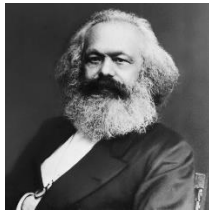


Karl Marx (1818 to 1883)



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“Philosophers have only interpreted the world, what matters is to change it.”

No other philosopher has such an influence like that of Karl Marx. The impact of Marx is not limited to domestic politics rather spreads to international politics also.

*Marx calls his theory as **Praxis**, which means **theory leading to action and action based on theory** . It means whatever we do should be based on the proper understanding and on the basis of understanding we should formulate our policies.*

Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, embodied, or realized. "Praxis" may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas.

Marx was concerned with the extreme exploitation of the poor, by the capitalist class. Hence he wanted to end their exploitation and to give them a life of dignity . He was a critic of capitalism and considered it as inhumane. Marx is a socialist.

Difference in capitalism and socialism

Capitalism denotes private ownership over the means of production. In capitalism the motive of production is profit rather than need. Socialism is a modern philosophy. It emerged as a reaction against capitalism. It is based on the realization of inhumane nature of capitalism. According to the socialists, industrial society can be based on socialistic principles. It is not necessary to base it on capitalist principles.

Marx's view on his Socialism

Marx calls his socialism as scientific and socialism before him as utopian.

Marx was not the first person to give the socialist ideas. Socialist ideas emerged in French revolution (the ideas of equality and fraternity). The prominent socialists during French revolution include Louis Blanc.

*Later on socialist ideas developed in other countries of Europe . For example in Britain **Robert Owen** led to cooperative movements. Early socialists proposed appealing to the conscience of the capitalists. Marx called them as utopians because Marx believed that socialism cannot come by such methods.*

*Marx does not believe in the concept of conscience . Hence, according to him there is no point appealing to conscience of the capitalists. He suggests – “**workers of the world unite, you have nothing to loose except your chains.**”*

Aim of Marxian socialism: Communism

What is Communism?

Communism is utopia of Marx, it is Marx’s ideal state. Marx’s ideal state and Gandhi’s ideal state both are stateless societies. Both Gandhi and Marx are anarchists. There are two ways in which scholars have described anarchy.

1. **Hobbesian View:** Anarchy is a painful situation. Life of man will be in chaos.
2. **Marxist view:** Anarchy is the state of perfect happiness, perfect freedom. State is an instrument of exploitation. Man is social by nature, man has enough reason to live in peace with others. The collective life will be governed by voluntary associations or self help groups.

***Communism is a classless society** as private ownership is abolished, property comes under common ownership. Hence there are no class divisions, everyone belong to one class. Since classes will end, **state will become redundant and will wither away**. There is lot of similarity between **Marx’s communism and Gandhi’s Ram Rajya**. The only difference is in methods. Gandhian method is based on peaceful appeal to the conscience of the capitalists class. Marxist method is violent overthrow of capitalism. In the words of Karl Marx “**Violence is the mid-wife of change. There has been no birth without blood.**”*

Prominent works of Young Marx

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts

Influences on Marx

1. **French revolution's** ideas of equality and fraternity. He accepted that apocalyptic change motivated by revolutionary idea is not only desirable but also feasible .
2. **British school of political economy** – He used the writings of classical economists to understand the dynamics of capitalism and industrial revolution .
3. **German philosophy** - Marx borrowed of Hegelian method of dialectics and applied to the material world

Marx and Hegel

“Hegel is standing on his head, he has to stand on his feet to understand what is real.”Marx

Hegel was the official philosopher of Prussia. He has given very strong defense to the state. Hegel compared state with God. In the words of Hegel, **“State is a march of God on earth.”** For him, God is Absolute Idea. Idea is the ultimate reality.

For Marx **idea is ‘false consciousness’**. Idea is not real, rather matter is real. According to Marx, idea is false consciousness, religion is opium of masses. **God has not made man, man has made God.**

Prominent statements of Hegel.

“State is a march of God on earth.”

God -> Physical World (Mountains, Land, Water) -> Trees -> Birds -> Animals -> Man -> Family -> Civil Society -> State.

According to Hegel, everything in this world is the reflection of God. The maximum amount of God is present in the state. State is nearest to God. Hence, we should worship the state.

How do we know that God is a creator of this world?

When we look at the things of this world, we wonder about the creator. Our reason tells that God is creator.

“Real is rational. Rational is real.”

Real is rational: In this part we understand Hegel's concept of reality. Like Plato, Hegel believes that idea is real i.e. real is rational. Thus, whatever can be understood by the use of reason is real. If we apply reason we will understand that God is absolute idea, hence God is absolute reality. (Hegel's Metaphysics)

Rational is real: Only idea is real reality can be understood only by application of reason . Anything understood by empirical observation is not real , rather shadow of real . Only God is real and other things in this world is a march of God. God reveals himself in his creation.

Hegel is rationalist , who believes that human emancipation can be realised only by reason .

Principles of Marxism

Marxism denotes the political doctrine of Marx which aims at the violent overthrow of Capitalism. Marx described his principles as scientific. Marx used to consider himself as scientist. However, Marx followers projected him as God. Marx is known as a 'God, that has failed.'

Dialectical Materialism

Concept of Dialectics.

Dialectics is a concept given by Socrates to understand the truth Dialectics can be represented through the equation.

Thesis → antithesis → synthesis.

Hegel's contribution.

Hegel has used the concept of dialectics to show 'the nature of movement of history.' History, for Hegel is a movement of absolute idea. He has given the three laws of dialectics

- 1. Unity of opposites*
- 2. Negation of negation*
- 3. Quantity changes into quality.*

Unity of opposites: *In all the things, exists its contradiction. Contradiction is a force of history.*

Negation of Negation: *As per law of history, force negativity gets negated.*

Quantity changes into quality: *Changes do not happen overnight, first quantitative changes takes place and it gives rise to qualitative change. It may appear new, but it is not entirely new. New has roots in the old. Once contradiction ends, movement ends, history ends.*

According to Hegel, *human history ends with the formation of state.*

Marx has adopted the dialectics of Hegel but instead of dialectics of ideas , he talks about dialectics of matter i.e. dialectical idealism .

Historical Materialism

Purpose of historical materialism is **to explain the causes of history**. Marx wanted to end capitalism and establish communism. Hence he enquired about the factors that play role in shaping history.

Marx first analyzed Hegel's theory of history. **Hegel's theory of history is idealistic interpretation of history**. According to Hegel, **history is the result of dialectical movement of idea**. Marx suggested that Hegel's theory is not a scientific explanation of history rather ideological explanation. Marx claims his theory as scientific.

In order to understand history scientifically, we have to understand what was the first historical act of man. He wanted to know whether thinking or action is more important. According to Marx, **"In order to make history, man has to live. In order to live man has to eat. In order to eat, man has to work."**

Implication of above statement.

Between the manual labour and the intellectual labour, former is more important. Society can live without the work of intellectuals, but society cannot live without the work of manual workers. It is 'false consciousness to think that the role of intellectuals is more important than those of workers.

He blames thinkers like Plato and Aristotle, who established that those who are men of reason are ought to be master and permanently deprived those who perform manual work, position of power.

According to Marx, **intellectual class is exploiter class**. Worker should not be misguided by intellectuals, philosophers, Church fathers as they generate only false consciousness. For example, in Indian context, we can compare intellectuals with Brahmins, giving theories justifying the subordination of Sudras and Dalits.

Marx's concept on society.

Origin of Society.

According to Marx, **society is the division of labour**. People form the society for the task of production. Production is a necessity for survival. Production is a social activity. It cannot be done alone. Thus, **the basic structure of society is the economic structure and all other relations are 'relations of production.'** Economic structure denotes the structure of production or the material structure.

Marx's view on structure of the society.

Marx is a structuralist. He has studied the society as a structure. According to him, economic structure is the fundamental structure or basic structure.

Marx's base and superstructure model of society:

Economic structure is the basic structure. There is an economic cause behind whatever happens in the society. State, Church, family, educational institutions, media are all superstructure.

Superstructure is a reflection of base. Superstructure is not independent of base. It is grounded in the base. The nature of base will determine the nature of superstructure. e.g. If mode of production is feudal, family system will be joint family. If mode of production is capitalist, there will be nuclear families.

Even the ideas or ideologies will be shaped by economic system. According to him, the ideas of ruling class have been the ruling ideas. The class which controls the economic structure will control all other structures.

Hence there is no point studying the elements of superstructure. What is needed is to understand the basic structure. Thus, there is no point changing the political system without changing the economic system.

Relations of Production.

*When man enters into the system of production, either man enters as the **owner of the means of production (haves) or non-owner (have-nots)**. Haves will have bargaining power over have-nots. One will be the exploiter and the other will be exploited. Man's relations with the mode of production explain his class. There are two classes in the society. Haves and Have-nots. It will be a relationship of exploiter and exploited. Hence, it will be a relationship of class struggle. Hence there will always be, a conflict of interest. The real identity of a person is identity of his class and not of his religion or nation. Hence, the real politics is the politics of class. Thus, Marx want that Workers should understand that their real interest is with the members of their class. They should not develop the false consciousness that the person belonging to their nation or religion has common interest. Hence the workers of the world would have to come together for their common interest. (Proletarian internationalism). Thus, from Marx perspective, poor Hindus and poor Muslims have common interest rather than poor Muslims and rich Muslims.*

Marx on revolution.

Revolution is defined as sudden and total change. Revolution, for Marx, would mean change in the mode of production. Thus, for him, political revolution is no revolution.

From Marxist point of view, Indian national movement was no revolution, it was just a transfer of power from British to India. In India, the basic structure remained intact. It remained feudal. Hence, there is no change in the situation of masses.

In China, a violent peasant revolution took place to overthrow feudalism. Peasantry established control over land.

Marx on False Consciousness.

People should come out of false consciousness and develop true consciousness. To develop true consciousness, one has to stand on his feet. One should look at the material conditions of life. Understand the objective conditions of life objectively, rather than subjective understanding of objective reality.

Marx has explained consciousness at two levels

- 1. Class in itself**
- 2. Class for itself**

Class in itself denotes low level of consciousness. When person understands that he belongs to a particular class. For example - when worker understands that he is from working class and the capitalist is from the other class.

While on the other hand Class for itself is a high level of consciousness i.e. true consciousness. For example - When worker will understand his exploitation, he will become class for itself. He will take up the arm in his hand.

When exploitation reaches to its extreme, class in itself changes in class for itself

“It is not our consciousness that determines our existence, it is our existence that determines our consciousness.”

In the above statement, we understand Marx's ontology and epistemology. Marx was a materialist who believed that idea is false consciousness. Marx has criticized Hegel's idealism. According to Hegel, real is rational and rational is real. However, according to Marx, Hegel is standing on his head and he will have to stand on his feet.

For Marx, it is matter that is real. On the basis of the base superstructure model, Marx has shown that economic structure is the basic structure, idea, ideology, religion is a part of superstructure. Superstructure has no autonomy of its own.

The class which control the economic structure, also controls the superstructure. The real interest is the interest of the class. Ideology, religion, develop false consciousness.

Working classes should understand their class interest, they should go for the objective understanding of their objective conditions. Once they will understand their conditions objectively, they will develop true consciousness. It is this situation when class in itself will

change into the class for itself. Once the true consciousness comes, it will not be possible to exploit them any more.

Criticism of Marx / Criticism of historical materialism

Marx is criticised as reductionist and economic determinist . He has reduced the complex phenomenon of history to the single cause i.e. Economic cause. Hence his theory is called as 'economic determinism'.

*His economic reductionism has not only been criticized by non-Marxists like Max Weber but even by Neo-Marxists like Althusser. Max Weber criticized Karl Marx for **monocausal explanation of history**. Max Weber in his book '**Protestant Ethics and Rise of Capitalism.**' has shown how superstructure like religion, has given rise to capitalism. Even before Althusser, Gramsci found flaws in Marx's theory of History. Marx has ignored the role of cultural and ideological factors shaping history. Althusser has given the '**Law of Overdetermination**' i.e. economic factor is overdetermined in Marx. Althusser has given multi structural approach. Althusser has studied Russian revolution. Russian revolution emerged from political structure and not from economic structure.*

Marx as a determinist.

Determinism is called as non-scientific thinking. It implies that a person believes his view as scientific, ultimate truth and cannot be questioned. Marx claimed himself to be scientific. He rejected all earlier explanations as false consciousness. For followers of Marx, 'Marx was God'. Since Marx was projected as God, it was believed that all of his predictions are bound to happen. However time has proved that 'Marx was a God that has failed.'

***Karl Popper in his book** 'Open Society and Its Enemies' called Plato, Hegel and Marx as enemies of open society. Karl Popper has criticized Hegel and Marx for committing the guilt of 'Historicism'. It denotes ideological interpretation of history.*

***According to Karl Popper**, Marx's theory cannot be considered as 'scientific'. It does not fulfil the criteria of falsification : It is a criteria to regard a particular theory as scientific in social sciences. In social sciences we cannot have theories based on experiments, as happens in natural sciences. In social science, a theory can be regarded as scientific if it is open for 'critical evaluation or examination.' Scientific theories are possible only in open societies because of freedom of speech and expression. It cannot be produced in closed societies.*

Theory of Class and Class Struggle

“The history of all, hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle.”

For Marx, History is because of class struggle i.e. dialectics between classes act as the moving force. The theory of class struggle is based on the theory of historical materialism. Class struggle is located in the mode of production. In all class divided societies, there will be class struggle.

Stages of History according to Marx

Marx has given the following stages of human history. History denotes change in the mode of production, means of production, forces of production and relations of production.

1. **Prehistoric stage:** Primitive communism.

Initially property was held in common. Hence there were no classes, so, no struggle and no state. Marx has given the concept of primitive communism to show that man once lived without private property and without state also.

2. **Slave society:** Masters and slaves.

The two classes were masters and slaves. Since classes existed, so class struggle also existed and hence state existed.

3. **Feudalism:** Feudal and Serfs.

The two classes were feudal lords and serfs. Since classes existed, so class struggle also existed and hence state existed.

4. **Capitalism:** Capitalist and workers.

The two classes were Capitalist and workers. Since classes existed, so class struggle also existed and hence state existed.

5. **Socialism:** This is a stage which will come immediately after communist revolution which will overthrow capitalism. Two classes would be workers and capitalists. Worker will be dominant now. State will be controlled by the workers. Hence, Marxist scholars also prefer to call this stage as **dictatorship of proletariat**.

6. **Communism:** There will be a peaceful change from socialism to communism. Classes shall be abolished. State will wither away. State of perfect freedom and perfect equality. Perfect happiness. Since classes will end, history will end.

Comparison between Socialism and Communism.

Socialism	Communism
<i>Classes exist</i>	<i>Classless</i>
<i>State Exists</i>	<i>Stateless</i>
<i>Socialism is not perfect democracy, it is a dictatorship of proletariat.</i>	<i>Perfect democracy.</i>
<i>Principle of distribution: 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.'</i>	<i>From each according to his ability, to each according to his need</i>
<i>It is a transition phase which will come immediately after revolution.</i>	<i>It itself is end of history.</i>
<i>In countries where communist revolution took place, the dictatorship of communist party emerged rather than dictatorship of proletariat .</i>	<i>Communism remains utopia. It never came anywhere.</i>

Message of Marx.

Marx himself knew that communism is a utopia. He only wanted to make capitalism humane. The western world understood Marx, incorporated the concern of social and economic equality, it has given rise to the concept of welfare state, whereas in countries with communist revolution, totalitarianism was established bringing bad name to Marx.

Marx's analysis of capitalism

"Capitalists dig their own graves"

It shows contradictions in capitalism which will result into the destruction of capitalism on its own. The purpose of production should be need, whereas in capitalism it becomes greed or profit. Capitalism creates the contradiction between man and society. The other person is seen as not a fellow human being rather a competitor, a source of insecurity. In capitalism, labour of the worker becomes the source of his own exploitation.

Capitalism is driven by profit. To maintain profit, we have to keep the cost of production low. To keep the cost of production low, workers will be given low wages.

Capitalist law of wages

Worker cannot be given more than what is enough for his survival, he cannot be given the surplus because he may not come back to the work next day.

Wages are already low and to maximise the profit they decrease wages further. Capitalist will bring technology to maintain profit, if one does others will be also forced to do the same. It will result into loss of job of workers. It means reduction in workers bargaining power. Worker will be more in number, hence they will be forced to work at low wages. As capitalism will advance, its contradictory nature will become more and more clearer. The exploitation will keep on increasing.

Disappearance of middle class

Capitalism is monopolistic in nature. Competition will become more acute. Only few capitalist will be able to survive. Small players in the Market will be out of the market. They will also join the rank of workers. A situation will emerge where society will be divided into two classes. Haves and Have-nots. This situation is called polarization of classes. On one hand, small number of people will be holding the entire amount of the wealth in the society. On the other hand, there will be mass poverty. This is a situation of dis-equilibrium in the society. Equilibrium is the law of nature, and hence disequilibrium cannot continue for long. Revolution will re-establish the equilibrium. As capitalism will advance, its exploitation will keep on increasing. More number of people will be facing the exploitation. These situations will convert class in itself into class for itself.

Cycles in Capitalism

Capitalism will always face the cycle of boom and burst. As capitalism will advance, more and more number of people will become jobless. There will be lot of goods, but people will not be having the purchasing power. It will result into the slowdown of economy. There will be more job losses. Hence capitalism creates the conditions for its own destruction. Capitalist dig their own graves. Such situations gave rise to communist revolution.

Surplus Value.

Surplus values denotes profit. According to Marx, labour is a source of value in any good. In capitalism, capitalist does not give share to the worker in profits. Ideally worker should have share in the surplus. The surplus becomes capital. It increases the bargaining power of the capitalist. More worker works, more surplus he generates, more surplus is generated the

bargaining power of capitalist increases and that of worker decreases. Hence worker is forced to work where the labour of his body is working against him.

Alienation : Work of young Marx

The concept of Alienation is given in his book 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscript.' He has taken idea from Hegel and Feuerbach.

Marx wanted to show that the so called freedom in the capitalist countries is actually alienation rather than freedom. Freedom in capitalist societies is false consciousness. Freedom means doing what one wants to do. Freedom is the source of happiness, well being. For Marx real freedom is freedom from necessities. It means when the basic needs of man are fulfilled only then man is free.

Freedom can never come in capitalist society. Freedom is possible only in communism. When man is fully assured that he can do what he wants to do and society exists for protection of his basic necessities. The so called freedom in capitalist societies is isolation. Capitalism destroys the organic link between man and his society. It gives rise to atomistic man, the abstract individual.

It was Hegel who first explained the alienation. According to Hegel, on this earth man gets alienated from God, which is a cause of unhappiness of man. The alienation of man ends in the state because state is march of God on earth.

Feuerbach was in the group of Young Hegelians who were trying to understand Hegel. Feuerbach came to the opposite conclusion. He held that God is source of alienation. Hence to be happy, we should be free from religion. He held that God is a source of unhappiness. God reminds us about our weakness.

Marx believed that it is not enough to be free from God, for the real freedom we need to change the basic structure of the society.

How capitalism alienates man?

Capitalism does not allow man to live as per his true nature.

Man is creative by nature and is social by nature. Capitalism destroys the human essence. In capitalism man faces alienation at four levels.

- 1. Alienation from the process of production*** – *The process of production has become so mechanized that man is reduced to mere cog in the wheel.*
- 2. Alienation from the product of his labour*** – *Production has become so much specialized that one does not even know the final shape of his labour.'*

3. **Alienation from society** – In capitalism, working conditions are such that man does not have the scope for realization of his social nature.
4. **Alienation from himself** – The cumulative effect of the alienation at three levels is man gets alienated from himself.

Hence, there is no real freedom or happiness in capitalism. Alienation can be ended by establishing communism and destroying capitalism. In communism man will produce what he wants. In communism there is no contradiction between man and his society.

If capitalists dig their own graves and capitalism die its own death, is there any role of human action?

“Man also makes history but only in given circumstances and not under the chosen circumstances.”

Though history is governed by law of dialectics, as per the law of dialectics, negativity get negated. Since capitalism is full of contradiction, it will automatically get negated. But it does not mean that there is no importance of human action. Hence he inspires workers not to wait rather go for action. Hence he says that, Man also makes history but man does not make history in chosen circumstances, he makes history only in given circumstances.

The difference between freedom and liberty and explain Marx’s concept of freedom.

There is no difference in freedom and liberty. Scholars use these terms interchangeably e.g. J.S. Mill gave the theory of liberty and freedom of speech and expression. Only few thinkers like Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt make difference.

Marx purposefully preferred freedom because liberty term got linked with liberalism. For Marx, so called liberty in capitalist society is false consciousness / alienation.

True freedom will come only in communism. In communism, people will work according to their ability and will get according to their need. Freedom means doing what one wants to do. This is possible only when basic necessities are fulfilled.