MARXIST

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Editor's Note

In the first contribution to this issue, **Professor K.K. Theckedath** discusses Marx's praxis of the working class saying that the famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach must be seen as a continuum of the earlier 10 theses in the process of Marx's enunciation of the epistemology of the working class based on dialectical materialism.

The refusal to do so has often led to many erroneous conclusions drawn by Marxists. One such, is the distinction drawn between an 'early Marx' and a 'late Marx'. This dividing line is often illustrated by Marx's turn to political economy after he moved to Paris at the end of 1843. It is also attributed to the influence of Engels that Karl Marx moved from philosophy to political economy.

This is a very superficial and an erroneous understanding. Marx himself writes in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* about his inquiry into the Hegelian philosophy of law that led him to the conclusion 'that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind (which was the Hegelian conclusion), but that on the contrary, they originate in the material conditions of life, the totality of which Hegel, following the example of English and French thinkers of the 18th century, embraces within the term "civil society"; that the anatomy of this civil society, however, has to be sought in political economy …'

Marx had independently come to this conclusion. While he was editing the *Deutsch-Franzosische Jahrbucher* in 1844, Engels

was its youngest contributor. One article of Engels, 'Outline of a Critique of Political Economy', laid the foundational principles for the critique of bourgeois political economy and the conclusion that a society without poverty could only be a society without private ownership of means of production. Marx found it fascinating that Engels, through a critique of bourgeois political economy, had independently come to the same conclusion that he had come to through his critique of Hegelian philosophy. It was this that cemented the lifelong collaboration between the two and their joint contributions in the evolution of the Marxist world outlook.

They eventually showed that capitalism never collapses automatically irrespective of the intensity of its crisis. It has to be overthrown by the revolutionary working class. In the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, they spoke of the establishment of working-class rule and concluded that during the period of transformation from a class-divided capitalism to class-less communism there shall be the state of the working class. In this period of political transition, there can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

Following the fascist dictatorships of the 20th century, many Marxists felt uncomfortable with the word 'dictatorship'. Shorn of semantics, the essential point is the character of class rule. As Lenin says in *State and Revolution*, 'The forms of bourgeois states are extremely varied, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism certainly cannot but yield a greater abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat.'

The discussion then proceeds to the law of the tendency of the falling rate of profit. Marx has spoken of tendencies which means that the affected class will seek to counter such tendencies in its own interests. Capitalist exploitation inevitably leads to the tendency of immiseration of the working class. The workers

counter this tendency through the formation of trade unions and the powerful instrument of collective bargaining. Likewise, the capitalists seek to counter the tendency of the falling rate of profit through changes in the organic composition of capital. These, however, do not negate the laws, as shown in this contribution.

Amar Farooqui discusses the dilemma of periodization in Indian history. James Mill, in his *The History of British India* published in 1817, had categorized Indian history into the Hindu period, the Muslim period, and the British period. This became deeply embedded in every study of India and continues to have an influence even today. This converges with communal historiography in providing intellectual sustenance to such religious labelling in the study of Indian history. As Romila Thapar says, such periodization 'is at the root of the ideologies of current religious nationalisms and therefore still plays a role in the politics of South Asia. It has resulted in a distortion of Indian history and has frequently thwarted the search for causes of historical change other than those linked to a superficial assessment of religion'.

At the global level, the Euro-centric periodization of world history into ancient, medieval and modern periods buttressed this tendency. The Renaissance in Europe, which laid emphasis on recreating the glories of the ancient Greco-Roman civilizations underpinned the understanding that the past was glorious while the medieval period was a dark age.

The glory of the past is a common recurrent theme of all revivalist and communal thinking. This also forms a fundamental tenet of the RSS variety of the glories of 'Hindu civilization' and the current Hindutva offensive. As the former RSS *guru* Golwalkar said: 'Those only are nationalist patriots who with the aspiration to glorify the Hindu race and nation next to their heart, are prompted into activity and strive to achieve that goal. All others are either traitors [or] enemies to the national cause …'

The author notes a more acceptable periodization of our

history, into ancient India, early medieval India, medieval India and modern India.

A scientific treatment of the study of Indian history emerged from Marxist scholarship in the 1950s that sought to avoid the pitfalls of a periodization which reinforced communal ideologies. Based on rigorous historical research and understanding, the unfolding of the human–nature dialectic, and the evolution of the tools that helped humans in appropriating nature for their benefit, such studies linked the historical periods with modes of production through developments in technology and forms of surplus extraction. The pioneers of this approach were D.D. Kosambi followed by R.S. Sharma. In parallel, Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya was also marking the changes in technology that impacted the history of Indian philosophy. This approach will have to be carried forward in order to ensure that colonial and communal stereotypes do not continue to influence both the past and the present, thus preventing a scientific study of Indian history.

In pursuance of the CPI(M) Central Committee decision to conduct a year-long observance of the centenary of the formation of the Communist Party of India, *Marxist* is reproducing some documents concerning the rich and glorious history of struggles and sacrifices of Indian communists. In this issue, we have reprinted some extracts from the documents of the **Meerut Conspiracy Case**, which was a landmark in the history of the communist movement in India. The communists and revolutionaries played a leading role in the working-class movement when the world capitalist system was submerged in its worst ever crisis—the great depression. The impact of these working people's actions reflected the burning urge for freedom that influenced the Lahore session of the AICC when the Congress had to adopt the 'Purna Swaraj' slogan. The British were alarmed; unless checked, the national movement could well pass into the hands of the communists and the revolutionaries. The Meerut Conspiracy Case began in March

1929 and lasted for four and a half years.

The first of these documents is the statement by a legal expert explaining the background and details of the case and the movement by a Barrister-at-Law. The document does not reveal his name but says that it was printed in Great Britain by Western Printing Services Ltd., Bristol.

The second document has two brief extracts from the general statement made by the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case when the charges against them were read out in seven different chapters containing multiple sections of violations of law they allegedly committed. They were asked for their response. The general statement of the accused ran into 425 pages which includes a brief exposition of Marxism and the revolutionary tasks of the working class, including the communists' approach towards social institutions like family, religion, women, etc.

It is only after the release of the Meerut prisoners in 1934 that the centre of the Indian communist movement could be established and function properly.