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Q3(b)

Critically examine the dialectics involved in each mode of production as propounded by Karl Marx

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Critically examine the dialectics involved in each **mode of production** as propounded by **Karl Marx**
- Keep the examination within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

A mode pairs forces and relations; dialectics is their contradiction and class struggle.

Communal, slave, feudal, and capitalist modes have distinct antagonisms.

- **Capitalism:** social production versus private appropriation, crisis, and **reserve army**.

Global chains and Indian informal labour are present forms of that dialectic.

The scheme is a type, incomplete on gender and caste, not a calendar.

Introduction

For **Karl Marx**, a **mode of production** is a pairing of productive forces and social relations of production. Dialectics means that each mode develops through internal contradiction, class struggle, and negation, not through a smooth climb of ideas. The sequence is historical and conflictual.

Body

The general dialectic

- Forces of production (tools, cooperation, science) grow inside relations of property and surplus extraction.
- Those relations, once progressive, become **fetters**. Class antagonism is the visible form of the contradiction.
- The negation of the negation is a new mode, not a return to the same village in a new costume.

Pre-capitalist modes

- **Primitive communal forms:** low forces, common appropriation; contradiction is still thin, yet surplus and rank begin to split the commune.
- **Slave mode:** the slave is property. The dialectic is between the need for labour and the slave's lack of interest in productivity, plus revolt.

- **Feudal mode:** serf and lord around land. Growth of towns, money, and serf flight contradict extra-economic coercion.
- The Asiatic mode, used cautiously by **Marx**, stressed a strong appropriating state over village communities. Later writers warned against a frozen "Orient".

Capitalist mode

- **Capital versus wage labour is the central contradiction:** social production and private appropriation.
- Competition forces accumulation, **reserve army**, and crises of overproduction. Use-value and exchange-value pull apart.
- The same mode produces, dialectically, the proletariat as a possible collective subject, which is not an automatic happy ending.

Present reading

- Global supply chains socialise production across borders while value is captured in cores, as later dependency and **world-system** writers argued from a Marxist root.
- Informal and gig labour in India show surplus extraction without the full legal wage relation of the factory volume.
- **Lockdown 2020 made the contradiction blunt:** social labour of migrants, private ability of capital and the state to halt movement.

Critical caveats

- Modes are types, not a railway timetable for every society.
- Gendered unpaid care and caste are not fully inside the original mode scheme.
- Dialectics is a method of contradiction, not a prophecy dated to a year.

Flow diagram

Forces of production -> Contradiction
 Relations of production -> Contradiction
 Contradiction -> Class struggle
 Class struggle -> New mode
 Capital vs labour -> GVC gig lockdown

Conclusion

Marx's dialectics in each mode is the clash of expanding forces with fettering relations, fought as class struggle. Slave, feudal, and capitalist forms show different pairs. The present global and informal scene still fits the capitalist contradiction if we add care, caste, and **world-system** hierarchy.

Facts & figures

Mode of production

Unity of productive forces and relations of surplus extraction in a historical epoch.

Fetters

Marx: relations that once developed forces later block them and provoke transformation.

Reserve army

A surplus labouring population that capital uses to depress wages and discipline work.

World-system

Wallerstein's extension: core-periphery capture of surplus on a global scale.

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