

Introduction to History

Assignment 2

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Based on the given readings, explain how Marxist Historiography can be used to study Indian History. Do you find any Limitations of Marxist Methods? Please elaborate using one incident or aspect from modern Indian history.

“Marxism is not a substitute for thinking, but a tool of analysis”.

Before we get into the use of Marxist historiography to study Indian history, let's first see what this means, so this is one of the four main schools of historiography used by historians to study India and it is based on the ideology of Marxism which itself is a method of socioeconomic analysis using a materialistic interpretation of historical development and due to its focus on materialistic aspects it is also known as historical materialism. Basically, it is a political and economic theory where society has no classes and each and every person within the society works for a common good. It divides society broadly into two new social classes (i) the bourgeoisie, or capitalists who have most of the wealth in the society, and (ii) the proletariat, or workers who must sell their labour to survive because of lack of wealth, on the idea that every society has an exploitative class that has wealth, power, and privilege while the other classes are exploited by them. By doing so it is easier to examine the effects of capitalism on labour, productivity and economic development and advocates an overthrow of capitalism in favour of communism. Marxist historiography uses this method of critical analysis that studies the historical process in terms of class struggle. It uses the lens of class interests to understand the socio-political change in society. The Marxist theory believes that history is about the history of economic development, which depends on the modes of production and their use-value. There are few different stages based on modes of production such as primitive communism consisting of hunter-gatherer societies, slave societies, feudalism consisting of artisans and merchants, mercantilism, and capitalism. In each of these social stages, different people interacted with production in different ways. Any surplus of this production was also distributed differently as well.

Since the Marxist theory is one of the most influential schools in modern historiography, and its methods can be applied to not just European history like during the time of the industrial revolution where workers are exploited by the capitalist system in many ways such as high working hours, low wages, hostile working environment causing health problems and widening the economic gap between society too, but also to any other set of events with a similar socioeconomic basis.

Marxist historiography can also be used to analyse Indian History since it takes into consideration the power dynamic between different classes in society during different periods and how power was distributed amongst these classes and how this distribution changes over time.

especially from the time of the Mughal empire which introduced tax reforms and finance system to promote industry but did not try to change the status of different castes.

Now, let us look at the era of the Mughal empire and British Colonial period till the independence how they lead to the rise of capitalism in India.

The Mughal Empire was the ruling power in India for almost 300 years, and socio-economic development is one of the main characteristics before the start of the Mughal empire era there was a great abundance of land and have a caste system and then concept for hiring servants by landlords to work on unused land in exchange of commodity goods and crop which leads to bringing in the concept of surplus and its management which create opportunity for introducing land revenue and agricultural revenue may be in the form of kind, but the demand was fixed by assessing separately on each individual peasant determined accordingly to his holding, crops and the estimated crop rate upon that area, so as to give the estimate of the total crop. but might subsequently be commuted into cash at market prices and suddenly it turned out to be collecting as much as possible. They were a liberal dynasty, as they respected the religions as long as they paid their taxes. This led to the tolerance of different religions in India. The tolerance towards different religions led to the spread of Marxist ideology among the lower caste Hindus and as it spread, the lower caste demanded more rights and opportunities from the upper castes who had been oppressing them for centuries.

After some years nearly in 1600, the British East India Company came to India as traders for spices for meats; silk, cotton, and indigo dye for raw material; tea, and opium as well. They realised that India has many provincial kingdoms and wanted to concentrate all the resources. Thus, the company started to meddle in Indian politics and started to see a steady rise in its fortunes.

"The first biggest strike from the British on India was the defeat of the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daulah, at the hands of Robert Clive in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. It was followed by the Battle of Buxar in 1764 wherein Captain Munro defeated the joint forces of Mir Qasim of Bengal, Shujaudaula of Awadh and Mughal king Shah Alam II."

Slowly the East India Company started to transform from a trading company to a ruling one and later power was shifted to crown in 1858 they had fulfilled two missions (i) one exploiting trade to grow the treasury of England, and (ii) laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia. The British rule in India was a time of many changes, they broke down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution and set up three departments of Government (i) Finance or the plunder of the interior, (ii) War or the plunder of the exterior and, finally, (iii) the Department of Public Works but they have neglected entirely the third one and focuses on enhancing agricultural output, raw materials and spices for exporting them to England at cheaper rates so they installed irrigation system and set up Railway system for fast and cheap transportation and also imposed high tax rates. They also trained the native army and provides a means of earning to them, replacing spinning wheels with handlooms also known as the Indian handloom. But not all of which were for the better. British colonialism led to the partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1947, and this event still traumatizes both countries to this day. They also created a capitalist system within India and introduced British culture and values. One such innovation allowed workers to own their own land; previously, peasants had been treated like slaves by the feudal system. They also

brought Western ideas with them, such as Marxism-Leninism communism. This ideology is still alive in India today through groups such as the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), who work with other organizations to create a “revolutionary movement” that will lead them out of poverty and exploitation.

A Marxist approach to Indian history can be used to study different parts of history such as India's independence movement against British colonialism, the conflicts created by the Industrial Revolution and the Colonialism in India and the making of the Indian constitution.

Although Marx inspired multitudes of followers due to its image of an ideal society with free education, health and economic equality all people will own all land and profits and no one will oppress others, but many criticize it since it only focuses on surplus and mode of production but not on cultural aspects such as literature, philosophy, folklore, and religion to determine the motivations behind historical events as well as neglects groups in society who are not part of the proletariat. Its method to achieve communism via revolution is always not a good scenario for a country or a region and as it provides economic equality then there will be no incentive for a hard worker and competition leads to low speed or maybe no development as well as creates an empty place for a powerful place can give rise to anarchy and dictatorships and mass destruction like the example of Lenin, Stalin and Mao. It can also lead to a one-sided depiction of events and not account for all factors, which could lead to inaccurate conclusions on what had happened in history.

According to my the thinking of such a society also fascinates me but the ways which are used to achieve this in Marxist theory is not beneficial for any society it will lead to mass destruction before achieving the economic equality defined in it.