

Marxism and Development of Human Society

To accomplish its revolutionary task and win emancipation the proletariat needs most to know truth. The downtrodden and exploited masses need most to learn meticulously the laws of science and to pursue knowledge in all its spheres. This address to agricultural labourers and peasants at a school of politics is a brief analysis of the materialistic thinking in society and of social development in the light of Marxism. It brings out the fundamental difference between dialectical materialism and other philosophies and emphasizes how capitalism in its present decadent stage obstructs the progress of science and society.

Marxism is the only philosophy which can guide us correctly in our quest for truth. Since no philosophy or ideology other than Marxism can throw light to reveal truth comprehensively, we accept Marxism, consider its in depth study to be so important, and call ourselves Marxists. The fundamental difference between Marxism and other existing philosophies is that, whereas, for acquiring knowledge, all other philosophies put the main emphasis on individual perception, individual intellect, individual thinking capacity, or the thinking power and power of analysis of some philosopher or other as an individual, Marxism, on the contrary, relies on experiments and verification, objective experience, history, scientific logic and reasoning for acquiring knowledge. Marxism holds that nothing can be regarded as real knowledge and no truth can be correctly realized unless these are arrived at through experiments, objective experience, a correct understanding of history and strict adherence to scientific logic and reasoning. So, for the determination of truth we cannot depend solely upon an individual's power of thinking or intellect. Man's power of thinking and intelligence are no doubt required but in addition, experiments and objective experience are prerequisites for determination and realization of truth. Thus, Marxism is wholly science oriented because truth based on experiments and verification is its basis — its entire structure rests on scientific experiments, and scientific truth. Its structure is not built on man's subjective thinking and analysis. In contrast to other philosophies which try to supersede science and negate scientific truth, depending as they do on subjective ideas and individual's beliefs, Marxism bases itself on scientific truth and seeks to coordinate particular truths of sciences for arriving at general truths.

Truth can be known only with the help of science

What do the other philosophies hold? The other philosophies hold that science can discover certain truths of particular domains, but the fundamental truth about the world around us cannot be comprehended through science. According to their idea science cannot even provide any understanding about the existence of supra-matter entity. So, they believe that it is not possible to get to know the whole gamut of truth, to comprehend all aspects of life with the help of science. How then, according to these philosophies, can that truth be known? Well, according to these philosophies truth is attainable only through self-realization of an individual. It means, what is not possible to attain by the all-round endeavour of science, which is but a product of collective human knowledge and experience, is attainable through the belief of a great individual and through an individual's self-realization. Marxism does not and cannot admit of such absurd propositions. On the contrary, Marxism holds that on the question of knowing truth science is far more powerful than the power of an individual. So, it is only rational to depend upon science rather than on the belief or self-

realization of an individual. Herein lies a basic difference between Marxism and all other philosophies.

Task of philosophy

Marxism has another difference with other philosophies. So long, all other philosophies have tried to know the world and to interpret it — how far they have succeeded is altogether a different question. For, the very function of philosophy is to know the world, to develop the correct idea about truth and about the multitude of problems. Till the emergence of Marxism, what philosophy did was only to interpret all that was happening in the material world. Marxism is the only philosophy which, for the first time, has pointed out that simply to know is but meaningless. What is the use of just knowing, if we cannot apply the knowledge in practice? That is, Marxism holds that the task of philosophy is not only to know the world but to change it as well. So we see that the difference between Marxism and the other philosophies is this that while all other philosophies confine their task to interpreting the world, with Marxism the task is not merely to interpret – it is to know, interpret, correctly conceive the world, and also to help accelerate the process of change of this world.

Now, to understand Marxism we should have some general idea of the history of philosophical thoughts, the history of progress or development of philosophy. Of course, it is not possible to deal with it in detail in a single class. I shall, however, try my best to dwell on the cardinal points within the time available.

Emergence of thought and development of human civilization

At the outset, I like to mention one point. There is a basic difference between man and the animals. What is that? The difference lies precisely in the fact that human beings are empowered with the faculty of thinking, analysing and judging basing upon the special organization and structure of the brain. The human species originated in this world with this characteristic. Animals have nervous sensation and are responsive to the external stimuli; but they do not have the power to think or analyse. It is solely the development of the particular organization and structure of the human brain that has endowed man with the power of thinking. And this power has made him completely different from the animals. Animals are wholly subjugated by the laws of nature, that is, they are slaves to the laws of nature. No animals can get over their total subjugation by the natural laws, nor can they bring nature under control. As a result, they try to survive and do survive so long as allowed by nature. Attempt they can, but they survive or perish following the course of nature. But man's struggle for existence brought in a new feature: man refused to remain wholly slave to the laws of nature. Man came to know, understand the laws of nature and learned to harness the forces of nature for building up civilization, culture and social life. Thus, man was organized in society, became progressively civilized, advanced knowledge including science, created culture, and through this course has reached the present stage. But this development of human society did not come about overnight. There is a long history behind it. Man was not always what we see him today. There was a time when man was not organized in society even. Primitive man of the jungle was also almost completely slave to the natural laws. Little difference was there between man and animal then, apart from man's power of thinking. This power of thinking which man alone possesses by virtue of his brain, has made him distinctly different from the animals, so he alone is capable of getting to know his environment, overcoming the forces of nature and finding out the ways of solving various problems. The primitive man at that very early stage, even with whatever little thinking power he possessed, realized that it was simply crazy to try to live alone; he could not survive that way. To live in the hostile environment, to survive, collective living was a must. Driven by the urge to survive in the struggle he had to wage against the adverse forces of nature, against a hostile environment, the first element of consciousness, even at its budding, which dawned on man was this: We have to survive through collective effort. We cannot live alone. We will have to struggle unitedly, and collectively we will have to try to survive. This is the earliest form of consciousness in the course of development of human civilization. This constitutes

the elementary knowledge about the gradual development of human society. On this consciousness human society was built and we became social beings. At the root of becoming social beings lies the realization that we cannot live alone. Collectively we will have to survive, struggling collectively against the hostile forces. And through this collective struggle we can bring under control the forces of nature and use them for our benefit. Primitive man came to learn this through his practical experiences.

Man's original thinking was materialistic

From what we have been able to learn about primitive man so far from the history of the tribes, the cave paintings, and anthropological research, we find that the thinking of primitive man was materialistic, not idealistic. There was no sign or imprint of idealism on the thinking of primitive man. So, it is clear that the onward march of human society started with materialistic thinking. But later on, at a certain stage of development of human society, it could no longer remain only materialistic. Side by side with the materialistic thinking, the idealistic thinking appeared in society. And since then, the two trends of thinking, materialism and idealism — materialistic thinking and idealistic thinking — ran side by side in human society. Of course, there is a history behind the emergence of this idealistic thinking.

When from the beginning the thinking of primitive man was materialistic, the question arises: How could idealism or idealistic thinking emerge in the human society? How can it be explained? What is the cause behind it? This is indeed a pertinent question. History shows that primitive man had no notion of any supernatural power. Although man's idea of the natural forces was very unclear, one thing was clear to him: the natural forces meant the forces of matter, nothing else. To him force as an entity was abstruse, either ominous or auspicious, but always a force of matter, that is the force of air, water, fire, stone, trees, wild animals etc. Such was his idea of force. So, primitive man's idea of force was materialistic, or in other words, the forces were but the forces of matter. Consider an example. A chunk of rock slid down, burying some people. Man used to take it to be an act of a physical force. Any student of science knows that physical force means, in science, the force of matter. Primitive man never considered what has come to be known as a spirit as something supernatural, supra-matter or non-matter entity. The 'spirit' was the force of the rolling stone that hit the people. It was to tame or control this 'spirit' of the stone, or to appease it, that primitive man started some acts of propitiation, some rituals. And the essence of these acts or rituals, the very primitive means to which they took recourse to propitiate the stone or matter — that was nothing but incantation or 'magic'. This magic came into existence with the purpose of controlling and using the forces of nature. This is the history of primitive man. Hence magic is called the science of primitive man. You should know, this science was not the science we know today; it was the science of primitive man. Why do I call it science? What is the function of science today? Science reveals the forces of matter, unveils the mysteries of nature, searches out the various laws, helps us to grasp the mode of existence of matter. But primitive man tried to know and bring this very matter under his control with the help of magic, because no other method was known to him. So, he used to think as he understood it, and did many things which seem meaningless in today's perspective. If you care a little, you will find that there are many magical recitals which carry no meaning at all. And with these 'means' at his disposal, primitive man fancied to control the forces of nature. The magic primitive man resorted to in order to control the natural forces, the magic, which to him was but the means to know and please, or control matter — how far he succeeded is altogether a different matter — in course of history, at a later stage, got inseparably linked with worship of god or a supernatural force independent of matter, a non-material entity. When idealism, theism or the idea of god appeared in society, this magic gradually got transformed into the *mantras* (incantations) and rituals to worship god.

Primitive society did not split

The earliest social group of man was the primal horde, the predecessor of a society. Now this primitive human society although a united and organized one, was however divided into different clans or groups. What was the means of livelihood of the members of the clans or groups? They lived on fruit-gathering and hunting. They hunted collectively then. Whatever they got, they shared among themselves, though they might have fought, used physical force to get their share. The accumulation, preservation and augmentation of wealth was then impossible, since no such wealth or property was created. That was the period when stable property had not appeared in society — property that could be accumulated and preserved for use and be increased by employing others' labour. Man's livelihood was very simple at that stage.

As I have mentioned earlier, with the elementary realization that they could not live and survive alone amidst the hostile forces of nature human beings got themselves organized into clans or groups, this being an objective necessity. So, man lived collectively, hunted collectively, and thus they led their lives. The point was not that they shared equitably whatever they could gather by hunting, being guided by conscience or inspired by a sense of morality or ethics. Such wisdom and sense of ethics and morality were yet to appear in society. Not to speak of the very primitive stage, even in the formative stage of clan society, man had many traits then in common with animals. So he was, in a sense, bestial, his characteristics were akin to animals. Because of this savage nature, man used to get some share of food by grabbing and using physical force. This was the picture then. The mightier took by force the major share of what they had procured by hunting. The old, handicapped by age, and the invalid — they might be weak — still stole a chance to pick up a little, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Primitive society had not split even then — the primitive collective character of society was not lost.

Inequality did not grow out of greed; society based on inequality gave birth to greed

I am discussing all this only to show how erroneous are the ideas of those who consider that greed is an eternal trait of man — it was always there, it will remain for ever — that the inequality in society is the outcome of greed, and it is because of greed in man that society got divided into classes, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. Many of them think that it is human nature that getting a chance one will always try climb up to attain prosperity and invariably suppress others, and this is why there will always be some people who will prosper, and that inequality — the haves and the have-nots — will always appear in society. They tell this not from history but from their fanciful ideas. Otherwise they could have realized that it was not the base instincts that gave birth to inequality in society, rather it was the society built on inequality which gave birth to and helped sustain these base instincts in man. What I intend to emphasize and what we should definitely keep in mind is that, even with near-animal instincts in them, primitive man lived collectively; the clans or groups did not disintegrate. The class-divided society did not appear then, not to speak of the owner class and the working class. Primitive savage man was used to tussling among themselves, which bore resemblance to the street dogs fighting over crumbs of bread. Like animals they used to fight against each other and scramble for food, yet the clans did not disintegrate and class division had not appeared. The owners, workers, traders, jotedars,¹ middle peasants, landless peasants, etc., whom we witness today had not appeared then. How did then classes come into being?

Emergence of agriculture and its aftermath

Only with the appearance of property, of stable property in society came the classes into existence. When the productive system reached a stage creating conditions for the stable ownership of the means of production and bringing in its wake the opportunity to permanent owners for usurpation of production, augmentation of wealth and appropriation of others' labour, thereby creating conditions for greater comfort at the cost of others — it is only then that classes emerged in society. Until the productive system reached this stage society did not

split into classes. And when was this stage reached in human society? Broadly speaking, it was the period when stable property appeared in human society from cattle breeding and particularly agriculture. Man, moving together in groups for hunting and food-gathering, in time came to notice the development of a strange phenomenon; he became aware that a tree, say, a mango tree grew at the very place where the fruit-stone was previously thrown and it bore the same fruit. This very fact struck his mind. He wondered that if the fruit-stone, that is the seed, had brought on the tree, then sowing of seeds could beget trees, fruits and crops! Of course to arrive at this conclusion it took man many, many years. And it was on the basis of this realization that one day man endeavoured to introduce tilling of land and cultivation.

So, at the primitive stage man lived in clans or groups and led a nomadic life. The whole human society was then made of such nomadic clans or groups. Nation, national boundary, tradition, etc., which we witness today did not exist at one time. What we call language was also non-existent at one time. Naturally, the articulation of primitive man was somewhat animal-like. Now the introduction of agriculture about which I was discussing came about at a particular stage; that is, in the stage of primitive organized clan society a new development took place with the discovery of agriculture. The technique of cultivation became known to man. By collectively deforesting the land, fighting against wild animals, they made fallow land fit for cultivation.

Emergence of stable property and private ownership

So, it is obvious that none was born as owner of the land. We should understand how false is the claim of the owners that the right to property is a sacred one, coming down from the ancestors from time immemorial. We should all understand that there is a history behind their ancestors becoming owners of land. And that is a horrid history of deception, a terrible tale of persecution, a history of robbery, robbing of the toil of others by physical force and coercion. We should ourselves know and make the other peasants know, too, this history. The land which was made available and suitable for cultivation by collectively fighting against wild animals and the adverse forces of nature — the land, the fruit of collective labour, was usurped by a small section simply by sheer might, and they became the owners. So, we find that a great change came about in the livelihood of man with the introduction of agriculture, with the invention of the means of cultivation and appearance of land as a stable means of production. Unlike in the past, when man's livelihood was uncertain and his satisfaction of hunger depended entirely on hunting or the availability of fruits, etc., and for which he led a nomadic life, a break was now wrought. Because, land is such a means of production from which crops can be raised, reaped and consumed every year. So, no longer was there the necessity to roam about for bare existence. And what else did happen? Man became aware that he could be the owner of the land. The mightier among them realized that if they could somehow own the land, they could get its fruits by employing the labour of others, they would be owners of the produce; it is they who would consume it and the right over the land would also be theirs. Consequently, they could lead a sumptuous life.

We need to understand : why did this mentality to live like a lord by depriving others come about? Because, if man shares the produce of the land equally with others, in that case his urge for having that type of comfort could not be satisfied. Of course, had they been moralists, or followers of Buddha and Gandhi, things would have been different. But at that time the sense of equality and justice had not appeared in society, Buddha and Gandhi were not born. Man was then in some ways like animals and his instincts, too, were somewhat animal-like. That was why he could not think in that lofty way. The greatest concern of man in those days was to meet his own necessity. This objective necessity and its impact on life worked as the more powerful factor than that of any ideal. What was the objective reality? Not to speak of luxury, man could not even always meet his minimal needs by sharing equitably what he could produce from the land, depending on the then productive system and his capacity to produce. If shared equally by all, only two full meals a day and a piece of bark to cover the body could be managed by some groups or tribes for themselves, but not even by

all. Those who did not have the implements for cultivation or enough land, had to move elsewhere in search of food.

Scarcity of production and its impact

One point is very much relevant here. That is, man's need is always on the increase, it cannot remain static. This is quite natural. On the one hand, population is growing, so is growing man's needs or his desire to lead a better life. There is no way to deny this truth. But in those days what man could produce was not sufficient to meet the growing needs. So, clashes and conflicts were common over sharing of whatever little could be produced in the primitive condition of the productive system. If, say, for argument's sake, from the dawn of civilization the conditions were such that production could increase keeping pace with the ever-growing needs of man, then the inclination to enjoy alone and deprive others could not have grown. Take an instance. Imagine we are seated in an open ground. The question of depriving others of the breeze does not arise at all, and the sense of competition on this score is absent. But, of course, there is competition over getting things like electric fans, air-conditioners or motor cars; we are not all privileged to have these, even if we desire. The competition among us over having a motor car is there because of dearth of the same. Obviously, there is no scope for all to own and enjoy things like that. Who can own a motor car and who cannot also depends on the purchasing power of an individual. Therefore this mutual competition is a competition to increase one's purchasing power. We want to have these comforts by any means of livelihood, fair or foul. So, this is a competition for comfort and luxury, and a tussle and conflict over power and position in the attempt to overtake each other. Because, there is dearth of materials of comfort to meet our needs. But is there any conflict among us over enjoying natural air, or do we need to cheat or put down anybody for that? No, such a thing does not happen. All of us can enjoy it at our will, since air is there in plenty. Now if all the necessities of life, whatever man needs for his sustenance, can be produced in plenty and made available to all, man's needs can be met only then. That is, along with abundance in production if the system of distribution be such that everybody receives all the necessary goods according to his needs, then and then only this problem can be resolved; there will not remain any longer the mentality to compete with or deprive others. But that is not so simple. Not to speak of the primitive society, it is not that simple even today.

Be that as it may, let us resume the discussion on what was the basic problem of primitive man. The basic problem was the contradiction between the growing human need and the dire paucity of production. So, conflict arose between man and man over distribution. The fallow lands that were made cultivable by the collective efforts of all — the mightier among them, by applying might in this conflict, became the owner of those lands. The chieftains, the warriors — the mightier among them — subjugated and made slaves all the others who had right to equal share and became the owners, the masters. By robbing the toils of the slaves they began to build up a world of comfort and luxury for themselves. In this process emerged in the course of time, the slave masters, or the rich, powerful, together with their private property. That is to say, with the vast majority of the slaves on the one side and a few slave masters on the other, society split into two parts; two classes were born.

Again in the very primitive stage of society when the groups or tribes led a nomadic life, roaming about to gather fruit or to hunt — for, beyond that they had not learned any method to produce food — when two different groups or tribes met, clashes and conflicts would ensue between them. Those who lost the battle, being defeated and captured would often be killed. For at that stage the procurement of food was fraught with such uncertainty that to meet everyone's daily necessity for food was a most difficult task. In this situation they were not in a position to carry the extra burden of defeated captive persons. But when stable property was created with the introduction of cattle breeding and agriculture, then those who were defeated in battle between two tribes were subjugated and forced to toil harder.

History of origin of state and private property

Then, what is the history of origin of the private property? Behind the origin of private property lie sheer injustice and coercion. The community property, through coercion and acts of sheer injustice, was transformed into private property. The natural wealth which was gathered by the collective labour for the satisfaction of the human needs, the land which was made available for cultivation through the arduous collective labour of all was transformed into the property of the chieftains of the tribes by sheer power of muscle and the rod. Since then this force of coercion has made the right to private property sacrosanct by invoking laws. Therefore, not only did private property arise out of utter coercion and use of brutal force, but it is also a fact that people could not at all accept the rule that was established to protect it. Hence, the owners invoked laws, developed coercive instruments like the army and established their order in society, to force the people to accept their 'sacred' right to private property. This is how, in course of time, the state, administrative machinery, rules and regulations and laws, etc., which we witness today, came into being. All these were created by the owners themselves in order to serve, protect and implement their class interest.

Thus we arrive at some important points. First, we come to know what state is. The state is an instrument of coercion in the hands of one class against the others. That is why the history of emergence of the state has become inseparably linked with the history of emergence of class divided society. We have already seen in the above discussion that in the very primitive society there was no state. It emerged at that very stage of history when society became class divided, giving rise to the owning class and bringing in its wake the need to establish the administrative machinery, to introduce police force and army, laws and regulations to protect their interest. This is the history behind the emergence of the state.

Just see, what a strange coincidence! After the emergence of the owner class came the idea of god, theism and idealism in society. In god the owners find their real friend in need. They never oppose but are always great devotees of god. Thus, the emergence of the theory of god, theism and idealism are inseparably linked with the system of private ownership.

Idea is a product of matter

You have already heard that man's thinking was originally materialist and it was bound to be so. Let me elaborate it a bit more. What is idea? How does man think? How does his thinking originate?

We know that through the five sense organs — eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin — man constantly connects and comes in contact with the external world, in different ways. This external world or the universe exists independently of man's existence. Well, the point is not that the external world exists, since we exist. For instance, if we leave this place, this microphone or this glass will not cease to be here; the matter is not like that. This Bhatpara² will exist with all its tradition, even after my demise. So, the existence of this material world is independent of our existence, our consciousness; nor is this material world an illusion. You have to bear this in mind. It is an objective reality which exists independent of us, independent of human consciousness. We think, and therefore the external world exists; or, the external world is what we take it to be — such ideas are absolutely erroneous. We may think it to be anything, but no matter how we fancy it, the world is what it is. We may indulge in utterly baseless, wishful thinking, it is of no matter; as you see, one may construe rice to be pulse but by that rice does not turn out to be pulse. We think this electric fan to be something else, but it remains what it is. The electric energy — when it exists, it exists with all its characteristics and laws. It exists without depending on our will; nor do its laws and characteristics depend on our will. That is to say, this external world exists independently of human consciousness. The external world has an independent existence; it does not depend on human intellect or consciousness. If anybody asserts that the existence of this material world with all its qualities is dependent upon human consciousness, then he is either totally ignorant or is deliberately practising deception.

Let us come back to our original point. How does man think? Man has come to acquire this power of thinking because of the material constitution and structure of his brain.

Through the sense organs the external world is striking the human brain constantly and interacting with it. The special endowment of the human brain is its power of translation — that is, the power of thinking, analysing, grasping and judging things. So it is due to the constant interaction of the external world through the sense organs with the human brain possessing this special power of translation that man can think, that he is getting acquainted with the external world. It means thereby man is able to think, contemplate and realize. It is therefore in matter that the origin of thinking can be traced. So, clearly, the way events and our surroundings strike our brain, accordingly we think and analyse. Matter is not only what we perceive as such, the environment which is constantly striking our brain also belongs to matter. Even the human brain we think with is composed of matter — composed of different organic compounds. So, it is matter which is thinking, again providing ingredients for thinking, and it is through conflicts and contradictions of matter that consciousness and idea have developed. The primitive man was therefore bound to be materialistic.

Emergence of idea of god in society

You see, when society became class divided and the owner class was created, when the system of ownership became firmly established and rules and regulations, laws and discipline were introduced, that is to say, one group of people ruled over others — at that time science was yet to develop. Science was then primitive — largely in the stage of magic. Man observed with awe and asked how fire burnt, rain fell, earth quaked, typhoon raged and how man originated, how he was born and why men died, and so many other questions. Why this sunrise and sunset at regular intervals, day after day, why this periodic change of seasons and ebb and tide, one following the other — such questions struck man's mind again and again. But who could answer these? For, man was yet to possess that instrument, the science, which could provide the answers. While trying to find answers to all such questions of 'why' and 'how', a point struck the human brain, and that too at a time and surely not before, when the objective conditions were ripe for such an idea to arise in man's mind. What was that idea? At a certain stage of development, man started to ponder: How is this society moving on in such a disciplined manner? Well, because there was one at the helm of society, a head of the state, a lawmaker. Just as there is someone who has to conduct everything in society and so society runs in an orderly fashion, just as there is a group of men who are the owners and the rest accept them as their masters, obey the laws framed by them and are moving as they are being driven, so also there must be one owner, the master of the universe who is conducting and guiding it to run in an orderly way. Thus, it is through this process of drawing analogy or drawing parallel between two different phenomena — that is following the logic of resemblance, which man, guided by common sense, is so easily prone to as also generally used to — that the idea of god was born in man. This in fact was the objective condition behind the emergence of the idea of god. And the objective condition was that man observed the owner, the slave master, the king governed the slaves in a disciplined manner, and so there was discipline among the slaves and order in society. Naturally, for this universe to run in an orderly way, there must be an owner, a master behind to guide it along.

So, from this we find that owing to lack of correct scientific knowledge in that period of infancy of science the idea of god emerged in society after the appearance of the owner class and the imposition of their rule in society. After the emergence of the idea in society that there is a Lord or master of this universe, the rulers of society started to use it in their class interest. From that period on materialism and theism, or idealism, have been running side by side in society.

Primitive man's concern was matter

Therefore you can easily understand that those who hold that man is the embodiment of god, his soul is the incarnation of the supreme soul and quest for supreme soul is the very nature of soul, and this is why man is intrinsically engaged from his very birth in contemplating the almighty god, are either ignorant of history of human development or are taking refuge in fantasy. Do they know that after the emergence of man, during birth and

development of the human mind, for a long period man did not contemplate god but all his thinking pertained solely to matter? It was matter that he wanted to know. What he wanted to know, have command upon and strive hard to control was matter. And the idea of god came in the wake of a system based on individual ownership.

I have already discussed how, after the emergence of the property owning class and from the analogy of masters bringing discipline in society came the idea of the owner, the master of the entire universe because of whom all things are moving in an orderly manner. So, the then social conditions and the infancy of human thought and science were the causative factors behind the emergence of the idea of god and idealist philosophy. Who or what did contemplate god? It was none but the human brain. The idea of god was the product of human brain. So it was not god that had created matter or the material world, nor did the idea of god or idealism emerge as the outcome of true knowledge, correct vision and higher human thought.

It was the human brain composed of matter and engaged in searching out the mysteries of matter that created the idea of god. At that primitive stage of development when science was unable to provide answers to all such questions, yet on observing some such phenomena in society and drawing analogy by common sense man came to think that the universe also had a master – this very line of thinking led to the idea of god. This is why, later on, we find that kings were deemed to be an integral part of god. So, to fight against the king was deemed to be a revolt against god in the then *shastras*³ of all religions — barring some exceptions in the history. Sometimes in history, religion was utilized as a weapon in the struggle against oppression and injustice perpetrated by the slave masters, on the argument that, since in the kingdom of god all men were equal, the slave masters, by perpetrating oppression and injustice were acting against the very religion itself. Instances are there of use of Christianity, Islam and other religions in the struggle of the slaves against the slave masters. Barring some such exceptions, the owner class almost in all cases used religion in favour of their class rule and class exploitation. In consequence, the idea prevailed in society that to fight against the king was impermissible because he was the representative of god. The progress of science and the idea of democracy and democratic right at a later period of history rooted out this concept from society. But that was long, long after — during the French Revolution.

When capitalism was born in the womb of feudalism, then prevailing all over the world, when the development of capitalism necessitated the abolition of serfdom, the overthrow of feudalism, and along with these the necessity arose for people to stand erect based on the ideal of individual liberty – without which it was impossible to introduce a higher productive system — cultivation of science and unfettered pursuit of knowledge started anew in society. This marked the era of the beginning of the exact sciences and technology. And with the development of capitalism came the galloping progress of science. Till then the feudal system posed a serious hindrance to the development of science, obstructed the quest for truth and even went to the extent of gagging truth. Attempts were made to preserve and protect the structure of a philosophical system with the help of fantasy and fanciful ideas. Since concepts like these provided a fertile ground for the monarchy to thrive, the kings and the feudal lords were all for patronizing them. ‘The king reigns over the country, god over the universe. The king is the representative of god, a god in the miniature. God himself bestowed upon the king the right to rule’. Such beliefs mostly reigned in society. Whence the king came, or the master — none searched for it in the past history of man and society.

Right from their birth, people found that the father of a king was a king; so was his grandfather. Hence they thought, perhaps the almighty god had himself bestowed kingship upon them. Their belief was somewhat like this. That the history of emergence of king and kingship is a horrid history of force and violence — people had forgotten all this after long, long years. Because, even today it is still a subject of research whether at that stage when all this happened ancient manuscripts had already come into vogue. So, that period in course of development of human history has been shrouded in darkness, leaving behind no record even. This was the situation. Naturally, when the idea of god emerged in society, the kings were taken for granted as the deputies of god. This is why I was telling the whole era of feudalism

was the period when idealist philosophy greatly flourished, and was the dominating phenomenon of that era. The materialist philosophy also ran side by side but it was staggering along, as if itself a 'proletariat'. History reveals that the old hawks of society persecuted and even made the materialists outcast though there were many a genius among the materialists who stood against idealism and even had to pay dearly for it. Starved and outcast were they, as the monarchy did not back them up. But they did not budge an inch still.

Growth of capital opened up new possibilities

When capitalism was born in the womb of feudalism, the growth of capital brought in its wake new possibilities. What were they? First, the industrial development needed workers. But in feudalism most of the men were serfs; they were tied to the land. The owners of the land made them serfs or near slaves. So, unless the serfs could be freed from the hands of the feudal landowners or lords, unless they could be freed from the land as their only mode of livelihood and their individual freedom ensured, how could then large-scale industries be built up? Wherefrom could come the regular supply of labour? Secondly, for the development of large-scale industries, the development of science and technology is a must, without which mining, navigation, transport system and, in a word, large-scale industries could not be built up. Yet a real urge and real necessity for the industrial progress appeared in society and the capitalist class felt it. Capitalism was then in the stage of mercantile capitalism. At the same time there appeared a social urge for further development of mercantile capitalism, for big factories, plants and industries. The capitalists wanted to utilize this in their interests and provided further impetus to this growing social urge. The capitalist class at that time belonged to the progressive section of the society who stood in revolt against all the old feudal ideas, the feudal sense of values, morality, ideology, philosophy, etc. This revolt extended into the fields of art, literature, science. The clarion call reverberated: Break all that is rotten and old, welcome the fresh and new and find out the truth. Thus began the onward march of science. The monarchs and kings were all for stalling this march of science. And it was the bourgeoisie who stood as the champion of the cause of science. That is why it was they who called Newton, the great scientist of the age, a 'great saint'. There was no mention of god in his scientific study; he was a man of science who dedicated his life to the pursuit of science and the quest for scientific truth. Yet, the bourgeoisie called him a savant. Because, he performed a great task. We know that Newtonian science dealt a deadly blow to the feudal thoughts and ideas. What became obvious from Newtonian science was that the monarchs and kings were no representatives of god; it was all false to say that. As for the question whether god himself existed, there was great doubt. Nowhere in this material world could his existence be traced. Nobody knew where he existed. The obvious conclusion from Newtonian science was that god existed only in human imagination and fantasy. And how could come his representative who himself was non-existent? In this way Newton's pursuit of science, his scientific thoughts and ideas shook the very foundation of the old thoughts. This opened up the avenues to unleash war against the king, nothing stood any more in the way. What obstructs man most is the fear of sin and retribution. The belief so long was that going against the king would condemn one to hell. The protagonists of *shastras*³, the pundits of *Tolas*⁴ and the scholars and priests of churches and mosques, all of them preached that hell was the destiny of those who went against the king, for the king was conceived as one inseparably linked with god. In the course of development of science these ideas and beliefs got shattered. From the history of development of society it is therefore seen that in the epoch of rising capitalism there began anew a rising tide of materialistic thoughts. The door to the development of materialist thinking was opened up anew. The victory of science was proclaimed all around. The call rang: Engage yourself in the pursuit of science and epistemology, search out truth, critically examine on the basis of reason and logic, change yourself, get rid of the old ideas and throw overboard whatever appears to be unjust in the light of reason. This was the call of Renaissance, the call of the French Revolution. Everywhere, in every domain of philosophy, science, art and literature this crusade started.

Here one point needs to be kept in mind. The bourgeoisie were no doubt believers of materialism in the beginning, but that was not the kind of materialism the Marxists stand for. That materialism was alloyed with bits of idealism. For, there is a great difference between the materialism of dialectical materialism and the materialism that the bourgeoisie once upheld. The materialist concept of the bourgeoisie was not completely free from the influence of idealism. But even then it cannot be denied that their thoughts or outlook was essentially materialistic. Not only that, I have already told you that from the initial stage of the advent of capitalism till a long period the materialist concept exerted great influence on society, dealing a severe blow to the prevalent idealist thoughts. Their inclination was towards science. The capitalist class then patronized the cultivation of scientific reasoning, logic and the method of judging everything on the basis of ethics and values. Because, in order to build up the capitalist society, they had to wage a struggle against the then reactionary forces, against the kings and monarchs and against the serfdom. The serfs had to be made free. So, they raised the slogan of individuality, individual freedom. Fighting thus they laid the foundation of the parliamentary system we find today — they brought about the industrial development, development of production and advancement of capitalism. And for this they had to perform another task, and that was, they had to free each individual and make all equal at least in the eye of law. Though, it is true in that system man did not become completely free. Free from serfdom as they became, they were not free from bondage as such. They had been reduced to wage slaves. The serfs now becoming free from land and its slavery and bondage were reduced to wage slaves — slaves at mills and factories. How could it happen? It happened because, where else would they go and how could they earn a livelihood? Although free from the bondage of the landlords, the situation forced them to run after the owners of mills and factories and submit to eke out a bare existence. So, those whom the bourgeoisie had liberated were reduced to almost semi-slaves by the bourgeoisie themselves. That is, the workers were compelled to work on whatever wage was decided by the owners. Because, the inexorable law of capitalism was to create unemployment — the army of unemployed. Thus came the opportunity to engage cheap labour by the owners. The bourgeoisie, therefore, could not advance society very far. With the passage of time, the capitalist class lost their earlier fervour and became reactionary. That is, the bourgeoisie which in the beginning had laid emphasis on science and scientific pursuit, experimented truth, logic and reasoning — when the capitalist system which they had developed became reactionary ; when the capitalist class, having lost its revolutionary character turned into a class wedded to vested interest, in the present era, at that stage the bourgeoisie turned their face away from science and scientific logic, and started patronizing the idealist philosophy and idealist thoughts and thereby halted the progress of science. A situation arose when the bourgeoisie, after having established their own class rule and exploitation, could no more advance the society. Compared to whatever little industrialization capitalism could achieve, the crisis it brought in its wake was much greater, plunging it in ever deeper crisis.

Moribund capitalism obstructs progress of science

From then on capitalism could not bring good to the people any more, could not show humanity the path of its emancipation; it had nothing to offer excepting the curse of exploitation, and hence capitalism became a deadweight on the life of the people. See, how strange! The capitalist class which in the era of rising capitalism fought against feudalism-absolutism, against the extremely narrow feudal mindset and outlook, religious blindness and bigotry, fought against the idealist philosophy and tried to establish materialism, proclaimed the victorious march of science — the same capitalist class, at a later period, just like the vested interests, the feudal masters, became inclined towards idealism, turning away from materialist thinking. Now they are uttering the name of the almighty. It is they who have become the votaries of idealism today. They are creating misconception about science through misleading talks, it is they who make confusing statements like ‘science is both a curse and a boon to humanity’. But they cannot altogether dispense with science, because the capitalist industrial production has reached such a stage meanwhile that they cannot allow

science to be completely done away with. So the capitalists are aiding science and its growth only to the extent it serves their own class interest. This slowed down the advancement of science. The bourgeoisie do not provide today the patronage and energy with which they stood by science in its onward march in the early period. On the contrary, they try to inhibit its growth, if possible. Because today the progress of science is threatening capitalism, bringing on crisis and inviting disaster to the existence of the capitalists as a class.

Production based on maximization of profit is the root cause of crisis

Why did this happen? This is no doubt a pertinent question. Capitalism which once advanced society and led the revolution against feudalism-absolutism with science as its instrument of struggle, devoted itself to the pursuit of truth, waged struggle against the old religious morals and values to establish new values of life based on the humanist ethics and morals and helped social progress — why is that very capitalism, at a later period, singing an opposite tune in all walks of life? It happened so because, despite all these, the bourgeoisie could not free labour from exploitation, from the grip and tentacles of exploitation by the owners. In a society based on private ownership over the means of production, the motive force of production is not just to earn profit, but the maximum profit for the owners. But the owners cannot earn this profit without exploiting the workers engaged in factories, without exploiting the people. And in this course the common people, being deprived more and more, got pauperized, and most of the owners, unable to withstand competition were reduced to, or continued to remain, small or petty owners, on the one hand and, on the other, most of the social wealth got concentrated in the hands of a few owners. When such a situation arose in society in the course of development of capitalism, that is, when capitalism was transformed into monopoly capitalism, its crisis deepened very much. What did it lead to? We must clearly understand the nature of the problem. You all know that whatever the need of the common people, their purchasing capacity falls short of their minimum need owing to capitalist exploitation. But due to the phenomenal development of science and technology the production or the productive capacity of society went up high. And consequently, there appeared the problem of overproduction in the capitalist system. What does overproduction really mean? That is, production far surpasses the demand in the market. Does this demand mean the real necessity of the people? Not at all. In a capitalist society or in a capitalist market this demand reflects merely the purchasing capacity of the people, of the whole of the people of the society. When production runs far ahead of this demand, we call it overproduction. It is then that a crisis develops, and so comes down the axe of retrenchment. Thus grows the number of the unemployed and consequently newer and newer problems appear in the capitalist society. With the introduction of newer machines more and more workers get retrenched. The unemployed workers start agitations. Why really do the workers get retrenched? The retrenchment is not due to new machines, nor is it due to the advancement of science. It is again the social system based on profit motive that is really responsible for this problem of retrenchment. The workers get retrenched because the capitalists utilize the new machines to earn maximum profit, and because the entire productive system is run in the interest of earning maximum profit by the capitalist class. But you see, the capitalists concealing this fact in order to shield themselves in the face of this situation, take recourse to create anti-science mentality among the people. And due to ignorance and inability to grasp the real problem correctly, the common people quite often mistakenly consider science to be their enemy.

Capitalism, not science, is the enemy of the people

For instance, when a crane is installed, the workers quite often think that the crane is their enemy — they want to smash it. But why? Because, after the introduction of the crane, the number of workers engaged in loading and unloading gets drastically reduced, and many workers are at once retrenched, the reason being that the owners, the capitalists are not ready to maintain workers who have no job to do. Just see, introduction of the crane reduced the labour cost and hence the cost of production, increasing the profit of the owners — but alas,

the net result was retrenchment of workers and nothing else. Experiencing this, the worker thinks that it is the machine that has made him unemployed. This thinking of the worker is wrong. Because, it is not the machine that has made him unemployed. The machine is supposed to bring comfort to his life. Previously, he had to earn his bread, putting in hard labour, carrying heavy burden on his back and smeared with grease and dirt. But the machine enables him to do the same job sitting on a chair, pushing just a button. The machine can bring him this comfort, but why should he lose his job for that? The worker got retrenched because the crane was being used in the interest of the owners, in the interest of their profits. In all capitalist countries the main object of production is not to provide employment to people, nor bring comfort to their life with better machines, but to lower the cost of production and thereby earn maximum profit for the capitalists. Simply because in all capitalist countries production is run from this motive workers get retrenched. So the workers must understand that such a situation would not have arisen had production been run with the object of fulfilling the people's necessities and not for earning maximum profit by the capitalists. So the use of machines — to be more precise, use of science and technology — must be freed from capitalist exploitation, from the motive of earning maximum profit or, in other words, from the clutches of the capitalist class. If the workers can achieve this, then machines will bring comfort and happiness to their life. The inhuman labour they have to put in when there is no machine will be drastically reduced and with the aid of machines they can produce more with much less effort and in less time. They will get more comfort, greater satisfaction and more happiness from the work. So machines are not their enemies. Their enemy is capitalism. At the root of all the problems of society — the problem of overproduction, problem of retrenchment and unemployment, problem of price rise of essential commodities — lies the crisis-ridden capitalism. Since the main object of capitalism is maximization of profit by the capitalist class — so in a capitalist system quite often the capitalist class, or the state run by it, would rather throw away or destroy the surplus production than sell the commodities to the poor people at cheaper prices. How strange! In the USA tons of cotton were once thrown into the ocean, but were not sold to the people at cheaper rates. In our country, too, during the last world war, a number of jeeps and trucks were deliberately turned into junks and were sold as scrap. Of course, some officers individually sold a jeep or two secretly, but that is a different story. What I want to say is, why is it that surplus commodities were even destroyed, or thrown into the sea but still not sold in the market at cheaper prices? This was not done because, in that case, the running industries would suffer. And to this, for that obvious reason, the capitalist class can never agree. If the jeeps were sold at a cheaper price, or given away for free, then how would the industries of Tatas and Birlas⁵ run? The Ford Company would go bankrupt! Who would pay more if one gets a jeep at a cheaper price or for free? The capitalists would not sell their products without keeping a profit or without adding an amount of profit to the cost of production. If the volume of commodities surpasses the demand of the purchasers who can afford to purchase at prices fixed by the owners, that becomes for them overproduction and this begets a crisis for them. Naturally, advancement of science and technological development are bringing in greater crisis in the capitalist production system. If science and technology are advanced too much that may pose a serious threat to the production system itself one day. That is why they cannot afford to utilize the atomic energy to enhance production. When the use of electricity alone is bringing about the crisis of overproduction how can they afford to utilize atomic energy, bringing in its wake a great disaster? So, you see in the less developed capitalist countries like ours they are still not using even the electrical power everywhere, but are using coal or some such kind of fuel. That is, they do not want to make full use of the electrical power even, because if they do that then the productivity will become so high that production would go far ahead of the demand in the market. Capitalism has bled the common people white. It is for this that there are hardly any people in the market to purchase goods at an increasing quantum at the prices fixed by them. People there are many, their needs are vast. But there are not many people who have the

capacity to purchase at the prices fixed by the capitalists. This is what we call the number one problem with the capitalist system of production.

The second problem is the problem of rationalization. The capitalists run mills and factories in the interest of earning profit. Certainly they do not do so to provide employment for livelihood and to eradicate the problem of unemployment for the common people. They start industries with a view to earning profit. If they find that the introduction of some machines lowers the cost and helps them earn more, they will employ less workers, resulting in further aggravation of the unemployment situation. So, this measure of rationalization is sure to lead to retrenchment of workers. Quite justly there will be strong protests, and slogans will be raised against this measure. This is quite obvious. How long can people be kept starving and simply fed on lectures? So, this too, poses a strong hurdle for the capitalist class and their government. Judging from this angle, science today is a curse for them. So, whatever little pursuit of science is there still in society, it is being used in the class interest of the capitalists, in the interest of their profit and exploitation of the capitalist class.

So, the socialist revolution or the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state machine that we advocate, what does it mean? It means emancipation — the emancipation of the workers and peasants from the exploitation and oppression by the capitalist class — emancipation of science from the tentacles of capitalist profit motive, and the emancipation of the womenfolk from male domination and oppression. We need emancipation for all from all sorts of bondage and exploitation. The women need freedom from the bondage and drudgery of family life. There is now some sort of division of labour. Men tell the women, “You do the household chores and look after the children; we will go out to do the earning”. Such has become the division of labour today in our country. Men and women have each their own departments. However, if planned in a scientific manner, the families may be structured in a new and different way. But this is not possible in the present set up. Yet if the families can be structured anew in such a way, the women will be able to say: “We will both go out for earning. Whatever household chores need to be done, together both of us will manage. During working hours there are the nurseries and kindergartens to look after the children – I will bring them there. On the way back either you or I will take them home. Then we can equally share the household chores. So, we the women can be free from the drudgery and bondage of family life.” And what else? The womenfolk need emancipation from the economic subjugation and domination by menfolk. This emancipation has to come on the basis of equal rights and a new relationship between man and woman based on mutual respect and love.

That is why I was telling that the workers, peasants and other sections of the toiling people need emancipation from economic and political subjugation. Science needs emancipation from the rule of capital. Our endeavour is for building up this struggle for socialism, for all-out emancipation — emancipation for all. So the struggle to establish socialism is a struggle not of the workers and peasants alone, it is a struggle of the womenfolk as well, and as such a struggle of the entire humanity. The struggle for establishing socialism is also a struggle to free science from the bondage of capitalism and to use it for the benefit of mankind. But the capitalist class, the vested interests, they do not want the progress of society. For, the total wealth as society is in possession today — that is enough for them. Because, as owners they are amassing all wealth of society, which they are doing today by robbing others, they enjoy enough lordly comforts, they lead a luxurious life. How can they wish to have a new society then? But those who are deprived of everything, who are exploited and oppressed, theirs is the need to overthrow this social system.

Proletariat need most to know truth

What do we witness today in the capitalist society? We find that the movements of the workers, peasants and the lower middle class people against capitalism are growing so as to free science and the productive system from the motive of exploitation; that is, from profit motive and instead use it for the satisfaction of the social needs. The proletariat or in other words, the workers and peasants are engaged in the struggle to oust private ownership over

the production system and establish social ownership in its place. That is why they want to smash the existing social order. But for the overthrow of the present social order and building up a new one in its place, and for the uninterrupted development of science and the productive system, the truth that science has unfolded to them so far, whatever they have hitherto acquired is inadequate to meet this necessity. It is for this reason that they stand for further advancement of science, deeper realization of truth and pursuit of knowledge for greater comprehension of the world. Let there be a continuous progress of science with the unveiling of truth more and more, let there be even more augmentation of production, let people consume more and more, let the gift of science reach every doorstep — this is the necessity of the proletariat today. In a socialist society, there is no crisis of overproduction because production is free from the motive of earning profit or of fulfilling the class interest of the owners. So they do not need to halt the progress of science. This is why the proletariat today want to free science completely from the fetters of capitalism. Because, it is the proletariat who have to suffer most if truth is strangulated. It is the proletariat who needs most the quest for truth, who can in no way afford falsehood. It is the workers, peasants, lower middle class, as such all the toiling people, whose need for truth, for knowledge is greatest. Because, bereft of knowledge, bereft of this instrument, man cannot throw light on the unknown, on the myriad problems. All the falsehood and myths concerning socio-economic problems, the web of confusions and conspiracies laid by the capitalist class in the society can only be disentangled with the help of knowledge; the proletariat will have to kindle this flame of knowledge. And that flame, the light of knowledge, is kindled by science and science alone. So, in today's world, it is the proletariat, not the bourgeoisie, who are the true devotees of science. The proletariat are much greater votaries of science today than the bourgeoisie in the beginning. By science I do not mean only the technological aspects, but want to emphasize more man's faculty of thinking, mental make-up and scientific outlook. Because, the proletarian mental make-up is built up on this scientific basis. On the contrary, at the earlier stage the mental make-up of the bourgeoisie developed in the superstructure of a society based and run on idealist thinking, and their world of science had to develop on it. And our urge, our aspiration for pursuit of modern science has developed on the basis of the present objective conditions and realities of life. As a result, for us, the proletariat, the materialistic thinking has developed further, reaching a higher level of perfection. Dialectical materialism, which is the philosophical basis of Marxism, has grown and developed completely free from the influence of idealistic philosophy.

Marxism is the only true materialist philosophy

In this context, one point needs to be mentioned. Marxism is not the only materialist philosophy in the world. Many materialist philosophies other than Marxism appeared not only in Europe but in our country, too. But there is a fundamental difference between Marxism or dialectical materialism and the other materialist philosophies. Excepting Marxism no other materialist philosophy is free from the influence of idealism. Although their basic tenet, the basic thought process or structure was materialistic, yet they could not be completely free from the influence of idealism. For these philosophies it was not possible to correctly know the scientific laws and the mysteries of this material world and its laws. They could not know them because science in those days had not developed to the stage necessary to enable man to get to know those laws. Till science attained a certain stage of development it was not possible for even a genius to know the general laws of the material world. It would be wrong to hold that before Marx no genius or talented person of his stature was born in the world. This is no way to judge. It can be easily understood that the then democratic thoughts and ideas of the capitalist system, the humanist concepts, coupled with the birth of the proletariat, and the scientific discoveries paved the path for the emergence of the philosophy of Marxism. It was on the basis of these that it was possible for dialectical materialism to come into existence, that Marxism emerged.

I have pointed out earlier that excepting Marxism all other materialist philosophies, from the standpoint of Marxism in the ultimate analysis turn out to be idealism. But why? Being

unable to know truth comprehensively and adequately, all other materialist thoughts, although essentially materialistic in character, have made out truth to be eternal, unchangeable, reducing it to dogma and binding it within a rigid framework through subjective ideas. Maybe their ideas were materialistic, yet they were subjective and not based on experimented truth. Just as the idea of god is untrue and hence yields nothing, similarly because their ideas were subjective and because according to their idea truth is eternal and unchangeable their concept of matter has become untrue and sterile. Now, why do I call the concept of god untrue or as yielding nothing? Because it has no bearing on objective reality. It is untrue because it has no relation with reality, and it yields nothing because nothing can be attained with it. Again consider that I do not believe in almighty god but my idea about matter is untrue; then even without believing in god, because my ideas are false and not based on reality I may turn out to be an idealist. Just as the idea of god or such idealist concepts cannot attain anything positive today, cannot help to bring about progress and development of society today so also nothing fruitful can be achieved with the incorrect materialist concepts. This is why such materialist philosophies, in point of fact, are tantamount to idealism. To speak the truth, these are, as if, the outcome of blind faith, or a rigid formula which they have made eternal. Just as, after the advent of idealism, the idealists came to accept the existence of god and on the basis of the conception of god, or to be more precise, on idealist concepts they built up their morality, ethics, sense of right and wrong and made these ideas eternal and unchangeable, if any materialist philosophy, too, even without believing in god, admits of such unchangeable concepts and claims that 'all these will be there for ever', can it then show us the way to truth and reality? This sort of materialism, though denying god, is another name for idealism.

Limitations of other materialist philosophies

For this reason, Feuerbach in Europe and many other philosophers long before, including Charbak⁶ in our country, could not free themselves from the influence of idealism even as they propagated materialism. Although originally man's thinking was materialistic, yet idealism came into existence because of the weakness of early materialism resulting from its failure to develop a correct and comprehensive idea about matter. I have already discussed that it was not possible for man to get a correct idea and knowledge about the host of questions confronting him in that period. So even though it was matter he desired to know and think about and even though the concept of supra-matter entity had not developed then, inasmuch as man's intellect, science and productive system were at such a backward level, that is, due to the limitations and weakness they had, man's idea of matter and its laws were so poor and lagged so much behind that these could not reach nearer to truth. And because of this, in a particular objective situation, about which I have already discussed, idealism was born and materialism was defeated in the hands of idealism.

Mutual relation between mind and matter

Many materialists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century likewise committed many mistakes. They used to think that there is nothing like what we call mind. It is a mere physiological action — an act of matter. Their idea of the mind was mechanical. They did not accept that the mind, too, as an entity had a power, and it acted on matter. They used to hold action of mind to be just physiological action. And hence it is simply a physiological reaction; there is nothing like mental process, or mental activity. As the physiological functioning influences the mental process, so also the mental activity influences the physiological functioning, that there is interaction between the two, the relation between them is dialectical — they did not have this objective concept. As physical ailments tell upon the mental condition of a man, so also a man may become physically sick as a sequel to a mental disease — this they could not understand. They failed to take note of and understand that the mind too had a relative independence. No doubt, mind cannot be conceived of in exclusion of the body, nor can the body be conceived of in exclusion of mind. Both are related to one another. These are all true. But the mind has its own function and activities, its own power;

and from that point of view it has an independent existence, even if relative, which we call the relative independence of mind. The materialists of the nineteenth century could not grasp this idea. Because, physiology and psychology as science were yet to develop or advance that much. The various mysteries of the living being which biological science today has revealed were not known. As a result, at that stage of development of science man could not understand the various aspects of the mind with its intricacies and activities. So, this led to many problems and confusions.

Ideal is ever-changing

For instance, Feuerbach did not accept the existence of god; he rejected Hegel's absolute idea, too. He explained this material world from a materialist outlook. He even admitted that the material world did change following the dialectical process. But in the end he propounded a moral code, certain ethical principles, invariably leading to certain unchangeable, eternal concepts relating to ethics and morality. On the basis of the concept of humanism he declared some ethical principles, morals, ideals as unchangeable and eternal. He started thinking that for the progress of mankind, for the change of society and its development these eternal principles were necessary. Feuerbach could not grasp the truth that along with the progress of society, in conformity with the objective necessities, ethics, morality and ideals change and these are bound to change. And because he failed to grasp it, he held morality and ethics to be eternal. Herein lies his departure from materialism. That the ideals have their birth and decay, that they change in consonance with human necessity and following the contradictions within society and the conflict and contradictions of the human mind with its environment could not be understood by Feuerbach. He could not understand that ideals are born and thrive in a particular society, in a particular set of conditions, and that they decay in a new society where new ideals are born.

So, an ideal, too, changes — it is dynamic. And in this dynamic world there is a definite process of its change and development. Feuerbach denied this objective truth, even though he tried to interpret this material world from a dialectical materialist viewpoint. As a result, even while preaching the materialist philosophy he became an idealist in reality.

Marx refuted Feuerbach and his humanism and propounded dialectical materialism as a complete and comprehensive philosophy, as a scientific process of thinking and analysis, as a science of sciences. Had he not committed that mistake, Feuerbach might have taken the position occupied by Marx in history, Feuerbach's name would have been associated with the glory and credit that the Marxist movement enjoys today throughout the world. But it did not happen. Where Feuerbach made the mistake, where he made the slip, Marx did not. Marx could balance and correctly coordinate the whole thing. In this way he established the entire gamut of materialist philosophy on a firm foundation of science.

Development of idealism vis-à-vis materialism

So, what do we find? Right from the beginning of the class-divided society, both idealist and materialist thinking ran and developed side by side. The primitive idealism in course of development passed from one stage to another. At one time existence of thirtythree crores of deities was conceived in the Hindu religion. But in course of time it came to believe in monotheism, i.e. one god, the incorporeal absolute being, the Brahma. Not only that, some idealists, advancing one step further, gave birth to scientific mysticism which does not believe in the idea of god, but it is still an idealist philosophy. Idealism, in course of development, has reached this stage. Now see how the materialist thought, too, developed. The primitive materialist thought, advancing gradually and advancing differently in different countries, reached the stage of mechanical materialism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I have already mentioned that the Newtonian physics, even though it helped science develop to a great extent, could not completely free the materialist thought from the influence of idealism because of some limitations and being unable to correctly comprehend the character of matter. As a result, mechanical materialism made its debut. But at a later period and as a result of further advancement of science, on the basis of newer concepts of

matter, and in the background of new experiences of class struggle, more particularly following the contribution of Darwin in the field of biological sciences, Marxism was born – thus being elevated from the stage of mechanical materialism we reached dialectical materialism.

Dialectical materialism is itself a science

So, in this way we have come to know about some general truths of this material world. Man wanted to know these truths, the general principles and the laws. The materialists, as well as the idealists, all wanted to know and all tried to know these. But through all their consistent endeavour they only came to know some things, developed a partial knowledge about some other things and came to know bits of some more things, and the rest they supplemented with fanciful notions which again in a dogmatic way they imposed on the society. But dialectical materialism is the first philosophy which has come to know correctly, on the basis of scientific experiments, verifications, objective experience and experimented truths, what are the laws governing the motion inherent in the material world, the motion of matter, and how matter changes. None of the conclusions of dialectical materialism is derived from fanciful ideas. Its philosophical structure has been built on the basis of correlation, coordination and integration of scientifically verified truths derived through scientific experiments and verifications. The general truths that develop by coordinating and integrating the particular truths or knowledge, derived experimentally in the different branches of science, namely physics, chemistry, mathematics, biological sciences, sociology, economics, etc. form the basis of dialectical materialism. That is why dialectical materialism is itself a science. I want to elaborate a bit more on this point. What does physics do? Physics studies and deals with the laws of physical motion of matter, the laws of energy. What is the function of chemistry? Chemistry studies and deals with the laws governing the chemical actions and reactions. In this way the different branches of science are trying to know in their own ways the different laws governing matter, its constitution and its motion. What does dialectical materialism do, which I am calling a science? What does it study? Marxism or dialectical materialism studies the general laws of matter which are obeyed in the different disciplines of science, namely physics, chemistry, mathematics etc. In other words, Marxism or dialectical materialism studies the general laws which govern the entire activity of the material world. So, the different branches of science study and try to know separately the particular aspects of the material world, and dialectical materialism by coordinating these particular truths arrives at general truths — the general truths which govern, conduct and guide all the activities of the material world and science as well. So, the task of dialectical materialism is to arrive at these fundamental principles or general truths denying which this material world cannot exist or move about. Whereas the particular disciplines of science, say, physics and chemistry, study and govern particular laws and activities in the material world, dialectical materialism studies all the general laws of all these disciplines and thereby studies and governs all the basic laws, the general laws, of the material world. Thus dialectical materialism is the only philosophy based entirely on science and is itself a science. And herein lies the fundamental difference between dialectical materialism and all other philosophies.

Today we have come to a very definite conclusion from science and dialectical materialism that nothing exists outside this material world. It is impossible for anyone to show any such thing, any entity existing outside this material world and unrelated to it. I have already pointed out that even the concept or idea of god came into being in a specific social situation on the basis of observation of certain similarities and drawing wrong analogy out of ignorance. This concept of god is wrong and erroneous but owing to absence of science worth its name, god had so long been conceived as the creator of this material world. But today science has proved that this wrong concept of god emerged in a particular given material condition. The mind or idea which many consider as supra-matter entity is in fact a product of matter in motion. Science has established that mind is a particular function of the human brain. And we all know that this human brain is composed of matter. So, the man who thinks of god, the very mind that conceives god does so with the help of an organ which is nothing

but the human brain. And that human brain is composed of matter. So we say, it is the human brain, i.e. matter that conceived god in a particular material condition — a condition in which there existed enough material ground for man to be confused. Consider the situation today, the capitalists resort to much false propaganda. Do you believe these? You all know, as we do, that these are not correct. But is it not a fact that by these propaganda some people get confused, they accept this falsehood as true? Why do they get confused? Because, there exists sufficient material ground to cause this confusion. That is why there is scope for these people to be confused. So also it was the existence of an objective material condition, sufficient to make people confused that gave birth to the concept of god. Except this, there is nothing at all to explain the development of the notion that god exists as an entity independent of the material world. Science has proved that whatever we observe is created out of matter, nothing exists outside matter. Matter is created out of matter — this material world, too, has come out of matter. So, we cannot think of anything or imagine anything outside matter, or independent of matter. Science has confirmed this truth through experiments.

Not merely to know but to change the world is the task of Marxism

So, we see that dialectical materialism did not grow overnight. There is a long history behind the development of Marxism or dialectical materialism. As the materialistic thinking in society developed step by step with the advancement of science and the productive system, and through various changes taking place within the social system, and got enriched with accumulation of knowledge of human history, Marxism or dialectical materialism came into being on the basis of certain general truths and scientifically experimented and verified laws. Its difference with other philosophies is that it is based on science and hence it does not search for entities independent of matter, denying scientific facts and scientific truths. It does not accept the existence of an entity independent of matter, an entity which does not exist at all. According to dialectical materialism, the task of philosophy, the object of pursuit of knowledge is not only to know the world, nor merely to interpret it but to change it. Its task is to know, grasp and utilize the different laws underlying the very many changes occurring every moment in the material world, in the society, and, by applying them to influence and act on the process of change, accelerate the process to change the universe further, and thereby bring about further changes of the world.

This is in short the history of development of dialectical materialism. We shall now dwell a little on a few aspects of dialectical materialism, on the present-day concepts of matter and the laws governing its changes.

Concept of matter in modern science

According to dialectical materialism, the material world is the only truth. Everything is created out of matter. This matter is infinite, general matter — it has neither origin nor end. By infinite, general matter I mean the entire category of matter comprised of each and all the particular forms of matter which is omnipresent and universal and is the very basis of our matter concept. This matter is philosophical matter, it defines a philosophical category. None has created it — matter exists and exists by itself. So also is the material world self-existent. This matter or the material world is ever-changing. Every moment it is undergoing change and successive development. And this matter is dialectical matter. The characteristic of this material world is that there is an internal contradiction in each and every thing and everything is at the same time in an external contradiction with its environment. Each and everything is ever in the vortex of contradiction, both internal and external. This is the distinctive feature of how matter exists and this is its character. Matter is not inert, static, unchangeable or mechanical. Matter is dynamic, ever in motion and dialectical, that is, it exists in both internal and external contradiction and this contradiction makes matter dynamic and ever-changing. Matter is always in the process of change and development — it is dynamic, never static. Perceptible or not, everywhere and at every moment changes are taking place in this material world. Somewhere the rhythm of this change is fast, somewhere it is slow. The change of every moment is so slow that outwardly it seems imperceptible. It may appear to us to be

unchanging, remaining as it is. But in point of fact it is not so. It is never static. It is ever-changing, ever-dynamic, at every moment and in every field. And in these changes we find some laws operating. What are these laws? Whatever changes are taking place and wherever in this world, in all the activities of matter and everywhere we see three basic principles operating. All the changes of matter are being guided by these three basic principles. What are these three basic principles?

1. From quantitative change to qualitative change and vice versa: Quantitative change leads to qualitative change, and the qualitative change helps further quantitative change to take place. The process is one of slow change, quantitative change, gradual change, evolutionary change proceeding to a nodal point, finally giving birth to a completely new thing. In every particle of matter changes are occurring at every moment. But through these changes the basic character of matter does not alter at once. Despite these changes of every moment, so long as the basic character of the thing does not change, we call such changes quantitative change. But whenever through these quantitative changes a situation arises when the basic character of matter changes or a completely new thing is born, we call this change a qualitative change, a basic change, a revolutionary change, etc. There remains no doubt a historical link of this new matter with the old one, but a fundamental change occurs because a qualitative change of matter has taken place — on that score there is no similarity, no continuity. This, in brief, is what ‘quantitative change to qualitative change and vice versa’ means.

Unity of opposites: As there is continuous conflict and contradiction within matter we observe another feature of matter amidst these contradictions, and that is, there is unity of opposites. That means in the very contradiction, the feature of unity is inherent in it. Where the opposite forces are existing in contradiction, opposing each other, that is, the contradiction is antagonistic in nature; where one is trying to annihilate the other, they, too, in a specific condition and till the annihilation of one, exist in unity despite this antagonistic character of contradiction. Guided by this principle all the changes, the changes of every moment are taking place. What we observe is that this character and feature of unity gets materialized amidst all the changes, amidst conflict and contradiction. We cannot bypass this principle, nobody can. This principle operates everywhere.

Negation of negation: Negation in course of development and development following negation — this is the law of development and growth in case of society, material world and every phenomenon. The material world is always in a process of change and development. How does this development take place? Continually negating self, negating its own existence, through the destruction of the old a new one is born. The new is born through constant annihilation of the old.

Through scientific experiments and verification we observe that these three basic principles operate in the domain of the laws and activities of the material world. Dialectical materialism has accepted these three basic principles guiding the changes in matter as scientifically verified truth. Dialectical materialism has shown that these three basic principles are applicable in the domains of all the myriad changes in the material world. I like to bring another point to your attention. This contradiction, which I am discussing, is of two kinds — antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradiction. Where the main object of contradiction is to annihilate one another we call it antagonistic contradiction. The object of struggle between the workers and the owners is to subdue and overthrow one by the other. Again the object of contradiction between one worker and another is to win over one by another through persuasion, and to cement the unity among them. We call it a non-antagonistic contradiction. In so far as the contradiction within a working class party is concerned, the fundamental principle governing its resolution is self-criticism, and therein lies the way to strengthen the party, to strengthen its cohesion, to cement its unity.

For lack of time I have to shorten this discussion on the three principles guiding change in matter. Many among you have attended more elaborate discussions on many previous occasions. But I am forced to shorten this discussion. Moreover, the discussion I have just made here on Marxism and development of human society is also very elementary and in

outline. There is hardly any scope today for dwelling on the various aspects of epistemology and the different discoveries of science. Still you had better ask whatever questions you have.

In the second session of the conference of the Krishak O Khetmajur Federation⁷ I shall discuss on organizational aspects in the context of the present political situation. I conclude my brief discussion here today in this first session on the history of emergence of Marxism and dialectical materialism.

1. Big landowners, i.e. rural bourgeoisie
2. Place where this school of politics was held
3. Scriptures
4. Sanskrit schools
5. Top Indian monopoly houses
6. Charvak, who is regarded to be a materialist philosopher of ancient India
7. Now renamed as All India Krishak O Khet-Majdur Sangathan

Address at a school of politics
on 18 June 1960 in Bhatpara
in the district of North 24 Parganas
in West Bengal. It was first
published in Bengali in book-form
on August 23, 1982.