

Paper Name : Western Political Thought

Paper Code : 18BPO53C

Class : BA Third Year

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Unit 3

3.1 Karl Marx

- Karl Marx was a revolutionary thinker and founder of Marxism, an important stream of communism
- He authored numerous books like Das Capital, The Communist Manifesto, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844
- Marx distinguished his thoughts from earlier strands of socialism by naming his thoughts as Scientific Socialism and predecessors as Utopian Socialism
- He provided a revolutionary ideology as he proclaimed "*The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.*"

Historical Materialism

- Marx provides an economic interpretation of human history and predicts a future of communism in his Historical Materialism
- Man is basically an economic animal or being. Economy constitutes the base and everything else like society, philosophy, religion constitute the super structure. Economy decides our life
- He divides the history of mankind into four stages in his Historical Periodization

1. Primitive Communism
2. Ancient Slave Society
3. Feudalism
4. Capitalism

1) Primitive Communism

- First social life stage in human history. Man in association with other men practices hunting and food gathering. There was common ownership of production, distribution and consumption. Men went for hunting and women gathered fruits and leaves from the commonly owned forest and other natural resources. The technology of production is primitive and ownership is common and therefore this stage is called Primitive Communism

2) Ancient Slave Society

- The second stage of human history is ancient slave society. Marx makes a fundamental assertion that man is always technologically progressive. Therefore hunting technology is gradually replaced by small scale agriculture. In this stage economy witnesses surplus production which is appropriated by some people. The people who appropriate surplus become rich class and the others become poor. Surplus appropriation leads to the emergence of private property and owners of property become masters and others become slaves

3) Feudalism

- The third stage of history is feudalism that is based on large scale agriculture. The feudal lords control all economic resources and a meager portion of production is provided to the peasants. Large scale land holdings is the bedrock of economy

4) Capitalism

- Karl Marx lived in this age and here capital became the main form of property. The capitalists own all the aspects of economy-production, distribution and consumption. They owned the industries and factories.

5) Dictatorship of Proletariat

-Karl Marx issues a clarion call to the workers to unite and conduct a struggle against capitalism and its exploitative structures. They should capture the state and use the political power to eliminate capitalists and to abolish private property

6) Communism

-Once the economic resources are brought under common production, common distribution and common consumption communist society will be established

-In communism there will be equality, humanism and technological development.

-There will not be classes, class struggle, state, private property

Critical evaluation

Liberalism, socialism, Communitarianism criticize the Historical Materialism of Karl Marx. Economy does not constitute the base of human life. All other factors like nationalism, language, religion also are important

Comment on the Following

1. Economy is the base and everything else is part of the super structure
2. Man is primarily an economic animal

Theory of Class and Class Struggle

Basis of Classes

- The widely quoted lines of The Communist Manifesto say "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."
- Karl Marx considers class and class struggle as the key events of human life
- Marx identifies class on the basis of economic ownership and not on the basis of factors like birth, education, abilities
- There are usually two classes in any society. The class that owns the forces of production is called the property class or rich class and the other one not owning the resources of economy is called poor class or workers

Class Struggle

- The inter relationship between the two classes is characterized by antagonism, exploitation, suppression and struggle
- Classes arose only after and because of the emergence of private property
- The first stage of human history is the Primitive Communism where there was no property and therefore no inequality existed among people.
- Classes emerge only after the advent of the second stage called Ancient Slave System. As there is surplus production and resultant private property some people appropriate the surplus and become property class or masters and others are called slaves
- While masters seek to exploit the slaves animosity and resistance arises and therefore class struggle begins to influence the dynamics between the two classes.
- The third stage of human history is the feudalism where the feudal lords own all landed resources and the peasants work in their land. Their relationship is characterized by tension and struggle
- The fourth stage of human life is the Capitalism where the capitalists are the property class and workers of industries and factories are the propertyless class. Marx appeals to the workers to unite and conduct a revolution for the capture of the state machinery

- The workers will establish Dictatorship of Proletariat after the success of their revolution. Here also class struggle will continue. But there are crucial differences. First time in human history the majority the workers will control and exercise power over the minority, the property class. The power will be used by workers to confiscate the private property of the rich class and to enforce common ownership of economic resources. **Communist Society of Classlessness**
- Once private property is abolished communism will be automatically established. Here there will be no private property and therefore classes. A new communist society of classlessness will be established where equality and humanism will replace inequality and suppression. Class struggle will be replaced with harmony among people.

Critical Evaluation

- Class Struggle concept was and is vehemently criticized by many ideologies and philosophers. Indian tradition of Ahimsa, No-Violence advocated by Budha, Mahavir, Asoka and Mahatma Gandhi rejects the struggle and violence as means of change. Libertarianism and Positive Liberalism arose as the primary ideological opponents of class struggle theory. Many argue that class harmony and cooperation is more desirable and productive than class struggle

Comment on the Following

- Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, that each time ended, either in the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.” Karl Marx

- "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

Alienation

-Karl Marx expounded the concept of Alienation to bring out the dehumanization of man in capitalist mode of production.

-Alienation refers to the condition of rejection, disappointment and a sense of hopelessness. Marx argues that man is alienated in capitalism because of the institution of private property and its exploitative nature.

- There are four kinds of alienation that a man suffers in capitalism

a) Alienation from Work

There is no choice or freedom for the laborer in his work

b) Alienation from the Product of his work

The worker does not know for what purpose the product of work is created for.

c) Alienation from fellow workers

The exploited, underpaid worker cannot protest as he will be replaced with a pliant worker standing next in the line

d) Alienation from Species Being

Man is alienated from his very nature. His innate nature and purpose in life lies in the totality of his social relationships. He achieves his self-realization by being in cooperation with other men and workers. But in capitalism this fundamental opportunity is denied. Not only workers even capitalists themselves are victims of alienation in capitalism

Karl Marx holds the private property centric capitalism as solely responsible for alienation and suggests proletariat revolution to abolish private property. The society of communism will provide freedom to all men to pursue their own potential and preferred professions.

Comment

Marx “ Private Property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labour, of the external relations of the worker to nature and to himself”

Dictatorship of Proletariat

- Marx called for the establishment of Dictatorship of Proletariat after the successful revolution of the workers
- Proletariat is a word that broadly means workers in Latin and other European languages
- The rule will have two mutually antagonistic and antithetical features of democracy and dictatorship
- Democracy will be there for working class population and dictatorship will be over the capitalists
- The numerically stronger working class for the first time history will possess and exercise power
- The numerically minuscule capitalists will be deprived of power in an unprecedented predicament in history
- The objectives and nature of the state is to destroy the capitalists and appropriate their economic resources
- The system of common production, distribution and consumption will be established by the state
- It is a semi-state
- It is a transitional state.
- It strives for the establishment of socialist democracy
- It is not a democracy for all the people as it has class bias

- Lenin propounded that the dictatorship of the proletariat is based on the principle of Democratic Centralism
- Once Communism is implemented there will be no necessity for the state to exist and therefore the dictatorship of proletariat will wither away

Critical Evaluation

Democracy and its philosophers reject the dictatorship of any kind including Proletariat. The critics of Marxism and Leninism argue that what USSR witnessed was dictatorship over proletariat and not of proletariat. After the establishment of communism the state did not wither away rather it became more authoritarian

Comment on the Statement

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is not to be a perpetual state, it is a transitional state.

Marxian Theory of State

Origin of the state

- Marx rejects the prevailing theories of the origin of the state
- State was not a product of divine creation, social contract, patriarchy and matriarchy
- State came into being at a particular circumstance in history with a specific purpose. It was created by the property class. **Function of the state**
- The primary function of the state is the preservation and protection of the right to private property and suppression and exploitation of the poor class. The state is the executive committee of the property class to exploit the poor class.

State in History

- The first stage of human history Primitive Communism did not experience the institution of the state as there was no private property, inequality and exploitation. There was common production, distribution and consumption

- The second stage Ancient Slave Society witnesses the emergence of private property. The rich people exploit the poor and the poor class resists the exploitation. The property group invents the state as an instrument to suppress the revolting poor class and to protect the exploitative system and structures. The state functions as the handmaid of the masters against the slaves
- The third stage Feudalism the property class Feudal lords control the state to exploit and suppress the poor class of peasants
- The fourth stage Capitalism is riven with animosity and antagonism between capitalists and workers and the state is an instrument of the capitalists against workers

State in Future

- Marx advocates a proletariat revolution to overthrow the capitalist system and to herald Dictatorship of Proletariat where the workers will capture the echelons of power. The state here will be different as it will be a workers state against the capitalists. The state will strive to destroy private property and herald common ownership of economic resources **Statelessness in Communism**

- Once private property is abolished and communism is established there will be no classes and class exploitation and therefore for the state. Gradually the redundant state will wither away. Communist society will be a society of classlessness and statelessness. **Critical evaluation**

- The Marxian theory of state advocates an anti-statist ideology. There are many ideologies and thinkers who believe in the authority of the state. Fascism and Nazism are staunch proponents of the all-powerful state. They say that nothing against the state, outside the state or without the state. Negative liberalism considers the state as a necessary evil. Positive liberalism and socialism consider the state as an instrument of social development and therefore repudiate the Marxian Theory of the State

Comment on the following

- The executive of the modern state is nothing but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

Marxist Theory of Nationalism

-Marxism considers nationalism as an offspring of capitalism. Nationalism was created by capitalism to protect the exploitative capitalist order. Karl Marx contended that the ruling ideas are essentially the ideas of the ruling class that owns the means of production.

-The capitalist class possesses private property and indulges in the exploitation of the property-less class. Nationalism was conceived and created by the bourgeois class for its own benefit to numb the feelings of the workers.

-“Nationalist consciousness is quintessentially a false consciousness deliberately created perpetuate and legitimize class exploitation”. Marx commented, 'The Proletariat has no fatherland'.

- He issued a clarion call in the 'The Communist Manifest' to the workers of the world to conduct revolution for ending capitalism and establishing socialism all over the world.

-He favoured internationalism and opposed nationalism.

3.2 *Vladimir Lenin*

- *He was the father of the Communist revolution in Russia in 1917.*
- *He contributed theoretically to communism in two important areas*

A) Communist party

-Lenin wrote in his work “What is to be done?’ his ideas about the Communist Party. Marx had called for communist revolution to end capitalism and exploitation and Lenin as his successor developed the instrument of communist party to carry out the proletariat revolution.

-He said that the communist party should be formed in every industry and factory by a small group of workers who possess knowledge about Revolutionary Marxism. They must possess qualities and abilities like dedication, commitment and hard work.

-The members of the communist party should mobilize the workers ideologically to conduct the revolution. Lenin asserted that the communist party must be in the Vanguard of the Proletariat that is the forefront of the Proletariat Revolution.

-It was expounded that the Communist Party should be organized on the basis of an innovative concept called Democratic Centralism.

-As the name indicates there are two features in the organizational structure of the communist party, democracy and centralism.

-Democratically the lower organs of the party organization must elect the members of the higher organs of the party. The party units in villages must elect the party units of the district and state units are to be elected by the district units of the party and the central unit will be elected by the state units.

-The element of centralism in communist party means that the decisions of the higher unit must be accepted and implemented by the lower units. The state units should accept the decisions of the central unit and district units must obey the decisions of the state unit and the village unit ought to follow the decisions of the district unit.

B) Imperialism

-Imperialism refers to the system where European countries subjugated and exploited the Asian and African countries through military conquest and force.

-Lenin expounded a new insight linking imperialism and capitalism in his book "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism".

-He argued that capitalism had not faced self destruction as Marx predicted only because of imperialism. The capitalist countries exploit the subjugated Asian and African countries and through this looted wealth capitalism sustains itself in their home countries.

-There should be two revolutionary struggles, one the struggle of Asian African countries against the Imperialist Europe and another revolutionary struggle of working class in the western countries.

- Once these two struggles become successful, the two inter linked exploitative forces of capitalism and imperialism will be destroyed and communist society of equality and fraternity will be born internationally.

Comment on the Following

1. The communist Party should be in the vanguard of the revolution
2. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism

3.3 Mao Tsetung

-Mao Tse-Tung was one of the greatest Marxist theoreticians and practitioners in the history of the world.

- He founded the Communist Party of China and conducted the Communist Revolution in 1949, leading to the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

Sinification of Marxism

- Mao introduced certain changes in Communism to make it suitable for China. The modification of communism to reflect Chinese realities is described as Signification of Communism.

- Peasantry led Revolution

- Karl Marx predicted that Communist Revolution will be seen only in west European countries that are fully industrialised and where workers are numerous and organised. But China in the decade of 1940s was an agricultural and industrially backward country.

-Karl Marx never considered that the peasants as a class have revolutionary potential as they are conservative and reactionary. Mao organized the peasants of China and succeeded in overthrowing the feudal exploitative State heralding the arrival of communism.

-Mao's success in China provided a revolutionary model for the other agricultural countries of Asia and Africa.

For Further Reading

1. Das Capital by Karl Marx 2. Western Political Thought by C.L.Wayper 3. Western Political Thought by J.P.Sudha 4. Modern Political Theory by M.P.Jain