

Marxist Historiography: An Analytical Exposition of Major Themes and Premises

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Abstract

Karl Marx is one of the nineteenth century's most influential philosophers of history. He, besides history, was a philosopher of sociology, economics and political economy. He advocated joining and strengthening an intellectual working class movement the destiny of which, he predicted, was to overthrow capitalism as a socio-political and economic system and replace it with a more humane system that could deliver people while discouraging sheer inequities and disparities. He believed his writings would provide this movement with a theoretical insight and make it stronger. There is no denying that he often emphasized that the movement is propelled by circumstances and will accomplish its mission of universal human emancipation. He created differences with others on the basis of not only his interpretation of history but also on the nature of political-activism and ideological fervour engendered by his amalgam of ideology and history. Marx was the one whose intellectual endeavours and achievements, in economics, social theory and history, deserves to be called 'philosophical' exposition in the most honorific sense of this term. He interpreted human past in a way that unfolds materialistic aspect of

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human nature and social conditions. Human beings are conditioned by the circumstances they pass through; this ceaseless combat between humans and material social conditions determines the course of history. Marx's contributions in social theory, economics and history gave birth to a new genre of historiography, namely Marxist historiography. Historians of this school of historiography interpret history in consonance with what Marx conceived of human past, present and future. Marxist historians use typical diction, jargon and terminology to ascribe importance to matter as prime-agent in progression of human historical process. This makes Marxist historiography a distinct and separate branch of the discipline of history. Marx wrote many books and founded the International Working Men's Association in 1864 and guided it through holding six congresses in the next nine years. He remained active in the working class movement throughout his life. He left an indelible imprint on the discipline of history; post-modernist and subaltern studies schools of historiography take many inspirations from and are grounded in the base provided by Marxist historiography.

Introduction

A brief and concise yet thought-provoking statement by Marx of what he considered most innovative in his analysis of the human historical process occurs in a letter of March 5, 1852, to his friend Joseph Weydemeyer:

Long before me bourgeoisie historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeoisie economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production, 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.¹

When Bentham averred that "sentimental and ascetic moralities serve the interests of the governing class, and are

1 Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 220.

the product of an aristocratic regime” he must have been anticipating Marx to emphatically pronounce similar views from the stage set by the utilitarian coterie.² Marx’s writings have been so influential that it is, these days, hard to conceive of economics, political science, sociology and history without him and he did more than anyone else to create the powerful movement of socialism that by “attraction and repulsion, has dominated the recent history of Europe.”³ More so, Rigby is of the opinion that the value and extent of Marx’s influence on modern historiography are rarely denied, even by those who reject his economics, politics and philosophy.⁴ He was born in Trier, Germany on May 5, 1818.⁵ He studied Law and Philosophy in universities of Bonn and Berlin respectively and was influenced by the ideas of Hegel, Fourier and Feuerbach.⁶ After a brief career as university teacher, he took up journalism and increasingly associated himself with socialist movement. Having spent some time in Paris, Geneva and Brussels, he settled in London where he spent most of his time writing about and organizing socialists. While in Paris, he met, came closer

2 Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), 743. See 740-747 for detailed discussion on utilitarian philosophy and related discourse. Utilitarian is a philosophy that flourished in England and it believed, in common parlance, in utility of things. Importance of everything, according to utilitarianism, had to be measured on the touchstone of its material utility and not abstract aesthetics. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the writer of *On Liberty*, brought this philosophy to prominence. ‘*The greatest happiness of the greatest number*’ was the fundamental principle and motto of the utilitarian. Society and government were to be organized with this point of view — the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

3 Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*.

4 S. H. Rigby, “Marxist Historiography”, in *Companion to Historiography*, ed., Michael Bentley (New York: Routledge, 2002), 889.

5 Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 215.

6 Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History*. It was Feuerbach who first, rebelled against the dominant discourse of Hegel’s ideas in Germany. He differed from Hegel regarding the primacy of ideas verses matter in the course of history. Feuerbach initially believed in the primacy of ideas over matter he however got convinced later that it was rather the material conditions which determine historical events.

and found friendship with his life-long collaborator Friedrich Engels: many of his writings are co-authored with Engels. Marx's famous works include *Inter Alia*, *The Holy Family*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *The German Ideology* and *Das Capital*.⁷

Marx "revivified materialism"; because he gave it a new interpretation and a new connection with human history and human past in a unique way.⁸ He regarded himself a materialist not in ordinary sense but, under Hegel's influence, in dialectical sense; this differed in important way from traditional materialism and was more akin to what is now called instrumentalism.⁹ He thought that the process which is called the pursuit of knowledge is not the one in which an object is constant while all the adaptation is on the part of the knower. On the contrary, both the subject and the object, both the knower and the thing known, are in a continual process of mutual adaptation. Marx termed this process as 'dialectical' because it is continuous and never fully completed.¹⁰ For him, the driving force, in history, is man's relation to matter of which the most important part is mode of production or the economic structure. Thus, the super structure which includes *inter alia*, politics, religion, philosophy and art is an outcome of its modes of production and distribution. This doctrine, in short, is called 'materialistic conception of history' which runs continuously, either implicitly or explicitly, throughout this paper while explaining Marxist historiography.

7 Andrew Heywood, *Politics* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), 51. *Das Capital* was published in 1807 in German. Marx, in this book, analyzed and criticized existing theories of economics and explained at length his theory of socialism. He dealt with history and economics scientifically. This cogently argued socialism of Marx was, thus, called 'scientific socialism'.

8 Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 748.

9 Marx ascribed agency to material forces while describing and reinterpreting human history that he termed as 'materialistic conception of history'.

10 Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 749. This process can also be understood in terms of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, not in Hegelian domain of the Idea but in the domain of matter.

Major Themes/Premises in Marxist Historiography

Marxist historians, like Marx, have equally been prolific in producing a sizable corpus of historical text which is called Marxist historiography.¹¹ Although Marxist historians follow Marx as far as their conceptual and ideological inspiration is concerned yet they have been careful and critical while applying their ideologue's ideology to time and context specific particularities. This incompatibility stems from Marx's and Engels's own writings which, in Rigby's opinion, can be categorized into "at least three overarching historical outlooks: the anthropogenetic, the pragmatological and the nomological."¹² In their early works, Marx and Engels viewed history in Hegelian, or 'anthropogenetic' terms: history was seen, in this sense, as the dialectical process in progress through which humanity comes to its full self-realization.¹³ Then, both philosophers shifted to 'pragmatological' outlook in which history was viewed as the result more blind than the outcome of any tendency to a specific goal or of the actions of individuals and of groups guided by their needs in the situations in which they find themselves being conditioned by historical process.¹⁴ They, in *Das Capital* and *Anti-Duhring*, adopted 'nomological' perspective in which historical development was seen as akin to a natural process taking place in consonance with 'inner hidden laws' which is the task of historian to uncover.¹⁵

Yet, despite the ambiguous and more often contradictory legacy bestowed to later Marxists by Marx and Engels and even though Marxist historians violently disagreed with one another on specific issues, it is not difficult to identify school

11 Historiography can be defined as 'the art of writing history', 'history of history', or 'history of historical writings'. For detailed definition and explanation of historiography, see E. Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004), 2. Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), 12-50.

12 Rigby, "Marxist Historiography", 889-90.

13 Rigby, "Marxist Historiography", 889-90.

14 Rigby, "Marxist Historiography".

15 Rigby, "Marxist Historiography".

of Marxist historiography by dint of its distinctive style of interpretation and vocabulary. Even if, in case that the methodology and epistemology of historical materialism do not differ from the conventional historical procedure, Thompson argued that, "Marxist historians can be distinguished from non-Marxist colleagues in terms of their common vocabulary and concepts, and shared body of interest, questions, hypotheses and historical emphases."¹⁶ Following major themes/premises are discernible in the Marxist historiography.

Historical Materialism

The cornerstone of Marxist historiography is the well-known term that Engels called 'the materialistic conception of history'. This highlighted the importance of economic factors in life and the conditions under which people produce and appropriate their means of subsistence. Materialistic conception of history of Marx points out the dominant factors in explaining social structures and their historical changes, sketching thereby a scenario of historical change, based on the dominance of these material factors. He identifies certain basic tendencies in human social behaviour; the tendency to increase the productive powers of society, the tendency of social relations to adapt themselves to efficient use of these powers, the tendency of social classes with common economic interests organizing social movements. According to him, "no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed."¹⁷ In this way, whole human history is the history of means of production and their concomitant relations of production and includes "everything that furthers production, everything which tends to remove an obstacle, to make production more active, speedier, easier."¹⁸

16 Rigby, "Marxist Historiography", 891.

17 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Harmondsworth, 1971), 21.

18 Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 22.

Famous Indian Marxist historian D. D. Kosambi explains means of production and through them human history by stressing that historians like to concentrate upon successive developments in the means and relations of production which can only “tell us how people lived at any period.”¹⁹ Kosambi asserts that “social organization cannot be more advanced than the instruments of production will allow.”²⁰ The economic base consisting essentially of the ‘mode of production’ or the economic system conditions and determines the ideological and political superstructures. This suggests, in other words, that social and historical development can only be explained in terms of economic and class factors. Some of the later Marxists even went further to portray this relationship as mechanical one, implying that immutable economic laws drive history forward regardless of the human agent. In large, however, due to its stress upon economic factors Marxist historiography has expanded and intensified the role of human beings as ‘agents’ in historical process.

History as a Grand Narrative and its Stages

While commenting on Hobsbawm’s historical writing, another Marxist historian, Marwick attests that “no text book is a more flawless example of total history than Hobsbawm’s *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*,” a book that is Marxist interpretation of history of Europe of the above-mentioned period.²¹ Marxist historians tend to view history in totality in line with Karl Marx because he viewed history as a grand narrative covering whole human past and future. For that matter he divided history into five distinct stages: primitive communism, age of slavery, age of feudalism, age of capitalism, and age of advanced communism. All these stages represent distinct mode of production and, hence,

19 Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1998); Upindar Singh, *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century* (New Delhi: Pearson Education Ltd.), 9-14.

20 Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*.

21 Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography*, 256.

distinct relations of production. In the stage of primitive communism, economic production, appropriation and consumption were socialized: as a result, people had been living a life, not marred by sheer economic inequalities, but a system of mutual caring and sharing in which there was no class struggle; living conditions, in this stage, were akin to what Marx anticipated as in the 'advanced communism'. In this initial stage:

Initially men live as equals in a classless society, in a primitive accommodation with nature, which their labour does not permanently transform. Each works, not for another, but all for the community at large, to which he is and feels united. All share depressed physical and cultural conditions.²²

The age of slavery represents a class struggle between slaves and slave owners, and likewise in the age of feudalism, the class struggle was between peasants and feudal lords. The worst form of struggle, Marx opined, was going on in the age of capitalism in which "the weapon with which the bourgeoisie felled the feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself" and that the masses of labourers crowded in the factories are organized on the patterns of soldiers.²³ The last stage, which was yet to come, was the advanced communism marked by classless society and, according to Marx, a final stage of human history. This stage would be a classless and stateless society because when there would be no class there would be no need of state as well. Class based societies necessitate the creation of a strong state to ensure perpetuation of their interests. In his own words, the "ending of class oppositions within the nations will end the mutual hostilities of the nations."²⁴

22 G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 24.

23 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 25-68.

24 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 50.

Social Class as a Key Historical Factor and Actor

Individuals become a class because they “have common interests because they share a common situation.”²⁵ The role of historical agency, in Marxist historiography, is visible more in class than in individual. Although the role of individual has been assigned importance yet it is the exploited class which holds the key to bring about change in society. With Marxism history’s focus shifted towards study of society as modern social sciences do. Marx was of the opinion that man exists in society; being a product of society he can only be studied with the respective society. Thus, Marxism gave a new impetus to the study and writing of history as the study of the social phenomenon and its various manifestations. History, thence forth, ceased to be a shapeless and purposeless pursuit but with a sense of clear direction and in complete social setting. Regarding the role of class, Marx writes:

Hitherto every form of society has been based on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can at least continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petite bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern labourer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth.²⁶

Marx looked upon history as a record of struggles between different classes. The class which controls the means of production is dominant. The dominant class, then, exploits the other classes by appropriating the profit and putting them only at the subsistence levels. In this way, the exploiting class gets more and more wealthy and steers the state according to its own wishes. State works as a tool of this class and people also start to believe by means of education, religion and other methods that dominance of this

25 Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 50.

26 Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 55.

class is just and natural. It is due to the class interests that “If any person does get dissatisfied and challenges this system, he is called enemy of society and morality, and subverted of old-established customs and is crushed by the State”, opines Nehru in his *Glimpses of World History*.²⁷ As conceived by Marx, classes are not simply product of a system of production relations rather classes ‘arise’ or ‘develop’ out of a system when the shared interest of people are engendered by political movements and class ideologies promoting their particular interests: “only then the interests they defend become class interests,” in the words of Marx.²⁸

Marxist Historiography: Birth of New Historical Disciplines

Hegel and Ranke had overemphasized the role of state: due to their influence, most historians had preoccupied themselves with writing political history. The materialistic conception — the economic interpretation of events — of history or Marxist approach suddenly shifted the focus, pushed the state into background and brought to fore the role of economic forces. Thus, historical interest receded from political, that is, an individual ruler to larger number of ordinary masses. This shift of focus gave birth to economic history and social history as distinct branches of history.

Increasing awareness of the role of economic factors in determining the direction of society led to rapid and systematic development of economic history which further gained strength by the introduction and implementation of economic and demographic statistics. At the beginning of the twentieth century, economic history attained institutional recognition in England, France and America and great works of economic history like those of Unwin and Clapham were written.²⁹ Hill wrote *The Economic Problems of the Church* (1956) and *The Intellectual Origin of English Revolution*

27 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004), 633.

28 Wood, *Karl Marx*, 51.

29 Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography*, 205.

(1965) which were written from Marxist point of view. Since the economic and social aspects of a society are closely intertwined, social history was also given fillip. Fabian socialists and liberal-radical intellectuals took a prominent part in establishing and writing in the domain of social history in Britain. Halevy, J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond³⁰, Cole and Postgate are some of the examples in this regard.³¹

Shift from Philosophy to Practice

One of the fundamental tenets of Marxism is “the commitment to a more egalitarian future and to the analysis of society with respect to assisting change towards that better future.”³² While commenting on Marx’s *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law*, Lemon, argues that the theme emerging in this piece reflects Marx’s increasing uneasy relationship with idealist philosophy, both of Hegel himself and its radical interpretation by the Young-Hegelians because of the basic difference of primacy of Idea or matter.³³ Matter plays the key role in determining historical realities so ideas are the product, not producer, of historical change. Marxist historians write not only for the sake of writing history but to pursue their agenda of change in line with Marx’s ideas and scientific prophecies. Marxist historiography holds with certainty that the mode of production either determines or, at least, conditions the historical outcomes. Therefore, a sheer political commitment to “radical critique of capitalism” and the “quest for an alternative and more equal or just society” has been sought after goal of the Marxist historians.³⁴ Consequently, the force

30 Some examples of the books of social history written by them are *The Village Laborer* (1911), *The Town Laborer* (1917), *The Skilled Laborer* (1919). These books were trend-setters of the shift from political to social history writing.

31 Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography*, 205.

32 Fulbrooke, *Historical Theory*, 41.

33 M. C. Lemon, *Philosophy of History: A Guide for Students* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 243.

34 Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 42.

of Marx's assertion that the important and basic question "whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question", and another logical premise that "Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice," is symptomatic of later Marxist historiography which also contributed in activism of Max's spirit.³⁵ In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, "the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win: Working Men of All Countries Unite," that became one of the famous Marxian slogans and was a call to action, in fact.³⁶ A prominent Indian Marxist historian, Irfan Habib's words that "it is important to remember that his [Marx's] commitment to the cause of India's national liberation pre-dated any recognizable beginnings of our own National Movement," attest, despite little direct relationship of Marx's ideology with that of Indian freedom, that historians with Marxist tendencies try to ascribe activism to their philosophy.³⁷ He, moreover, writes that when the Great Rebellion of 1857 broke out, Marx and Engels were consistent in their defence of the freedom fighters and in condemnation of British atrocities in their writings in the newspaper, the *New York Daily Tribune*.³⁸

Indian Marxist Historiography

In the post-independence period in India, a kind of trend in history writing developed which though being deep-rooted in the tradition of writings of nationalist historians was yet tinged in the tone and tenor of Marxism. Marxist phase does not mean that all history produced during that time was written in line with Marxism; some historians adopted more or less materialistic interpretation as a method of understanding and interpreting Indian history. Their

35 Quoted in Lemon, *Philosophy of History*, 254.

36 Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, 55.

37 Irfan Habib, *The National Movement: Studies in Ideology and History* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2011), 84.

38 Irfan Habib, *The National Movement*.

interpretation derived dialectical materialism from the philosophy of history of Karl Marx and applied it particularly on history of ancient, pre-modern and modern India. The essence of this new approach lies in the study of the relationship between social and economic organization and its effects on historical events.³⁹ The names of historians of Marxist School of Indian Historiography are Kosambi, Sharma, Chandra, Rumila Thapar and Habib. As a result of the influence of these Marxist historians, the scope of history was broadened to social and economic history, interdisciplinary approach was used to interpret events, wrong conclusions of the western understandings of Indian history were repulsed and Indian history was explained and interpreted with new vigour and freedom.

Critique and Assessment

Critics have come up with many points regarding the assessment of Marxism and Marxist historiography and they have pointed out many lacunas, contradictions and controversies in Marxist historiography which, *inter alia*, include:

a) Utopian Idea of a Stateless Society

Marxist historians have asserted unequivocally that the inevitable conflict between the bourgeois and proletariat would lead to a stateless society because in the classless society of advanced communism there would be no dominant and dominated classes, so there would be no need of state. Marx says that the state is an executive committee for managing affairs of the governing class as a whole. Critics assert that it was wrong-calculated prophecy of Marx and Marxist historians because instead of decreasing the role of state, the Marxist revolutionaries highly increased its role and thus made the state ever powerful in Soviet Russia and China. Moreover, the role of state cannot be said to be decreasing in future as well: there would be anarchic situation without state. Likewise, the class analysis of Marxist history has been commented upon by Munslow who

39 Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography*, 469.

writes that “the forces, the social structures and patterns that influence our lives are rarely palpable, are never quite as simplistic or reductive as, say, a crude Marxist class analysis suggests.”⁴⁰

b) Problems in Periodization of History and ‘Asiatic Mode of Production’

The periodization of Marxist history is problematic because its universal application, as claimed by Marx and some of his followers, raises many questions. History has witnessed different stages in different regions and cultures, and there may not be the sequence of five stages enunciated by Marx. Critics assert that Marx had tried to explain whole world through his euro-centric empirical deductions which was an erroneous attempt. Commenting on the Marxist history of Kosambi, Thapar writes that “he did not accept *in toto* the Marxian notion of the Asiatic Mode of Production in relation to the Indian past, and as far the feudal mode of production, he made his own qualifications as far as Indian history was concerned”.⁴¹ Kosambi presented a view of ancient Indian history which sought answers to the fundamental questions of Indian society as to what it is today; he strongly believed that, in case of absence of sources, ancient Indian history can be interpreted with the help of archaeological material in the light of continuities which can be found very much alive in socio-cultural life of India.

c) Reduction/Contradiction in the Importance of Ideas

Due to its obsession with class relations and materialistic conception of history, Marxist historiography tends to reduce the importance of ideas in determining historical events. Marx’s views are self-contradictory regarding the importance or primacy of ideas: hence he writes, “it is not consciousness that determines being, but on the contrary social being determines consciousness” and “the ruling ideas of the age are the ideas of the ruling class.”⁴²

40 Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 50.

41 Sreedharan, *A Text Book of Historiography*, 474.

42 Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 42.

It can easily be assessed from the foregoing assertions of Marx which allude to discrepancies and contradictions in Marx's own writings, especially, regarding the importance of ideas in the process of history. However, Marx's early writings were more neglectful of the primacy of ideas as compared to his later writings in which he admitted that economic cause is one of the dominant causes and not the dominant cause. However, a Marxist historian Christopher Hill has a sympathetic conception of the place of ideas in the historical process. He insists that there can be no revolution without ideas and the ideas of intellectuals are not sole harbingers of revolution, rather a historian must attach equal importance to the circumstances which gave these ideas their chance.⁴³

d) Problems in Method of Social Stratification

Theories of social stratification have been formulated by various philosophers including Marx, Weber and Veblen. Weber's social stratification relies less in the exposition of a must-claim the honour because there should be those who accept that honour claim. A group claiming honour could, if possible by circumstances, stabilize their economic and political prowess.⁴⁴ Veblen suggested that the emergence of a leisure class as a more or less permanent group in society depended on circumstances of war and peace.⁴⁵ Hegel and Marx both had inherent problems in their methods of determining social stratification. While Hegel gave primacy to ideological factors and believed that elite of a society is custodian of ideological concerns, Marx viewed social stratification on the basis of expropriation of material sources. According to Marx, elite class of a society is always exploiter class and it is the one who appropriates and manages means of production and exploit lower classes of society i.e., middle and working class. Marxist historians, generally, borrow blindly the framework of social stratification from the writings of Marx and by doing so they ignore

43 Sreedharan, A Text Book of Historiography, 255.

44 C. Owen, *Social Stratification* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1968), 22.

45 Owen, *Social Stratification*, 23.

peculiar social conditions and historical experiences of a society. Resultantly, such application of strait-jacket ideology on different social conditions becomes preposterous.

Conclusion

Marx's postulates taken together suggest a "determinate pattern in history."⁴⁶ Marxist history, a distinct and profound genre of historiography, can easily be distinguished from the other types of history writing regarding its particular terminology and emphasis. Marxist historians give primacy to the material conditions of a society along with pace of technological development. They believe in class struggle between haves and have-nots: it is through the struggle of the depressed class or have-nots that a rapid and sudden change is discernible in human history. The impact of Marxism on historiography was so much that it influenced history writing throughout the world. Owing to its pervasiveness in social analysis, it promoted inter-disciplinary approach in social science analysis and gave birth to new disciplines of social and economic history. Furthermore, Marxist history is part of their agenda to bring about change in society in line with their philosophy not for the sake of thought but for the sake of action and practice. Historical materialism promoted the cause and effect analysis on material, not ideological, basis which gave impetus to analysis of social phenomena on materialistic conception. Critics, however, argue that Marx gave importance to the material conditions at the expense of the significance of ideas. Moreover, they disagree regarding the order of various periods in human history, as proposed by Marx in line with his Euro-centric worldview. In short, Marxist historians have borrowed much from Marx at the same time making changes to it with the passage of changing socio-economic circumstances. The example of Indian Marxist historians like Kosambi and Thapar is much relevant here to explain the way they have borrowed from Marx and applied his thought to Indian history by making many changes to it according to particularities of unique Indian historical experience.

46 Wood, *Karl Marx*, 60.