

## SECOND LECTURE

### MARXIST PHILOSOPHY

What is Marxism? Marxism is the science of the development of nature, society and human thought.

"Marxism", says Lenin, "*is the system of Marx's views and teachings. Marx is the genius who continued and consummated the three main ideological currents of the nineteenth century.... classical German philosophy, classical English political economy and French socialism combined with French revolutionary doctrines in general.*"

Marxism arose in the last century in Europe. It arose when capitalism had taken firm roots in a number of European countries and was going full steam ahead. Capitalist society is, as we have seen, a class society. It does not give rise to the capitalist class alone, but to another class also, viz. the class of modern industrial workers.

And as soon as the two classes are born, they begin to clash for the simple reason that they have opposing interests. The capitalists cannot live and prosper without constantly attacking the working class.

And the battle royal is fought in right earnest in all fields—economic, political and ideological. Capital enters the field with its own political economy, with its own politics and with its own ideology. The working class is naturally called upon to counter these attacks with its own economy, its own politics and its own ideology.

That is why it is the culmination and consummation of the three main ideological currents of the 19th century: classical German philosophy, classical English political economy and French socialism, combined with French revolutionary doctrine in general.

Marxist philosophy is thus the philosophy of the working class, an ideological weapon in its hands, a weapon with which it fights other philosophies, mainly capitalist philosophy, and arms its own class for the final showdown against capitalism and for the establishment of a socialist society.

#### *Materialism: What It Means and Does Not Mean?*

Marxist philosophy is materialist in outlook. What does it mean? It means that it rejects idealism totally. "Marx was", says Lenin, "a materialist and especially a follower of Ludwig Feuerbach... To Marx Feuerbach's historic and 'epoch-making' significance lay in his having resolutely broken with Hegel's idealism and in his proclamation of materialism...."

Before we delve further into the matter, let us get rid of a very vulgar and crude attack made against us, since Charvakas of old. Charvakas were materialists. They openly declared: "How can a dead body turned into ashes ever come back?" Their idealist opponents instead of taking up the challenge straight, twisted their argument and added words which were certainly not theirs: "So even at the risk of running into debt let us fill our bellies with sumptuous food."

The idealists thus tried to pose as the champions of 'idealism', i.e. of devotion to an ideal and to vilify the materialists as gluttons, bent on satisfying their low sensual needs. This charge is often made against us, communists, in India and elsewhere.

Let these hypocrites ponder over the lives of Marx, Engels and Lenin or any ordinary member of the Communist Party like that brave young girl Zoya or a Fuchik. Let them ponder over the lives of Ajoy Ghosh and Bharadwaj of the CPI. For all the material wealth of the world, they did not give up their noble ideals even for a moment. Marx led a life of extreme poverty and could not find the wherewithal to give adequate medical help to his only

son on his deathbed. But he did not flinch even for a moment from the pursuit of his great ideal: emancipation of the working class. Zoya faced death without fear and even at the stakes declared her invincible faith in the ultimate victory of the working class over fascism. The sacrifices made by Ajoy Ghosh in the pursuit of his ideal are too well known to be repeated.

So, when we say we, communists, are materialists, what do we mean?

### *What Comes First? Matter or Spirit?*

"To Hegel....", wrote Marx, "the process of thinking, which under the name of 'the idea', he even transforms into an independent subject is the demiurgos (the creator, the maker) of the real world... with me, on the contrary, *the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.*"

Thus, the real difference between materialism and idealism is that the materialist considers nature to be primary and thought, spirit as secondary, while the idealist maintains that thought, spirit or idea existed before nature and that nature is, in one way or another, the creation of spirit and depended upon it.

*What is primary—matter or spirit?* The answer to this question is what divides materialism from idealism.

Marxism maintains that man with his thinking brain is a product of nature and not *vice versa*. The mental world is nothing but the reflection in the brain. Nature has been there long, long before the thinking brain appeared in this world and as such, thought, idea cannot take precedence over nature, matter.

Religious ideas, in one way or another, are based on idealism. *Mayawad* of Shankar looks upon consciousness, the supreme *Brahman* as the only reality. It looks upon the material world as an illusion. It is said that a *Mayawadin* was passing through a street after he had given a profound lecture on *Mayawad*, when suddenly a mad

elephant came rushing through the street. Everyone, including the great thinker, ran away for fear of death. A disciple of the great man asked him: "Sir! If the whole world is nothing but *Maya*, why did you run away?" Pat came the reply: "Oh! My running away was as much *Maya* as the world is *Maya*." The argument, though brilliant, clearly fails to answer the philosophical question.

### *Religion and Idealism*

Most of the religions speak of Ishwar (God) as the creator of this world, whether personal or impersonal. The Hindu religion speaks of *Brahman*, the supreme consciousness, from which sprang the world. Islam starts from "Allah-ho Akbar!" (God is Great!) The Holy Bible, right in the beginning, tells us the story of how God created this world about 5,000 years ago. According to it, he went on creating the whole world from the stars to the smallest little creature for six whole days and then rested on the seventh day.

Not all the religions preach God. Buddhism for instance is silent about God. But none of them is free from idealism in one form or another. Buddhism does talk of *Karma* and rebirth. All religions speak of a heaven (and naturally, of hell, too) somewhere outside and above the material world. Their idea of heaven is, however, absolutely materialist. They talk of gardens, delicious drinks, beautiful women, wonderful singers and dancers and hold out a promise for the believers of this 'heavenly' life after death.

### *Science Not Superstitions*

This leads to superstitions and to denial of science. Every progressive philosophy had to fight idealism. *Charvakas* were murdered and eminent religious reformers like Martin Luther and Bruno were persecuted throughout their lives. Bruno was even burnt at the stake. Scientists, who based themselves firmly on the nature, were never tolerated by the church and the state of the

exploiting class. Copernicus and Galileo were hunted by the church and, in the modern times, Albert Einstein, by the fascist state. Of course, this does not mean that they were completely free of idealist ideas.

In India, most of the medieval religious sects based themselves on the Geeta. Geeta is permeated through and through with idealism. The great saints of India preach social equality but did not challenge the basic idealism of the *Bhagwad Geeta*. Dnaneshwar and Tukaram were the founders, so to say, of the *Warkari* sect in Maharashtra. They preached that all are equal in the eyes of God and thus led the crusade against social inequality. Dnaneshwar opened the doors of knowledge which was till then the sacred preserve of the Brahmins, to all, including women and shudras by bringing out a Marathi commentary on the Geeta. But the idea of God was never challenged.

*Marxism, basing itself firmly on the primacy of nature, rejects idealism completely. It gives no quarter to superstitions and bases itself squarely on science, i.e. the study of nature as it is without preconceptions and always ready to change its ideas in conformity with the changes in the material world and consequently in conformity with the latest developments in science.*

#### *Marxism: A Guide to Action*

*Marxism is thus not a dogma but a guide to action. The primary concern of Marxism is to change society. Marxism with its strictly materialist outlook sets about this task without any preconceptions, idealist conceptions and relies firmly on the study of society as it is and in conformity with natural scientific laws of social development.*

That is why Marx fought the utopian socialists who propagated ideas about an ideal world. Marx unravelled the laws of social development and came to the conclusion that socialism is the next stage of society. He refused to paint an idealist picture of the future communist society because data supplied by nature, society were insufficient for a

detailed description of communism. He restricted himself to what could be predicted on the basis of the natural laws of social development.

Religions, basing themselves on the idea of God, take a pessimistic view of life and lead to fatalism. That is why Krishna says to Arjun, "All this is preordained. You are merely an instrument in the hands of fate. Do thou thy ordained duty and leave everything to me." And Tukaram, the great saint, says: "Man should reconcile himself to the position allotted to him by God, maintaining a feeling of serenity in mind."

*Marxist materialism is, on the other hand, an optimistic life-asserting and radiant philosophy entirely alien to pessimism and that is what gives courage to every communist that the ultimate triumph of communism is certain, whatever hardships he may have to face in the revolutionary process.*

#### *Development of Materialism*

*Materialism bases itself strictly on science. Naturally, though it arose many centuries ago, it was extremely naive in the beginning. With the advance of science, materialism has also advanced.*

Later, in the 17th and 18th centuries, science advanced by leaps and bounds. Mathematics and physics registered great advance. Newton discovered the laws of mechanics, which naturally gave rise to *mechanical materialism*. *Marxism*, the modern materialism, is *dialectical and historical*. Materialist philosophers of Newton's times looked upon the world as immutable and unchangeable on the whole eternally repeating the same cycle. Hindu mythology, for instance, talks of man as passing through 48 lakhs of lives turn by turn and repeating the process over and over again till 'liberated'. *Marxism*, basing itself on further advances in science, rejected mechanical materialism. It looks upon the world as a constantly changing world, changing not on the basis of outside forces but on the basis of *intrinsic* forces. We will deal with dialectics in detail.

## Basic Conception of Matter

What is "matter"?

To pre-Marxian materialists matter meant only physical bodies and the tiny particles. They looked upon atoms as the "bricks of universe". To them atom was indivisible.

"Matter", wrote Lenin, "*is the objective reality given to us in sensations.*" It is not limited only to heavenly bodies down to atoms. Everything existing outside and independent of our mind is of a material nature. Not only atoms, not only the "particles" which go to make an atom, but radiation, the electro-magnetic, nuclear and gravitational fields are also included in this conception. It is the infinite multitudes of worlds in an infinite universe together with the fields stated above. So wrote Lenin "*The sole 'property' of matter with whose recognition philosophical materialism is bound up is the property of being an objective reality, of existing outside our mind.*"

Matter is both uncreatable and indestructible—matter in the above sense of the word.

## Spiritual and Material Life

*Marxism thus does not deny the existence and importance of spirit, of ideas, of culture.* Marxism fully subscribes to the view that "man does not live by bread alone". Marxism fully appreciates and values man's urge for a higher intellectual, cultural and spiritual life. But basing itself strictly on the primacy of matter over spirit, *it looks upon material life as the basis of spiritual life.*

An artist, for instance, is deeply devoted to arts. A lover of music often faces all sorts of material difficulties just for the pursuit of his art. And that is extremely good. All that Marxism says is that material things, however, always come first. They have precedence over ideas, over arts. What is a musician without his musical instruments? What is a poet without his rich emotional experience born out of the society around him? What is a scientist without his library and his laboratory?

Rich spiritual life is possible only on the basis of a rich material life. This interdependence of the spiritual life and the material life and the precedence of material life over spiritual life are a basic conception of Marxism.

## Importance of Ideas

It should be carefully borne in mind at the same time that Marxism never looked down upon ideas or their role as such. In fact, Marxism maintains that *ideas, when they take hold of the minds of millions of people, become a tremendous material force.* What is the French Revolution without its Rousseau? What is Shivaji's movement without its Ramdas and Tukaram? What is modern scientific and technological development without Faraday, Edison and Einstein? Science studies nature and on the basis of this study, generalises and discovers certain laws and develops its theory. This theory, in turn makes further research possible, on the basis of which there is a further study of natural phenomenon and processes, which leads to further development of science on a higher scale. We will discuss this development in more detail later.

It is on the basis of this scientific philosophy that Marxism calls upon us, communists, to fight for socialism. Marxism tells us not to look for a happy life somewhere in the skies, in a nonmaterial heaven. Marxism tells us that, with the giant instruments of production that man now commands, a rich, happy life is possible here and now. All that we have to do is to organise the toiling people, to arm them with the revolutionary ideas of Marxism, lead them in their class battles, take over political power, take over these powerful instruments of production, establish socialism and secure a rich material and spiritual life for all.

## Marxist Dialectics: Motion and Its Laws

Marx has said in one of his works, "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."

The question is how to change it.

How to achieve socialism? Is it possible to change society? Is it possible to destroy the hated system of capitalism and instal a socialist system in its place? How can it be done? Who will do it? Or, will it come automatically?

And that brings us to the problem of change. There was a time when many in India felt that the Indian society had become so ossified that it would never change. After the defeat of the Indian Revolution in 1857, things seemed so hopeless that many a man lost all hope for a better Indian society. They said, "India is an ice-cold ball. It will never warm up." Fatalism, frustration seized them. And that feeling had to be fought before masses could be roused and the job was done by our great social and political reformers and revolutionaries like Tilak, Keshab Chandra, Phulay and others. Tilak gave an "active" interpretation to Bhagwat Geeta in his *Geeta Rahasya*. He laid stress on *karma* (action) and deprecated *sanyas* (inaction). He laid stress on the words "Take you to ordained action! For action is superior to inaction."

And we see that our society, which seemed to be a dead lifeless ball, *did* move. It has moved many times in the past and is moving and will continue to move in the future.

#### *Motion: The Very Mode of Existence of Matter*

In fact, Marxism, basing itself strictly on natural phenomena and natural processes asserts that matter is in constant motion. *Motion is the very mode of existence of matter.* Matter without motion is unthinkable.

This is borne out by the study of every branch of science; from astronomy to atomic science. Astronomy is the science of the movement of celestial bodies, movement of planets, of stars, of galaxies and nebulae. Physics is the science which deals at every step with the movement of particles and radiation. Mechanics deals with mechanical motions, sound with the movement of air molecules, heat with the movement of molecules and electricity with the motion of electrons. Chemistry is the science of atoms,

combining and recombining. Mathematics deals with operations of addition and subtraction and higher mathematics deals with moving points and continuity, i.e. motion of a point. Biology and botany deal with the origin of living things and their development-motion. The modern atomic science deals with motion of protons, neutrons and of still smaller "particles" and what is more, new forms of movement are being discovered and science developed.

Let us not forget that the bodies we observe at rest, like rocks and mountains are also in motion along with earth and changing internally, too.

*From this scientific universal law of motion, Marx drew the conclusion that society* (which has a material basis) *also moves* and moves not according to somebody's whims and wishes, good or bad, but in accordance with its own intrinsic laws. Society has passed through various stages: primitive communism, slavery, feudalism and capitalism. This stage also is being passed and socialism is bound to spread over the whole world.

How will this change to socialism take place?

That question can only be answered by studying the process of movement of change, how it takes place, what causes it and laying bare the laws of development of society—its innate laws.

What causes movement, change? The movement may be caused in two ways. The movement may be due to the work of a force from outside or it may come from inside. The child grows, not because somebody stretches it but because of certain internal forces. A plant grows because of internal forces. In dialectics, when we speak of motion, we speak of this motion and not of mechanical motion alone, motion brought about by outside forces. We will deal with this question later at length.

#### *Unity of the Opposites*

So what causes motion? What are these forces? Where do they spring from? How do they cause motion? And

finally, what forces cause the *social* movement? Can we locate them? What are they? And how do they work?

Marxism tells us that the forces that cause movement—the natural spontaneous movement—exist, and exist inside that body itself. It is they that make that body move, change and develop and ultimately destroy it. They are always mutually contradictory but cannot but coexist.

The simplest example is that of a magnet. As is well known, it has two poles: north and south, having contradictory properties but necessarily staying together, so to say coexisting with each other. If a magnet is broken, it breaks up into more magnets, and if one pole is smashed, out goes the other also. A magnet is thus a *single thing in which duality, opposing duality is inherent*.

And the instances can be multiplied. Stars we are told by science are made up of matter subject to two opposing forces: expansion and contraction. Movement of planets is due to centrifugal and centripetal forces, forces that make them fly away and at the same time trying to bring them together. Physics studies action and reaction, expansion and contraction, positive and negative charges, etc. Chemistry deals essentially with analysis and synthesis, coming together of atoms and their separation. Life can only be conceived as the unity of two opposing processes, inhalation and exhalation, of taking in food and throwing out waste matter and so on.

And now we come to the problem of society. On the one hand, there are the productive forces; on the other, the production relations. For some time they correspond, but they are bound to come to grips at a certain moment. And then society, social formation, changes. In the slave society, the slaves and the slave-owners fought, while productive forces as a whole developed and they came in conflict with the existing production relations; new classes came in, conflicting classes, and the old order was overthrown and a new one based on fresh contradictions was founded. That also died and capitalist society was born with new contradictory classes—the capitalists and the workers.

Marxism, therefore, calls upon us, communist organisers, to recognise the role of classes in society. Not class collaboration but class struggle is the law of development of society. Be in the thick of it. Help this process and that will lead us to the next social order—socialism. On the point of ideology there can be no compromise. Only by fighting for a correct ideology and against an incorrect one can you build real unity.

And then we come to the next question. How does the change take place? By an evolutionary process? Can socialism be achieved by reformist means or by revolutionary means? Evolution or revolution?

### *Change of Quantity into Quality*

Marxist dialectics tells us that first there is a change in quantity only. It goes on slowly. After reaching a certain quantity, there is a sudden change in quality. Take, for instance, water. If we warm it, at first only its temperature changes. Water, however, remains water all the same. But as soon as the temperature reaches 100°C it begins to boil. It no longer remains water and now becomes steam. Quantity changes into quality. The old thing is gone and a new thing has come.

*Evolution (slow development) is followed by revolution (rapid development) and a totally new thing is born.* This also develops slowly, but at a certain point, it again changes rapidly into something new. Evolution followed by revolution gives rise to a new product. This product also changes in a similar manner and a third product comes into being. This is the natural process.

Instances of this type can be multiplied from every branch of science. Solids when warmed up retain their state for a time while temperature rises. And then, at a certain temperature, they begin to melt and suddenly change into liquids. Liquids similarly change into gases. A body goes on increasing its speed but still falls to the ground, but when it reaches a critical speed it flies off.

Rays get bent (refracted) under certain conditions. But at a critical angle, they get reflected, suddenly reflected. Colour changes take place when critical wave lengths are reached. In chemistry, new substances are formed only at a critical stage. Hydrogen and oxygen may be kept together for years and nothing will happen. They combine and form water only when a lighted match is applied and a certain temperature is reached. Species have evolved by evolution in the beginning and revolution at the end.

In primitive society, the instruments of production and the number of producers went on increasing continuously for a time. And when they reached a stage where surplus product became possible, this social formation suddenly changed and slavery came in. Here also productive forces continued to grow—both instruments of production and the number of producers. And at a certain stage, a sudden change took place and thus came feudalism. Productive forces in feudalism also grew slowly till they reached a certain point. Revolutions now took place and bourgeois society was born. This society also grew and is bound to break by a revolutionary change, when a certain definite point is reached as evidenced by the revolutions in Europe, Asia and America.

For us, communists, this principle is extremely important. You may meet people who say: "Oh! Don't you bother! We are with you! But don't ask us to participate in the movement now! We will be there at the time of the revolution!" This attitude is totally wrong. A true communist never shuns or neglects day-to-day work. He does not remain inactive in the hope that some fine morning, revolution will "set in" and then he will be there. On the other hand, there are people who are totally bogged down in their daily routine. They forget that the new is brought in the world only through a revolution. It is a very important lesson for us. It will enable us to fight both reformism and dogmatism.

As applied to social development, it means that a social system where means of production have to be worked col-

lectively cannot tolerate for long their private ownership and primitive distribution. A time must come when further progress gets bogged down because of private ownership of collectively-operated machines and then the old order is overthrown and the new order, based on social ownership and collective operation of factories, i.e. socialism triumphs; must triumph. That is why we say socialism is inevitable.

#### *Negation of Negation: From Lower to Higher*

Finally, we come to the last question. Why do we say that socialism alone is inevitable? Why not some other social formation? Why not slavery, for instance? Can you not go back to the golden Vedic times? Or Ashoka's times? Or to Akbar's times?

*Marxism tells us that when changes take place in nature, they always take place in an everexpanding spiral.* That is, things and processes never repeat themselves in exactly the same manner. Old order changeth yielding place to new, but to a higher new, never to the older one or a lower one.

Spiral development—what does it mean? If we go up the ghats over a winding road, we reach what appears to be the same spot but actually it is not the same, it is on higher level, though the scene around appears to be the same.

In science, in life, we see the same thing. In physics (and music) we have notes and keys. Change the vibrations you get the same notes on a higher key. Those who are conversant with chemistry know very well what they call the "periodic" table. Elements change with a steady growth in the atomic weight of atoms; but at certain points, similar elements come in, in the same old order but on a higher plane.

In social development it is the same. Primitive communal system gave way to slavery, a system on a higher plane in the sense of progress in the basic struggle of man

against nature. Man scored victories over nature. And then came feudalism, capitalism and socialism, each a higher stage than the preceding one in the same sense; more and more victory over nature.

If this is true, all talk of revivalism is meaningless. Vedic times may be good and Pindarees' times may be bad. Whether bad or good, we cannot go back to the old formations at all. Whether we wish it or not, we cannot go back.

And still the new formation may, in some respects, appear to correspond to some old formation. The socialist system has much in common with the old primitive communal system. But it is not the same. It is communism at a very much higher stage.

And here is the answer to the question very often asked about revivalism. The answer is simple. We cannot go back to the past, however glorious it may appear to be. And we need not feel sorry also because we will certainly reach a better stage in point of development of society.

Gandhiji said: "Let us go back to hand-spinning and the charkha." Arya Samajists and the Jana Sanghis also extol the past and want people to go back to old times. This simply cannot be done. It would be a retrograde step. We can only improve the machines further. We can in no case go back. And since we are heading for an infinitely better stage, there is absolutely no need to rue over it.

This in a nutshell is Marxist philosophy at once materialist and dialectic—*dialectical materialism*.

### *Struggle for Socialism*

And lastly, we come to that great question: If everything develops according to natural laws, why "work" for a socialist society? It will come automatically. Why try to obtain knowledge? Why learn Marxist philosophy? What is the role of knowledge in human development?

Let us take an instance, say, the electric lamp. It is not "found" in nature. It has to be made, of course, from

material things. But how was it invented? Scientists first studied the laws of electricity, how they operate. What are conductors and nonconductors, etc. They unravelled the laws of light, too. And then, using this knowledge an Edison came and on the basis of this scientific theory, knowledge, he conceived an electric lamp in his mind, experimented with the idea and gave the electric lamp to us. Faraday started with the magnetic effects of an electric current and thought of a reverse process on the basis of which he invented the modern dynamo.

So is it with human society. Rousseau discarded the false notions of the feudal age, put forward new ideas based on the rising capitalist class and when these ideas took root and seized the minds of French masses, they became a material force and changed the world—the feudal world.

The ideas of Marx and Lenin were based on a deep study of the capitalist society. They propagated them and built revolutionary parties and once the Russian masses were seized with those ideas, they made the socialist revolution. So ideas can be turned into a tremendous material force.

At the same time, as we have noted before, the forces that bring about the real changes, natural, spontaneous changes are brought about by forces situated within the object itself and not from outside. Motion is the result of the action and reaction of the forces inside the body itself.

### *Indian Socialist Revolution Is Our Own Business*

If this is true, it follows that socialism will come only through the struggle of the forces inside the capitalist society, i.e. struggle of the working class against the capitalist class. Change to socialism cannot be brought about by forces outside that society. It is the Indian working class, it is the toiling Indian masses alone who will overthrow the Indian bourgeoisie. Our revolution will *have* to be made *by us* and not by the Russians or the Chinese for us. Revolution cannot be exported.

And a socialist revolution can take place only if the working class is seized with ideas—the philosophy of Marxism. Revolutions cannot come automatically but on the basis of a conscious effort of the masses who need it and cannot do without it. Science tells us that man floats. It also tells us that a man thrown overboard into a river will necessarily try to live. But only a swimmer, who has learnt the art of swimming, can save himself. Otherwise, he will be drowned. That also explains why masses and not individuals make revolutions. It is the working class as a class that can bring about a socialist revolution, working class armed with the scientific ideas of socialism.

### *Role of the Party and Party Organisers*

Not that individuals play no part in it. Individuals do play a part. Leaders do play a part in the revolutionary process. But leaders can do it only *through* the masses. They are leaders only insofar as they make the masses move on the basis of a correct ideology and on the basis of their organising capacity. Men like Napoleon and Hitler have been thrown into the dustbin of history because in spite of their abilities they could not move the masses in the right direction. They lacked the philosophy of revolutionary masses and took to reactionary philosophy, the antipeople, decadent philosophy.

Marxist philosophy arms us with a powerful weapon for bringing about a socialist revolution. That is why we have to study it, propagate it particularly among the working class and peasantry and the middle classes, and to organise them for the final overthrow of this hated society and for the establishment of a socialist society—a society which man has always dreamed of through centuries.

### *What Is Historical Materialism?*

“Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it”, so wrote Marx. Is it possible to change the world? Is it possible to change society? Is it possible to end the miseries of the present-

day human life? Is it possible to establish a happy society? Who will do it? And how? What is the relation between a rich spiritual life and a rich material life? Is humanity moving towards a golden age of peace and prosperity or towards stagnation and decline?

Historical materialism gives a *scientific* answer to these questions. Historical materialism rejects utopia and bases itself completely on science, on material conditions, on the study of society as it is, as it is moving. It unravels the laws of development of human society.

We have learnt dialectical materialism—the Marxist outlook on nature. Historical materialism is the extension of this philosophy to the field of human society.

### *Material Life and Spiritual Life*

Marxist philosophy is materialist. It rejects idealism. As between matter and spirit, matter and thought, Marxism is emphatic that matter has precedence over spirit. Spirit, ideas, thoughts are merely the reflection of matter in a material substance, the brain. Man is also matter, part and parcel of the material world. Man's material life has, therefore, precedence over his spiritual life. Human art, human culture, human politics, human philosophy are the outcome and not the source of human material life. Not that they do not influence human material life in their turn. But they can do so only insofar as they are true reflections of the human material life and taking hold of man's mind become a material force. As Engels says, mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.

Marxism thus rejects the idea that human society and its development are predestined by a supernatural being, by God. Basing itself squarely on science, on dialectical materialism, it asserts that human society develops according to *its* own laws and it is society itself that changes itself. God, “great” men, “great” ideas do not and cannot change it. History is not made by “great” men; history is made by society itself. It is not an Ashoka or a Babar or a

Shivaji or a Napoleon or a Hitler who made history; it is the people who have made it and will continue to do so.

And history like all things and processes in nature follows its own laws of development. Dialectical materialism tells us that everything in nature changes. Nothing is steady, motionless. Human society being material must also follow the same law. Human society is also constantly changing. It has always changed in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Human society has passed through many formations, and this formation, the capitalist society, will also pass out, along with its miseries, as surely as the older formations passed out.

### *Higher and Ever Higher*

Dialectical materialism has also told us that the changes that take place in nature are not mere repetitions. Matter not merely changes but changes on a higher level. The development follows an everexpanding spiral-like pattern. If this law is universal, it must also apply to human society. Human society has not merely changed; every human formation was at higher level than the preceding one. Slavery, which followed primitive communal society, was an advance in man's struggle against nature. For the first time in human life, surplus product became possible. The feudal system which followed slavery was a further advance in the basic battle of man against nature—and so was capitalism. And capitalism must give way—not to a lower but a higher form of society—socialism and communism, when surplus product will be so abundant that everyone will get according to his 'needs'.

### *Classes: The Motive Force of Class Society*

Dialectical materialism tells us that the forces which bring about changes in a material thing are inherent in the thing itself. Changes are not brought about by outside forces; they are brought about by forces situated within it. Naturally, changes in society, social formation must also be due not to external forces but to *internal* forces. Marxist

philosophy tells us that these forces are in the nature of (opposing) contradictions.

From this general principle Marx concluded that the search for forces that lead to the development of society must be conducted in society itself, in its material life. And he put his finger exactly on them. In a class society, it is the opposing classes who are the motive force of history. In social formations in general it is the contradiction *between the productive forces and the production relations* that moves society. It is *the* cause of the birth, development and death of every social formation.

And that is why Marx rejected geographical environments as the cause of change in social formations. Natural material conditions do exercise considerable influence on the course of social development, but the real cause must be sought in the society itself. Natural environments cannot form the basis of the historical process.

What are "productive forces"? What are "production relations"?

### *What Are Productive Forces?*

Productive forces comprise of two parts—the instruments of production and the producers. The means of production created by society and, above all, the instruments of labour by which material wealth is created, and the people carrying out the process of production on the basis of a certain degree of production experience, constitute the *productive forces* of society.

For example, the club, the stone-axe, the flint-knife and later the bow and arrow were the instruments of production in the early stages of the primitive commune. In the later stage, metal coulters, metal axes, bronze and iron tips for spears and arrows came in. Domestication of cattle and their use as draught power for tillage made its appearance.

These instruments were still further improved during *slavery*. Then came the wheeled plough, the barrow and the scythe. During the *feudal* system, agricultural instruments were still further improved and craftsmen's tools

also were invented and improved. The bellows and hammer of the blacksmith, the saw of the carpenter, the loom and the spinning wheel of the weaver, all these instruments came to stay and underwent further development. Making of iron from pig iron, building of sailing ships, optical instruments, compass, gun-powder, paper, book-printing, mechanical clocks were all invented during the feudal period. In the capitalist society modern machines like the power-hammer came in. New automatic machines came in; steam, electricity, atomic power came in.

Corresponding to these instruments producers also change. The slave "belongs" to his master wholly; the peasant only partly so. The worker, on the other hand, is totally "free"—outwardly free.

The productive forces continuously grow and improve both in number and in quality.

### *Production Relations*

But every social formation has its own "production relations" also.

For instance, in the primitive communal society, means of production were held in common and the production carried on jointly. Naturally there were no classes. In slavery, there was for the first time surplus product. Means of production were now owned by a handful of slave-owners and the producers (the slaves) had no access to the means of production without the intervention of the slave-owners. Slave-owners and slaves, landlords and serfs (and handicraftsmen), capitalists and industrial workers—these were the main classes, contradictory classes in slavery, feudalism and capitalism respectively. These relations are known as production relations.

*The relationships that people enter into in the course of producing material values were called by Marx and Engels production relations.* The relations thus established become the relation between classes—large groups of people, some of whom own the means of production and appropriate for themselves the results of the labour of others who are

deprived of the means of production either completely or partially and are compelled to work for the former.

During a particular formation of society, productive forces and the corresponding production relations form a definite unity. This unity is known as *the mode of production*.

### *How Society Changes*

And now we come to the problem of change of society. Take any particular system, e.g. feudalism. It is established on the basis of particular instruments of production: the land, the plough, the tools of the craftsmen, etc. These tools were operated individually and owned individually. But the land was mainly the private property of the landlords. That gave rise to specific production relations—relations between the landlord and the serfs, journeymen and apprentices, and amongst the peasants and the craftsmen themselves. The productive forces began to grow steadily. New instruments came in. The number and skill of the producers also improved. Manufacture began to take roots and the existing production relations would not change so rapidly.

After a time, the situation became intolerable. Production itself began to suffer. All further progress became impossible. The contradiction between the new productive forces and the existing production relations reached such a pitch that production relations had to give way and make room for new relations in keeping with the new productive forces. Revolutions, bourgeois revolutions took place. The old order changed, giving place to new. Feudalism passed out and capitalism came in.

New classes now sprang up: the capitalists who owned the means of production and the "free" modern workers who were divested completely of the means of production. For a time, this went on steadily. But with the rise of monopoly capitalism, the contradiction between the new productive forces and the existing relations began to come into insoluble conflicts. Technology could not advance.

Surplus product could not advance. The social method of production and the private ownership of the means of production began to clash, paving the road for a new order of society—socialism.

### *Contradiction between Productive Forces and Production Relations*

It is thus the contradiction between the productive forces and the production relations which is the motive force of society. During the primitive communal stage, instruments of production grew in number and also improved from the club to metals. The producers, i.e. the members of the commune, also grew in number. The production relations, however, continued as they were for a long time till a point was reached when they came in conflict with the productive forces and began to hinder production. The result was a social revolution, which gave birth to slavery.

The instruments of production and the producers, i.e. slaves, now began to grow in number and improved steadily. But the production relations, i.e. the relations between the slaves and the slave-owners did not change for a long time. They now became a hindrance to further growth of production and the result was a revolution—feudalism came in. Instead of the slaves, we have the semifree serf together with the landlords.

The instruments of production again grew in number and improved. Power-driven machines came in. Producers also went on growing in number and in skill. The production relations, however, continued for a long time till they began to hamper further production. That resulted in a revolution and the capitalist system was born.

Instruments of production again began to grow in number and in quality. Number of workers also began to grow. Production process became more and more social in character. Private ownership in the stage of imperialism began to hamper production. And we are now on the threshold of a world revolution—socialist revolution.

That is how the law of "change of quantity into quality"

operates in human development also. It also shows how evolutionary and revolutionary processes function in the development of human society and how every time a new higher society springs up, higher in the sense of man's struggle against nature.

### *Relation of Cultural Life to Material Life of Society*

Let us now turn to culture, to the spiritual world.

In primitive communal society, we do not see much of a flowering of culture because man's whole time was taken up in fighting against nature for food and shelter. There was no leisure. There was no state, too, for the simple reason that there were no exploiting and exploited classes. The structure of the Red Indian society proves it. In India, too, we have ample secondary evidence to prove it. For example, Bheeshma says in Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata: "It is heard that there was no state and no monarch in old, old times." "The people protected themselves by recourse to reproach". As regards moral concepts of marriage, etc. the story of Yama and Yamee, Brahmadev and his daughter Saraswati prove amply that intercourse was promiscuous in very old times. "Religious" ideas were also essentially materialist. The Vedic Aryans prayed to "Usha" and "Surya" and prayed for "a big progeny, ample stocks of cattle and grain, etc."

When slavery came to stay, we find the great pyramids, the gardens of Babylon and the "caves" of India—monuments of the architectural, painting and other arts. It was made possible because of the availability of surplus product, and leisure for the rich. God was now looked upon as another slave-owner, somewhere in the heavens. The "joys" of heaven meant the possession of thousands of slaves. For the first time, the state was born—an instrument of coercion with armies, prisons, bureaucracy and courts.

In feudal times, we have the great temples of India followed by famous tombs like the Taj—art for the monarchs. We have Tansen, the great court singer. Prior to that we have poets like Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti who painted court

life, love stories of princes. In Europe we have Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci and Dante. Religions like Buddhism, Christianity and Islam were also born during the slave and the feudal periods.

In capitalist society, great strides are made in science and art—thinkers like Rousseau and Voltaire, Newton and Einstein. In the imperialist stage, however, the decay sets in with pornographic pictures and books.

And then comes socialism, with its harbingers Marx and Lenin, Gorky and Sholokhov, with its Gagarin and Zoya. The nature of state changes from the state of an exploiting class to the state of the proletariat.

Man's ideas are thus born and reared on the foundations of his material life. The intellectual world is the superstructure, raised on the foundations of his material life. The ideas, however, in their turn influence the material life also.

#### *Historical Materialism: Guide to Action*

These basic ideas of historical materialism thus give us the key to the understanding of human development. They give us the faith (not religious, but based strictly on science) in the triumph of our ideal of socialism and the knowledge of how to work for it.