

**EXTRACTS FROM
FREDERICK ENGELS' WRITINGS
RELEVANT TO INDIA
OTHER THAN THOSE ALREADY
PUBLISHED IN IQBAL HUSAIN (ED.),
*KARL MARX ON INDIA***

That Marx and Engels wrote extensively on India is now well-known, and Iqbal Husain's edited volume *Karl Marx on India*, Aligarh Historians Society/ Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2006, sets out the entire corpus of what they both wrote during the period 1853–62. This undoubtedly includes the bulk of their writing on India, but leaves out what they wrote outside of the period covered. This omission, in so far as it concerns Engels, it is now proposed to rectify by providing the relevant extracts from his other writings. These are mainly drawn from the series of Volumes of *Collected Works* of Marx and Engels, published from Moscow, and cited below as 'M. & E., *C.W.*'. Where other publications are used for source, full references to them are supplied.

For the reader's convenience, the Appendix furnishes a listing of all of Engels' writing on India during 1853–62, published in *Karl Marx on India*. A complete referencing of all of Engels' writings on India is thereby hopefully attained.

From Engels' Writings

1. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, [MS, 1845–46], tr., Moscow, 1946:
 1. "When the crude form in which the division of labour appears with the Indians and Egyptians calls forth the caste system in their State and religion the historian [wrongly] believes that the caste system is the power which has produced this crude social form [rather than the other way about]". (p. 51)
 2. "...if in England a machine is invented which deprives countless workers of bread in India and China, and

- overturns the whole form of existence of these empires, this invention becomes a world-historical fact”. (p. 60)
2. Engels, *Contribution to New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. I, (1858) (art.: Afghanistan) (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 18, p. 43):

“At this epoch [around 1809], Runjeet Singh rose into power and fame. He was a Sikh chieftain, and by his genius made his country independent of the Afghans, and erected a kingdom in the Punjab, earning for himself the title of Maharajah (chief rajah) and the respect of the Anglo-Indian government”.
 3. Engels, *New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. II (1885) (art.: Artillery) (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 18, pp. 188–89):

“In the Hindoo laws some sort of firearms appears to be alluded to; gunpowder is certainly mentioned in them, and, according to Professor H.H. Wilson, its composition is described in old Hindoo medical works. This first mention of cannon, however, coincides pretty nearly with the oldest ascertained positive date of its occurrence in China. Chased’s poems, about [AD] 1200, speak of fire-engines throwing balls, the whistling of which was heard at the distance of 10 coss (1,500 yards). About 1258 we read of fireworks on carriages belonging to the king of Delhi. A hundred years later the use of artillery was general in India; and when the Portuguese arrived there in 1498, they found the Indian as far advanced in the use of firearms as they themselves were. From the Chinese and Hindoos the Arabs received saltpeter and fireworks”.
 4. Engels, *New American Cyclopaedia*, Vol. IV (1859) (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 18, p. 311):

“From the defeat of the Huns at Châlons (451) to the sepoy mutiny of 1857, there is not a single instance where the splendid but irregular horsemen of the East have broken a single regiment of regular cavalry in an actual charge”.
 5. Engels, ‘Fighting in France’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, London, 11 Nov. 1870 (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 22, pp. 165–66):

“Not even the Prussians in Baden, 1849, or the Pope after Mentane had the courage to shoot down indiscriminately their prisoners of war, irregulars and “rebels” as they were. There exist only two modern examples of the ruthless application of this antiquated code of “stamping

out”: the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny by the English, and the proceedings of Bazaine and his Friend in Mexico”.

6. Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (1878), tr., M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 25, pp. 1–309.
 1. “The old primitive communities which have already been mentioned, could remain in existence for thousands of years—as in India and among the Slavs up to the present day—before intercourse with the outside world gave rise in their midst to the inequalities of property as a result of which they began to break up”. (p. 137)
 2. “Even the formation of a primitive aristocracy, as in the case of the Celts, the Germans and the Indian Punjab took place on the basis of common ownership of the land, and at first was not based on force, but on voluntariness and custom”. (p.150)
 3. “From India to Ireland the cultivation of landed property in tracts of considerable size was carried on by such tribal and village communities; some times the arable land was tilled jointly for account of the community, and sometimes in separate parcels of land temporarily allotted to families by the community while woodland and pastureland continued to be used in common... In the whole of the Orient, where the village community or the state owns the land, the very term landlord is not to be found in the various languages, a point on which Herr Dühring can consult the English jurists whose efforts in India to solve the question, who is the owner of the land? — were as vain as those of the late Prince Heinrich LXXII ... in his attempts to solve the question of who was the night watchman?” (pp. 163–64)
 4. “In each such [primitive village] community there were from the beginning certain common interests the safeguarding of which had to be handed over to individuals, true, under the control of the community as a whole, adjudication of disputes; repression of abuse of authority by individuals; control of water supplies, especially in hot countries; and finally, when conditions were absolutely primitive, religious functions. Such officers are found in aboriginal communities of every period—in the oldest German marks and even today in India. They are naturally endowed with a certain measure of authority and are the beginnings of state power... It is

not necessary for us to examine here how this independence of social functions in relation to society increased with time until it developed into domination over society; how he who was originally the servant, where conditions were favourable, changed into lord; how this lord, depending on the conditions, emerged as an Oriental despot or satrap.... However great the number of despotisms which rose and fell in Persia and India, each was fully aware that above all it was the entrepreneur responsible for the collective maintenance of irrigation throughout the river valleys without which no agriculture was possible. It was reserved for the entitled English to lose sight of this in India: they let the irrigation canals and sluices fall into decay, and are now at last discovering through the regularly recurring famines that they have neglected the one activity which might have made their rule in India at least as legitimate as that of their predecessors". (pp. 166–67)

5. "Where the ancient communities have continued to exist, they have for thousands of years formed the basis for the cruellest form of the state, Oriental despotism, from India to Russia". (p. 168)
6. "Commodity production, however, is by no means the only form of social production. In the ancient Indian communities and in the family communities of southern Slavs, products are not transformed into commodities. The members of the community are directly associated for production; the work is distributed according to tradition and requirements; and likewise the products to the extent that they are destined for consumption. Direct social production and direct distribution preclude all exchange of commodities, therefore also the transformation of the products into commodities (at any rate within the community) and consequently their transformation into *values*". (p. 294)
7. "All religion, however, is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. In the beginning of history, it was the forces of nature which first so reflected, and which in the course of further evolution underwent the most manifold and varied personifications among the various peoples. This early

process has been traced back by comparative mythology at least in the case of the Indo-European peoples, to its origin in the Indian Vedas....” (p. 300)

7. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 26, pp. 129–276.

1. “In the east the middle stage of barbarism commenced with the domestication of milk and meat-yielding cattle, while plant cultivation appears to have remained unknown until well into this period. The domestication and breeding of cattle and the formation of large herds seem to have been the cause of the differentiation of the Aryans and the Semites from the remaining mass of barbarians. Names of cattle are still common to the European and the Asiatic Aryans, the names of cultivable plants hardly at all. The formation of herds led in suitable places to pastoral life among the Semites, on the grassy plains of the Euphrates and Tigris; among the Aryans on those of India, of the Oxus and the Jaxartes, of the Don and the Dnieper”. (p. 137)
2. “Furthermore this system [of consanguinity] exists in full force among all American Indians (no exceptions as yet have been discovered) but also prevails unchanged among the aborigines of India, among the Dravidian tribes in the Deccan and the Gaura tribes in Hindustan. The terms of kinship current among the Tamils of South India and the Seneca Iroquois in the State of New York are identical even at the present day for more than two hundred relationships. And among these tribes in India, too, as among all the American Indians, the relationship arising out of the prevailing form of the family stand in contradiction to the system of consanguinity... A system which is generally prevalent throughout America, which likewise exists in Asia among peoples of an entirely different race, and more or less modified forms of which abound everywhere throughout Africa and Australia, needs to be historically explained....” (p. 140)
3. “...this or a similar form of group marriage provides the simplest explanation of the reports by Herodotus and other ancient writers concerning community of wives among savage and barbarous peoples. This also applies to the description of the Tikurs of Oudh (north of the Ganges) given by Watson and Kaye in *The People of the India* [Vol. II, p. 85]:

“‘They live together’ (that is sexually) ‘almost indiscriminately in large communities, and when people are regarded as married the tie is but nominal’”. (p. 151)

4. “Westermarck (pp. 28 and 29) adduces a whole series of examples of such periodical Saturnalian feasts during which the old free sexual intercourse comes into force again for a short period as for example, among the Hos, the Santals, the Panjas and Kotars of India, among some African peoples” (pp. 159–60)
5. “In India, the household community with common tillage of the soil was already mentioned by Nearchus, at the time of Alexander the Great and exists to this day in the Punjab and the entire North-Western part of the country”. (p. 168)
6. “Actually, polygamy on the part of a man was clearly a product of slavery and limited to a few exceptional positions. In the Semitic patriarchal family, on the patriarch himself or a couple of his sons lived in polygamy; the others had to be content with one wife each. It remains the same today throughout the Orient. Polygamy is privilege of the rich and of the nobility, the wives being chiefly recruited by the purchase of female slaves; the mass of the people live in monogamy. Just such an exception is provided by polyandry in India and Tibet, the certainly not uninteresting origin of which from group marriage requires investigation; it appears to be much more generous than the harem system of the Mohammedans. At least, among the Nairs in India, the men, in groups of three, four or more have, to be sure, one wife in common; but each of them can simultaneously have a second wife in common with three or four other men, and, in the same way, a fourth, and so on ... it is a special form of group marriage, the men living in polygamy, the women in polyandry”. (pp. 169–70)
7. “But man did not remain in this [hunting and gathering] stage everywhere. In Asia he found animals that could be domesticated and bred in captivity. The wild buffalo cow had to be hunted down; the domesticated one gave birth to a calf once a year, and provided milk into the bargain. A number of the most advanced tribes — Aryans, Semites, also, perhaps, the Turanians — made first the

domestication, and later the breeding and tending of cattle their principal occupation Pastoral tribes separated themselves from the remaining mass of barbarians: *the first great social division of labour*". (p. 259)

8. Preface of 1888 by Engels to Karl Marx, *Speech on the Question of Free Trade*: M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 26, p. 522.

"It was under the fostering wing of protection that the system of modern industry – production by steam-moved machinery – was hatched and developed in England during the last third of the 18th century... The succession of south American colonies from the rule of their European mother countries, the conquest by England of all French and Dutch colonies worth having, the progressive subjugation of India, turned the people of all these immense territories into customers for English goods. England thus supplemented the protection she practices at home, by the Free Trade she forced upon her possible customers abroad".

9. Engels's Preface to the English edition of his *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1892, reprinted in Marx and Engels, *On Britain*, Moscow, 1953, pp.17–32, contains a reference (p. 18) to development of colonial markets for English manufacture at an increasing rate after the crisis of 1847: "In India millions of hand-weavers were finally crushed out by the Lancashire power-loom".

From Engels' Correspondence

1. Letter to Marx, 30 July, 1851 (M & E., *CW*, Vol. 38, p. 395):
 "Provided nothing toward happens within the next 6 weeks this year's cotton crop [throughout the world] will amount to 3000,000 bales or 1,20 million to 1,350 million in weight... At the same time symptoms of declining trade: East India is overstocked and is crying out for a STOPPAGE of imports of cotton goods; in this country the market for yarn and cloth still upset by fluctuating prices – if the CRASH in the market coincides with such a gigantic crop, things will be cheery indeed".
2. Letter to Marx, 12 April 1865 (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 42, p. 141):
 "*Ad vocem* [regarding] COTTON crisis, things are looking quite cheerful here [at Manchester]... The bills which were drawn from India against the white cotton, run out in the next six weeks, and there will be many more besides Joyce who will come to grief".
3. Letter to Marx, 25 May 1866 (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 42, p. 279):

“But the colossal losses on cotton which occurred simultaneously therein [with the ‘collapse of the LIMITED LIABILITY and FINCANCING swindles’] threaten to make it a grave matter here, so many houses here [Manchester] and in Liverpool are entangled in it through their branches in Bombay, etc”.

4. Letter to Marx, 29 January 1867 (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 42, p. 345):

“India, China, Levant, etc., grossly oversupplied [with English cotton goods], in consequence of which CALICOS have been almost unsaleable for the last six month... Meanwhile the manufacturers go and send *consignments* of their goods, unsaleable here, to India, China, etc, thereby aggravating the GLUT”.

5. Letter to Marx, 11 December 1868 (M. & E., *CW*, Vol. 43, p. 181):

“Here [Manchester] we have the finest crisis, and this time *pure* (though only relative) overproduction. The spinners and manufacturers for nearly two years now, on their own account, been consigning goods unsaleable here to India and China, thus doubly overloading the overloaded markets. This is no longer possible, and they are failing right and left”.

6. Letter to Kautsky, 12 September 1882 (M. & E., *Sel. Corr.*, p. 423):

“In my opinion... the countries inhabited by a native population which are simply subjugated — India, Algeria, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions — must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat and led as rapidly as possible towards independence. How this process will develop is difficult to say. India will perhaps, indeed, very probably, make a revolution, and as a proletariat in process of self-emancipation cannot conduct any colonial wars, it would have to be allowed to run its course; it would not pass off without all sorts of destruction, of course, but that sort of thing is inseparable from all revolutions”.

7. Letter to C. Schmidt, 27 October 1890 (M. & E., *Sel. Corr.*, p. 502):

“The conquest of India by the Portuguese, Dutch and English between 1500 and 1800 had *imports from* India as its object — nobody dreamt of exporting anything there. And yet what a colossal reaction these discoveries and conquests, brought about solely by trade interests, had upon industry: it

was only the need for *exports* to these countries that created and developed modern large-scale industry”.

8. Letter to N.F. Danielson, 18 June 1892 (M. & E., *Sel. Corr.*, p. 528):

“The introduction of steam engines and working machinery, the attempt to manufacture textile and metal products by modern means of production, at least for home consumption *must* have been made sooner or later [in Russia], but at all events at some period between 1858 and 1888. Had it not been made, your [Russian] domestic patriarchal industry would have been destroyed all the same by English machine competition, and the end would have been — India, a country economically subject to the Great Central Workshop, England. And even India has reacted by protective duties, against English cotton goods....”

APPENDIX

References to Engels’ texts relating to India already printed in *Karl Marx on India*

Practically all articles of Engels relating to India as also extracts from his letters containing references to India during the period 1853–62 have been printed in *Karl Marx on India*, ed. Iqbal Husain, Aligarh Historians Society/ Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2006. For the readers’ convenience a list of these texts and passages is given below with page numbers of that volume.

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