an organizational aggregate of seven constituent elements: the ruler or sovereign (svāmi

or svāmin), the minister (amātya), the territory of the state and its population (janapada or rāstra), the fortified city or capital (durga), the treasury (kosa), the coercive apparatus mainly in the form of the army (danda), and friends and allies (mitra). Many of these elements (e.g. rāja, amātya, etc.) figured previously in the works of the Dharmasūtras, but it was the Arthasāstra that first attempted to combine them by picturing the state as an organizational totality of certain institutional structures. While authorities sometimes differ on the particulars, most of them go along with the above-mentioned seven elements of the state. This saptānga (literally seven limbs) theory of the state held the field in India for not only ancient but also feudal times.²⁰³

Closely related to the institutional structures of the state, otherwise called the prakritis or angas (i.e. constituents or limbs), is the issue of their relative importance to each other. This includes the resolution of the question of whether or not the Indian king could be called despot. There is little doubt that most Indian authorities recognize that the king is the most important amongst all the other institutional structures of the state. But this does not mean, as I shall show below, that they made the king a despot, one who is beyond any checks both moral and legal. In the Arthasāstra each preceding element of the state structure is considered more important than the succeeding one. Excluding the king, the amātya becomes more important than the janapada, the janapada is more important than the durga, and so on and so forth. The attribution of this order of importance to the

constituents rests, however, on a supposition of the occurrence in future of certain calamities (e.g. political instability) that might afflict the state.²⁰⁴ Manu, like many others, compares the king to god(s). But this should be taken to mean that "the king resembles the deities only in the performance of his regal functions."²⁰⁵ Further, while some compare the king with some deity(ies), others liken him to the father, mother or certain other family relations, because of an apparent resemblance of the functions they are expected to discharge.²⁰⁶ In any case, for the first time Manu formulates an organic interrelationship amongst the different constituent institutional structures of the state.

Yet in a kingdom, containing seven constituent parts, which is upheld like the triple staff (of an ascetic), there is no (single part) more important (than the others), by reason of the importance of the qualities of each for the others. For each part is particularly qualified for (the accomplishment of) certain objects, (and thus) each is declared to be the most important for that particular purpose which is effected by its means.²⁰⁷

It is obvious, first, that Manu attaches particular importance to each constituent in view of particular functions that it is supposed to perform. Second, under ordinary circumstances (i.e. when there is no calamity) each element apparently enjoys equal importance. The king is, however, asked to emulate "the energetic action of Indra, of the Sun, of the Wind, of Yama, of Varuna, of the Moon, of the Fire, and of the Earth", implying the superior role of the king in the whole state apparatus.²⁰⁸ Finally, he envisages an organic interrelationship amongst the components of the state in such a way as to make the state a

totality of institutional structures. Thus he accepts this: "(hence a kingdom is said to have seven limbs (anga)."209 The clearest exposition of this organic view is found during the medieval times in Sukra who compares the seven structural units of the state with seven organs of the human body. The king is likened to the head, the minister to the eye, the ally to the ear, the treasury to the mouth, the army to the mind, the fort to the hand, and the country to the legs.210 All in all, the trend of political development that can be traced in the relevant source materials indicates fairly well that, by giving currency to the concept of the state as a seven-limbed (saptānga) institutional structure, the Hindu authorities did not reduce all problems and issues of politics to a simple catch-phrase of Oriental despotism, as Marx made it out in his AMP.

The same conclusion follows from the analysis of the character of kingship, as it prevailed in India. Strictly speaking, according to the general Marxist methodology and theory, it is class domination and rule that constitutes the focus of Marxist political analysis. In the AMP the focus is not on class domination and rule, but on the despotism of the king. From this point of view, I focus on the institution of kingship in India. It has been rightly pointed out by a recent observer that "ancient Indian thinkers, most of whom without any shadow of doubt, enjoyed royal patronage, had time and again denounced unfettered autocracy of a king and emphasized that it was his bounden duty to rule the country in accordance with the sacred law, the varṇ-āśrama system, the laws of communities, professions and guilds, to follow, in levying

taxation, the customary law and usage of the communities and regions, and to treat the people he ruled as his own offspring."²¹¹ There is no doubt a few of the Indian kings were bad kings who fell far short of ideal standards expected of them or who turned out to be oppressive and capricious in practice.²¹² But, as stated by Auboyer, "in general, moderation prevailed" and "the average monarch was good-natured rather than despotic, strove to be even-tempered and acted above all as the protector of his people."²¹³ In practice, as much as or perhaps even more than in theory, the king was obliged to consult his ministers. That the latter acted as a counterweight to the royal power and pretension is undoubted, since this follows from the importance attached to the ministers.²¹⁴

For instance, the epigraphic evidence confirms that many kings continued to retain ministers, giving rise to the presumption of the importance of ministers in the state apparatus and, hence, ruling out Oriental despotism. Thus, the Badal pillar inscription of Nārāyanapāla attests to the great power and influence which a Brāhmaṇa family of ministers exercised in the administration of the Pāla state (c.760 A.D.-1142 A.D.) for several generations. The Mau inscription of a Candella king named Madanavarman mentions five generations of one family represented by Prabhāsa, Śivanāga, Mahīpāla, Ananta and Gadādhara, who served as ministers of nine generations of the Candella dynasty (c.916 A.D.-1203 A.D.) that included Dhanga, Gaṇḍa, Vidyādhara, Vijaypāla, Devavarman, Kīrtivarman, Sallakṣanavarman, Prthvīvarman, and Jayavarman.²¹⁵ The fact that the ministers were given the charge of, or

were connected with, the administration of territorial units is also corroborated by inscriptional evidence.²¹⁶ The Saltogi inscription states that one Nārāyana was the foreign minister of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king named Krishna III (940A.D.-965 A.D.), and that he was the 'king's right hand'. Another inscription of the Cāhamāna dynasty (c.973 A.D.-1192 A.D.) depicts a minister (mantrin) named Śridhara as having been consulted by the king Vigharāja in connection with the conduct of an impending battle.²¹⁷ All these instances go a long way to point out the importance enjoyed by the ministers in the state apparatus. However, at times the ministers themselves were portrayed as dishonest and oppressive. Thus, the Mānasollāsa, which was composed in 1129 A.D. by king Someśvara III of Caulukya dynasty, advised the kings to protect their subjects not only from robbers and other officers connected with the treasury but also from dishonest and self-seeking ministers.²¹⁸

A noteworthy restriction on unbridled kingship, which I hinted at earlier, was the king's moral and legal responsibility as upholder of Dharma. It includes kuladharmā (family traditions), jātidharmā (varṇa rules), deśadharmā (local customs), and srenidharmā (guild regulations). In the Śatpatha Brāhmaṇa it is stated that the king alone is not "capable of all and every speech, nor of all and every deed."²¹⁹ It is hard to imagine how the king could uphold Dharma unless he speaks and acts according to it. This being so, the kingship becomes limited. However, as Spellman observes, "the practice may indeed have been sometimes different, but let it not be said that the political theory of ancient India encouraged any tendencies towards 'Oriental despotism' in

this regard."²²⁰ A few of the representative authorities may be cited in this connection. The Arthaśāstra lays down: "In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good."²²¹ According to Manu, the king, like any other public servant or individual, is "liable to fines for violation of the law."²²² According to Nārada and Aparāka, the subjects pay taxes to the king in return for protection and, hence, the king is considered the protector of his subjects. Sukra goes a step further. He says that the king should serve their subjects as their servant (dāsa) because he receives taxes from them.²²³ The Agni Purāna, a work of the 9th century, goes even further and declares that "the king's responsibilities are greater than those of a trustee; the latter is not called upon to sacrifice his own interests in favour of the object of trust; the king has to do so."²²⁴ Some authorities explicitly suggest resistance:

The Mahābhārata justifies regicide on the part of the people (tam hanyah prajāh), if the king is not a 'protector' and 'leader', but one who 'spoils' or ruins and 'demolishes' or destroys. ... And Śukra-nīti is as emphatic as Mahābhārata in its advice to the people regarding the treatment of a tyrant. 'If the king is an enemy of virtue, morality and strength, the people should expel him as the ruiner of the state'. And for the maintenance of the state, 'the priest with the consent of the prakṛiti (the council of ministers) should install one who belongs to his family and is qualified'.²²⁵

While more will be said later in regard to the protests of the exploited class (i.e. whose surplus labour was appropriated by the non-producers), some examples are cited here from the Jātakas. The Padakusalamānava Jā

taka refers to an unjust king who was dethroned by the people, who afterwards selected a Brāhmana for the office of king. Similarly, the Saccamkira Jātaka describes how a bad king was dethroned and how a Brāhmana was enthroned.²²⁶

In the early medieval period between c.550 A.D. and c.1206 A.D. the class-based state system did not wither away; neither did the institutional structures of the state apparatus, especially the institution of kingship, change in such a radical way as to give rise to Oriental despotism. However, with the rise of feudalism they did not remain altogether the same. Indeed feudalism affected politics and the state systems of ancient India deeply and created new political institutions (e.g. pañchamahāśabda etc.). The impact of feudalism was such that one can speak of historically specific feudal political developments in early medieval India. In addition to what has already been stated in chapter 5 and 7, additional aspects of feudal political developments in early medieval India will be presented here.

To begin with, in all their essentials the core (feudal) political developments were such that they rule out the applicability of the AMP to early medieval India.

The development of the sāmanta-system had led in actuality to the phenomenon of the fragmentation and the hierarchical gradation of political authority. As such, the monarch, who was at the topmost rung of the sāmanta-hierarchy, became and also began to be viewed more as the lord of the vassal kings than the ruler of the whole people in his kingdom or empire. The vassal kings, chiefs and landlords emerged as the real rulers in their respective principalities and estates covering the greater part of a kingdom or empire, and the paramount lords at the top became visibly detached from the common people. Though the power of the monarchs had thus considerably declined, a marvellous aura began to surround

them owing to their position as the rulers of rulers, their being associated with or viewed as divinity, and the growing vogue of bardic sycophancy.²²⁷

An important aspect of feudal political developments is the hierarchical relation between lord and vassal. This lies at the core of the feudal state, which can be defined "as one in which all the members of the ruling class form a feudal hierarchy with a chief lord or suzerain at its peak."²²⁸ In chapter 5 and 7 I referred to such a feudal hierarchy of the ruling class which combined privileges and immunities of both political power and property in their lordships.²²⁹ Here, I shall mention only those aspects of feudal social relations which bound lord and vassal to each other.

Of particular significance in this respect is the lord's obligation to provide protection to his vassals. The relevant inscriptional records frequently refer to the lords' promises as well as to acts of protection. The protective function of the lord was often complemented by benevolence shown toward his vassals.²³⁰ The contemporary literature articulated lord-vassal bonds more comprehensively, reflecting the feudal character of the Indian polity.

In the Samaraichchakaha of Haribhadra Suri (c.700-770 A.D.), a Sabara chief, on being defeated by Prince Kumarasena, recognizes his overlordship and speaks thus to one of the Prince's followers, "O noble one, we did not know that this great man accompanied you. We have been vanquished by him and recognize him as our overlord on account of his great prowess and magnanimity. Hence you are our kinsman (sambandhin) and we cannot loot your property". And the reply given to the Sabara chief's declaration is equally significant, for it shows the deep-rooted character of the feudal spirit of the period. Instead of disclaiming this new bond, the Prince's follower acknowledges it with all due courtesy and alacrity by saying, "With the Aryaputra (the Prince) as my overlord and you as my kinsman (sambandhin),

is there anything I do not have?' Here a Mlechchha chief and a Vaisya enter into a bond of kinship because of their common allegiance to one overlord. It was this kinship, we might note, which made the Rajputs and Bhils fight shoulder to shoulder in Maharana Pratap's fight for independence. This bond created by allegiance entailed not only service by the liegeman, it rendered it obligatory for the overlord also to rush to his vassal's help in the time of his need. Sometimes this help was forthcoming even when the vassal's cause was unjust. When the Sabara chief had to fight against the troopers who came to punish him for his misdeeds, Kumarasena rushed to his help with the words, 'He (the Sabara chief) has become my liegeman. Hence even though he has been committing bad deeds, I cannot stand neutral when he fights'.²³¹

It is obvious in the above that feudal relations between the lord and his vassal had become strong and solidified. This explains why the bond of loyalty and allegiance to a common overlord generated among the vassals such an intense feeling of closeness, friendliness and brotherliness as to consider themselves, as it were, the sambandhins (i.e. closely related kinsmen) of each other. That is why feudal relations topped the family and varna relations, which were necessarily overcome but which did not altogether disappear. Some verses in the allegory Upamiti-bhava-Prapañcā-kathā, affirm the same feudal character, i.e. the concept that the co-vassals, owing loyalty, allegiance and service to a common overlord, are sambandhins or kinsmen.²³² In a way, the Indian situation bears a close resemblance to that in feudal Europe. Here, on the one hand, feudal relations appeared because the kinship relations failed to offer the needed protection during the uncertain times of feudalism. But, on the other hand, there was simultaneously a real tightening of the ties of kinship in Europe.²³³ In India, feudal relations were considered important, so much so that they were likened

to kinship relations of the family. In spite of this, however, the point remains that feudal relations were open rather than bound by the constraints of the family and varna systems. The loosening up of the kinship relations, making way for the rise of universalistic feudal relations, explicitly appears in the Śanti Parva, which was compiled in the early centuries of the Christian era.²³⁴ So in reality it is very likely that kinship restraints might have loosened up even earlier. The erosion of kinship relations was accompanied later by the transformation of landed property into a prized object as well as the major basis of social status and political power. As I showed elsewhere, this was connected with the rise of religious and secular lordships in the wake of feudal developments between the 6th and 13th centuries A.D.²³⁵

In any event the relevant source materials indicate that the lord's obligation to protect his vassal was only one facet of the institution of vassalage. Its other facet was the vassal's obligations toward his lord. The Agni Purāna, which was composed in the 10th or 11th century, refers to a few of them. "The sāmantas are advised to assuage public feeling, to help their overlord in war, to mobilize his (the overlord's) allies and auxiliaries, and to distinguish friends from enemies. They are further asked to protect the people (janatrānam) like a fort, - a function that devolved on them from their sovereign."²³⁶ The inscriptions of landgrants, invariably containing the lord's eulogies for their respective overlords, reveal certain other aspects of vassalage. For instance, they mention the vassal's offering of homage to his lord, the former's dependence on the protection of the

latter, and the personal bond between lord and vassal. The so-called passages of eulogy in the land charters also bring into focus vassalic commendation whereby a vassal placed himself under the protection of a powerful patron or might lord.²³⁷

An expression which typifies the personal bond between the lord and the vassal is tat-pāda-padmopajīvī or dwelling at the lotus feet of the overlord. The term occurs very frequently and virtually means a declaration of the vassal's surrender to his lord. Everybody seemed to be a dweller at the lotus feet of a superior person. The village headman (gavunda) says this in respect of his mahāsāmanta overlord, the mahāsāmanta says this in respect of his mahāmandaleśvara overlord, and the mahāmandaleśvara says this in respect of his mahārājādhi rājā overlord. Interestingly enough all these swearing in by different grades of feudatories, of what appears to be an oath of allegiance, figures in the same inscriptions suggesting thereby that from one level of the hierarchy to another the vassal was irrevocably bound to a personal lord who gave protection and patronage.²³⁸

Besides tat-pāda-padmopajīvī, there were other expressions that symbolized the vassal's offering of homage to, and his dependence upon, his lord. They include pādarādhakam, bhṛtya-cintāmani, svāmīśantoṣam, svāmi-pādarādhakam, pādupajīvin, and pāda-prasādupajīvin.²³⁹

No less important was the widespread recognition that the vassal was the 'man' of his lord. "In Sanskrit charters the term tat (his) symbolizes the element of personal relationship. Kannada and Tamil records also contain corresponding terms. We have (cited) several examples which refer to the landholder of such and such a person, the warriors of such and such a person, the sāmantas of such and such a person. All such expressions become meaningful in the context of personal bonds existing in a feudal set-up."²⁴⁰ The nexus of reciprocal privileges and obligations between lord and vassal sometimes became

contractual. In chapter 5 I referred to the Lekhapaddhati, a 15th century text that attests to the usage of written contracts containing the obligations of the fief holder.²⁴¹ Kalhan's Rājtarangini provides an example of an oral contract between the king Chakravarman and a leading Dāmara chief named Sangrāma. "They with their swords mutually swore an oath placing `foot on a shipskin wet with blood'. Here we get a customary observance and a mutual oath apparently imposing the obligation of subordination and military service on the vassal and that of protection and non-aggression on the king."²⁴²

A marked feature of the feudal polity is the fragmentation of state power, which is otherwise known as parcellization of sovereignty. In different places, particularly earlier in this chapter, I have already drawn attention to the growth of feudal landed proprietors who began to exercise different aspects of political power. Some additional examples on the basis of inscriptional evidence may be provided here to illustrate the growth of political fragmentation in south India.

The Setti warrior of a village is said to have lorded over certain lands in recognition of the victory he had won in a battle. The lands were constituted into a sarvanamasya holding with absolute rights of possession and powers of private justice. The political authority which the Setti was now entitled to exercise was symbolized by the gifts of umbrella, palanquines and throne. Another warrior of a mahā mandaleśvara chief, who already held the position of a petty locality officer, was similarly elevated to the status of an underlord after he had `extirpated' the enemies of his lord in a battle. The vassal-right which the warrior acquired is evident from the fact that, on his elevation to the position of a vassal, the lord invested him with the three powers of government.²⁴³

Similarly, the guilds of artisans, merchants and/or bankers exercised varying degrees of state power and as such enjoyed autonomy in the early

medieval period. This is evident from the numerous rules and regulations which for the first time received detailed treatment in the law books of Nārada and Brhaspati.²⁴⁴ The former urges the king to maintain and approve of the usages observed, and the laws and rules formulated, by the guilds. The latter states that the king must approve of whatever, harsh or kind, is done by the heads of the guild(s). Brhaspati also states that the king's jurisdiction, as an appellate authority, arises if the heads, actuated by hatred, injure any member of the guild, or if there is a dispute between the heads and their guilds, or if the merchants conspire to cheat the king of the share due to him.²⁴⁵ More specifically, the guilds of artisans had their own rules of conduct, possessed juridical powers to try violation of these rules of conduct, and accordingly could have administered punishment. They enjoyed the right to blow the conch shell, the right to planquin, the right to build a two-storyed house, and so on.²⁴⁶ An inscription from Tanjore shows that the assembly of the artisans (i.e. goldsmiths, silversmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, stoneworkers, and painters) "could collect taxes or even confiscate the property of recalcitrant members."²⁴⁷ However, in comparison with the artisan whose position deteriorated with the rise of the sāmanta hierarchy and landed aristocracy in the early medieval period, the merchants came to occupy a far superior position in view of their connections with the feudal state apparatus.

An example of how the merchants became a component of the feudal state apparatus can be illustrated by an inscription of 1105 A.D. from

Bangalore in Mysore:

The document mentions Maro Setti, the chief merchant (vadda-vyavahāri) of the Cālukyas and a resident of Hadahalli village (mulikā-Hadahalli-grāma), as the principal Ganga-vā dikāra. The last term probably refers to the invaluable service rendered by the Setti to the Cālukyas in conquering the Ganga territory. The record then proceeds to state that Maro Setti, proceeding from the army encampment at the village Henjeru (Henjeru-grama katakam), fought one Kilva Raya and brought the Raya down after piercing his horse. The rural garrisons, such as one in the Henjerugrama, are frequently mentioned in the inscriptions suggesting thereby a predominantly rural setting of feudal warfare which was also the nobleman's chief source of wealth and power. The concluding portion of the inscription furnishes details relating to the vassalization of the Setti by his Cālukya patron. The record states that, impressed by the exemplary services rendered by the Setti, the king granted to him lands with full powers of possession and the right to impose and collect fines. The state honour conferred upon the new underlord included an umbrella, a palanquin, a throne and a staff, besides bodyguards. The terms sarvanamasya and astabhoga-teja-sāmya-sahita clearly show that the territory granted to the Setti was for all practical purposes a domain of private government under a warrior.²⁴⁸

However, this is not an isolated example. For instance, the founders of the Māna dynasty of Western Gaya and North Hazaribagh were Udayamāna and his two brothers, who were originally merchants.²⁴⁹

Epigraphic evidence also bears out the fact that merchants became practically as autonomous as religious and secular lords. Their guilds came to exercise various political powers, e.g. the right to collect taxes, the right to administer justice, the right to maintain their own militia, etc.²⁵⁰ Below is a charter (c.710 A.D.-711 A.D.) of king Bhōgaśakti, recording the rights, privileges and exemptions granted to the merchants and others of the resettled town of Samagiri:

Be it known to you that I have settled (again) the Samagiripattana, which had been previously devastated,

together with Chandrapuri (and) together with the three hamlets, (viz.) Ambēyapallikā, Savānēyapallikā (and) Maurēyapallikā, and also Kamsāripallikā. (This charter is made) over to the whole town, of which Ela sṛēshtin and Karaputa sṛēshtin are the chief (representatives). The merchants residing in Samagiri are not to pay octroi duty in the whole kingdom as long as the moon and sun will endure. Besides, there is not (to be escheat to the crown of) the property of a person who dies sonless. There is to be no distinction of wharfs. There is (to be) no (tax for the) lodging and boarding of royal officers. For a violent offence against unmarried girls, (the offender will be fined) a hundred and eight rupakas; for adultery, thirty-two rupakas; for boxing of the ears, sixteen rupakas; for injury to the head, four rupakas. If (the offence is committed) against a labour-woman, a merchant's son caught naked (?) will be fined one hundred and eight rupakas. And whatever eight or sixteen Mahallakas (respectable men) of the town will declare after deliberation, will be the right standard (of punishment).²⁵¹

An earlier charter issued by king Visnuseṇa in 592 A.D. to merchants in the Gujrat region include, among other things, the following: (1) the king's men are not to break into anybody's house; (2) no one should be arrested on mere suspicion; (3) a merchant who has come upon legitimate business from a foreign region is not to be apprehended merely because he is suspected as a foreigner of encroaching upon local privilege; (4) those engaged in their business at home or at the shop must not be summoned to the court whether by a sealed document or messenger; (5) merchants who have come (from a foreign region) only for shelter through the rainy season are not to be charged import duty (and immigration tax); but export duty (and emigration tax, are to be charged on leaving).²⁵² The Kakatiya king Ganapatideva issued a charter in 1244 A.D. in favour of the trading port of Motupalli in the Bapatala taluk of Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. It assured all merchants freedom from oppressive taxation and piracy which they experienced

earlier. The king posted an official to see that the merchants received fair treatment. The charter was renewed in 1358 A.D. and 1398 A.D. by other dynasties.²⁵³

In chapter 7 I have already drawn attention to the fact that the merchants themselves founded cities or towns when commercial and economic necessities demanded it.²⁵⁴ Here I should point out that the merchants, particularly in medieval south India, came to occupy a pre-eminent political position with the rise of feudalism. Two epigraphs of 1090 A.D. and 1200 A.D., for instance, mention that Vishakhapattanam in Andhra Pradesh was a mercantile town with a mercantile assembly (nakaram). They also mention that it was this assembly which administered the affairs of Vishakhapattanam.²⁵⁵ In northern India also the merchants seem to have participated in the administration of cities or towns during the Gupta period (320 A.D.- c.550 A.D.). In an important Gupta town named Vaiśālī as many as 274 seals belonging to the big merchants, itinerant traders, and artisans have been found, and this gave rise to the presupposition of the importance of the merchant's role in the civic administration of that city.²⁵⁶ In all the cities and towns of early south India the merchants were a dominant group. The term 'nagaram' meant as much the town and its assembly as merchants themselves and their guilds. The merchant was also signified by the term 'nagarattar'. Furthermore, certain towns are specifically designated as mercantile towns (e.g. Terdol, Hulgur etc. in Karnataka), confirming the dominance of the merchants as a social group in the urban centres. It was also, thus, no mere chance that the merchants employed

their own militia.²⁵⁷

Finally, I should point out that the available literary, historical, and epigraphic data refute Marx's theory of the existence of 'general slavery' in India. Put alternatively, the source materials do not confirm the AMP's supposition that the undifferentiated mass of individuals lacked political consciousness and, hence, were politically inert, to the extent that they ended up succumbing to the Oriental despot.²⁵⁸ The consciousness of the divide between the haves and the have-nots was clearly evident in the Buddhist source materials. Thus, the master in the Majjhima Nikāya, complains of the slave:

'O Bhante, our slaves ... do another thing with their bodies, say another with their speech and have a third in their mind'. Explaining this passage, the commentary says: 'On seeing the master, they rise up, take things from his hands; discarding this and taking that others show a seat, fan him with a hand-fan, wash his feet, thus doing all that needs to be done. But in his absence, they do not even look if oil is being spilled, they do not turn to look even if there were a loss of hundreds or thousands to the master. (This is how they behave differently with the body.) ... Those who in the master's presence praise him by saying, 'Our master, our lord', say all that is unutterable, all that they feel like saying once he is away. (This is how they behave differently in speech).²⁵⁹

To this may be counterposed the awareness of the slave to the effect that if he does not work to the satisfaction of his master even on the festival day, he will be punished, which might involve mutilation of some parts of his body. "A slave, enjoying himself on a festival-day, leaves everything and goes running where he is told to go (by his master) on hearing that something urgent has got to be done, and that he must go there at once, failing which his hands, feet, ears or nose may be cut. Such a slave has no idea of the beginning, middle or end of the

festival-day."²⁶⁰ This antagonism between the slaves and slave owners reminds one of the class struggle, not between slaves and freemen, but between slaves and slave owners in Rome, where "the great majority of free men, and even citizens, owned no slaves."²⁶¹

One can discover a dimension of class conflict in the texts of the 3rd and 4th centuries, which portray, as I have shown in chapter 7, a state of social crisis and transition with the coming of the Kali Age. By refusing to pay taxes or to perform sacrifices or by claiming superior status the lower varnas (the Vaiśyas and Śūdras) are said to have created general social anarchy, which included the disturbance of the traditional varna hierarchy and breakdown of the institution of private property, family, and the political machinery. What this amounts to is that it threatened the prevailing dominance of the Brāhmanas and Kṣatriyas or, strictly speaking, only of those Brāhmanas and Kṣatriyas who owned and controlled the means of production (land) and expropriated surplus labour from the producing peasants and artisans, most of whom belonged to the two lower varnas. The contradiction becomes sharpest between the Śūdras and the Brāhmanas, and this is brought out in religious terms. It is said that the Śūdras would acquire wealth, behave like Brāhmanas, and be greeted like āryas or nobles. At the other end, the Brāhmanas are depicted as losers, and would be addressed in terms of disrespect (bho).²⁶² Elsewhere, it has been pointed out how the artisans and peasants (mainly consisting of the two lower varnas) gradually emerged as a dependent population with the advance of feudalism. However, manifestations of class antagonisms are

not altogether absent. The Brhannārādīya Purāna, composed in the 9th century, reveals that acute distress due to famines as well as overtaxation caused the people to migrate en masse to regions rich in wheat and barley. The Subhāsitaratnakosa of Vidyakara of the 12th century shows that some of the villagers left the village because of the oppression of the landlord or feudal chief (bhogapati) of the village.²⁶³ The Yaśastilaka demonstrates the resistance of forced labourers. "In a story occurring in the text, a few poor men who were subjected to forced labour eventually lost their lives when they along with others protested against their master who was the minister of a king."²⁶⁴

Epigraphic evidence on class conflict between the feudal landed aristocracy and the dependent peasantry and artisans, though rare, is also not altogether absent.

An inscription (A.D. 1173) recovered from the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh records an ordinance issued by the landholders in the village Lāhadapura (modern Barahpur) in the Gāhadavāla kingdom in an extremely abnormal situation created by the turbulent people who appear to have been mostly peasants. It says that any person found guilty of scandalizing the framers of the ordinance (parivāda), plunder (luntanam), rebellion (droha), and seizure of cattle would be killed at sight (caksurvadha), and his entire property would be confiscated, while his abettor would be expelled from the village and his house demolished. An inscription (A.D. 1230) of south India furnishes an example of refusal by the farmers to obey the royal order for converting their village into a freehold. For this disobedience, however, they were punished severely. At times, the attempt to transfer communal property was also resisted by the villagers. In some regions, where labour was not scarce, peasants were sometimes evicted.²⁶⁵

Conflicts, pertaining to varna status but highlighting sociopolitical awareness, are also evidenced. Thus, one inscription from Tiruvannamallur states that "a Kaikkōla weaver was killed while fighting for the right to sing the tēvāram (Śaivite religious songs) in the streets on festive occasions. Apparently, this right was challenged on the ground that they were śūdras and hence not fit to recite the tēvāram. Their stand was ultimately vindicated and special honours were conferred on the Kaikkola weaver who was killed."²⁶⁶ Inscriptional evidence provides additional examples apparently of varna conflict between the left-hand (Idangai) and the right-hand (Valangai) caste groups.²⁶⁷ A Chōla inscription from Aduthurai reports that people belonging to 96 castes of the Idangai group, who were cultivating peasants, decided not to pay any taxes imposed by the sabha and the king's officers.²⁶⁸

Two inscriptions of the year 1239 state that certain cultivating peasants of a village complained to the sabha by means of a memorandum. It contained the threat that the peasants would not cultivate the land unless measures were taken to control certain persons who were harassing them or were illegally demanding portions of their agrarian surplus. Another inscription records a riot that took place in the fifth year of the reign of king Raja Raja III (1218 A.D.-1246 A.D.). During the riot the original records of land transfer were destroyed and, as a result, the rights of the individuals had to be determined according to the then actual possession of lands. From the same region of south India there comes inscriptional evidence of at least three cases of suicide, which

were manifestly a form of protest against the landowners. For instance, a dancing girl threw herself down from the temple tower with a view to establishing the right of her relatives to cultivate the land that had been assigned to her as jeevitham - an usufructuary tenure.²⁶⁹ An instance of open revolt of the peasants is found in Sandhyakara Nandi's Rāmacaritam. In this instance, the Kaivartta peasants in Eastern Bengal were subjected to heavy taxes and also were deprived of their plots of lands which they received and enjoyed as service tenures. This abortive revolt was led by Bhima and was directed against King Ramapala (1077 A.D.-1120 A.D.). This peasant revolt was so intense that the king had to mobilize the resources of his vassals.²⁷⁰ Again, some of the Dāmara revolts in Kashmir, which were described in the Rājataranginī, were in the nature of peasant movements. In the course of time some of the peasant leaders were, however, integrated into the feudal set-up and, thus, emerged as feudal lords.²⁷¹

Finally, sometimes class conflicts apparently took the form of religious conflicts and were clothed in religious shibboleths. This was as much true of India as of countries in Europe.²⁷²

A verse in the Skanda Purāna indicates that at times the peasants and artisans in the estates of the religious donees resorted to the social ideology of Jainism and other heretical religions and acted in violation of the rights conferred on landholders by the land grants. ... The Tantric Dharma cult, which prevailed in this age (i.e. early medieval - BB) among the lower sections of the common people in some regions of Bengal and Orissa, clearly reflects the conflict between the landed aristocracy and the oppressed people. Considerable significance attaches to the Sahajayā na movement (initiated originally by a Brāhmana named Siddha Sarahapāda - BB) of the Siddhas, who raised their voice of revolt against the inequities and disparities of the existing social organization, criticized the higher

religions, rejected the externals of religion and undue other worldliness, and used the Apabhramśa language of the common people. The list of the eighty-four Siddhas bear out the leading role of merchants, artisans and the followers of lowly occupations in this religious movement.²⁷³

IV Conclusion

In the light of my preceding discussion on the formation and development of both social classes and the state in pre-Muslim India, one has no choice but to abandon the theory of the AMP. If weighed against the different source materials that are available à gogo, the AMP in point of fact thoroughly misrepresents the class and political components of Indian reality. Indeed, this is all the more so because of the complexities of Indian class and political developments.

It was made clear in my presentation that the Indian social formation during the period under review did not always remain simply stuck at the stage of primitive communism, as Marx wants us to believe. For the same reason it was not at all static, as Marx depicts it. The archaeological evidence concerning the Indus civilization rules out primitive communism in view of the ascertainable complexity of class structure, including a very wide variety of occupations and professions. Apparently such developments would not have been possible unless the Indus cities had evolved a far more extensive and complex a social division of labour than could be imagined in Marx's AMP. Neither does the Vedic social formation conform exactly to the same stage of primitive communism, as is envisaged by the AMP. The reason is that the Vedic social formation, in addition to continuously generating the developing elements of class stratification, was a dynamic one, from

which emerged a full-blown class-divided social formation at the time of the Buddha (566 B.C.-486 B.C.). No less significant was the growth of a feudal class structure dominated by a class of landlords who enjoyed and exercised varying degrees of state power over a class of labourers in varying degrees of servitude. By naming only these I do not by any means underemphasize the importance of other classes or fractions thereof (e.g. merchants, independent peasant producers, etc.) in the Indian social formation. But all this clearly repudiates Marx's simplistic portrayal of India as a social formation consisting only of an undifferentiated mass mostly of peasant possessors.

The same is true of Marx's description of the state, and politics, or rather lack of them, except what comes under the rubric of 'Oriental despotism'. The relevant source materials suggests that the causation of the Indian state lies neither in hydraulic functionalism nor in the brute force of a conquering despot. On the contrary, while sharply negating these AMP explanations, the source materials support the general Marxist explanation of the origin of the state. That is to say, the Indian experience corroborates the general Marxist analysis to the effect that the state arises only at a certain stage of a country's social development - the stage when the social formation becomes internally divided into opposed social classes. More specifically, the Indian state had hardly come into being when its existence and functions became objects of repeated justification primarily as a defender of the institution of private property, both movable and immovable. The Hindu legislators who wrote on statecraft did not reduce the state to the

person of the despot, as Marx did in his AMP. They envisioned the state as an organizational aggregate of seven institutional components of which the king was only one, though a very important one. The total context of the aggregate institutional structure (i.e. the state), along with the legal and moral requirements of upholding Dharma, made the Indian king not a despot, but a limited ruler. In this conclusion I have drawn particular attention to the epigraphic evidence concerning the role of ministers in the structure of the state apparatus. Further, while the same organizational structure of the state consisting of seven institutional components continued to be endorsed and practised even during the early medieval times between the 6th and 13th centuries A.D., this does not mean that the state as such remained what it was. Indeed, as I have shown, the state structure became vulnerable to forces of change inasmuch as it was penetrated by feudal political relations, especially those hierarchical relations that bound lord and vassal to each other.

Finally, I call attention to the fact that the individual in India was not the same individual whom Marx depicts in his AMP. Put otherwise, the individual was neither an accident nor purely a natural component part of his tribe or community. He was not the one who, vegetating in the conditions of locally grown 'general slavery', never tasted freedom either from the community or from the despotic king.²⁷⁴ It was shown that individuals in India did constitute themselves into different social classes and that they did in fact share and participate in what may be called antagonism and struggle between opposed social

classes. In this regard the available evidence, though quantitatively not great, is qualitatively decisive. Furthermore, it points to the existence of a politics bound up with class antagonisms and struggles. It is needless to add that such a politics was neither the politics of despotism thrust from above nor the politics of general slavery which deprived the Indian mass altogether of their capacity for political consciousness and resistance. Thus, when tested by the empirical experience of India the AMP appears to be nothing short of an ignis-fatuus.

Footnotes

1. Marx, Gundrisse, pp. 493-4. Emphases in original.
2. S. Hall, "The 'Political' and the 'Economic' in Marx's Theory of Class", in A. Hunt, et. al., Class and Class Structure (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978), p. 15; and G. De Ste. Croix, "Class in Marx's Conception of History, Ancient and Modern", NLR, 146 (July-August 1984), p. 96.
3. Therborn, Science, Class and Society, p. 405. Emphases in original.
4. Cited in Ibid.
5. Gunawardana, "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx", p. 385; and Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis", pp. 458-60.
6. See chapter 8, pp. 449-58.
7. Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 46-7. Emphasis in original.
8. Ibid., pp. 43 and 69. Emphases added.
9. See V. G. Childe, "The Urban Revolution", Possehl, ed., Ancient Cities of the Indus, pp. 15-7; and Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 54.

10. Sankalia, Prehistory of India, p. 94; and Sharma, Perspectives, p. 108.
11. Allchin and Allchin, The Birth of Indian Civilization, p. 268.
12. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 177.
13. Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, pp. 31 and 53-4; and Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p. 55.
14. See chapter 7, p. 361.
15. Fairervis, Jr., The Roots of Ancient India, p. 299; and Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, pp. 184-6.
16. Ratnagar, Encounters, pp. 227-8.
17. See chapter, 4, pp. 209-10.
18. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 28.
19. Ibid., p. 51.
20. Ibid., pp. 64 and 71.
21. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, p. 24; and R. S. Sharma, "Economic Life and Organization in Ancient India", in G. S. Metraux and F. Gouzet, eds., Studies in the Cultural History of India (Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwala and Co., 1965), p. 33.
22. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 27 and 304.
23. Ibid., p. 310; and Habib, "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India", p. 26.
24. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, p. 310. Emphases in original.
25. Ibid., pp. 304 and 306.
26. See G. Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 63-4.
27. Bandyopadhyaya, Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India, vol. 1, p. 171.

28. See chapter 7, pp. 368-71.
29. Therborn, What Does the Ruling Class Do When it Rules, p. 157. Emphases in original.
30. Kosambi, Ancient India, p. 101.
31. Sharma, Perspectives, pp. 26 and 123; and Baudhayana, The Sacred Laws of the Aryas, part II, III. 2.2, p. 288.
32. Bhattacharya, "Land-System as Reflected in Kautilya's Arthaśāstra", p. 93.
33. Gopal, The Economic Life of India c. A.D. 700-1200, p. 7.
34. Sastri, The Cōlas, p. 577.
35. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 332-4; Jain, Labour in Ancient India, pp. 40 and 43-5; and Bongard-Levin, "On the Problem of Landownership in Ancient India", p. 45.
36. Fick, The Social Organization of North-East India in Buddha's Time, p. 243.
37. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 31-4 and 324.
38. Nath, A Study in the Economic Conditions of Ancient India, p. 129.
39. Fick, op. cit., p. 243.
40. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 16, 326-7, and 330-1.
41. Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 92.
42. D. Kumar, "Private Property in Asia? The Case of Medieval South India", CSSH, 27 (April 1985), p. 362.
43. See chapter 5, p. 258.
44. Marx, The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, pp. 100-1. Emphasis in original.
45. Sharma, Social Changes in Early Medieval India, p. 6.
46. Yadava, "Problems of the Interaction Between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", p. 45.

47. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 28.
48. Ibid., p. 260.
49. Chapter 5, pp. 271-2.
50. Ibid., pp. 21-2.
51. See Sircar, Indian Epigraphy, pp. 388-407.
52. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", p. 27.
53. Mirashi, ed., Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, vol. IV, part 1, n.3, p. 89.
54. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, pp. 202-3.
55. Yadava, "Presidential Address", p. 24.
56. Ibid., p. 23.
57. Ibid., p. 53.
58. D. N. Jha, "Temples as Landed Magnates in Early Medieval South India (c. A.D. 700-1300)", in R. S. Sharma, ed., Indian Society: Historical Probings in Memory of D. D. Kosambi (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974), pp. 202-16; "Temples and Merchants in South India c. A.D. 900-1300", in De, ed., Essays in Honour of Prof. S. C. Sarker, pp. 116-23; and M. Liceria A. C., "Emergence of Brahmanas as Landed Intermediaries in Karnataka (c. A.D. 1000-1300)", IHR, 1 (March 1974), p. 33.
59. Thapar, A History of India, vol. 1, p. 77.
60. S. A. Dange, India: From Primitive Communism to Slavery, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1961), pp. xi-xii.
61. D. R. Chanana, Slavery in Ancient India (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1960), p. 110. Emphases in original. The same view is endorsed by Sharma in his Perspectives, p. 26.
62. De Ste. Croix, "Class in Marx's Conception of History, Ancient and Modern", p. 107. Emphases in original.
63. De Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World, p. 133. Emphases added.
64. Marx, Capital, vol. 3, p. 831; and his A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 21.

65. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, no.3, p. 334. See also Ibid., vol. 3, p. 806.
66. See Chanana, op. cit., pp. 106-7.
67. Ibid., p. 64.
68. Ibid., p. 113-4.
69. Jain, Labour in Ancient India, pp. 148-9.
70. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, p. 339; and Chanana, op. cit., pp. 43-4.
71. See Chanana, op. cit., pp. 40-52.
72. Ibid., p. 59.
73. S. Patil, Dāsa-Sūdra Slavery (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1982), p. 246.
74. Chanana, op. cit., p. 108. Emphases added.
75. Jain, Labour in Ancient India, p. 146; and Nārada, op. cit., v. 25-8, pp. 135-6. See also P. C. Jain, Socio-Economic Exploration of Medieval India from 800 to 1300 A.D. (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1976), pp. 257-96; and Maity, Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period, p. 188.
76. See chapter 5, p. 254.
77. Herlihy, ed., The History of Feudalism, p. xviii.
78. Neubauer, "Feudalism", p. 330.
79. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 2, p. 446.
80. Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p. 17.
81. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 717 and 751.
82. Marx, "The Chartists", in Marx and Engels, On Britain (Moscow: Foreign Languages Press, 1962), p. 358. Emphases added.
83. P. Dockès, Medieval Slavery and Liberation (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 152. Emphasis added.
84. S. Resnick and R. Wolff, "The Theory of Transitional Conjunctures and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism", RRPE, II (Fall

- 1979), n. 1, p. 19. See also L. L. Schorsch, "Direct Producers and the Rise of the Factory System", SS 44 (Winter 1980-81), p. 437; and W. Lazonick, "Karl Marx and Enclosures in England", RRPE 6 (Summer 1974), p. 4; and R. Hilton, "Capitalism - What's in a Name", in Sweezy, et al., The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, p. 154.
85. Quoted in Sweezy, "A Critique", p. 33.
86. C. Hill, "A Comment", in Sweezy, et. al., op. cit., p. 121.
87. Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, p. 147; and Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 78.
88. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 264. Elsewhere he argues: "The legal language of the Middle Ages was not fixed by any code, and it lacked uniformity. It varied in different regions and at different times, and differed according to the people who spoke it. Notaries, lawyers and troubadours did not always call the same things by the same words. ... The terminology for the serf in the diplomatic language of the thirteenth century is particularly varied. However, one expression is missing in this abundance: it is the very one we are looking for serf: de la glèbe. It does not seem to have ever been pointed out in the charters of medieval France. Should we then assert that nowhere, at any time, in no authentic act did it slip in? This would be unwise. We will presently see that Romanists and Canonists were not unaware of it; it is possible that some time, by chance, some cleric who was educated from their works may have used his literary memory while drawing up some contract. No case of this sort has yet been discovered, though perhaps we will discover one some day. We will then have dug up a curious exception, and this will be all. Serf de la glèbe did not belong to the usual vocabulary of medieval notaries in France. This is a fact that cannot be doubted. These two words are not found joined together, either, among the jurists who wrote the great books of French common law in the vernacular. Neither Beaumanoir, nor Pierre de Fontaines, nor the authors of the Livre de Justice et de plet or of the Etablissements de Saint Louis, called unfree men by his term, any more than did the officials or functionaries of the royal chancellery. The historians of the nineteenth century who discoursed on the 'serf of the soil' of the Middle Ages were thus using a term that the practitioners of the very age they were studying either did not know or rejected. ... He (the serf - BB) was not, strictly speaking, attached to the soil. By law nothing kept him from leaving his landholding if he wanted to. In fact, however, this freedom was somewhat imaginary - he could go, as long as he left all his possessions to his master. Departure for him meant poverty, and fearing that, he was bound by an economic necessity to his fields as strongly, or nearly so, as if he had been kept there

by the most implacable law". See Bloch, Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages, pp. 180-1, 184-5 and 190.

89. Critchley, Feudalism, p. 127.
90. Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 430.
91. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 271.
92. Hilton, "Introduction", p. 30.
93. Hilton, "A Crisis of Feudalism", p. 8.
94. For details, see chapter 7, pp. 387-94.
95. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", pp. 35-6.
96. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 60.
97. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to Feudalism", p. 37; and Sharma, "Problem of Transition from Ancient to Medieval in Indian History", p. 4.
98. Yadava, "Some Aspects of the Changing Order in India during the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa Age", pp. 79 and 82.
99. Yadava, "Problem of the Interaction Between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", p. 48.
100. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", p. 37.
101. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", p. 23.
102. Ibid., p. 24.
103. Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", p. 41.
104. Ibid., pp. 42-3. Emphases added.
105. Ibid., pp. 41-2.
106. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 58.
107. Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", p. 32.
108. Jha, "Presidential Address", pp. 24-5. Emphases added. See also

- Sharma, Indian Feudalism, pp. 120-1.
109. Sharma, "Indian Feudalism Retouched", p. 328.
110. Yadava, "Immobility and Subjection of Indian Peasantry in Early Medieval Complex", p. 22.
111. Cited in Ibid., p. 23.
112. Yadava, "Presidential Address", p. 27; and Sharma, "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism", p. 32.
113. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 121.
114. G. K. Rai, Involuntary Labour in Ancient India (Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House, 1981), pp. xxii-xxiii, 202-4 and 207-8.
115. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, p. 122. Emphases added.
116. Ibid., pp. 242-3; and Rai, Involuntary Labour in Ancient India, pp. 202-3.
117. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 326, 330 and 334-5. See also Jain, Labour in Ancient India, p. 229.
118. For details, see Kher, Agrarian and Fiscal Economy in the Mauryan and Post-Mauryan Age, pp. 134-6; and Maity, op. cit., pp. 192-6.
119. Brhaspati, The Minor Law Books, XVI. 14, p. 345.
120. For details, see Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 98-101; Prasad, "Urban Occupations and Crafts in the Kusana Period", pp. 107-17; and Jain, Labour in Ancient India, pp. 111-3.
121. B. N. Puri, India in the Times of Patanjali (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957), pp. 116-7.
122. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 183-5.
123. Jain, Labour in Ancient India, p. 113.
124. See chapter 7, p. 379.
125. Ibid.
126. Wagle, Society at the Time of the Buddha, p. 135.
127. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 267.

128. L. Gopal, "Organization of Industries in Ancient India", JIH 42 (1964), p. 905.
129. V. Ramaswami, "Some Enquiries into the Condition of Weavers in Medieval South India", IHR, 6 (1979-80), p. 126.
130. Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, p. 347; and M. K. Pal, Crafts and Craftsmen in Traditional India (New Delhi: Kanak Publishers, 1978), p. 122.
131. For details see B. Lahiri, "Guilds in Ancient India and the Evidence of Coins", in Sircar, ed., Early Indian Trade and Industry, pp. 63-9; and O. P. Verma, "Organization and Functions of Some South Indian Guilds", in Ibid., pp. 76-82.
132. Lamb, "The Indian Merchant", pp. 25 and 27.
133. Basham, The Wonder that was India, pp. 222-5.
134. See chapter 7, pp. 375-6. For more examples, see Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, p. 345.
135. P. Ivo Fiser, "The Problem of the Setthi in Buddhist Jatakas", AO, 22 (1954), p. 246.
136. Ibid., p. 248.
137. Prasad, Foreign Trade and Commerce in Ancient India, pp. 27-9; Rai, The Rural Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India, pp. 342-3; and B. Bhargava, Indigeneous Banking in Ancient and Medieval India (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala and Son, 1934), pp. 24-5.
138. Thapar, A History of India, vol. 1, p. 109.
139. K. Sundaram, Studies in Economic and Social Conditions of Medieval Andhra: A.D. 1000-1600 (Madras: Triveni Publishers, 1968), p. 58.
140. Ibid.
141. Ibid., pp. 68-9.
142. See Ibid., pp. 48-9, 55, 67-8 and 72.
143. Jha, "Temples and Merchants in South India c. A.D. 900 - A.D. 1300", p. 119.
144. Darian, "Social and Economic Factors in the Rise of Buddhism", p. 231.

145. Verma, op. cit., pp. 79-80.
146. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, pp. 49-50.
147. Ibid., p. 72.
148. Ramaswami, op. cit., p. 127. Emphases added.
149. Lamb, op. cit., p. 28.
150. Nārada, The Minor Law Books, III. 16-8, p. 127.
151. For details see Maity, op. cit., pp. 157-82 and 201-40.
152. See Childe, op. cit., p. 16.
153. See chapter 8, pp. 449-50.
154. Allchin and Allchin, The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan, p. 178.
155. Wolpert, A New History of India, p. 17; and Wheeler, Civilizations of the Indus Valley and Beyond, pp. 21 and 26.
156. Piggott, Prehistoric India to 1000 B.C., p. 153.
157. Ibid., p. 136.
158. Ibid., pp. 153 and 175.
159. Shaffer, "Harappan Culture: A Reconsideration", p. 43.
160. Ibid., p. 49.
161. A. Ray "Harappan Art and Life: Sketch of a Social Analysis", in Chattopadhyaya, ed., History and Society, p. 130. Emphases added.
162. Kosambi, Ancient India, pp. 64 and 70.
163. R. S. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1968), p. 266.
164. Ibid., pp. 268-9.
165. D. K. Ganguly, Aspects of Ancient Indian Administration (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979), p. 1.
166. For details about these tribal assemblies, see Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, pp. 78-122.

167. Ibid., p. 271.
168. Chapter 7, p. 367-8.
169. See Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 487 and 493-4.
170. R. Thapar, "State Formation in Early India", ISSJ, 32 (1980), pp. 656-7.
171. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 273.
172. Ibid., pp. 273-4.
173. Ibid., p. 273.
174. Wolpert, op. cit., pp. 38-9; and Ganguly, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
175. Sharma does not distinguish between dominant class from ruling class, and he fails to mention that all members from the Brāhmanas and Ksatriyas did not necessarily form the ruling class. Thus he wrote: "In a way the first two orders constituted the ruling class, and tried to establish their authority over the vaiśyas who formed the producing peasant class with the śūdras as a servile domestic adjunct which was small in number at this stage". See Sharma, Material Culture, p. 74.
176. Ibid., p. 74.
177. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, pp. 275-6.
178. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 28.
179. Ibid.
180. Sharma, Material Culture, p. 84.
181. Ibid., pp. 84-5.
182. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 271.
183. Ibid., pp. 277-8.
184. Sharma, Perspectives, p. 30.
185. R. S. Sharma, "Taxation and State Formation in Northern India in Pre-Mauryan Times", SSP, 1 (March 1984), p. 3; and Thapar, A History of India, vol. 1, p. 50.

186. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 119.
187. Sharma, "Taxation and State Formation in Northern India in Pre-Mauryan Times", p. 27.
188. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, p. 53.
189. Spellman, Political Theory of Ancient India, p. 22; and V. R. R. Dikshitar, Hindu Administrative Institutions (Madras: The University of Madras, 1929), p. 18.
190. B. A. Saletore, Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), p. 323. Emphases added.
191. Ibid., pp. 323-4.
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193. Wolpert, op. cit., p. 37.
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228. Painter, The Rise of Feudal Monarchies, p. 4.
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230. Nandi, "Feudalization of the State Apparatus in Medieval South India", p. 56.
231. Sharma, "Some Light on Feudal Elements in Indian Polity (700-1000 A.D.)," p. 80.
232. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 155.
233. Bloch, Feudal Society, vol. 1, p. 142.
234. Sharma, Material Culture, pp. 145-6.
235. See chapter 5, pp. 267-70; chapter 7, pp. 393-6; and pp. 493-8 of this chapter.
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237. For an argument that the practice of ordinary man commending himself to the protection of a powerful lord was not unknown to India, see R. Choudhary, "Theory and Commendation and Sub-Infeudation in Ancient India", IHCP, 30th session (Patna: 1968), pp. 115-20.
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239. Ibid., pp. 53-4; and Sharma, "Land Grants to Vassals and Officials in Northern India", p. 104.
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249. Mazumdar, "Merchants and Landed Aristocracy in the Feudal Economy of Northern India (8th to 12th century A.D.)", pp. 64. For additional examples see Ibid., pp. 67-9; and Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 285.
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256. Thakur, Urbanization in Ancient India, pp. 254-5.
257. Velayudhan, "The Role of Merchant Guilds in the Urbanization of South India", pp. 204-7.
258. See chapter 8, pp. 453-7.
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260. Cited in Ibid., p. 57.

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262. For details see Yadava, "The Accounts of the Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages", *passim*; and Sharma, "The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crisis", pp. 186-203.
263. Yadava, Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 171.
264. Yadava, "Problem of the Interaction Between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", p. 53.
265. Ibid., p. 56.
266. Ramaswami, op. cit., p. 137.
267. Ibid., pp. 136-7.
268. Vanamamalai, "Consolidation on Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles during Chola Imperialist Rule", p. 243.
269. Ibid., pp. 242-3.
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272. See F. Engels, The Peasant War in Germany (Moscow: Foreign Languages Press, 1956), p. 54; and his "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", in K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), vol. II, pp. 398-9.
273. Yadava, "Problem of the Interaction between Socio-Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex", p. 57.
274. See chapter 8, pp. 453-7.

CHAPTER TEN

GENERAL CONCLUSION

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.¹

It is this intellectual spirit, to which Anderson refers in the above, that animated and prompted me to undertake the present methodological, theoretical and empirical assessment of Marx's "Asiatic" Mode of Production. Even though the current literature devoted to the discussion of this Mode is already quite vast and does show no visible signs of stagnation, the rationale of my endeavour can hardly be undervalued. As I indicated in chapter 1, the present dissertation serves at least two purposes. On the one hand, it focuses not only on a number of serious methodological and theoretical problems and consequences that are immanent in the AMP, but also on the materialist Orientalism that permeates the AMP thoroughly. On the other hand, by focussing especially on pre-Muslim India for the determination of the empirical validity of the AMP it purports to fill in a characteristic void since in the existing literature there still is no work as this

present one. It is an important rationale of the dissertation, and more so because Marx constructed his AMP almost completely on the basis of India.² In this light let me summarize my main findings and conclusions.

The theory of the Asiatic Mode of Production was never systematically formulated anywhere by Marx although, curiously enough, he held on to it to the end of his life.³ Nevertheless, as shown in chapter 2, the AMP can clearly be dissected into three leading components: (1) the absence of private ownership of land and, hence, the absence of fundamental class division between the landowners and landlords on the one hand, and the landless (slaves, serfs, wage-labourers) on the other; (2) the categorization of the social formation as consisting only of numerous insular village communities whose economic self-sufficiency and ultimately their socio-economic stagnation in aeternum was brought about in the main as much by the unity of agriculture and manufacture as by the non-existence of class struggle; and, finally, (3) a class-transcending despotic state which, while holding down the masses in general slavery but extracting economic surplus from them, originated in and rested on hydraulic functions and/or force. All these component concepts, assumptions and corollaries in their mutual interconnections portray the mode of production, in the final analysis, only in the Orient/East/Asia. At the very core of the AMP lies this geographical divide which, as I have said elsewhere, makes it a purveyor of Orientalism or, rather, materialist Orientalism. It is not that one or even a few aspects of the Oriental social formation

could not be found in the Occidental social formation. For instance, the Indian form of common property may be discovered to have constituted the starting of other peoples also in the West. But that is as far as the AMP would go in explaining an aspect of the forms of primitive communism in the West. Otherwise, the Orient remained imprisoned within the primitive communism of the AMP, while the Occident successively evolved and went through the ancient, feudal, and capitalist modes of production out of its own variant(s) of primitive communism.

The stressing of the essentialist differences between the Occident and the Orient in respect of all possible material dimensions (e.g. the absence/presence of private landed property, historical dynamism and urbanism/ pre-historic stagnation and ruralism, and so on) of their respective social formations and peoples is what makes the AMP precisely a theory of materialist Orientalism. The ideological, rather than scientific, function of the AMP can be well expressed in the following words of Lichtheim, whose self-congratulatory remarks are well saturated with what I have designated as materialist Orientalism:

...We may nevertheless extract what comfort we can from Marx's belief that the inner principle of Western historical development has from the start been quite different from that of the East or of Graeco-Roman antiquity. For my own part I am inclined to think that - in this as in most other matters - he was right, and that we are entitled to look upon European history as an evolution propelled by a dialectic of its own, to which there is no parallel in Oriental history. Needless to say, this Hegelian-Marxist view is incompatible with the notion that European, or Western, society is subject to a general law of growth and decay (or 'challenge and response' to employ the currently fashionable jargon) applicable to all major civilizations. On the contrary, it insists upon the West's uniqueness; and to that extent the present writer has no hesitation in calling himself a Hegelian.⁴

What is to be stressed in the context of my findings in this

dissertation is that it was not Marx's AMP alone that drew upon the geographical divide between the East and West - the core of Orientalism - for, as I have shown, there were others, both predecessors and contemporaries of Marx, who also drew upon that divide. What Marx's AMP does, however, is to epistemologize and ontologize the geographical divide in terms of material (or concrete) causative factors in such a way that either of the geographical categories (i.e. East or West) is turned into an autonomous, coherent, homogeneous, and global entity. The inescapable result is that the geographical hiatus became an epistemological and ontological point of departure as much for the production of the so-called knowledge of the differential development of the East and West, as for justifying imperialist interventions of the West apparently for the purpose of liberating the East from its ageless stagnation and establishing therein the material foundations of the "historical" Western civilization.

The materialist Orientalism of the AMP comes into full view when one takes into consideration its numerous methodological and theoretical problems which, in their turn, can hardly be explained unless one does so in terms of materialist Orientalism. This becomes unmistakably clear in chapters 3, 6 and 8 where I undertook the methodological and theoretical assessment of the three primary components of the AMP. A common theme underlying all these chapters is that Marx, while formulating his AMP, adhered to the same Europocentric Weltanschauung of a select group of European thinkers or imperial administrators (e.g. Montesquieu, Hegel, Mill, Maine, etc.), although he criticized them as

severely as he could in other contexts. Thus, when it came to the non-European regions of the world, Marx remained characteristically uncritical in respect either of their views or of the reliability and validity of the data on which such views were based. At one and the same time Marx did not really confront the alternative, in fact exactly the opposite but realistic, point of view that was put forward by a minority of European thinkers and imperial administrators. Thus, for instance, one can cite Campbell's Modern India (1852) and Wilks's Historical Sketches of the South India (1810-4), and even the Fifth Report (1812), all of which contain enough reliable and valid data as to the existence of the private ownership of land in India. This was, however, in addition to the positive evidence in the then available indigeneous source materials which Marx almost entirely chose to ignore. When he did consult them, he attempted to interpret them in such a way as to suit his own pre-judged and pre-determined opinion (i.e. the absence of private ownership). Strictly speaking, he exhibited the tendency to misinterpret them. For instance, when he discussed Mitāksarā's evidence he attempted to interpret the common ownership of the family members over land in such a way as though it were communal ownership of all in the village. And what is more, Marx was altogether silent on other source materials, such as the Dayabhāga of Jimutavāhana, which clearly attests to the existence of private property in land in India. What ensued is that Marx, just like Maine among others, selected and interpreted the data tendentiously by ignoring Jimutavāhana, on the one hand, and by exaggerating and generalizing the common ownership of

the Mitāksarā family, on the other.⁵ To cite another example, I refer to Marx's suppression of Engel's information to the effect that the village community also undertook works of artificial irrigation.⁶ What this boils down to is that Marx hung on to his AMP in spite of the existence then of relevant countervailing data which demanded immediate revision if not complete abandonment of the AMP. Needless to say, for all his doctrinaire adherence to the problem-ridden AMP Marx can hardly be exonerated on the ground that there existed no other critical or countermanding data.

Why Marx continued to subscribe to the AMP, despite its awful methodological and theoretical problems, cannot be understood unless one takes into account the fact that Marx was not interested in the "scientific" study of the Oriental social formations and their peoples per se. As I showed in different places above,⁷ Marx's elemental purpose was above all to illustrate the inner working mechanisms of capitalism as the highest stage of historical social development attained by the West. Thus he said: "Capital is the all-dominating economic power of bourgeois society. It must form the starting point as well as the finishing point..."⁸ But this task - the illustration of capitalism as the highest stage of historical social development in all its illuminating theses - could be better done if the CMP is simultaneously contrasted with the AMP together with all the latter's obfuscations and antitheses. Obviously this entails a comparison of the AMP with the ancient and feudal modes as well, both of which were regarded as logical and empirical predecessors of the CMP. In the end,

the AMP emerged as an Aunt Sally in Marx's schema of social development. The Oriental social formations and their peoples were not worth studying for their own sake, nor were they objects of scientific knowledge per se. If it were not so he would have revised or, better, dropped the AMP concept altogether. Thus, given the ideological and teleological objective and commitment of Marx, the Orient or, for that matter, the geographical divide between the Orient and Occident inevitably became his favourite epistemological and ontological point of departure in the discovery, analysis and explanation of the stages of social development of what was essentially made into a dualistic reality or divided humanity. This being so, Marx could now swear black was white even though methodological and theoretical problems of the AMP were too apparent to be ignored. Empirically the AMP is proverbially a square peg in the round hole, for it does by no means picture or conform to the reality of India at any period of its historical development.

The methodological and theoretical problems are built into the AMP in such a way that they make it entirely a less than useful concept. The most important aspect in this is the absence of causality in the AMP. In chapter 3, where I evaluate the methodological and theoretical flaws of the component concerning the absence of private property in land, it was shown that Marx was basically unable to account either for the lack of individuation or for the non-development of private property in land in any of the non-European social formations. Of course, Marx apparently referred to certain factors, but they were not really of any causal significance. Thus, the negative role of the unity of

agriculture and industry may be explained away by saying that it also existed in the ancient and feudal modes of production. The limit of Marx's methodological and theoretical arbitrariness and, for that matter, his materialist Orientalism lies precisely in his doctrinaire refusal to accept the fact that factors like population growth, war and conquest were capable of generating private property as much in India or the Orient as in Rome or the Occident. By making the West the locus classicus of private ownership of land and individualism on the one hand, and by turning the East into the Heimat of common property and collectivism on the other,⁹ Marx only succeeded to hypostatize the geographical divide between the West and East and, thus, generated what I called materialist Orientalism.

The lack of causality, as shown in chapter 6, also characterized Marx's particularistic identification of India (or the East) with a typical village economy which remained imprisoned, within a vicious spiral of repetitive undevelopment since time immemorial to the rise of John Bull's messianic imperialism. In other words, true to the spirit of materialist Orientalism, Marx counterposed the dialectical West to the non-dialectical East. The so-called causative factors (e.g. the unity of agriculture and handicraft manufacture, the absence of the means of transportation and communication, the state intervention as provided of public works, etc.), which are alleged to have brought about irreversible inertia in saecula saeculorum in the Oriental social formations, were not really causative factors because they were methodologically and theoretically neither specific nor essential to any

specific geographical division, the East or West. The AMP itself was made a cul-de-sac by Marx inasmuch as it remained caught up eternally within the simplest of all divisions of labour, i.e. within the natural division of labour characteristic of primitive communism. Since it never expands into social division of labour, the AMP or, for that matter, the East is deprived of all forces or mechanisms of internal social dynamism and change that social division of labour entails, viz. the differentiation among agriculture, industry and commerce, the separation of town and country, the individuation and individual private property, the emergence of class stratification, and antagonism between the opposed social classes, etc.¹⁰ The absence of dialectical change and development was thus literally built into the very structure of the AMP. As I have shown, the choice for Marx was certainly not between the affirmation of the dialectic in the Occident and its negation in the Orient. What was needed was a dialectical approach to both the Occident and Orient, not to the former alone. If Marx wanted to, he could have explained the causes of slower development of the productive forces and relations, including the non-development of capitalism in the Orient, by utilizing his own concept of combined and uneven development.¹¹ Why he abandoned the dialectic only in the case of the Orient can not be adequately understood unless one understands it in terms of materialist Orientalism. At any rate, the methodological and theoretical consequences flowing from Marx's abandonment of the dialectic were quite disastrous. Not only did he become "a Europe-centered thinker" and propogate a "Europe-oriented philosophy of history", but he ended up by

justifying European imperialism and colonialism in the non-European social formations for the latter's integration first into (European) bourgeois, and later into (Europe-led) socialist, social formation.¹²

Like the absence of private property and the lack of any (dialectical) mechanism of internal socioeconomic change and development, Marx made the class-transcending concepts of politics and the state an immanent characteristic only of the Oriental social formations and their peoples. As discussed in chapter 8, politics in the Orient was for him no more than despotism from above and subjection of the undifferentiated mass below. Surely it was not like Occidental politics that grew out of class antagonisms and struggles. The state in the Orient was not more than a class-transcending entity that continuously prevented the growth of social classes and the antagonism between them by monopolizing ownership of all lands within its jurisdiction. In contrast, it was precisely the existence of private ownership of land as well as of antagonism or struggle between the opposed classes that led to the origin and development of the state. Thus, Marx's differential concepts of the state and politics in the Orient are ideologically and teleologically grounded with a view to showing them both as the direct antecedent and the opposite of the state and politics in any of the modes of production that originated in the Occident. If this materialist Orientalism is set aside there is really no reason, at least from the general Marxist methodological and theoretical points of view, that explains the origin of the state. Insofar as it rests on hydraulic functions the AMP asserts, rather than

demonstrates, the actual origin of the Oriental state. Inasmuch as it rests on conquest and force the state continually emerges or dissolves depending upon which one of the numberless conquerors wins or loses. Further, the conquest and force explanation has dangerous implication not only because it legitimates the erstwhile imperialism and colonialism in the non-Western social formations allegedly for the latter's benefit but also because it legitimates and institutionalizes in the same way future Western interventions in the East. By far the most important methodological and theoretical problem that the political component of the AMP generates is one that negates what Marxism stands for and promises. And it is this. If the state could appear in a classless social formation then it might not disappear in a future (classless) socialist or communist social formation, which is supposed to be, among other things, a free association of individuals without the state. It is clear that the AMP is a negation of all that Marxism stands for and promises.

The methodological and theoretical contradictions that were built into the very structure of the AMP constituted only one facet of the problematic undertaken for investigation in this dissertation. Another was the empirical appraisal of the AMP with reference to India, i.e. the determination of the extent to which the AMP reflected and expressed the empirical reality of India. The extremely important role of the empirical validity of any concept or theory was emphasized over and over again by no less a person than Marx himself. To be sure, the AMP was not a theory which conceptualized only an hypothetical reality

and provided merely a conceptual, but not an empirical, contrast to the CMP, as Lubasz erroneously argues.¹³ Time and again Marx argued against the construction of a purely logical or conceptual entity that is divorced from the empirical reality. This separates Marx from Hegel and his dialectical idealism.¹⁴ For Marx concepts are "abstract expressions" of actual relations, and certainly not entities "to be excogitated a priori."¹⁵ It was Hegel, not Marx, whose "method took as its point of departure pure thought."¹⁶ It is a pre-condition of Marx's materialist methodology and theory that concepts, which are constructed with a view to reproducing reality in thought, must be grounded on and sustained by the real and the concrete.¹⁷ Thus in his Notes (1879-80) on Adolph Wagner Marx expressly stated:

In the first place... I do not start out from 'concepts', hence I do not start out 'from the concept of value', and do not have 'to divide' these in any way. What I start out from is the simplest social form in which the labour-product is presented in contemporary society, and this is the 'commodity'.¹⁸

For the same reason Marx begins his analysis in Capital by stating that "a commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another".¹⁹ All this goes to prove that Marx never conceptualized in vacuo. It is true that the AMP rested on "a narrow material base" compared to "the immense body of materials" that Marx utilized in his critique of capitalist production.²⁰ But it is wrong to say, as Lubasz does, that Marx conceptualized his AMP totally ignoring the empirical reality (e.g. 'socio-economic life' or different institutions) of India or, for that matter, the Orient.²¹ To give an example, if one leafs through Marx's

Notes on Indian History (1664-1858) he would immediately discover how intense was Marx's interest in the empirical, particularly political, affairs of the Indian social formation.²² However, the important point to be remembered in this connection is that Marx appropriated only so much empirical material concerning the Orient as sufficed to serve his own ideological and teleological objective, i.e. the conceptual and empirical demonstration of the AMP as the direct antecedent and opposite of the modes of production that originated in the West. In effect this only promoted and represented what I have designated as materialist Orientalism.

In chapters 4, 5, and 7 and 9 I demonstrate how detached the AMP was from the empirical reality of pre-Muslim Indian social formation. In chapters 4 and 5 I show that Marx's assertion of the absence of private ownership of land has no basis in fact, in light of the existence of a overwhelming mass of literary, historical, philosophical, legal and epigraphic data to the contrary. The support for village communal ownership, put forward by Marx, is also very slender, if not practically non-existent, in the same Indian data sources. Insofar as royal or state ownership is concerned, it never existed in the sense in which Marx meant it in his AMP. For one thing, while the king or the state in the AMP monopolized ownership of all lands within his jurisdiction, the empirical source materials point just to the contrary because the king (or state), by making grants of land during the period of feudalism (550 A.D.-1206 A.D.), created both landed property and a (feudal) landed class. Ex facie the relevant data sources confirm not

only the development of private property in land but also its evolution in different forms. The two predominant ones were the allodial and the feudal. While the former stands for free peasants' ownership, the latter meant the hierarchical landownership of the feudal lord who also exercised state power to a certain degree over the land he owned. It is clear that, if Marx wanted to, he could have found numerous source materials, especially the writings of the British colonial officials (e.g. Thomas Munro, William Jones, James Todd etc.) as well as the Fifth Report of 1812 - all of which would have negated his assertion of the absence of private landed property in pre-British India. Indeed, it is precisely his refusal to consult such materials that contradicts the requirements of his own methodology and theory and, hence, raises the presumption of materialist Orientalism in respect of his dealings with non-Western social formations.

In chapter 7 also the same presupposition arises from my assessment of the empirical validity of the AMP in respect of its postulation of a stagnant village economy engulfing the entire Indian social formation. Even though contrary evidence, affirming the prevalence of commodity production, trade, towns, etc. in pre-British India, figured in the writings of colonial officials and in the appropriate official documents, Marx tenaciously held on to his ideological and teleological thesis of a non-dialectical social economy in India. When empirically tested the AMP is shown to misrepresent the actual economic formation. As my investigation shows, there are enough relevant data that contradict Marx's identification of India with

pristine ruralism and communalism. In the period under review, India experienced at least two distinct phases of urbanism, repudiating thereby Marx's assertion that India's history was merely the "history of a kind of indifferent unity of town and countryside."²³ The development of urbanism meant that numerous productive forces and relations came into being in the Indian social formation, e.g. the expansion of the natural division of labour into social division of labour, the differentiation between agriculture, industry, and commerce, the rise of market towns or cities, the growth of merchants and bankers, and so on and so forth. The presence of all these, while negating the AMP, simultaneously implies that the Indian social formation was neither stagnant nor always dominated by a self-sufficient peasant economy. The source materials amply bear out that between the 6th and 13th centuries the Indian economy came to be dominated by a class of feudal lords (sāmantas), both secular and religious, who exercised varying degrees of state power and controlled the use of the major means of production (e.g. land). This included the extraction of surplus produce from a class of servile labourers who were legally or otherwise bound to them, to their lands, or to both. If anything, this development was certainly not the one portrayed in the AMP.

The existence of the feudal class structure is amply corroborated in chapter 9, where I undertook to demonstrate the empirical invalidity of the AMP inasmuch as it asserts the existence of a (despotic) state without opposed social classes in the Indian social formation. My findings indicate that Marx's simplistic depiction of the

class and political situation is grossly misrepresentative of the Indian reality precisely because the social economy of India did not remain stuck on the stagnant primitive communism as depicted in the AMP. The social formation, whether during Indus urbanism or after the Vedic period (c. 1750 B.C. - 600 B.C.), was certainly not devoid of antagonistic social classes. In particular, the post-Vedic social formation, in addition to being a fully class-divided one, was indeed characterized by a complex class structure whose dramatis personae did not always remain the same. Thus, while the peasant proprietors, large landowners, slaves, and merchants were quite conspicuous by their presence in the social formation before the 6th and 7th centuries of the Christian era, it was the sāmanta (feudal) lords and a class of servile labour including serfs who became especially prominent since then. What all this adds up to is that the formation and persistence of all these social classes plainly negate the AMP's validity. The same thing is true of Marx's views on the state and politics in the AMP. The state in India originated neither in hydraulic functionalism nor in brute force and conquest. It appeared on the scene only when the Indian social formation became class-divided. The Hindu legislators justified its existence, among other things, as the defender of private property, confirming thereby the validity of the general Marxist theory of the origin of the state - a theory whose applicability to non-European social formations was, however, denied by Marx in his AMP. Similarly, the relevant source materials make it clear that the state in India cannot be reduced to the despot (and his aides); nor can politics be

reduced to his despotism, generating general slavery of the undifferentiated mass. Contrary to Marx, legal and archaeological sources indicate that the state was conceived in India as an organizational aggregate of seven institutional elements, of which the king was one. The institutional context of the organization of the state, especially the role assigned to the ministers as well as the legal and moral requirements of upholding Dharma, made the Indian king not a despot, but a limited ruler. This position continued to prevail throughout the period under review here, although the state structure was permeated by feudal political relations between the 6th and 13th centuries. Last but not least, however, was the political role of the different classes, especially the exploited ones, which in one way or another affected the state and politics in India, at least so much as to rule out the politics of despotism and general slavery. Different pieces of evidence clearly point to the presence of class antagonism and conflict in the pre-Muslim Indian social formation.

Finally, in light of my own findings a few remarks are in order in respect of certain recent suggestions about modifying Marx's AMP in such a way as to make it more acceptable than it was in its original Marxian form. An idea has been suggested to the effect that the AMP does not imply social stationariness; neither does it provide any suggestion of an Oriental social formation's being at a dead end. Thus one analyst has proposed to resurrect and revitalize Marx's AMP by asserting that millennial motionlessness is a dead component and should be expunged from the theory of the AMP. A complementary suggestion

asserts that the AMP, set free from its dead constituent, was in transition from a classless to a class-based social formation.²⁴ This move to make Marx's AMP acceptable is unwarranted for several reasons. First of all, Marx had in mind several causative factors when he spoke of Oriental stagnation. These - the spatial isolation of villages, the lack of exchange of commodities and non-development of towns, the absence of individuation and private property, the unity of agriculture and manufacture and the resultant economic self-sufficiency - are at one and the same time the very causative factors that underlie, in varying degrees, the other components of the AMP. It follows from this that if one seeks to drop the component of millennial stagnation from the AMP, one necessarily has to remove its causative factors as well. But this cannot be done at all without doing violence to the very existence of the AMP, which is a totality in itself and an organic whole like any other Occidental mode of production. So, if the causes of stagnation are removed this would mean the removal of those grounds on which other components (e.g. absence of private property, Oriental despotism of the patriarchal state, etc.) of the AMP are based. Therefore, conceptually to remove the component of the stagnation as a dead part of the AMP is to destroy it altogether. That is, the element of stagnation is built into Marx's schema of development, for the West not only overcame its own primitive communism(s) but also passed through at least three other (ancient, feudal and capitalist) modes of production, while the East continued to vegetate solely in the primitive communism of the AMP.

Second, it is highly questionable, if not altogether wrong, to call the AMP a transitional mode in light of Marx's repeated assertions to the contrary. Marx's definitive assertions leave no doubt that stagnation, instead of being a dead part, was in actuality a very living component of the AMP: "The Asiatic form necessarily hangs on most tenaciously and for the longest time. ... The individual does not become independent vis-à-vis the commune"; "Since in this form the individual never becomes a proprietor but only a possessor, he is at bottom himself the property, the slave of him in whom the unity of the commune exists, and slavery here neither suspends the conditions of labour nor modifies the essential relation";²⁵ "As I have pointed out in a number of my writings, it (i.e. communal property - BB) is of Indian origin and is, therefore, to be found among all nations of European culture at the beginning of their development".²⁶ And, finally, Marx throws light on the secret of why co-operation in India remained at the same level where it had first begun.

Co-operation, such as we find it at the dawn of human development, among races who live by the chase, or, say, in the agriculture of Indian communities, is based, on the one hand, on ownership in common of the means of production, and on the other hand, on the fact, that in those cases, each individual has no more torn himself off from the navel-string of his tribe or community, than each bee has freed itself from connexion with the hive.²⁷

Likewise, Marx refers to such an "unalterable division of labour" in the village community that makes manufacturing division of labour "impossible" and keeps the market, whatever there is of it in India, constantly "unchanging". The nature-determined division of labour also explains why towns did not develop in India, since their development

would imply the growth of the social division of labour between town and country. The ambit of stagnation thus includes identifying India only with rural India.²⁸

The fact of the matter is that the AMP stands for the most stagnant and primitive, rather than dynamic and transitional, social formation. Marx himself, for one, saw this as an inseparable component of the AMP. A simple comparison of Marx's AMP with the Graeco-Roman (ancient) mode of production fully affirms that the AMP was not a transitional mode, much less a class-divided or exploitative one. Lubasz has rightly stated that "what Marx calls 'the Asiatic mode of production' is, to his mind, the oldest variety of the aboriginal economic conformation of society, primitive communism", and that the AMP is "the only variety of primitive communism which did not disintegrate, and was incapable of changing."²⁹ If this were not so Marx would have made it clear in one way or another since he lived long enough to do that.

In the Third Draft of his letter (1881) to Vera Ivanovna Zasluch, a Russian Menshevik, Marx casually raised the possibility of the AMP's making a transition "from society based on common property to society based on private property" and, hence, overcoming "the collective element" depending "on the historical environment in which it occurs."³⁰ Ironically, that is all he could say and no more. In effect this meant, till then, that the AMP did not, and could not, begin the stated process of transition since such a favourable environment was not yet in being. Neither did Marx suggest any specific mechanism of

internal change and development. In the final and formal version of the letter (of 8 March 1881) Marx asserted, while referring to the expropriation of the agricultural producers and the "transformation of one form of private property into another form of private property", that the "historical inevitability" of the Western movement was "expressly limited to the countries of Western Europe."³¹ If Russia wanted to enter this movement then the Russian peasants' "common property" would first have to be transformed into "private property."³² Viewed from this angle, Marx's obiter dictum regarding the AMP's alleged potential for internal change simply does not carry any conviction; if anything, it confirms how tenaciously Marx continued to subscribe, till his last days, to the apocryphal doctrine of a non-dialectical East.

The fact that Marx did not change his position in respect of the Orient and that he did not modify his AMP in the light of the data from new researches can be amply illustrated. For instance, in his 'debate' with Kovalevsky Marx continued to adhere to his general thesis in regard to the absence of private property in India. As Krader summarizes: "Marx's position in general was that the community was the owner, the individual the possessor of parcel for a limited term."³³ Actually this sounds even more dogmatic than his earlier position, because in the Grundrisse Marx regarded the Oriental individual as "only possessor of a particular part, hereditary or not..."³⁴ Thus, instead of opening up, Marx became even more closed towards the end of his life. If this is regarded as a change in emphasis then it was a change in the direction of more dogmatism insofar as he became even more restrictive and

categorical. Similarly, it is an unwarranted truism to say that Marx changed his original position in view of his ethnological notes taken especially on the data provided by Morgan. Tokei, a pre-eminent Hungarian scholar who inspired the renewal of the "new debate" on the viability of the AMP in the early 1960s, also confirms this.

To what extent did Morgan's famous work modify Marx's theory on the Asiatic mode of production. Well, if one identifies Marx's theory with his relevant passages in the Grundrisse - my policy ever since the beginning of the 'new debate' - the unequivocal answer is that it did not modify in any way. Plekhanov was the first to write of a certain shift in Marx's views in 1908, when he ventured the supposition that, having read Morgan's work, Marx perhaps did not place the Oriental or Asiatic mode of production before the Antique mode of production in a line of progressive succession, but rather interpreted it as a form of development parallel with it. It is obvious in my opinion that Plekhanov, for whom Grundrisse was, of course, not available, simply misunderstood the concept of the Asiatic mode of production by overlooking its most important element, namely, that the basis of the Asian civilizations is the tribal or communal ownership of land, i.e. primitive society itself. Now that Marx's abstracts from Morgan's work are available for all in the original in Lawrence Krader's edition, anyone interested can make sure himself that Marx's notes do not - and cannot - bear any trace of a revision of his views on the Asiatic mode of production.³⁵

The same holds good for Marx's notes on Henry Maine and John Budd Phear. At any rate, the validity of the AMP must remain dependent, in the first and last instances, not on the truth of "pure" theoretical speculation but, above all, on the real, concrete, empirical world. This is an integral component of the Marxist materialist methodology and theory. It is on this basis that all future research concerning the AMP should be conducted, as I have tried to do here.³⁶ To conclude, therefore, in the words of Engels:

Our (i.e. the materialists' - BB) conception of history is above all a guide to study, not a lever for construction after the

manner of the Hegelian. All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined individually before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil law, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc. views corresponding to them.³⁷

Footnotes

1. Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, p. 9.
2. See Godelier, "The Concept of the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and the Marxist Models of Social Evolution", p. 220; Bailey and Llobera, "The AMP: Sources and Formation of the Concept", p. 23; and D. M. Lowe, The Function of 'China' in Marx, Lenin, and Mao (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 15.
3. Godelier, op. cit., p. 219; and Mandel, The Formation of the Economic Thought of Karl Marx 1843 to Capital, p. 116. It may be noted that certain analysts (e.g. V. N. Nikiforov) argue that Marx eliminated AMP from his scheme by 1881. See Gellner, "Soviets Against Wittfogel; Or, Anthropological Preconditions of Mature Marxism", p. 359.
4. Lichtheim, "Marx and the 'Asiatic Mode of Production'", p. 171. Emphasis in original.
5. See also Datta, Hindu Law of Inheritance: An Anthropological Study, p. 88.
6. See chapter 8, p. 460.
7. See chapter 3, pp. 184-5.
8. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 107.
9. Melotti, op. cit., p. 72.
10. See Marx, Grundrisse, p. 496; and Marx and Engels, The German Ideology, pp. 43 and 68-9.
11. Chapter 6, p. 342.
12. Cf. Avineri, "Introduction", pp. 19-20 and 30.
13. Lubasz, "Marx's Concept of the Asiatic Mode of Production: A Genetic Analysis", p. 457 and 478.
14. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 19-20. See also pp. of chapter 8 of this dissertation.

15. See Marx's letter of December 28, 1846 and January 24, 1865, in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 45 and 188.
16. F. Engels, "Karl Marx. A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", in Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 223.
17. T. Carver, "Editor's Preface to Marx's Notes (1879-80) on Adolf Wagner", in Marx, Texts on Method, pp. 164 and 169.
18. Ibid., p. 198. Emphasis in original.
19. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 35.
20. Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, p. 176.
21. Lubasz, op. cit., pp. 478.
22. See K. Marx, Notes on Indian History (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), passim.
23. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 479.
24. See Godelier, op. cit., pp. 209-57; and Baiby and Llobera, op. cit., pp. 37-8.
25. Marx, Grundrisse, pp. 486 and 493.
26. See Marx's letter of February 17, 1870 to Kugelmann, in Marx, The Letters of Karl Marx, p. 268. Emphasis in original.
27. Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 334. Emphases added.
28. Ibid., pp. 352 and 357-8; and Grundrisse, pp. 467 and 479.
29. Lubasz, op. cit., p. 479. Emphasis in original.
30. Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p. 145.
31. Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 412. Emphases in original.
32. Ibid. Emphasis in original. See also Marx's letter (1877) to the Editorial Board of the "Otechestvenniye Zapiski", in Ibid., pp. 376-9.
33. Krader, op. cit., p. 207.
34. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 477. Emphasis in original.

35. Tokei, "Some Contentious Issues in the Interpretation of the Asiatic Mode of Production", p. 296. Emphases added. See also n.136 in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
36. This must not be misconstrued to mean that I propose to undervalue the significance of theoretical work that is grounded upon or backed by concrete data from the empirical world.
37. Engel's letter of August 5, 1890 to Schmidt, in Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, pp. 496-7.

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