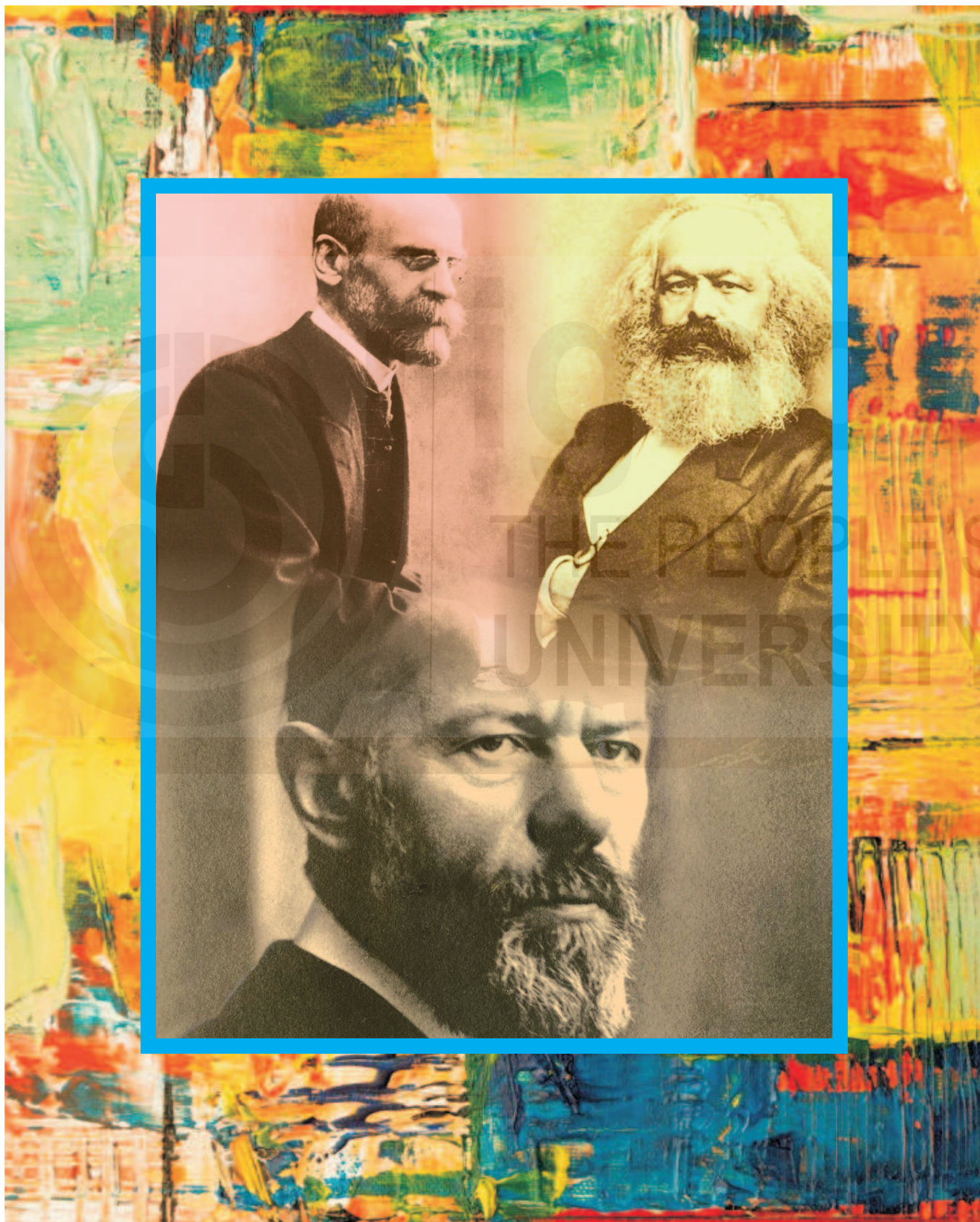


BSOC-133 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES



SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

THE PEOPLE'S
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School of Social Sciences
Indira Gandhi National Open University
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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with two interrelated questions: what is sociological theory? and what is the purpose of sociological theory? Well, sociological theory comprises a set of ideas which seeks to explain what we see happening around us i.e., nature of social action in different contexts. You might want to ask if sociological theory could explain, for example, some people's practice of showing off an expensive diamond ring. Thorstein Veblen explained such a practice in the framework of the theory of leisure class. This does not mean that there is only one theory for each social phenomenon. The fact is that a single theory can explain multiple phenomena and single phenomenon can be explained by multiple theories. Let us take the example of Marx's theory of capitalism. This theory is often used in discussion on class as also religion. It is also true that single phenomenon can be explained by multiple theories. Let us take the example of division of labour is explained both by theory of functionalism and capitalism. You will be able to understand how theories explain social phenomena and how a social phenomenon is can be explained using different theories.

This course on sociological theories will familiarize you with the main ideas of three major theorists in the Discipline of Sociology: Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber. Additionally, it will enable you to understand the social and political climate that influenced their ideas. One of the main concerns of Marx, Durkheim and Weber was with the effects of the Industrial Revolution. What they encountered predominantly were, among others, issues of division of labour, relations of production, law and property, religion, and class. Not surprising, therefore, their theories stemmed from a close understanding of these issues.

The purpose of this course here is threefold: first, to discuss the central ideas of three theorists who laid the foundation of the Discipline of Sociology; second, to explain how phenomena that we encounter in everyday life can be explained from a theoretical perspective; and third to demonstrate how the same phenomenon can be explained using different theoretical perspectives. The course is divided into four Blocks.

Block 1 comprising three Units focuses on the contribution of Karl Marx to sociological thought. We begin with a Unit which deals with major issues and concerns that influenced Marx's perspective on social reality. You will also get a glimpse of the personal life of Marx which influenced his intellectual life. The next Unit discusses Marx's ideas on social change. You will learn how Marx's idea of dialectical materialism is applied to understand the process of social change. The last Unit familiarizes you with Marx's notion of class. You will learn about the very basis on which class formation takes place and why classes enter to into conflict with each other.

Block 2 comprising three Units discusses on the contribution of Émile Durkheim to sociological thought. Like the previous Block, this one is divided into three Units of which the first explains the issues and concerns that influenced his perspective on social reality. The next Unit looks into Durkheimian method of understanding of society. He maintained that society can best be understood in terms of social facts and gave a set of rules to comprehend social facts. This particular Unit explains the concept and characteristics of social fact and deliberates on the rules for observation of social facts. The last Unit sheds light on fundamental question: how is social life controlled and regulated? Why is it that social life does not split and disintegrate? Durkheim's response to these questions lies in his understanding of different societies and different forms of solidarity. You will learn about different forms of solidarity in this Unit.

Block 3 comprises three Units. The first Unit begins with the contribution of Max Weber to sociological thought. The objective is to demonstrate in what way the social and political climate at that time influenced his sociological perspective. The second Unit focuses on social action and ideal type. It explains Weberian understanding of social action and types of social action. Thereafter, it clarifies Weber's concept of ideal type, explains its characteristics and sheds light on the relevance of the concept of ideal type in understanding social reality. The third Unit explains Weberian understanding of power and authority. You will learn about the important features and types of authority.

Block 4 comprises three Units: Religion; Economy; and Society, Class and Solidarity. Each Unit discusses the viewpoints of Marx, Durkheim and Weber in a comparative framework. You will learn how and in what way the viewpoints of these sociologists were similar and different. Some of you might wonder what purpose comparison of viewpoints would serve. The purpose in bringing out comparison between the viewpoints of Marx, Durkheim and Weber is to understand how an issue can be approached from different perspectives. Also, this would enable us to understand the complementarity of different approaches on a phenomenon and deepen our own understanding.



Block 1

Karl Marx

UNIT 1 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF KARL MARX'S WORK*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Biographical Sketch of Karl Marx
 - 1.2.1 Early Years
 - 1.2.2 Berlin Days
 - 1.2.3 in Paris
 - 1.2.4 Revolutionary Marx
 - 1.2.5 Exile
- 1.3 Socio-Historical Background
- 1.4 Intellectual Influences
 - 1.4.1 German Philosophy and Idealism
 - 1.4.2 Materialist Perspective
 - 1.4.3 Political Economy Perspective
- 1.5 Central Ideas
 - 1.5.1 Alienation
 - 1.5.2 Class and Relations of Subordination
 - 1.5.3 Means, Relations, Forces and Mode of Production
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 References
- 1.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe biographical details of Karl Marx;
- outline main intellectual ideas and perspectives that influenced his writings;
and
- explain central ideas in his writings.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx was a German philosopher. He wrote on a wide variety of themes including capitalist mode of production, class and class conflict, political economy, alienation and many others that have provided meaningful insights in the disciplines of economics, history, political science and of course sociology. In this Unit we begin with a biographical outline of Karl Marx in order to familiarize you with the social, economic and political environment in which his ideas developed. We then examine the specific intellectual ideas that influenced him. Finally, we will understand some important ideas in his writings.

*written by Sumit Saurabh Srivastava. Centre for Globalization and Development Studies, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj; Section 1.2 is adapted from IGNOU Course Material: *Sociological Thought* (ESO)13 with minor modifications by Nita Mathur

1.2 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KARL MARX

1.2 Biographical Sketch

We can divide the life of Karl Marx into five phases. Let us look at each phase closely.

1.2.1 Early Years

Karl Heinrich Marx was the second child and eldest son of Heinrich and Henrietta Marx. He was born on the 5th May, 1818, in Trier, in the German Rhineland, where his father, Heinrich Marx practised law.

Heinrich Marx belonged to the small but widely dispersed Jewish community of Germany. In the period that Napoleon ruled Germany the Jews had taken advantage of the opening of trades and professions which were previously barred to them. For enjoying the prospects of wider opportunities, many Jewish families had departed from their traditional style of life. In 1828, after Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna assigned the German Rhineland to the Prussian Kingdom. This meant that Germany was again divided into feudally organized kingdoms and the Jews once more faced racial, political and religious barriers. Some of them could not retrace their path and Karl Marx's father was also one of them. [...] In 1817, one year before the birth of Karl Marx, Heinrich became a member of the Christian Church. The hostile attitude of Karl Marx to religion may well be partly due to the peculiar and embarrassed situation in which such converts sometimes found themselves' (Berlin 1939: 33). [...]

On his father's advice, Karl Marx joined the University of Bonn as a student in the faculty of law. In the autumn of 1836 he was transferred to the University of Berlin. [...]

1.2.2 Berlin Days

Karl Marx's years in the University of Berlin were spent under the impact of Hegelian philosophy. He joined the group known as Young Hegelians. These were also the years of a period of dejection among the German intellectuals. [...] As a student of the faculty of law Karl Marx attended the lectures of Eduard Gans, who was one of Hegel's favourite disciples. We find that Eduard Gans had considerable influence on him. Marx learnt from him the method of theoretical criticism. Gans showed Marx in jurisprudence the legitimate field for applying and verifying every type of philosophy of history. This led young Marx to try and construct a rival system of Hegelian ideas of positivism. Despite his father's advice to abandon metaphysical speculation, Marx gave up his studies of law and immersed himself in philosophy. [...]

A Cologne publicist, Moses Hess, helped Karl Marx to be invited to write articles for a journal (*Rheinische Zeitung*). Later, Karl Marx became its chief editor. When it became clear to him that in Germany he could not speak and write freely, he decided to emigrate to France. After his marriage in 1843, he left for Paris.

1.2.3 In Paris

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when Karl Marx arrived in Paris, the French capital mirrored the unparalleled phenomenon of socio-economic, political and cultural upheaval in Europe. As far as Karl Marx was concerned, he had uppermost in his mind one question. What was the reason for the failure of the French Revolution? Do you know what Karl Marx did to find answer to this question?

He studied historical records of the revolution and huge body of works written in France on this and other associated subjects. Can you believe that this hard working young man of 25 years finished the gigantic exercise within one year! He read for night and days just as he had done when he joined the group of Young Hegelians and wanted to know all about Hegelianism. Marx's reading of the economists from France and England clarified for him a great deal of issues related to Hegelianism. He began comparing the socio-economic conditions of France and Germany. Though influenced by French socialist writers and English economists, Karl Marx was not any the less critical of their scholarship. According to Karl Marx, they lacked a sense of history. He thought that their scholarship lacked seriousness and integrity.

Interestingly, although very critical of Hegelianism, Karl Marx accepted Hegel's view of the structure. In other words he believed in the fact of formal relations between the elements of the process of human history. But, his understanding of the elements themselves was based on his study of the views of the French thinker Saint Simon and his disciples. This is how the critique of Hegel provided Karl Marx a basis for creating a new outlook and a plan of action. This was also the time when he met in Paris a revolutionary by the name of Friedrich Engels, who was a German radical and son of cotton manufacturer. In connection with publication of economic articles for Marx's Journal, the two had met in the autumn of 1844 and thus began a long lasting phase of friend and partnership between them. Karl Marx who wrote in an obscure and clumsy manner, benefitted by collaborating with Engels who had a remarkable capacity 'for sifting, assessing and perceiving the practical applicability of the discoveries of others' (Berlin 1939: 100). Not only this Engels provided Marx with the feeling of security which the latter lacked. It is said that on his part, Karl Marx gave his friend an affection which he gave only to his wife and children. [...]

Marx's brief but very productive spell in Paris ended in the beginning of 1845 when he was expelled from Paris. Comments against the ruling Prussian King had appeared in the socialist journal, Vorwarts and the Prussian authorities had demanded expulsion of the entire group connected with these activities.

Karl Marx was one of them. He left Paris for Brussels with his wife and one-year-old daughter. He was joined in Brussels by his friend Engels. While in touch with the various German communist workers' organizations, with branches in various European cities, Karl Marx decided to set up an international organization of workers. This was the beginning of the period when the scholar Marx turned into a visionary of revolution.

1.2.4 Revolutionary Marx

Working with the Communist League, a federation of workers, Karl Marx became an organizer and leader of a revolutionary party. In 1847, the London branch of the Communist League entrusted him with writing of a document which would spell aims and objectives of the party. Karl Marx welcomed this idea and produced the document early in 1848. Just a few weeks before the Paris revolution of 1848, this document was published. It was called the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848). [...] As a result of producing the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Karl Marx and his family were expelled from Belgium and its territory. He was, on the other hand, invited back to Paris by the new French Government. Long awaited revolution had broken out in Paris and Marx immediately left for the French capital. Marx was generally not very much taken in by this revolutionary and he once again left Paris and went to Cologne to find out what he could do to propagate his idea in his native Rhineland.

He started a new journal and named it The New Rheinische Zeitung after his first journal. Articles in this journal were read avidly by the public. But soon, owing to rather radical position taken by Karl Marx regarding the Prussian Government, the paper was suppressed and its last issue came out in red letters. For his article in this issue, Marx was arrested for sedition and tried in Cologne court. Here, during his trial, Karl Marx delivered a speech on socio-economic conditions in Germany and other countries. The jury thanked him for an enlightened lecture and acquitted him. All the same the Government had already taken away his citizenship and therefore he was expelled from Rhineland in July 1849. As he had very few alternative places to go to, he went once more to Paris where the French Government ordered him to either leave France or to retire to the obscurity.

1.2.5 Exile

With the help of funds collected by his friends, Karl Marx bought his fare to England and arrived in London in August 1849. His family joined him after a month. In November, Engels also arrived in London. Do you know that Marx expected to be in England for only a few weeks? But, in fact, he lived there until his death in 1883.

Because England in those days was not much affected by goings-on in Europe, it was possible for Karl Marx to continue to live there without problems. He was, on the other hand, isolated and cut off from the ferment of intellectual and political activity. With his family and close friends, he led a life of relative inactivity and material poverty. This forced inactive life, of course, helped him to develop as a thinker. [...]

In 1864, when Worker's International was formed in London, Marx joined its executive committee as the representative of the German artisans in London. Marx, in fact, took charge of the organization and delivered its Inaugural Address, which contained a socio-economic survey of the working class from

1848 to 1864. The International grew fast and Marx controlled its activities from London. While involved in these pre-occupations, Karl Marx published in 1867 the first volume of *Das Kapital*, his magnum, opus. The second and third volumes of this treatise were edited after Marx's death by Engels. *Das Kapital* created in stir and it was soon translated into French, English, Russian and Italian. Sure enough, now we have its translations available in many of the regional languages of India. [...]

Marx's writings and speeches of thirty years were mainly directed against the country which eventually welcomed his ideas and turned him into the greatest hero of modern times. This country was Russia. Russians visited Karl Marx in London. He welcomed them and talked about his mission in life. The mission was to overthrow capitalist society. He inspired the Russian revolutionaries. Himself he spent his days in writing and making notes. After a prolonged illness of lungs, his health failed and he died in his sleep on 14th March, 1883 (excerpted from Biographical Sketch—Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-83), ESO 13: 5-9).

1.3 SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed wide-sweeping economic changes across Europe. These changes particularly affected England. Most of the changes were taking place in the economic sphere due to the introduction of an industrial economy. With the coming of industrial economy, the earlier form of feudal society underwent significant changes. There was a shift from the feudalism to capitalism. There was a stream of migration from the rural hinterlands to the emerging urban, industrial and modern centres like Manchester, Liverpool etc.

Simultaneously, there was decline in the influence of trade guilds. Such decline gave more space to the capitalist expansion in the economy of that time. The aforesaid variables deeply impacted the European society. Along with it, the process of rapid industrialization and horrible working situations of the industrial workers (working class) led to wide spread poverty and social distress among them. In a way, it all culminated in the social revolution in France and throughout Europe. These specific historic conditions influenced Marx very much and gradually his increasing engagement with economic questions and economic problems was articulated in his numerous writings. An important influence on him was his reading of Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844 which made him aware of the nature and extent of misery of industrial workers. Subsequently his engagement with the workers' movement became more and more passionate. Marx and Engels developed their philosophy of communism and became the intellectual leaders of the working-class movement.

As you learnt in the previous section, in 1847 Marx was asked to write the Manifesto of a society made up of revolutionary German workers living in London. Marx and Engels renamed the group the Communist League and began writing a manifesto summarizing the doctrines of the League. Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in January 1848 in which the historic statement was made:

‘The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world, unite!’ The emergence and gradual consolidation of industrial capitalism made him more aware and articulate towards critiquing the exploitative system. (excerpted from Biographical Sketch—Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-83), ESO 13: 5-9).

1.4 INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

Marx’s work can be appropriately understood in light of the intellectual context from which it emerged. Let us now look at the intellectual ideas that influenced Marx.

1.4.1 German Philosophy and Idealism

In early years of studentship, Marx was largely influenced by the German Philosophy and Idealism of his days. More specifically, influence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach is noticeable in his writings. Hegel’s ideas can be located in the broad framework of idealist philosophy. In a general sense, idealist philosophy lays emphasis on ideas i.e., reason for the understanding of social change. Further, Hegel explains dialectics in terms of three elements: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Thesis is the dominant form of ideas prevalent in society at any given point of time which are perceived to be ‘true’. Antithesis is the contrary set of ideas which are formulated over a period of time. Over time, the thesis and antithesis reconcile in the form of synthesis. In due course, this synthesis serves as thesis. Opposing the new thesis emerges new antithesis and subsequently new synthesis arises. Seen in this way, progress in history happens by way of series of clashes between an idea (i.e. thesis) and its contradiction (i.e. antithesis) leading to the rise of a new idea (i.e., synthesis).

Marx accepted Hegel’s idea of dialectics but did not agree with the emphasis on ideas. Instead of ideas, Marx brought in material forces and developed the idea of dialectical materialism. You will read more about dialectical materialism in Unit 2. He examined the dialectical relationship between capitalists and the proletariat. Also, he traced the dialectical history of changes in society from primitive through feudal to capitalist society. Further, dialectical approach takes a view that various aspects of society are in constant conflict with each other. Following this understanding, Marx saw the contradiction between capitalists and the proletariat. He maintained that while the very basis of capitalism is exploitation of the working class. This exploitation will create conditions for the working class to revolt and overthrow capitalism itself.

Another set of writings which influenced Marx came from Ludwig Feuerbach who was a German Philosopher. While Hegel believed that ‘real man’ emanates from the divine, Feuerbach argued that ‘real man’ is one living in the ‘real, material world’. According to Feuerbach, human beings create an image of God to which they ascribe ideal qualities that they cannot attain. Human beings strive to be like God but this is not possible. In the process, however, they are not able

to appreciate human qualities and in this sense suffer from religious alienation. What attracted Marx to Feuerbach's ideas was the emphasis on material bases of religion. Marx, however, felt that Feuerbach should have related religious alienation with economic activity. Marx felt that alienation originated from social and economic activities of human beings. You will learn more about the concept of alienation in section 1.5.1. Marx elaborated it in his own materialist perspective and stated that religion is the handiwork of those who are rich class i.e. own the means of production and politically powerful. Religion in a way masks the everyday pain and suffering and justifies the same on account of religious ideals.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Name two scholars who influenced Karl Marx's ideas.

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- 2) What is the main focus of dialectical approach? Use the space below to write your answer.

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1.4.2 Materialist Perspective

The materialist perspective is at the centre of Marx's analysis of society. You may be curious to know what materialism is. Let us refer to Box 1.1 to understand the meaning of materialism.

Box 1.1 Materialism

“Materialism seeks the scientific explanations of things, including even religion. The idea of materialism may be opposed to the concept of idealism. Idealism refers to a theory that ultimate reality lies in a realm of transcending phenomena. Materialism, on the other hand, contends that everything, that exists, depends upon matter. We can speak of three kinds of materialism, namely, philosophical materialism, scientific materialism and historical materialism. Without going into terminological details of the first two kinds, we clarify that historical materialism emphasises the fundamental and causal role of production of material conditions in the development of human history.

Marx traced historical events in the light of materialistic understanding of reality”.(ESO 13, Block 2: 16)

According to Marx, the structure and development of society is conditioned by the material conditions or economic factors of that society. The notion of Materialism as given by Marx can be compared and contrasted with Idealism which is much associated with Hegel. While, Idealism refers to a theory that ultimate reality can be understood and interpreted through ideas, Materialism argues that everything, that exists, depends upon matter. It studies the real conditions of human existence. One can thus see that both these perspectives are bi-polar in nature. One gives importance to the idea and the other to the material conditions of existence. Marx’s general ideas about society are known as his theory of historical materialism. Let us refer to Box 1.2 to learn little more about historical materialism.

Box 1.2 Historical Materialism

“Marx’s general ideas about society are known as his theory of historical materialism. Materialism is the basis of his sociological thought because, for Marx, material conditions or economic factors affect the structure and development of society. His theory is that material conditions essentially comprise technological means of production and human society is formed by the forces and relations of production. [...] Here, let us tell you why Marx’s theory of society, i.e., historical materialism is historical. It is historical because Marx has traced the evolution of human societies from one stage to another. It is called materialistic because Marx has interpreted the evolution of societies in terms of their material or economic bases. [...]

According to Friedrich Engels the theory of historical materialism was discovered by Karl Marx, but Marx thought it was Friedrich Engels who had conceived the materialist formulation of history independently” (ESO 13, Block 2:12-13)

Major tenets of historical materialism are: (i) economic structure of society is the most important one; (ii) economy determines politics and culture in society; and (iii) instead of ideas, economic structure determines political and legal superstructure. Historical materialism is a materialist interpretation of social, cultural and political phenomena. His theory of historical materialism is both historical and material in nature. It is historical because Marx has traced the evolution of human societies from one stage to another. It is materialistic because he has interpreted the evolution of societies in terms of changes in their material or economic bases. In evolutionary perspective, the history of society is seen through the successive stages of evolution.

Marx outlined his theory of historical materialism in 'Preface' to A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy stating, 'It is not the consciousness of men, therefore, that determines their existence, but instead their social existence determines their consciousness.' The society is seen as a structure having at its base the economy - the infrastructure so to speak. This economic infrastructure of society is made of forces and relations of production. You will read about these concepts in section 1.5.3. The superstructure of society is based on relations of production. Other aspects of society as history, politics, law, religion, education are influenced by the economic structure. Historical materialism is also the cornerstone of Marx's understanding of the process of social change. Over time, forces of production evolve. When this happens, they contradict existing relations of production. When the contradiction intensifies, the existing mode of production and its superstructure breaks down. New relations of production that match with forces of production emerge. This dialectic between forces of production and relations of production lies at the root of societal development that explains history of societies. Thus, conflict is viewed as a creative force that triggers progress.

Marx described stages of human history in terms of the four modes of production: the Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. According to him, ancient, feudal and capitalist modes of production followed each other one after the other in western societies. Asiatic mode of production is a feature of those societies in which ownership of land is communal, kinship relations predominate, and production process and labour are controlled by the State. He predicted that capitalist mode of production will be followed by socialism/communism. Ownership over means of production in each mode of production lies in the hands of one class. This determines the relations of production and class relations that emerge from production process. Ancient mode of production is characterized by slavery, feudal mode of production is characterized by serfdom and capitalist (bourgeois) mode of production is characterized by wage earning.

Asiatic mode of production is characterized by the subordination of all people to the state or the state bureaucracy. You will read about modes of production in section 1.5.3. Can Marx's historical materialism be equated with economic determinism? Let us refer to Box 1.3 to find out.

Box 1.3 Historical Materialism is not Economic Determinism

“It is possible that you may consider Marx as a proponent of economic determinism or the view that economic conditions determine the development of society. But you will here see how historical materialism is different from economic determinism. Marx recognised that without culture there can be no production possible. For him, mode of production includes social relations of production which are relations of domination and subordination into which men and women are born or involuntarily enter. The reproduction both of life and of the material means of life cannot be understood without turning to the culture, norms and the rituals of the working people over whom the rulers rule. An understanding of working class culture contributes to an understanding of the mode of production.

Class is a category that describes people in relationships over time, and the ways in which they become conscious of these relationships. It also describes the ways in which they separate, unite, enter into struggle, form institutions and transmit values in class ways. Class is an ‘economic’ and also a ‘cultural’ formation. It is impossible to reduce class into a pure economic category”. (ESO 13, Block 2:21-22)

1.4.3 Political Economy Perspective

Before discussing how Marx was influenced by the political economy perspective, let us understand what is meant by ‘political economy’. In its simplest sense, political economy refers to the interface between politics and economy. In this sense, politics and economics are treated as inseparable from each other. Political economy addresses the question: how do politics and policies influence economic outcomes (e.g., economic growth, trade, employment, income inequality across different sections of society and regions)?

Engels explained political economy in terms of laws that govern production and exchange of ‘material means of subsistence’. Marx, however, did not discuss the concept of political economy but developed a critique of it. Giddens (1998) mentions two main criticisms of political economy that Marx proposes. The first one attacks the basic assumption that conditions of production that are characteristic of capitalism can be found in all forms of economy. Marx’s argues that capitalism is not the only form of productive system. As you have seen in the previous section, there have been other forms of productive systems before capitalism and that other forms of productive systems may emerge after capitalism. The second criticism attacks economists’ practice of reducing everything to economic value and economic relations. For them, ‘commodities’, ‘prices’ etc. are independent of human intervention. In the political economy framework, those people who are not engaged in the production process (like the unemployed, beggars etc.) do not exist. Reduction of both commodities and people to economic categories is not agreeable. Class division in society is conveniently ignored by economists. The fact, however, is that there is perpetual conflict between working class and the capitalist class over wages and profit.

Marx argued that major share of the profits in capitalist mode of production is taken away by capitalists (i.e., those who own the land and capital). The workers lack control over both: the production process and the commodities they produce. They are not able to relate with what they produce. This is what Marx referred to as 'alienation' of the workers.

According to Marx, every commodity has two kinds of value attached to it 'use-value' and 'exchange-value'. Use-value of the commodity is in its consumption and exchange value denotes the value of a product when it is exchanged with the other products. Labour Theory of Value according to both Adam Smith and David Ricardo suggests that it is the human labour power which makes any commodity valuable in terms of its use and exchange value. This proposition influenced Marx to a great extent which he subsequently modified to explain the emergence of surplus value and surplus labour. For him, the production of any commodity involves costs of human labour, raw material and machinery which are borne by the owner of the industry or factory / the capitalist. Capitalists buy human labour and thus produce and sell the commodity. In order to have surplus value which is the source of profit, the capitalist maximizes the production and tries to keep down the human labour cost. In this way, the capitalist gains surplus value which though is an economic concept, yet is configured by the relation of domination and sub-ordination among the capitalist and the industrial worker. It is in such a heightened sense of exploitation and appropriation of human labour that first the sense of alienation enters in to the worker which effectively channeled gives way to the social revolution. Thus we see that the pure economic categories like 'use-value' and 'exchange-value' and human labour cost are modified by Marx within the framework of political economy so as to explain the rise of capitalism.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the major tenets of historical materialism? Use the space below to write your answer.
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- 2) What do you understand by political economy? Use the space below to write your answer.
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1.5 CENTRAL IDEAS

Let us understand some of the important ideas in Marx's writings.

1.5.1 Alienation

The concept of alienation used by Marx in his writings is derived from Hegel. In fact, according to Hegel, Idea was the Universal Absolute from which man was alienated i.e., estranged. In simple words, according to Hegel, we see our own ideas and creations as external and alien to us. In the long run, we overcome this alienation. Feuerbach did not agree with Hegel that Idea was more important than man in the metaphysical sense. According to Feuerbach, man projected the best attributes that he can think of in an entity called 'god'. This externalized, objectified creation of man i.e., god represents man as alienated from his own self. While Marx accepted Hegel's notion of alienation, he rejected the idea that alienation has to do with consciousness alone. For Marx, alienation involves a sense of detachment of workers from their own labour and the objects they create. Consider the case of a carpenter who makes a chair but cannot use it for himself. The chair which he has made himself is for sale but not for his own use.

In a shoe factory, for example, a worker produces say only the heel while someone else produces the upper part and yet another worker assembles all the parts and forms the shoe. The work of each one is mechanical and not creative. According to Marx, alienation takes place in four ways: (i) workers lose control over what they produce; (ii) workers lose control over their own work activity since they sell their labour for wages and treat the productive process only as a means of subsistence; (iii) workers have to produce mechanically with no creativity or mental engagement; and (iv) private labour of workers makes them self-centered and individualistic, they compete with each other. This estranges them from each other.

1.5.2 Class and Relations of Subordination

The notion of class is central in the writings of Marxist analysis of society. According to him a social class occupies a fixed place in the production process and thus in the relations of production. According to Marx, in the beginning of the human history, as the land was collectively owned or was not owned by any one person or a group, it was seen as a classless society. One explanation is that class emerges as the corollary of property and ownership of property. Marx in *Capital* (1894) distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income: (a) owners of simple labour power or labourers whose main source of income is labour; (b) owners of capital or capitalists whose main source of income is profit or surplus value; and (c) landowners whose main source of income is ground rent. It needs to be mentioned that in two of Marx's writings *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* and *The Class Struggle in France*, we find two different class structures.

However, the other explanation suggests that with the ownership of the means of production, there emerges two classes; one who owns it i.e. 'Haves' (bourgeoisie/capitalists who appropriate surplus value) and those who do not own it, i.e. 'Have nots' (proletariats who possess only their labour power). The latter in order to survive often submits to the former and thus theirs is a relation marked by superordination and subordination - oppressors and oppressed. Bourgeoisie is the class of capitalists who control means of production. One can also look in to 'Class in itself' notion which means that all those who are sharing the same relationship to the means of production comprise a class; and 'Class for itself' where the members of a class are aware of their exploitative situation and come together to resolve it through revolution.

Outlining the relations of subordination, Marx notes that in every historical stage of the human society, we find the presence of two antagonistic classes i.e. Masters and Slaves in Ancient society, Lords and Serfs in Feudal society and capitalist and industrial worker in capitalist society. However, he sees class as a unique feature of capitalist societies because it is here that exploitation reaches its peak and through revolution waged by class conflict and class struggle the capitalism is overthrown. The cause of exploitation is the intense desire of the capitalist for profit making in form of surplus value. Finally, capitalist mode of production will be replaced by communism in which abolition of private property, self-alienation are abolished. You will learn more about Marx's notion of class and class struggle in Unit 3.

1.5.3 Means, Relations, Forces and Mode of Production

By 'means of production' Marx refers to things that are used for production (e.g., land, raw material, technology etc.) . Now, there is a class of people who own the means of production but it is not possible to produce anything with only tools, machinery, and technology. For production process all these have to be put to use. When this happens, people have to interact with each other. The social relations that they enter into for production are called 'relations of production'. Relations of production include both: relations between owners of means of production and workers; and relations among workers themselves. Relations of production between owners and workers are characterized by dominance and exploitation while those among workers are characterized by cooperation. The way commodities are produced is referred to as 'forces of production'. This is a combination of means of production and labour power. In simple words, forces of production refers to all the factors that contribute to the process of material production directly. According to Marx, each stage of social history of the society is differentiated with each other by how, or by what means, the members of society produce the material goods for their survival and thus fulfilling their needs. Each mode of production associated with a specific stage in the human history has its specific relations of production. As explained in section 1.4.2, Marx identified four modes of production: the Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. Let us understand each mode of production in detail.

The Asiatic mode of production is feature of primitive communities in which ownership of land is collectively owned. Here the sense of individual 'ownership' is absent. As a result, the notion of property or private property is also absent. In the absence of both, this is called as a 'classless' society.

In the Ancient Mode of Production, slavery is seen as the basis of the process of production. Herein for the first time in the human history, that we come across two distinct and opposing classes i.e. Masters and the Slaves. One can see the emergence of large scale agricultural practice as its reason. The relation of masters to slaves is considered as the very essence of slavery as it is exploitative in nature and Master appropriates the labour of the slaves.

Feudal Mode of Production is marked by two mutually antagonistic classes' i.e. landed nobility feudal lords and their tenants or 'serfs'. As Serfs were legally unfree they were deprived of property rights. In order to survive, they used to work on the landed properties of their feudal lords. The feudal lords appropriated land rent from their serfs.

Capitalist Mode of Production is a feature of the industrial era. There are the two antagonistic classes: capitalist or the bourgeoisie and the worker/ labourer or the proletariat. As a mode of production, capitalism first emerged in Europe. Here capital is the dominant means of production. Subsequently, the world witnessed the rapid growth of technology and rise of capitalist economies. The means of production is in the absolute control of the capitalist who exploits the labour of the proletariat for profit making. In Marx's view, capitalism will be eventually replaced by communism.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

The Unit discussed key influences on Marx's writings and discussed in brief his central ideas. One can see that his idea on understanding history as the continuous line of development marked by the successive evolutionary stages of human society is very much influenced by the evolutionary thoughts of that time. Similarly the dialectics of idealism by Hegel was modified and 'turned upside down' by Marx when he applied his dialectics of materialism. The core values of thesis, antithesis and synthesis remained the same but their inherent nature change from Hegel's progress of ideas to Marx's progress of means of production thus leading to progress of human history. The labour theory of value given by classical economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo were influential in Marxist writings on use value, exchange value and surplus value.

Along with class and relations of subordination, the central ideas of Marx included means of production, relations of production, mode of production and forces of production which in the ultimate analysis provide a picture of Capitalism. Needless to say, as a philosopher and economist of the times of revolutions of 18th and 19th centuries, Marx's writings still resonate in the contemporary times.

1.7 REFERENCES

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1.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach
- 2) The main focus of dialectical approach is on (a) relationships between these components; and (b) totality of social relations and the relation of this totality to those components. The dialectical approach is also concerned with how social phenomena exist in a dialectical relationship to one another across space and time.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Major tenets of historical materialism are: (a) economic structure of society is the most important one; (b) economy determines politics and culture in society; and (c) instead of ideas, economic structure determines political and legal superstructure.
- 2) Political economy explains how politics and economics influence each other. Political economy addresses the question: how do politics and policies influence economic outcomes (e.g., economic growth, trade, employment, income inequality across different sections of society and regions).

UNIT 2 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Concept of Dialectics
- 2.3 Laws of Dialectics
 - 2.3.1 The Law of the Unity and Conflict of Opposites
 - 2.3.2 The Law of Negation of the Negation
 - 2.3.3 The Law of Transition of Quantity into Quality
- 2.4 Application of the Laws of Dialectical Materialism
 - 2.4.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society
 - 2.4.2 Slave-Ownning Society
 - 2.4.3 Feudal Society
 - 2.4.4 Capitalist Society
- 2.5 Social Change and Revolution
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 References
- 2.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit you should be able to:

- discuss the Marxian concepts of dialectics and social change;
- describe the laws of dialectics;
- show the application of the laws of dialectics to understand social change; and
- outline Marx's ideas on social change and revolution.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, you learnt the fundamental conceptual and theoretical structure of Marxian thought on the history of development of society. After having read his specific contributions to the materialistic and scientific interpretations of human history in terms of forces of production, relations of production and modes of production one is required an understanding of his ideas on dialectical materialism.

This Unit undertakes two major tasks: (i) to introduce the significant Marxian concept of dialectics and change and (ii) to summarise the entire conceptual and theoretical structure relating to dynamic and social change as envisaged by Karl

* Adopted from IGNOU Course Material: Unit 9 of *Sociological Thought* (ESO 13) with modifications by Nita Mathur

Marx. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 introduce the concept of dialectics and then discuss the laws of dialectical materialism and social change in a theoretical perspective. Section 2.4 deals with successive forms and modes of production and social change with emphasis be on dialectical aspect of the historical course of development of society. Section 2.5 deals briefly with Marx's ideas on social change and revolution.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF DIALECTICS

The word 'dialectics' refers to a method of intellectual discussion by dialogue. It is a term of logic. According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), it referred to the art of deputation by question and answer. Before Aristotle, another Greek philosopher Plato (427-397 B.C.) developed this term in relation with his doctrine of ideas. Even before Plato, yet another Greek philosopher Socrates (470-390 B.C.) used this term to examine the presuppositions at the back of all sciences. Until the end of the middle ages, this term remained a part of logic. Carrying the same tradition of treating this term as reason, in modern philosophy of Europe, the word was used by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) to discuss the impossibility of applying to objects of a non-sensuous understanding the principles which are found to govern phenomena of sense-experience.

There is one more strand in the meaning of the term dialectics. It is the idea of dialectics as a process. This means the dialectics is a process of reason in ascending and descending forms. In ascending form of dialectics, one is able to demonstrate the existence of a higher reality, e.g., the forms of God. In descending form of dialectics, one is able to explain the manifestation of a higher reality in the phenomenal world of sense- experience.

In order to understand how Karl Marx made use of the term 'dialectics', we need to remember that Marx evolved his concept of dialectical materialism on the basis of his critique of the German philosopher Hegel's theories of idealism.

Hegel combined the two strands of dialectic, i.e., the idea of dialectic as reason and as process. In broad sense, he used the notion of dialectics as a logical process and more narrowly he traced it as the generator or motor of the logical process. Hegel maintained that God or the Absolute comes to self-knowledge through human knowledge. In other words, the categories of human thought are equal to objective forms of being and logic is at the same time the theory about the nature of being. Further, Hegel proposed that dialectics can be conceived more narrowly as grasping of opposites in their unity. Hegel saw it as a process which brings out what is implicit. In this way, each development is a product of a previous less developed phase. In a way new development is a fulfilment of the previous state. Thus there is always a hidden tension between a form and its process of becoming a new form. Hegel interpreted history as progress in the consciousness of freedom.

Marx was initially influenced by Hegel's philosophy but later on he criticised it due to its idealist nature and propounded his own dialectical materialism. Marx criticised Hegel for deducing the laws of dialectics from consciousness instead of material existence. On this point Marx said that to get a scientifically sound dialectical method one will have to totally invert the logic of Hegelian dialectics. This is what Marx did in his dialectical materialism, where in contradistinction to Hegel, he said it is the matter which is supreme and determinant of consciousness and idea and not vice-versa.

2.3 LAWS OF DIALECTICS

Dialectical materialism evolved by Marx is diametrically opposite to Hegelian dialectics. It seeks to explain everything in terms of contradictions of matter. Dialectical materialism provides abstract laws for natural and social change. Contrary to metaphysics, it believes that in Nature, things are interconnected, interrelated and determined by each other. It considers Nature as an integral whole. Dialectical materialism declares that the law of reality is the law of change. There is constant transformation in inorganic nature and human world. There is nothing eternally static. These transformations are not gradual but there is a violent, revolutionary shift. Marx's colleague Friedrich Engels put forward the following three major laws of dialectical materialism.

2.3.1 The Law of the Unity and Conflict of Opposites

We have studied that everything changes, we have also learnt about the nature and direction of change, but what remains to be seen is the cause behind change. What leads to change? The law of the unity and conflict of opposites is the core of dialectics. This law reveals the sources, the real causes of the eternal motion and development of the material world.

It states that there are internal sides, tendencies, forces of an object or phenomena, which are mutually exclusive but at the same time presuppose each other. The inseparable interconnections of these opposite tendencies or contradictions is responsible for the unity of opposites. This contradictoriness of objects and phenomena of the world is of a general, universal nature. There is no object or phenomenon in the world which could not be divided into opposites. These opposites coexist and one is inconceivable without the other. However, these opposites cannot coexist peacefully in one object: the contradictory, mutually exclusive character of opposites necessarily causes a struggle between them. The old and the new, the emergent and the obsolete must come into conflict. Here it is important to note that the unity of opposites is a necessary condition of the conflict, because it takes place only where opposite sides exist in one object or phenomenon. It is the contradiction, the conflict of opposites that is the main source of development of matter and consciousness. Development is the struggle of these opposites. Here, more often than not one opposite or tendency of the two tries to maintain the status quo and the other counterpart tries to radically change the status quo. This conflict leads to a new situation, object,

phenomenon or stage or development, when the mature conditions come into existence after several quantitative changes. This radical change is the qualitative change. This is how one can find the logical interconnections between these three laws of dialectical materialism.

It would be erroneous to ignore the role of external influences which may help or hinder one form of movement or another. Nevertheless, each movement takes its source from internal contradictions, so that the emergence of new contradictions gives rise to a new form of movement, while their disappearance gives place to another form of movement for which other contradictions are responsible. The opposites can never become balanced completely. The unity, the equal effect of opposites, is temporary and relative, whereas their conflict is eternal.

Both the laws of transition from quantitative changes to qualitative changes and that of negation of the negation may be regarded as particular instances of the law of unity and conflict of opposites, which reveals the sources of all development and change (see sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3).

This abstract law of the unity and conflict of opposites can be explained and understood if applied to successive modes of production in the history of development of society.

2.3.2 The Law of Negation of the Negation

The term 'negation' was introduced in philosophy by Hegel but with an idealist meaning. Hegel believed that the negation was present in the development of the idea, of thought. Marx criticised Hegel and gave a materialistic interpretation of negation. He showed that negation is an integral part of development of reality itself. Marx wrote, "In no sphere can one undergo a development without negating one's previous mode of existence."

Let us explain it. For example, the development of the earth's crust has undergone a number of geological eras, each new era, arising on the basis of the preceding one, represents a certain negation of the old. In animal world also, each new species of animal, arising on the basis of the old, at the same time represents its negation. The history of society also consists of a chain of negations of the old social order by the new: as Raymond Aron (1965) puts it, capitalism is the negation of feudal society, and socialism would be the negation of capitalism i.e. negation of negation. In the realm of knowledge and science also, each new scientific theory negates the old theories, for example, Bohn's theory of atom negated Dalton's molecular theory or Darwin's theory negated earlier speculations about human evolution.

Here one thing should be kept in mind. Negation is not something introduced into an object or phenomenon from outside, but is the result of the object's or phenomenon's own, internal development. Objects and phenomena develop on the basis of their own inherent, internal contradictions: they themselves create the conditions for their destruction, for the change into a new, higher quality.

Negation is the overcoming of the old through internal contradictions, a result of self-development, self- movement of objects and phenomena. Thus, socialism comes to take the place of capitalism because it resolves the internal contradictions of the capitalist system.

Dialectical negation, therefore, consists of the fact that something of a stage which is negated is lost, something becomes part of the new, negating stages (although in a modified form), and something entirely new is added. Thus, recognition of continuity, the connection of the new and the old in development is a feature of the Marxist understanding of negation. But we must bear in mind that the new never takes over the old completely, as it is. It takes from the old only certain elements or aspects. This too, it does not absorb mechanically, but assimilates and transforms them in conformity with its own nature.

For example, after throwing off the colonial yoke, in India we started building a new nation. In this process, we tried to do away with all the vestiges of oppression and the institutions that blocked national development. However, we did retain the educational, legal and bureaucratic structures along with the modern infrastructure of transportation and telecommunication.

Due to these reasons, the succession of developmental stages is progressive. Although no stage is ever completely repeated, some features of earlier stages necessarily recur, although in a different form, at later stages. In this way, the old is destroyed and the new arises. This is only one of the stages of development, not to end, because development does not stop here. Anything new does not remain new forever. While developing, it prepares the prerequisites for the rise of something newer and more progressive.

When these prerequisites and conditions ripen, negation again occurs. This is a negation of the negation, that is the negation of that which itself previously overcame the old: this is replacement of the new by something newer. The result of this second negation is again negated, overcome, and so on till infinity. Development thus appears as a countless number of successive negations, as an endless replacement or overcoming of old by the new.

2.3.3 The Law of Transition of Quantity into Quality

In nature, everything is in a state of continuous movement and change. Certain things are arising or coming into existence whereas certain things are developing, and/or decaying and certain things are dying or going out of existence at a given time. This means a state of continuous flux. As said earlier, Marx believed that law of reality is the law of change. Now the question arises regarding the nature of change. What kind of change is this? This law responds to this particular question. According to this law, process of change is not simple or gradual but it is a product of quantitative advances which result in abstract qualitative changes at a particular moment when mature conditions are present. There is never repetition of occurrences. This change is always from lower to higher, simpler to complex, homogeneous to heterogeneous levels of reality.

Let us elaborate this point of quantitative and qualitative changes. The appearance or the birth of the new and the death or disappearance of the old can be considered as qualitative changes, philosophically as well as logically. Whereas all other changes, whereby different parts or aspects of an object become rearranged increase or diminish (while the object retains its identity) could be considered as quantitative changes. To explain and simplify it further, one could say that the qualitative changes may be of two forms: (i) something did not exist, but now it does, and (ii) something existed but now it does not. Quantitative changes, on the other hand, are infinitely diverse, e.g., larger-smaller, more/ less, more often more seldom, faster-slower, warmer-colder, lighter-heavier, worse-better, poorer-richer, and so on.

In fact these quantitative changes occur continuously in every object of Nature and they reach to a limit determined by the nature of each process, after which a leap inevitably occurs. The limit beyond which continuous change is interrupted is described as measure philosophy. This leap is the qualitative change. To give a concrete example, Indian national movement for freedom was continuing for more than a century leading to continuous quantitative changes and when it reached its limit there was a leap at the midnight stroke of the clock on 15th August 1947. India was a free country. Independence from colonialism was the qualitative change. Similarly, the process of ageing in human being does not stop even for a fraction of a second. We keep getting older or in other words we keep undergoing quantitative changes and when we reach the limit prescribed by nature, we meet the qualitative change i.e. death. This example could also be applied to birth of an infant. Quantitative changes keep going on during gestation period right from the day of conception but the qualitative change occurs when the baby breaths air in this world i.e. when it is born.

Hence the dialectical level or law of transition from quantity to quality and vice-versa is that continuous quantitative changes, upon attaining measure, cause abrupt qualitative changes, which in their turn determine the character of the further continuous quantitative changes.

From this law, we move on the other very significant law of dialectical materialism known as the law of negation of the negation.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Name the laws of the dialectical materialism.

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2) Define quantitative change.

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3) Define qualitative change.

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2.4 APPLICATION OF THE LAWS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

The principles or laws of dialectical materialism hold good for nature, world and society alike. When these laws are applied to the history of society they take the shape of historical materialism. (We have already studied in the previous Unit that human society according to Marx has gone through four major modes of production viz., Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. Finally these successive forms of society would reach the stage of communism, as per the predictions of Marxian theory.)

Here we shall see how the laws of dialectical materialism are applied to understand the successive forms and modes of production and hence social change.

2.4.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society

This was the first, the simplest and the lowest form of mode of production. During the period of this form of mode of production, appearance of improved and also new implements, such as bows and arrows and learning to make a fire were examples of quantitative changes in terms of the laws of dialectical materialism. Even beginning of cultivation and herding were examples of similar type of changes. The extremely low level relations of production were based on cooperation and mutual help due to common, communal ownership of means of production. These relations were conditioned by the fact that people with their primitive tools could only collectively withstand the mighty forces of nature.

Even in primitive society the productive forces developed steadily. The tools were improved and skills were gradually accumulated. The most significant development was the transition to metal tools. With the growth of productivity the communal structure of society started breaking into families. Private property

arose and the family started becoming the owner of the means of production. Here the contradiction between the communal relations of production and the potential forms of exploiting classes led to the qualitative change i.e. transition into ancient mode of production. There was conflict of opposites within the system which led to the negation of primitive-communal system. Consequently, a new stage of slavery appeared. The slavery system can be described as the negation of primitive communal system.

2.4.2 Slave-Owning Society

In this form of society the primitive equality gave way to social inequality and emergence of slave-owning classes and slaves. The forces of production underwent further quantitative changes. In the slave-owning society, the relations of production were based on the slave-owner's absolute ownership of both the means of production and the slaves themselves and their produce.

In this society, there existed the contradictions between slave-owners and slaves. When the mature conditions were reached the struggle of these contradictions led to the qualitative change i.e. the negation of slave-owning society by way of its transition into feudal society. The conflict of the opposites i.e. the slave-owners and slave culminated into violent slave revolts ultimately effecting the negation. We can say that the feudal system stands as an example of negation of negation. It means that feudal society can be seen as an example of negation of slave-owning society which itself is a negation of primitive-communal society.

2.4.3 Feudal Society

Slavery system was the first stage where relations of production were based on domination and exploitation by the slave-owner class of the slave class. This was the stage, where the relations of production saw qualitatively fundamental differences compared to previous stage. In feudal stage, the forces of production saw rapid quantitative change where for the first time inanimate sources of energy such as water and wind were tapped. The development of these productive forces was facilitated by the feudal relations of production. The feudal lords oppressed and exploited their serfs. However, towns began to emerge at this time. Trade, commerce and manufacture began to flourish. Many serfs ran away from the feudal estates to pursue a trade in the growing towns. The conflict of opposites within the feudal system namely, that of landless serfs against feudal lords, reached its maturity. The feudal system declined and its negation was the capitalist system.

2.4.4 Capitalist Society

Based on private capitalist ownership the capitalist relations of production facilitated tremendous growth of the productive forces. With this growth of productive forces, capitalist relations of production ceased to correspond to forces of production in feudal system. The most significant contradiction of the capitalist mode of production is the contradiction between the social character of

production and the private capitalist form of appropriation. Production in capitalist society bears a strikingly pronounced social character. Many millions of workers are concentrated at large plants and take part in social production, while the fruits of their labour are appropriated by a small group of owners of the means of production. This is the basic economic contradiction of capitalism. This contradiction or conflict of opposites gives rise to economic crisis and unemployment, causes fierce class battles between the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class), in other words, quantitative changes. The working class would help bring about a socialist revolution. This revolution would, according to Marx abolish the capitalist production relations and usher in the new qualitative change i.e. the communist socio-economic formation.

The new communist socio-economic formation, as we have seen earlier, passes in its development through two phases, socialism and communism. Socialism does away with private ownership of the means of production. It establishes public ownership of means of production. In such a society the proletariat will jointly own means of production and distribute the produce according to the needs of people. This is the stage of dictatorship of proletariat, which will later on also, do away with the state apparatus leading to a stateless society. This stage of the stateless society will be possible in communism, where the dialectic finally unfolds itself, ushering in a social system which would be free of any contradictions within classes. According to the laws of dialectics contradictions will remain as this is the basis of development. Under communism there will be contradiction between Human Being and Nature, as in Primitive-Communism. The basic difference now is that the level of technology will be higher and Nature will be exploited more efficiently. Thus we see how the three laws of dialectics operate in Marx's interpretation of the history of society.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Name the four modes of production.
(a) (b)
(c) (d)
- 2) Class antagonism reaches its climax and it leads to which of the following formations?
(a) Revolution (b) Slavery
(c) Bourgeoisie (d) Proletariat
- 3) What is the main contradiction of capitalist mode of production?

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Let us now discuss the ideas of Marx on social change and revolution. In the German Ideology (1845-46), both Marx and Engels outlined their scheme of history. Here, the main idea was that based on a mode of production there was a succession of historical phases. Change from one phase to the next was viewed by them as a state of revolution brought about by conflicts between old institutions and new productive forces. It was only later on that both Marx and Engels devoted more time and studied English, French and American revolutions. They named them as bourgeois revolutions. Marx's hypothesis of bourgeois revolution as given us a perspective to look at social changes in Europe and America. But more than this, it has stimulated further research by scholars on this subject. Secondly, Marx spoke of another kind of revolution. It pertained to communism. Marx viewed communism as a sequel to capitalism. Communism, according to Marx, would wipe out all class divisions and therefore would allow for a fresh start with moral and social transformation. This was the vision both Marx and Engels carried in their minds for future society.

Marx's concept of socialist revolution presupposes an era of shift from capitalism to socialism. He explained bourgeois revolution as a defeat of the aristocracy. This defeat came at the end of a long period of growth of capitalism. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie is, on the other hand, only the first phase of the revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism. According to Marx the socialistic phase of revolution would not be without classes, occupational division of labour and market economy etc. It is only in the higher phase of revolution there would be distribution of goods to each according to his needs. This would be the phase of communism. Thus, change to communism was perceived by Marx as a series of steps to completely revolutionise the entire mode of production.

In fact, Marx conceived intensification of class antagonism in capitalism, because the new forces of production do not correspond to the relations of production. There will be increasing gap between the levels of distribution of gains between the two classes. This shall leave the have-nots extremely alienated and conscious of their class interests. The new forces of production in capitalism are capable of mass production and will dump heaps of prosperity at the feet of bourgeoisie without helping the lot of proletariat, who would continue to suffer from misery and poverty. This shall accentuate the class consciousness and hasten the maturation of the conditions for socialist revolution. The socialist revolution according to Marx would be qualitatively different from all the revolutions of the past as it would for the first time, after the beginning of history of inequality and exploitation, usher in a stage of classless society with a hope for all members of society.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this concluding unit of the block, we studied Marx's most philosophically profound contribution of dialectics and social change. There was an introduction to the concept of dialectics followed by the fundamental laws of dialectics and change. This was followed by a discussion of the application of the laws of dialectical materialism in the successive modes of production and consequent social change in society. In this unit, we have therefore studied these successive forms of mode of production in the context of dialectical principles of Karl Marx. Finally, we discussed Marx's views on revolution and social change.

2.7 REFERENCES

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2.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) It is the Marxian theory that seeks to explain everything in terms of change, which is caused due to constant contradiction of mutually opposite forces found in matter.
- 2) Law of transition of quantity to quality; law of negation of negation; law of unity and conflict of opposites.
- 3) Minor or major changes in any object whereby the object does not lose its identity.
- 4) Appearance of new or disappearance of old is a qualitative change.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) (a) Asiatic mode of production
(b) Ancient mode of production
(c) Feudal mode of production
(d) Capitalist mode of production.
- 2) (a)
- 3) The main contradiction of the capitalist mode of production is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation.

UNIT 3 CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Class Structure
 - 3.2.1 Criteria for Determination of Class
 - 3.2.2 Classification of Societies in History and Emergence of Classes
 - 3.2.3 Intensification of Class Conflict Under Capitalism
- 3.3 Class Struggle and Revolution
- 3.4 Marx's Concept of Alienation
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 References
- 3.7 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- define the concept of class;
- describe the various criteria for class formation;
- identify the various stages involved in the history of society that change due to class conflict or change in mode of production;
- discuss what is social revolution and how it will be reached; and
- understand Marx's concept of alienation.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit will explain the key notion of class as used by Karl Marx. We shall study in detail about the various criteria that are basic for calling any collectivity a class. Also we shall discuss how and why classes come into conflict with each other. We will seek to understand the impact of these class conflicts on the history of development of society. Finally, the present unit will give you a brief overview of history including the future of human society on the basis of Marxian framework. The Unit discusses the class structure, including the classification of societies in history and class struggle. We go on to elaborate the intensification of class conflict under capitalism, discuss class struggle and revolution and explain Marx's concept of alienation.

*Adopted from IGNOU Course Material: Unit 8 of *Sociological Thought* (ESO 13) with modifications by Nita Mathur

3.2 THE CLASS STRUCTURE

The word ‘class’ originated from the Latin term ‘classis’ which refers to a group called to arms, a division of the people. In the rule of legendary Roman king, Servius Tullius (678-534 B.C.), the Roman society was divided into five classes or orders according to their wealth. Subsequently, the word ‘class’ was applied to large groups of people into which human society came to be divided.

Marx recognised class as a unique feature of capitalist societies. This is one reason why he did not analyse the class structure and class relations in other forms of society.

Marx’s sociology is, in fact, a sociology of the class struggle. This means one has to understand the Marxian concept of class in order to appreciate Marxian philosophy and thought. Marx has used the term social class throughout his works but explained it only in a fragmented form. The most clear passages on the concept of class structure can be found in the third volume of his famous work, Capital (1894). Under the title of ‘Social Classes’ Marx distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income: (a) owners of simple labour power or labourers whose main source of income is labour; (b) owners of capital or capitalists whose main source of income is profit or surplus value; and (c) landowners whose main source of income is ground rent. In this way the class structure of modern capitalist society is composed of three major classes viz., salaried labourers or workers, capitalists and landowners.

At a broader level, society could be divided into two major classes i.e. the ‘haves’ (owners of land and / or capital) often called as bourgeoisie and the ‘have-nots’ (those who own nothing but their own labour power), often called as proletariats. Marx has tried to even give a concrete definition of social class. According to him ‘a social class occupies a fixed place in the process of production’.

Activity 1

Can Indian society be divided into classes in Marxian sense of the word ‘class’? If yes, describe these classes. If no, give reasons why Indian society cannot be divided into in Marxian sense of the word ‘class’.

3.2.1 Criteria for Determination of Class

In order to have a better understanding of the concept of class and class structure, one must be able to respond to the question – “What are the criteria for determination of class”? In other words, which human grouping will be called a class and which grouping would not be considered as class in Marxian terms. For this exercise, one could say that a social class has two major criteria: (i) objective criteria (ii) subjective criteria.

- i) **Objective Criteria:** People sharing the same relationship to the means of production comprise a class. Let us understand it through an example – all labourers have a similar relationship with the landowners. On the other hand all the landowners, as a class, have a similar relationship with the land and labourers. In this way, labourers on one hand and landowners on the other hand could be seen as classes. However, for Marx, this relationship alone is not sufficient to determine the class. According to him it is not sufficient for class to be ‘class in itself’ but it should also be class for itself. What does this mean? By ‘class in itself’ he means the objective criteria of any social class. Obviously, Marx is not simply satisfied with objective criteria above. Hence he equally emphasises upon the other major criteria i.e., “Class for itself” or the subjective criteria.
- ii) **Subjective Criteria:** Any collectivity or human grouping with a similar relationship would make a category, not a class, if subjective criteria are not included. The members of any one class not only have similar consciousness but they also share a similar consciousness of the fact that they belong to the same class. This similar consciousness of a class serves as the basis for uniting its members for organising social action. Here this similar class consciousness towards acting together for their common interests is what Marx calls – “Class for itself”.

In this way, these two criteria together determine a class and class structure in any given society.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Define a social class in two lines.

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- 2) Name the two criteria for determining a class.

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3.2.2 Classification of Societies in History and Emergence of Classes

Marx differentiated stages of human history on the basis of their economic regimes or modes of production. He distinguished four major modes of production which he called the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the bourgeois or capitalist. He predicted that all social development will culminate into a stage called communism. Let us simplify this classification of societies or various stages of human history into (i) primitive-communal, (ii) slave-owning, (iii) feudal, (iv) capitalist and (v) communist stages. In this sub-section we will discuss the first three stages.

i) The Primitive-communal System

The primitive-communal system was the first and the lowest form of organisation of people and it existed for thousands of years. Men and women started using primitive tools like sticks and stones for hunting and food-gathering. Gradually they improved these tools, and learned to make fire, cultivation and animal husbandry. In this system of very low level of forces of production, the relations of production were based on common ownership of the means of production. Therefore, these relations were based on mutual assistance and cooperation. These relations were conditioned by the fact that people with their primitive implements could only withstand the mighty forces of nature together, collectively.

In such a situation, exploitation of humans by humans did not exist because of two reasons. Firstly, the tools used (namely, means of production) were so simple that they could be reproduced by anyone. These were implements like spear, stick, bow and arrow etc. Hence no person or group of people had the monopoly of ownership over the tools. Secondly, production was at a low-scale. The people existed more or less on a subsistence level. Their production was just sufficient to meet the needs of the people provided everybody worked. Therefore, it was a situation of no master and no servant. All were equal.

Gradually with time, people started perfecting their tools, their craft of producing and surplus production started taking place. This led to private property and primitive equality gave way to social inequality. Thus the first antagonistic classes, slaves and slave owners, appeared.

This is how the development of the forces of production led to the replacement of primitive communal system by slavery.

ii) The Slave-owning Society

In the slave-owning society, primitive tools were perfected and bronze and iron tools replaced the stone and wooden implements. Large-scale agriculture, live stock raising, mining and handicrafts developed. The development of this type of forces of production also changed the relations of production. These relations were based on the slave owner's absolute ownership of both the means of production and the slave and everything they produced. The owner left the slaves only with the bare minimum necessities to keep them from dying of starvation. In this system, the history of exploitation of humans by humans and the history of class struggle began. The development of productive forces went on and slavery became an impediment to the expansion of social production. Production demanded the constant improvement of implements, higher labour productivity, but the slaves had no interest in this as it would not improve their position. With the passage of time the class conflict between the classes of slave- owners and the slaves became acute and it was manifested in slave revolts. These revolts, together with the raids from neighboring tribes, undermined the foundations of slavery leading to a new stage i.e. feudal system (See Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Feudal System

The term feudalism is derived from the institution of 'fief', which was a piece of landed property. During the medieval period of European history, this form of property was given to a vassal by a lord in return for military service. In this sense feudalism was a relationship between a vassal and his Lord. This relationship was expressed in terms of property holding through the fief. The relationship was exercised through jurisdiction. Lords held courts for their vassals, settled disputes and punished breaches of law and custom. The court was also an administrative body which levied taxes and raised military forces. Landowners maintained control over the peasantry. By the twelfth century, landowners' control over tenants and others had increased to a very great extent.

iii) The Feudal Society

The progressive development of the productive forces continued under feudalism. People started using inanimate sources of energy, viz., water and wind, besides human labour. The crafts advanced further, new implements and machines were invented and old ones were improved. The labour of craftspersons was specialised, raising productivity considerably. The development of forces of production led to emergence of feudal relations of production. These relations were based on the feudal lords' ownership of the serfs or landless peasants. The production relations were relations of domination and subjection, exploitation of the serfs by the feudal lords. Nevertheless, these relations were more progressive than in slavery system, because they made the labourers interested, to some extent, in their labour. The peasants and the artisans could own the implements or small parts of land. These forces of production underwent changes due to new discoveries, increasing demands for consumption caused by population increase and discovery of new markets through colonialism. All this led to the need and growth of mass scale manufacture. This became possible due to advances in technology. This brought the unorganised labourers at one place i.e. the factory.

This sparked off already sharpened class conflict leading to peasant revolution against landowners. The new system of production demanded free labourer whereas the serf was tied to the land, therefore, the new forces of production also changed the relations of production culminating into a change in the mode of production from feudalism to capitalism. In the next sub-section we will talk about class conflict in capitalist societies. So, the next section will cover our discussion of the fourth stage of social development. But before going to it, let us complete Check Your Progress 2.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Give the five stages of society as given by Marx.

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2) Mark True or False against each of the following statements

- a) History of class antagonism begins with slavery systems True/False
- b) There was no private ownership of property in primitive-communal systems True/False

3.2.3 Intensification of Class Conflict under Capitalism

Large-scale machine production is the specific feature of the productive forces of capitalism. Huge factories, plants and mines took the place of artisan workshops and manufacturers. Marx and Engels described the capitalist productive forces in the 'Manifesto of the Communist Party'. "Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground". In a century or two capitalism accomplished much more in developing the productive forces than had been achieved in all the preceding eras of human history.

This vigorous growth of the forces of production was helped by the capitalist relations of production based on private capitalist ownership. Under capitalism, the producers, the proletariat, are legally free, being attached neither to the land nor to any particular factory. They are free in the sense that they can go to work for any capitalist, but they are not free from the bourgeois class as a whole. Possessing no means of production, they are compelled to sell their labour power and thereby come under the yoke of exploitation.

Due to this exploitation the relatively free labourers become conscious of their class interest and organise themselves into a working class movement. This working class movement intensified its struggle against the bourgeois class. It begins with bargaining for better wages and working conditions and culminates into an intensified class conflict, which is aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system. Marx said that the capitalist system symbolises the most acute form of inequality, exploitation and class antagonism. This paves the way for a socialist revolution which would lead to a new stage of society i.e. communism (see Box 3.2).

Box 3.2 Communism

The word 'communism' originated in the mid-1830s, when it was used by members of the secret revolutionary parties in Paris. It referred to political movement of the working class in capitalist society. It also referred to the form of society which the working class would create as a result of its struggle. During the later half of the nineteenth century, both terms, socialism and communism, were used interchangeably to describe the working-class movement. Marx and Engels also used these terms in a similar fashion.

With the advent of the Third (Communist) International in 1917, the term communism was applied to a form of revolutionary programme for overthrowing capitalism. We can say that the term socialism began to be applied to a more peaceful and constitutional action of long-term changes, while communism referred to a revolutionary action, involving violent forms of changes.

Marx discussed communism as a form of society. In the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844) he wrote that 'Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature, through and for man'.

3.3 CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION

It is clear that according to Marx the mode of production or economic structure is the base or foundation of society. Any change in this infrastructure will cause fundamental changes in the superstructure and consequently in a society. The changes in the mode of production are essentially changes in the forces of production and relations of production. In primitive communal stage there was no surplus production and hence it had no inequality and exploitation caused by the private ownership of means of production. The means of production were common property of the community. With the development and improvements in the forces of production there was increased productivity. This caused private ownership of means of production and change in the relations of production. This marked the end of primitive-communal system and thus began the long history of inequality, exploitation and class conflict, coinciding with the emergence of slave-owning society.

In the slave-owning society the class conflict between the slave owners and slaves reached a peak causing a change in the mode of production from slavery to feudalistic mode of production. Marx has said that the history of hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle. This means that the entire history of society is studded with different phases and periods of class struggle. This history of class struggle begins in the slave-owning society and continues through feudal society where this class struggle is between classes of the feudal lords and the landless agricultural labourers or serfs. Due to change in mode of production and class struggle a new stage of society i.e., capitalism replaces the age-old feudal system.

In the capitalistic mode of production the class antagonism acquires most acute dimensions. The working class movement begins to concretise and reaches its peak. Through a class conflict between the class of capitalists and the class of industrial labourers, the capitalist system is replaced by socialism. This violent change has been termed as revolution by Marx. We shall deliberate on this concept of revolution in detail in the next section. This marks, according to Marx, the fifth stage of social development. Before reading about the fifth stage in the next sub-section, please complete Activity 2.

Activity 2

Do you think that Indian history provides us with some examples of class conflict? If yes, elaborate at least one such example. If no, then give reasons for the absence of class conflict in Indian history.

Marx said that the class antagonism and subsequently the class conflict in the capitalist system will usher in socialism in place of capitalism through a revolution. Here the question arises what is the basis of this antagonism? Marx's answer is that the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production is the basis of this antagonism. The bourgeoisie is constantly creating more powerful means of production. But the relations of production that is, apparently, both the relations of ownership and the distribution of income are not transferred at the same rate. The capitalist mode of production is capable to produce in bulk, but despite this mass production and increase in wealth, majority of the population suffers from poverty and misery. On the other hand, there are a few families who have so much wealth that one could not even count or imagine. These stark and wide disparities create some tiny islands of prosperity in a vast ocean of poverty and misery. The onus of this disparity lies on the unequal, exploitative relations of production which distribute the produce in an unequal manner. This contradiction, according to Marx, will eventually produce a revolutionary crisis. The proletariat, which constitutes and will increasingly constitute the vast majority of the population, will become a class, that is, a social entity aspiring for the seizure of power and transformation of social relations.

Marx asserted that the progress of society meant the succession of victories of one class over the other. He assigned his life to planning a victory for the proletariat. In a way, he became a commander, engaged in a campaign. With his solitary aim of defeating the enemy, Marx stressed on acquiring the knowledge of the history of society and the laws that regulate its organisation. His monumental work, *Das Kapital* (Capital, 1861-1879), provided an analysis in which Marx was not concerned with arguments for a class-war. He treated the necessity for such arguments as an unnecessary task. He had no love for emotionalism and humanitarianism and appeal to idealism etc. He conceived of the class conflict on every front and proposed the formation of a political party which would eventually gain victory and be the conquering class.

You do not have to imagine that it was Marx who, for the first time ever, advanced the idea of conflict between classes. Saint Simon wrote about human history as the history of struggles between social classes. In the 1790s Babeuf, a French political agitator, spoke of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Weitling and Blanqui (Babeuf's disciple) developed Babeuf's ideas in the nineteenth century. The French State Socialists worked out the future position and importance of workers in industrial states. In fact in the eighteenth century many thinkers advanced such doctrines. Marx did the admirable task of sifting all this material and constructed a new set of social analysis. His analysis of class struggle was a unique mix of simple basic principles with down-to-earth details.

According to Marx, the bottom rung of the social stratification is the proletariat. Below it there is no class and therefore emancipation of the proletariat will, in fact, be the emancipation of mankind. Marx accepts the right of the bourgeoisie to fight the final war. But for the proletariat the battle is for its very survival and it has to win.

The revolutions of the proletariat will differ in kind from all past revolutions. All the revolutions of the past were accomplished by minorities for the benefit of minorities. The revolution of the proletariat will be accomplished by the vast majority for the benefit of all. The proletarian revolution will, therefore, mark the end of classes and of the antagonistic character of capitalist society. This would mean that the private ownership of property will be abolished. The proletariat will jointly own means of production and distribute the produce according to the needs of the members of the society. This stage is called the stage of dictatorship of proletariat. This stage will later on convert into a stateless society where the communist system will finally be established in the society. This will also end all kinds of social classes and of all kinds of class conflicts for future. This will also mean de-alienation of the proletariat. Since the concept of alienation is now regarded as one of the main ideas of Marxism, after completing Check Your Progress 3, you will also learn a little about this concept, and its relevance to Marxian analysis of class conflict.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss the main features of communism in three lines.

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- 2) Mark True and False against each of the following sentences.

a) The private ownership of property will not be abolished True/False
in communism.

b) Communism is characterised by stateless and classless society. True/False

3.4 MARX'S CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

Alienation literally means “separation from”. This term is often used in literature and Marx has given it a sociological meaning. Marx has conceived of alienation as a phenomenon related to the structure of those societies in which the producer is divorced from the means of production and in which “dead labour” (capital) dominates “living labour” (the worker). Let us take an example of a shoemaker in a factory. A shoemaker manufactures shoes but cannot use them for himself. His creation thus becomes an object which is separate from him. It becomes an entity which is separate from its creator. He makes shoes not because making shoes satisfies merely his urge to work and create. He does so to earn his living.

For a worker this 'objectification' becomes more so because the process of production in a factory is divided into several parts and his job may be only a tiny part of the whole. Since he produces only one part of the whole, his work is mechanical and therefore he loses his creativity.

A systematic elaboration of the concept appears in *Capital* under the heading "Fetishism of commodities and money". But the ethical germ of this conception can be found as early as 1844, when Marx unequivocally rejected and condemned "the state" and "money", and invested the proletariat with the "historical mission" of emancipating society as a whole. In Marx's sense alienation is an action through which (or a state in which) a person, a group, an institution, or a society becomes (or remains) alien

- a) to the results or products of its own activity (and to the activity itself), and/or
- b) to the nature in which it lives, and/or
- c) to other human beings, and in addition and through any or all of
- d) to itself (to its own historically created human possibilities). Alienation is always self-alienation, i.e., one's alienation from oneself through one's own activity. To quote Gajo Petrovic (1983: 10) we can say, "And self-alienation is not just one among the forms of alienation, but the very essence and basic structure of alienation. It is not merely a descriptive concept, it is also an appeal, or a call for a revolutionary change of the world".

Mere criticism of alienation was not the intention of Marx. His aim was to clear the path for a radical revolution and for accomplishing communism understood as "the re-integration of one's return to oneself, the supersession of one's self-alienation". Mere abolition of private property cannot bring about de-alienation of economic and social life. This situation of the worker, or the producer does not alter by transforming private property into state property. Some forms of alienation in capitalist production have their roots in the nature of the means of production and the related division of social labour, so that they cannot be eliminated by a mere change in the form of managing production.

Far from being an eternal fact of social life, the division of society into mutually interdependent and conflicting spheres (economy, politics, laws, arts, morals, religion, etc.), and the predominance of the economic sphere, are, according to Marx, characteristics of a self-alienated society. The de-alienation of society is therefore impossible without the abolition of the alienation of different human activities from each other.

Alienation in the Marxian sense of the term cannot be overcome by the reorganisation of the economy, however radical the programme of such transformation may be. Alienation of the society and of the individual are integrally connected. Therefore, the de-alienation of neither can be carried out without the other, nor can one be reduced to the other.

The concept of alienation is a key tool of analysis in Marx's thought. According to Marx, one had always been self-alienated thus far. The bourgeoisie relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production causing alienation. At the same time, the production forces developing in the womb of bourgeoisie society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism and alienation. This social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the "prehistoric" stage of human society. Our discussion of the concept of alienation closes Unit 3 on Class and Class Conflict. Before moving on to a summary of the unit, let us complete Activity 3.

Activity 3

Is there a word for alienation in your mother-tongue? If yes, provide the term and explain it by giving examples from your day-to-day life.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the concept of class and class conflict in the history of development of society as given by Karl Marx. He defined class in terms of people's relationship to the means of production and their class-consciousness. In Marxian terms, the history of society, so far, is the history of class struggle. This means that ever since the social inequality and exploitation started in human history, that is, beginning from slavery system, society has been divided into mutually warring classes of Haves and Have-nots. This successive class conflict and change in mode of production has led to change in the stages of society from slavery to feudalistic and feudalistic to capitalistic system. The final social revolution would transform the capitalistic system into communist system where there would be no more classes, social inequality and class conflict. In other words, there will be de-alienation of the proletariat.

3.6 REFERENCES

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3.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) It comprises people sharing same relationship with the means of production and having similar consciousness regarding their class interests.

Karl Marx

- 2) A social class can be determined by two major criteria, namely,
 - a) objective and
 - b) subjective criteria.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Five stages of society as given by Marx are:
 - 1) Primitive-Communal System
 - 2) Slavery
 - 3) Feudalism
 - 4) Capitalism
 - 5) Communism.
- 2) a) True
b) True

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) It will be characterised by a classless society, devoid of private ownership of means of production. There will be no stateless society.
- 2) a) False
b) True