

CHAPTER 2

A FABLE

Let us begin with a story, a fable. Let us tell the story of primitives, about our ancestors, whom we call Adam and Eve (in deference to the West). This is also the ancestor, the primitive, the origin of the other stories we will narrate in this dissertation. In conformity with formal demands I claim originality for this reading of the primitive story.

Adam hunts and Eve cooks. It is their choice, though each can do the work of the other. The intelligent reader can sense that Adam and Eve represent only two types of labours, crossing the boundaries of gender division.

Through the week Adam hunts four deer and Eve cooks them in even time. The cooked deer is divided equally. This story is also there in the bible of the economists — (Adam) Smith's **Wealth of Nations** — as a deer-beaver example.

But the East would tell a different story, or tell this story differently. Listen to a story from **Mahabharat**, the great epic from India. The mother of the *Pandavas*, *Kunti*, when distributing the gathered food among her five sons, would set aside half for *Bhim* alone, and divide the rest among the others. The primitive knows from commonsense, wisdom, that is, that the consumption of a big-bodied *Bhim* cannot be the same as that of the semi-ascetic, intellectual *Yudhishtir*.

So let us reform(ulate) the simple (minded) Biblical story (from the economist's bible, that is) with the wisdom of the East. Remember . wisdom was the first source of sin in the Bible Adam being a hunter, that is a warrior, needs three cooked deer and Eve only one

Thus we insinuate a fundamental question . what does equality mean ? There can be a goods or income based concept of quantitative equality Alternately, there can be some quality based measure conceptualising, justifying the quantitative differences In other words, an equality of the goods or income received per unit of the quality associated with an individual The Mosaic story (Smith as Moses) misses the point that equality in per hour income can be justified only if the quantity-quality of labour performed is the same. Different activities may require different levels of consumption of goods to produce one hour's capability of working. For example more nourishing, tissue generating food may be necessary for those engaged in labour requiring greater physical effort. In this case a concept of equality that dictates equal level of consumption of all would be unjust Chaudhury (1992 P30-3) is worth quoting at length here

“In the course of our learning we will know that equality is a totem that modern man has produced (invented) That is to say, in the world of nature there are only different (unequal) beings Society produces a code to render these different beings comparable so that their worth can be compared At a particular point of time, the principle to compare the worth of men earns a high sounding name equality Equality is one among the many ways to represent the underlying principle of a code that serves to designate the differences in the worth of men ”

In the wise Oriental's reformulation of the Mosaic story (propagated by the West) — Adam getting three cooked deer and Eve only one — the differences in consumption are mere quantitative differences signifying a qualitative equality — subsistence living for all. *Subsistence living*, this qualitative concept of equality, renders the different beings in this primitive society as equal.

We can translate the wisdom of the East into Marxian language, in terms of categories like concrete / heterogeneous labours and abstract / homogeneous labours (after all, Marx was also wise !). Adam and Eve perform heterogeneous labours and as such their worths are not comparable, the fact that both work weeklong does not entitle them to equal consumption. Marx would say a week's labour by Adam is worth three week's labour by Eve in terms of reproduction cost of subsistence existence (i.e. of labour power) for both.

Modern man's order of discourse (Smith's equality) has colonised the primitive (the petty producer), discursively — wiping clean the differences of labours — all (Wo)men are the same in the dark (continent). We have decolonised the primitive using a primitive woman's wisdom (*Kunti*). We see in this struggle we have Marx with us.

So now, this Mosaic couple are happy and satisfied in this subsistence economy. The 'equilibrium' rate of exchange is 4 deer for 3 cooked deer. Obviously, the fable can be extended to accommodate many Adams and Eves.

But the Avenging God of the mighty West cannot be wrong So now that Adam and Eve have become wise, eaten of the tree of wisdom that is the East, they are cast out of paradise

“In the sweat of the face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3)

Now that they are *wise*, as they *toil* they *think* of ways to produce more with same toil.

Suppose Adam hones his hunting skills so that he can hunt more than 4 deer in a week. At the same time Eve devices some improvement in her hearth so that she can cook more than 4 deer in a week. Let us say that Adam hunts 8 deer and Eve cooks as many in a week, but their recognized need remains the same as before. This economy then produces a surplus of 4 cooked deer But what to with this, how to divide it among Adam and Eve ? Without surplus production the total output gets divided according to the deemed subsistence requirement of each, whatever be the mode of distribution of output — market or community based. A community will straightaway distribute the total output according to needs. The same will occur through the mediation of the market, through the operation of a labour-power reproduction cost theory of value. But in a surplus producing economy distribution on the basis of needs does not suffice for the definitional reason that surplus over and above subsistence needs escapes the subsistence rule, is outside its border So there is more meaning in

the economic surplus, Meanings which have to be produced as supplement — other rules, supplementary to the rule of subsistence needs

See all the talk of supplementarity, deferring of meaning, gaps in the text and all that is no big deal after all. The economist has been deploying these meaning / reading/ deconstructing strategies always, of course unconscious of these names.

Let us grope for the supplement to close the gap caused by the insufficiency of the rule of subsistence needs for ordering the distribution of products Recall that in the primitive society without surplus, the division between Adam and Eve was in 3 1 proportion. Will the same ratio of distribution hold in its surplus producing counterpart, Adam getting 6 cooked deer and Eve 2?

No for in that case Adam has 3 cooked deer over and above his subsistence needs and Eve has only 1. They cannot, of course, consume these as their needs have already been fulfilled. So we have a question even before we come to the question of proportional distribution : why would Adam and Eve take the surplus, in whatever proportion it distributed ? They have (possession, property, propriety – another thorny question) only subsistence needs. They have no use for the surplus unless they have another function, another position, that is. Let us defer this question for the time being Let us pretend that Adam and Eve can, logically, have some ‘use’ for the surplus to which each is entitled. So from a 3:1 division of surplus in favour of Adam,

Adam gets more of that use (a la bourgeois economics) So Eve resents this distribution. This, then, cannot be an equilibrium situation.

Does this mean that we have to go back to the crude Smithian labour theory of value that dictates equal payment for equal hours of work, meaning a 1:1 (=4:4) division rule for the work, Adam and Eve getting 4 cooked deer, each ?

Again the answer will be 'no' For in this case, the earlier situation gets inverted. Eve retains 3 surplus deer and Adam only 1. This is evidently not desirable for Adam, who declines to accept this exchange ratio. Hence, a state of unrest follows

Indeed this economy will never reach a state of rest; neither arithmetic, nor algebra can help us Let us apply our common sense, commonly held sense, primitive sense, to see why this must be so.

Think of how a market functions : through the mobility of its agents. An economist sums up the state of rest in terms of two concepts: existence of equilibrium and its stability.

In the no-surplus-primitive-economy, a 3:1 division rule for the 4 worked deer represents the stable equilibrium ratio Any deviation from this rule will be a state of unrest which will tend towards the state of rest with 3:1 division rule Suppose, the exchange ratio is 2:1 This will be followed by a movement of Adams from the job of hunting because their subsistence existence will be at stake They will simply

crowd to the job of cooking, where subsistence requirement is lower. This reduces the supply of raw meat, whose relative price, (and consequently Adam's consumption basket) moves up. A 3:1 division rule is ultimately established. The proper input-output balance will be restored. All will be employed.

So in the primitive economy the subsistence needs signal the agents to move, shift from one job to another if exchange ratio changes to other than equilibrium. Equilibrium is restored through the mobility of its agents. The production of surplus, the surplus of meaning, disrupts the signaling system.

Surplus production as symptom (a concept to be elaborated in chapter 3) disturbs the order.

The point is that surplus would mean different things to different agents. There is no homogeneous notion of what is to be done with the surplus. Mainstream economics resolves this dilemma invoking the general notion of abstract utility: consumption generates utility. But we know, since Marx, how silly this claim is — utilities are concrete, there is no concept of 'general utility' which motivates the agents.

In the age of mortality (after the fall from grace of Adam and Eve) equilibrium requires a single, dominating rule for the distribution of surplus.

In classical political economy, the rate of profit provides this rule. Signal: in equilibrium the exchange ratio must be such that the rates of profit are the same in all activities. If exchange ratio deviates from equilibrium position, capital movement occurs from lower rate of profit sector to the one with higher rate of profit, restoring

equilibrium. Of course, capital cannot move of its own. So we have a capitalist class position (and thus simultaneously, the working class position). So we have run the course · surplus production as symptom → surplus meaning → different class positions as supplement. Those who occupy the capitalist class position seek the highest rate of return on capital (i.e. the cost of production advanced, the wage-bill, in this case)

The gap in the logic (the excess meaning) that appeared at the moment of surplus production calls for a closure. This classical political economy provides in the separate class position of the capitalist. That is a specialised position devoted to surplus management (thus, appropriation).

So, surplus production engenders surplus position, additional position : the position of appropriator and allocator of surplus. In fact, it breeds the very concept 'position'. After all without differences in positions, there is no notion of position. There is now the position of the appropriator and manager of surplus who decides on the basis of profit calculus. This is the capitalist class position. There is also the position of the producer of surplus — the working class position which operates on the basis of needs calculus. Profit calculus causes movement of capital, needs calculus causes movement of labour. The two separate rules can together generate equilibrium in this economy which produces subsistence and surplus. The details of the story (division of surplus between the capitalists in cooking industry and hunting industry, the relative price of raw deer to cooked deer, the rate of profit etc.) can be worked out using some elementary algebra. This we defer to a more generalised site in chapter 3



A society that produces surplus must be class divided. Class is a possible, provisional closure of the gaps in the logic (of equality of needs) that surface at the moment of surplus production. In a capitalist economic the closure is affected through the differentiation of the position of the worker from that of the capitalist. The capitalist class position is the position from which surplus is appropriated and managed. The working class position is the position which fulfills its subsistence needs and produces a surplus. That is not to say that this is the only possible resolution of the problem of surplus meaning, of surplus management. Other systems can be conceived with a multiplicity of position, which can equally generate equilibria.

But before we go on to elaborate possible different set(s) of positions which may generate equilibria, we will anticipate a resentment about the position that a surplus producing economy must be class divided.

Already, I can sense a lot of Marxist hackles rising: What about the classless society of the future? Very tentatively, and without proof, I would propose that if and when the future dawns, the very notion of needs and surplus will be transformed through cultural processes: the future, then, will belong, to the present — the future will be present — the needs of future generations will be perceived as needs of the present. Surplus now would be wisely used to ensure needs fulfillment of the future. Equally tentatively, I would suggest that in this “associated producers” economic, the positions of managers and producers of surplus would continue to be functionally separated but some mechanism would emerge whereby continuous mobility of agents between the positions would be ensured.

Let us get back to our narrative. Our past, which is also our present. Apart from the wage-labour / capital division, other systems can be visualised which would provisionally close the gap engendered by surplus production. The simplest solution is, of course, to throw the surplus away, beyond the border of this economic, so that it cannot disturb the order of this economic. Throw it away — give it up to God, sacrifice, or give it up to a distant ruler. But then why would Adam and Eve produce a surplus? This can be only in the hope that God or the distant ruler will give something (physical prowess, mental peace, peace on earth, security) beyond the produced goods. But whatever it is, must be given to the community as a whole (non-excludability, public good). Else the question of (prior) division of surplus between Adam and Eve will remain: If Adam gets more of the surplus to sacrifice, he will be blessed with more of whatever it is that God or the monarch bestows. Let us just take note that giving up the surplus to a distant ruler is the mark of what is known as the Asiatic mode of production or Asiatic Feudalism.

The message of our story is that the existence of surplus requires the corresponding presence of distinct class positions, responsible for the management of the surplus. We cannot imagine a self-exploitative economy producing surplus, because self is already divided between necessary and surplus labour. This is true whether we talk of a self-exploitative commodity economic or a self-exploitative community economic, as we will elaborate in chapter 3 and chapter 4, respectively.

Giving up the surplus to a distant ruler — the Asiatic Feudalism — is being replayed here and now. We can narrate this story through an extension of our fable.

Adam and Eve had a quarrel over the distribution of the 4 surplus cooked deer. Taking advantage of their internal strife, the capitalist enters the scene, takes over the task of management of the entire surplus and devours it, leaving only 3 cooked deer for Adam and 1 for Eve so that they could survive, work and hand over the surplus to him time and again.

Now let us make a little alteration in the story. The capitalist finds Adams insubordinate and declines to manage their surplus for them. Adams now, become self employed. The capitalist however manages the surplus for Eve.

So, Eve continues to receive one cooked deer as before. But how-much will Adam get?

Adam now is self employed and no longer works for the capitalist. So we would expect that Adam will receive something more than 3 cooked deer. Suppose he gets 4 cooked deer in a week. Now, Eve is not satisfied as she has no surplus. So some Eves leave the capitalist to hunt in the jungle. Capital flies to distant lands. As a consequence, the supply of raw meat rises. Demand falls, and its price falls. Adam's share is reduced to his subsistence need of 3 cooked deer.

So finally, Adam gets 3 cooked deer and Eve 1, the capitalist taking away the remainder. The capitalist without intervening in Adams work process, takes away the surplus of Adam, simply by control over and manipulation of Eve. Just commodity trade ensures that the noncapitalist sector's surplus is drained away. Adam, the proud and independent hunter, is reduced to the situation of a wage-worker (with no

entitlement to surplus) The petty producer's surplus drained by the absent capitalist .
the story of Marx's Asiatic Mode of Production or Asiatic Feudalism. A much
denigrated image, pushed to the depths of the "night-like pit", come back to have the
last laugh

Denigrated · treated as a pariah because of its difference from mainstream story of
modes of production and their historical sequence. Asiatic Feudalism as
nontransitional, non dialectical. But Asiatic Feudalism having the last laugh So a
false step somewhere in spite of all the swagger of the mainstream story

False step. You fall into a gaping hole. A gap, a symptom that the mainstream story is
not well grounded. Symptom signaling the need for a supplement. The supplement of
the space in which Adam and Eve work in the time of their work The time of their
work generating values, but the power the access space determining partly the
distribution of surplus value. Partly · apart from the capitalist class position that is

Let us detail the false step.

Adams who have fled the physical rule of capital and gone to the forest to hunt and
exchange with capitalist sector establish their control over the forest They insist that
all forest resources have to be paid for. Though the live deer does not contain value
(not being the product of labour) a price is extracted for it. This tantamounts to
Ground Rent (GR) payment for non produced input (generally land) — analogy we
will elaborate in chapter 5.

GR then enters as a constituent of price. This new component disturbs the tranquility of the overdetermined order. Brings disorder. Indeterminacy. So GR as symptom, signaling, pointing to, revealing the supplement of access to space within the time of production.

This symptom, this supplement quite irrespective of whether Adams (or Eves) remain petty producers (i.e. metonymic workers) or actual workers. A commodity produced with a nonproduced input (having price originating in GR, but no value) will command more price than that determined within the V-P overdetermined system. How much more price? How much GR? That will depend largely on the bargaining power of those with power over space. So indeterminacy. Disorder. Indeterminacy characterising Asiatic Feudalism. Asiatic Feudalism come back to have last laugh. The story of the forgotten land, denied, the privilege of class narrative, risen now to challenge that narrative here and now and everywhere in this era of global capital.

Let us flesh out the rising Phoenix.

Suppose capital has wings but those who labour are bound within defined territories — that is bonded to earth. They are the latter-day bondsmen (observe WTO's rejection of the demand for free mobility of labour). To contextualise: the Adams, who are outside the domain of capitalist production, yet drained of their surplus output, are forced to live and toil in the forest. They have not the option of doing the job of cooking, if they so prefer. The stage is set, but before we stage "rising of the phoenix" we have to clear the mind of prejudices, of unquestioned propositions on which we build the edifice of the class position narrative.

Adam needs 4 cooked deer and Eve 1 every week. This begs the question: how many hours do they labour in a day? The question of work hours is not important simply because it entails dissipation of physical energy and depreciation of the body-machine. We had provisionally indicated that it is this expenditure which decides society's conception of needs. Adam spends more body mass-energy and so 'needs' more food. This provisional, masquerading as scientific biological closure, 'need', always has a strong cultural component.

Suppose, Adam hunts 5 hours every day. The physiologically necessary functions take 12 hours, say. He is left with 7 hours of daily leisure time, that is, 49 hours leisure in a week. So society deems that, given the nature of Adam's activity, he needs 49 hours of leisure and 3 cooked deer in a week. The leisure-labour balance is predominantly determined by cultural-political factors, not natural-physiological factors. For example, in our fable it was an equality ruled, no surplus economic (and its socio-polity) which decided that Adam needs 3 cooked deer, given that he should labour for 35 hours each week. A hierarchically ordered society may decree otherwise.

Suppose the new (Asiatic) order decides that (bonded) Adam needs only 35 hours of leisure in a week, or 5 in a day. He 'should', therefore, hunt 7 hours every day.

You open one, you open all. After all the physiological is not a closed compartment. Adam works more now and, therefore, physiologically, needs more food. Say, he needs now 5 cooked deer in a week. So Adam's work hours increase by $\frac{2}{5}$ while need

for cooked deer (i.e. surrogate wages) increase by $\frac{1}{4}$. Assuming that he always needs the same time to hunt a deer, Adam now produces surplus (value) at a greater rate

So the petty producer confined to the forest (the neo-colony) is drained of surplus by absent capitalist (coloniser) while being forced to work harder to produce greater tribute for the distant capitalist (emperor). Surreptitiously the (colonised) independent producer is transformed into a metonymic worker - a worker, but not quite. That is, while Adam resembles a worker in that he lacks entitlement to surplus, he lacks, the privileges (of, for example, work hours) governed by factory laws which had been won through workers' struggles. Simultaneously, profit of distant capital is silently constituted by GR.

But this is an old story. So global capital which flies every where (flies in and flies out) learns its Asiatic lesson, which it transports, metaphorically, into its homeland, which is every where.

Metaphor : displacement. Let us displace the middle of the fable. Adam and Eve have fallen from grace. They produce surplus which capital manages. But this capital is wise. It is global in reach and gaze. It imports, metaphorically, the Asiatic mode. Capital breaks up the production process in which Adam is employed. Parts are put out to some Adams, who revel in their 'independent producer' status. Outside the factory gate Adam is denied working class privileges won through hard struggle. His deemed necessary leisure hours are smaller, he is denied retirement benefits (indeed, outside the factory there is no retirement, only unemployment), etc. The screws are tightened by turning the terms of trade against hunting (so to say). Instability — flight

of Adams to cooking activities — is repressed by tying down these metonymic-worker Adams to the forests

In the not-too-distant future this (WTO sponsored) bondage will become unnecessary with the death of the factory system in epidemic proportions. One of the most significant changes that globalisation will ring in is the large scale replacement of the factory system with petty production.

Thus we have a reversal of hierarchy in the discursive order. From discursive order constituted by class process relegating Asiatic mode to a residual (illogical) space, to Asiatic mode ordering the, discursive, and (working) class position surviving mainly within the independent producer-as-metonym-of-worker position. We will narrate this part of our tale with proper economic jargon in Chapter 5.

Thus we come to the end of our East — West hybrid story. The rest are just detail, elaborations, acknowledgements, and other academic embellishments.