

**Introduction to History, HS3.201**  
**End Semester Exam**  
**Date-01/12/2025**

**Maximum Time: 180 Minutes**

**Maximum Marks: 60 (12x5)**

Instructions: Answer any five of the following six questions in approximately 600 words each.

Q1) What do the concepts of, ‘productive forces’ and ‘relations of production’ mean within the Marxist canon and what is the relationship between the two? How does this relationship inform Marx’s theory of historical materialism?

*Productive forces:* (3)

- The extent to which human beings control nature, The things that go into the production of material goods
- Means of production + labour power (explain what is Means of production: all the assets and resources needed to produce goods and services i.e land, raw materials, machinery etc . Labour power : comprises of the actual act of labour required to produce and technical know-how – the knowledge and training required to be possessed by laboureress to do their work so that they can do their job.)
- Ever changing within all social orders: Have an intrinsic tendency to develop and become bigger and better as the material conditions of that social order or mode of production develop further.

*Relations of production* (3)

- People are able to produce jointly by organising in society
- Labour is social in character: According to Marx, the act of production involves people entering into specific relationships with one another. Production occurs solely within these social relationships. These relationships of production are the social connections among individuals involved in the production process. The nature and level of development of the productive forces determine these social relationships.
- In order to produce, people get into definite relations with one another

*Relationship between the two* (2)

- The forces and relations of production are deeply intertwined. The advancement of one leads to an increasing incompatibility or contradiction with the other. In fact, these contradictions between the two aspects of production serve as the driving force behind historical progress.
- The causal chain in historical development can be summarized as follows: the forces of production constitute the base which shapes the superstructure.

Part II: How does this relationship inform Marx’s theory of historical materialism?

*Historical materialism:* (4)

- Aims to understand society as a product of particular material conditions; A materialist conception of history
- Production and the exchange of things produced: the basis of all social structure
- Determines the nature of social relations in all societies through history
- The difference between different stages in history?
- Each stage of historical development is defined by a particular mode of production
- Transition from one mode of production to the other: Can be explained through ‘dialectical materialism’. Dialectics: Two aspects of a contradiction exist both in unity and opposition with one another.

- Nature of all modes of production: The fraught co-existence of exploiter and exploited  
The struggle between them drives social historical change
- Historical progression occurs as a result of the contradictions between each historical epoch being resolved through: The development of the society's productive forces and the transformation of the relations of production through class struggle.

Q2) What were the reasons for the decline of social history and the rise of cultural history? What the discernible shifts in how historians have approached the study of 'culture' as a legitimate field of historical enquiry?

Part 1: What were the reasons for the decline of social history and the rise of cultural history? (3)

- Social history became too broad and all-encompassing. Led to balkanisation of the field – into sub-fields such as feminist history, labour history, Black history etc.
- The link with Marxist historiography was seen as anachronistic: Too concerned with structures and social models. Common people were always seen as members of a class and their actions assessed as such.
- Cultural history was about individuals, attitudes and beliefs.

Part II: What the discernible shifts in how historians have approached the study of 'culture' as a legitimate field of historical enquiry? (9)

Shifts are based on how 'culture; itself is understood: (-2)

- 1) The best of what a society has to offer
- 2) Anything distinctive that a society has to offer

Cultural history hence moves from the first idea of culture to the second , broader one. (-7)  
any 7 WITH explanation

#### *Classic Cultural History*

- The period from 1800-1950
- Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860)
- Johan Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1919)
- The idea of the historian painting a 'portrait of the age'
- Concentration on the history of the 'classics' of an age
- Different from historians of art and literature: Not interested in technique and its history but in form and theme of cultural production which worked as primary source.
- Looking for connections and context in which cultural production takes place.

#### *Cultural history from beyond the discipline*

- Contributions to cultural history from non-professional historians
- Max Weber's "Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism"
- Norbert Elias' history of manners in Western Europe
- Aby Warburg and the symbols found in Classical Art
- The Great Diaspora

#### *A new Cultural history*

- Emerging from a new-found interest in 'popular culture', All things are culture and culture is everywhere
- The meanings, discourses and politics embedded in everyday, routine, ordinary things
- It could be about a particular period – a decade in history or a particular year or, a century, a genre of music, fashion, dance form, rituals , festivals etc

**NOTE:** More elaboration on these points needed. Merely mentioning them is not enough.

Q3) In what ways does post-structuralism diverge from structuralism? Reflect on why Jacques Derrida's theorisation of 'deconstruction' is considered a cornerstone of post-structural thought.

Answer Rubric (6+6)

Part 1: In what ways does post-structuralism diverge from structuralism?

- For structuralists language has universal meaning: It emphasises the underlying structures and systems governing language and meaning; For poststructuralists language is unstable and open to diverse interpretations: It critiques the idea of stable structures. Argues that meaning is unstable and context dependent.
- Structuralism only abides by the idea of a sign (composed of signifier and the signified); Poststructuralism goes beyond the sign to bring its historicism and context into perspective: Meaning (ascribed to signs) is not absolute and can change based on the historical context and who is doing the reading.
- Structuralism analyses texts and culture through binary oppositions (for example good vs, evil, male vs female, life and death, hot and cold etc); Poststructuralism, on the other hand insists upon 'deconstructing' binary opposition so as to study their inherent fluidity and instability
- Structuralism considers the author's intent and the text as an expression of underlying structures and codes.; Poststructuralism heralds the "death of the author"
- The reader then becomes the central figure in poststructuralist thought
- Hence poststructuralism is more of a philosophical movement rather than a linguistic one like structuralism

Part II: Reflect on why Jacques Derrida's theorisation of 'deconstruction' is considered a cornerstone of post-structural thought.

Post-structuralism essentially emphasises that the world around us and the sense we make of it has no given, structural meaning but that meaning is dependent on who is reading a text or culture and in what context. This instability and impermanence of meaning is what Derrida's deconstruction demonstrates through the dismantling of the following two binary oppositions and others beyond them:

- Philosophy or knowledge and language: He begins with the elemental question: What is truer: Thoughts (knowledge) or our ability to express them (language)? For a long time, Western philosophy has operated on the binary opposition between knowledge and language wherein knowledge is the privileged part of the binary opposition. Derrida challenges this through his conceptualisation of deconstruction by saying they do not exist in separate realms and are inherently, intimately interrelated, and interdependent.
- This is his opposition to the traditional metaphysics of 'presence': the notion that someone's presence guarantees the truth of what is spoken
- Writing and speech: This leads to other binary opposition Derrida challenges between writing and speech. Conventional philosophy has privileged speech over writing as it is perceived to be twice removed from "pure" thought. Derrida challenges this assumption by emphasising that the speech seems more immediate and present to us because we have already internalised its rules and that the same rules apply to both writing and speech.
- Deconstruction problematises binary oppositions in general as opposed to structuralists like Claude Levi Strauss. Binary oppositions make us see the world only as extreme dualities and that reduces its complexity. One part of the binary opposition always becomes the dominant one which is not a very useful lens to understand the world from. Also, they downplay that there can be a range of other

layers of identity and existence between the two parts of a binary opposition – black and white (what about the other colours), man and woman (what about the other sexualities), Western and non-Western (too simplistic a categorisation of the world)

- Deconstruction's focus on establishing the instability of meaning and the varied, dynamic nature of interpretation is presented through his formulation of the concept of *differance* (to defer and to differ) which essentially says that we can never truly know the meaning of anything because meaning is constantly dependent on how it differed from all other kinds of meanings that the same thing/idea/ word/gesture etc can have and it is also permanently deferred or delayed : refer to slide 19 lecture 19 for more on *differance*
- Discussion on Derrida's critique of Logocentrism and embrace of aporia

Q4) What do you understand by postcolonial criticism? Edward Said, one of the most important postcolonial scholars of all time described Orientalism as both a field of knowledge and a field of power. Reflect on what he means by this.

Part 1: What do you understand by postcolonial criticism? (8)

This part has to be answered in two sub-parts: What is postcolonialism and then what is postcolonial criticism

*What is postcolonialism:* (2)

- Can be understood in two ways:

- 1) A historical period: all that comes after colonialism. Read in this way, it essentially implies the period following the end of colonial rule in the former colonies of the various European empires. Hence for example India gained independence from British Colonial rule on 15 Aug 1947 and hence post 1947, it is a postcolonial nation.
- 2) The other way for approaching postcolonialism, which is related to the first but also broadens its ambit considerably it to look at it as a lens/ a conceptual framework for reading and making sense of and critiquing texts coming out of a colonial system.

- *What is postcolonial criticism* (6)

—Understood this way postcolonial criticism addressed the long-lasting consequences of colonialism as viewed by postcolonial artists, authors and historians coming from these postcolonial contexts ; - Postcolonial criticism then seeks to understand and highlight the continuity of the impact of the colonial encounter (—1)

- It is Rooted in one simple observation:

- Decolonisation did not end the hegemony and dominance of the former colonial powers (—1)
- The power they continued to exercise and hold was asserted in two ways:

- 1) Directly: The former empires remained centres of economic power. They controlled most of the world's natural resources, agricultural and industrial production (—1)
- 2) Indirectly: By influencing postcolonial education system (for example why English is so important to know and speak fluently in most postcolonial countries) and controlling the culture industry i.e. the ways in which the postcolonial world is represented in media (—1)

- It Emphasises on

- i) 'Reading from the margins' to identify the bias in texts: why do the central characters in stories when told by the West, even when they are about non-Western cultures,

always white. Why do characters who are not White always portrayed in certain stereotypical ways? (—1)

ii) Re-writing texts and history in ways that placed these marginal characters at the centre of the story so that they become the main drivers of the plot instead of those looking at it from the margins. (—1)

Part II: Edward Said, one of the most important postcolonial scholars of all time described Orientalism as both a field of knowledge and a field of power. Reflect on what he means by this. (4)

Orientalism:

- An actual academic discipline to study “oriental” cultures as a way to exoticize, frame and - ultimately control them. This is what he meant when he said that ‘Orientalism’ is both a field of knowledge and a field of power.
- Only ‘Orient’ is incapable of studying itself. This must be done by the “rational” West.
- Creating the binary between “us” and “them”, the creation of stereotypes of the ‘other’; Establishes the superiority of the west and hence the justification why it must rule over and ‘civilize’ the “orient”
- Examples (any from the ones discussed in class through the audio-visual material)

Refer to the relevant slides on this from the lecture on postcolonialism.

Q5) What do you understand by subaltern studies and how did it challenge colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist interpretations of Indian history? Discuss why is David Hardiman’s book *The Coming of the Devi* (1987) considered an important piece of scholarship to have come out of the Subaltern Studies collective.

Part I: What do you understand by subaltern studies and how did it challenge colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist interpretations of Indian history? (This part of the question should cover the following points) (9):

1) What is subaltern studies (—3)

- A new approach to restore history of the subordinated
- Started by an editorial collective of six scholars (later joined by more): They started the journal Subaltern Studies. Ranajit Guha, one of the school’s most prominent historians, was the founding editor
- What does ‘Subaltern’ mean? Discuss here the original usage of the word and the context in which subaltern historians use it.

2) What do subaltern historians’ study/do when they try to write the history of subaltern groups? (—3)

- Analyses the binary relationship of the subaltern and the ruling classes
- Studies the interplay of dominance and subordination in colonial systems
- Looks for subaltern agency, Reads the colonial archives ‘against the grain’ to find subaltern voices

3) How was it a point of departure from colonial, nationalist and Marxist historiography (—3)

- Colonialist historiography: Focused on justifying colonial rule and downplaying the significance and force of the anti-colonial struggle.
- Nationalist historiography: Focused on writing a nationalist account of the anti-colonial struggle and the role played by its prominent leaders. Highlights the role played by the Indian National Congress; presents the struggle as a unified one against a common

enemy – colonial rule. Downplays fragmentation or the presence of separate class and communal interests within the struggle.

- Marxist historiography: Critical of both the colonialist and nationalist historiography. Foregrounds the systemically exploitative nature of colonial rule as well as the elitist nature of the leadership of the anti-colonial struggle under the Congress. Highlights the centralism of class and class-struggle to the anti-colonial movement by emphasising that different classes had different class-interests and were not always working in tandem with the nationalist movement.

Subaltern Studies: Critiques all three by saying that they rob common people of their agency. In the effort to write big-picture history, the subalterns either remain completely absent or only as passive recipients of 'orders' from above rather than actors with their own way of making sense of the world. The subaltern, contrary to Marxist historiography, is also not only a member of a class. They can have multiple and overlapping subjectivities based on gender, ethnicity, religious identity, regional and linguistic identity etc. Their action might be guided by their religiosity and does not always align with the nationalist position.

Part II: Discuss why is David Hardiman's book *The Coming of the Devi* (1987) considered an important piece of scholarship to have come out of the Subaltern Studies collective (3).

Refer to the reading – Book review by Surinder Jetley.

- The book is about the history of the Devi movement among the adivasis in South Gujarat in the early part of this century. The study is a part of the wider subaltern studies project, the primary aim of which is 'to understand the consciousness that informed and still informs political action taken by the subaltern classes on their own, independently of any elite initiative.'

- In the 1920's an indigenous adivasi movement for a strong internal reform in their established way of life was witnessed by almost all the major adivasi jatis in the middle Indian region. This movement was largely initiated and carried on by the adivasis though many elements of the nationalist movement also harmonized with it. Therefore the nationalist historians attribute it to the nationalist upsurge. In South Gujarat, the Devi movement had started long before Gandhi appeared on the stage. Yet history records only the paternalistic bourgeois middleclass social worker who appears at a late stage to 'uplift' the adivasi and ignores the adivasis' own contribution to their history.

- The socialist historians were no better, for they ignored the centrality of the religiosity of the adivasi ideology, dismissing such movements as 'petty bourgeois' and imposed from above.

Q6) Write a short note on the following:

i) Contribution/compensation history: what is contribution history (4)

- Late 1960s, early 1970s: Women historians, on the back of second wave feminism went looking for the women in history (1)
- What they found were only glimpses of certain kinds of women who found mention in the pages of history but only briefly and incomprehensively. This kind of history was labeled by the feminist historians looking at it as compensation or contribution history. (1)
- It had the following broad characteristics: (0.5 each)

- Included discussions on women in standard histories, Treated women according to masculine standards of significance, Biographies of women worthies, Focus on exceptional women
- Women standing alongside men (just also there), The wives of the working class
- Sometimes they appeared in histories in which they were seen as ‘problems’ or ‘deviants’
- What we got to know was what **men** thought about women

Feminist critique of contribution history (2)

- They used traditional conceptual frameworks, Essentially men’s history masquerading as that of women, Merely slotted women into the empty spaces of male-defined historical scholarship
  - Marginality was maintained
- NOTE:** These points need to be elaborated upon based on Jill Mathew’s article. Merely stating them as they are listed on the slides will not suffice.

## ii) Episteme and archaeology in Foucauldian theory (6)

### **Episteme: (–3)**

- The way in which a society thinks at any given point of time: refers to the orderly ‘unconscious’ structures underlying the production of scientific knowledge in a particular time and place. It is the ‘epistemological field’ which forms the conditions of possibility for knowledge in a given time and place
- A shift from one ‘episteme’ to another allows for new discoveries, It also simultaneously limits some other thoughts and ideas
- The episteme is the pattern that can be seen across various disciplines like economics, linguistics, and science.
- Three epistemes and their possibilities in Foucault’s *Order of Things* (1966): *Renaissance* episteme (marked by the idea of resemblance), *Classical* episteme (marked by the idea of representation or categorization) and *Modern* episteme (marked by historicity).
- Epistemes provide a sense of temporality that goes deeper than the conventional periodization used by historians which Foucault felt was too surface level.
- The methodology identifying *epistemes* – **Archaeology**

### **Archaeology: (–3)**

- Foucault’s use of the term **archaeology** helps to distinguish his historical work from mainstream *history*. Mainstream history is longitudinal: it studies the development of something over a period of time. In contrast, archaeology is cross-sectional: it studies many different things that occurred at the same time.
- Archaeologists study artifacts of a single time: the pottery, building materials, books, instruments, and artwork of a particular stratum. Archaeologists try to make sense of how all of those various artifacts fit together. Foucault’s archaeological approach to history is similar. He examined several different things that occurred at the same time. For example, he studied artifacts of eighteenth-century European linguistics, economics, and science. Then he tried to figure out how those artifacts made sense together.
- Archaeologists try to explain what was going on in one selected historical time. When he conducted archaeological studies, Foucault was particularly interested in knowledge, and he used the term **episteme** to refer to the knowledge system of a particular time.