

# MARXIST INDIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

**Karl Marx (1818–1883)** takes the credit for developing a philosophical system which was partly the work of his life collaborated with Friedrich Engels, who was a German philosopher. Marx's first contribution to the understanding of historical process was the development of dialectical materialism. Dialectic meaning contradiction which emerged in past from Marx's criticism of Hegel. In Marxist dialectic, social relation made of opposite forces: thesis and antithesis. Marx claimed that the agent of change was 'class struggle' between the opposite forces which eventually led to a new mode of production. At the center of dialectical materialism, also known as historical materialism, was the notion that humans are social animals forming societies and maintaining relations with other humans. The key factor in this relationship between men mainly food clothing and shelter thus the condition of material determines social existence. Using this as the starting point, Marx periodized history according to the material circumstances of a given time. The slave mode of production was associated with the ancient period. The feudal mode of production was associated with the medieval period. The capitalist mode of production was associated with the modern period.

The Marxist concept of history states that the economic system directly influences the nature of ideas, institutional politics and the government. The doctrine of class struggle is a vital feature of historical material. To Marx materialism is to be understood in contrast to supernaturalism and all that associated with the speculation.

**Karl Marx left behind two legacies:**

**1. History as totality:** universal history in which also society experience struggle between exploiter and exploited class which automatically lead to the breakdown of the capitalist system and bringing about a classless society. All history is a history of class conflict.

**2. History as idea** which is summed up as "*consciousness of man does not interfere their existence, rather social existence determines their consciousness.*"

In the Indian context, the Marxist School of historiography may be understood through the study of the works of Marxist historians such as DD Kosambi on ancient India, MD Habib on mediaeval India and KM Panikar on modern India.

History according to Kosambi is in the representation in chronological order of successive developments in the means and relations of production. The three essential tools for the study of Indian history are archaeology and anthropology and philology (the study of languages).

Society according to Kosambi is held together not by family ties but by bonds of production and mutual exchange of commodities. A particular society is characterized by what it regards as necessary, basically those who gather or produce things by what implements or rules, who is associated with production and by what right, divine or legal; who owns the land, who controls the disposal of surplus and regulates quantity and supply. According to him, material exchanges lead to exchange of ideas. Superstitions and rituals cannot produce meaningful understanding of culture. The more important question is not the issue of who was the king but whether people used a plough, light or heavy; that is the mode of production at a given time in history.

DD Kosambi wrote the "Introduction to Indian history", "Myth and Reality of Ancient India", "Culture and civilization of Ancient India" and many others which emphasize on using archaeology and anthropology as necessary prerequisites in historical writing.

*MD Habib is referred to as the father of Muslim history*, belonging to the Marxist School like other Marxist historians he attempts to understand medieval Indian history in the larger context by using the economic interpretation to understand Islam and history in India.

KM Panikar wrote about 60 books, covering not only the themes of modern Indian history but also of Africa and China. Some of his well known books are "Origin and evolution of kinship in India", "Revolution of Africa, India and China". For Panikar, true history lies in the study of activities of the people and

according to him, historical research should not only be related to compiling details but also should focus on intelligent analysis of causes, conditions and processes.

The true history of India of the British period according to him was not about the activities of East India Company all the British crown but the activities of the people and how they responded and reacted to the call of the government, ultimately forcing the Imperial power to quit India.

Karl Marx based his ideas on how to change the world using a scientific analysis of society through history. The Indian Scholars used this materialistic approach of social change and then I transform the earlier ways of history writing in India. The biggest single achievement of Marxist history in India was this place in the dynastic model of viewing the past associated much with the imperialist school of Indian historiography and it was taken over with some changes by Nationalist historiographers. .