

Paper : POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

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Marxism (Communism)

- Marxism, an important variant of communism was brought out by Karl Marx
- 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

Karl Marx said “In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution.”

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

Karl Marx said “ Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster 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.”

Socialism

-Socialism is an ideology that supports public ownership of property and natural resources.

- It is fundamentally opposed to Liberalism that believes in the private ownership of property.

-There are many varieties of socialism like **Democratic socialism, Evolutionary Socialism, Fabian Socialism, Guild Socialism etc.** The terms

-Socialism and Communism are at times interchangeably used. But Karl Marx introduced a distinction by describing his ideology as “**Scientific Socialism**” and other prevailing varieties of socialism as “**Utopian Socialism**”.

1. Utopian Socialism

- Many thinkers in nineteenth century had questioned the negative consequences of Liberalism. They strove to protect the interests of the working class.

-**Robert Owen** was a successful industrialist and philanthropist. He started the cooperative movement and experimental socialist communities in England to realize betterment in the conditions of the workers.

-He associated the workers in the management of his industries and showed that profits can be increased by the joint endeavor between workers and employers.

-He appealed to the reason of the fellow capitalists to take into account the welfare of the working classes.

-**Saint Simon**, a French industrialist and thinker argued that the welfare of the working class must also be taken into consideration for realizing an **efficient economy and effective society**.

-**Charles Fourier**, another French thinker suggested the socialist reconstruction of the society by forming association of producers termed as *phalanges*.

- Both Saint Simon and Charles Fourier appealed to the conscience of the capitalists to improve the miserable state of the tiling workers.

-These three notable theorists advocated ideas in favour of the workers in 19th century. **Karl Marx** described their thoughts as **Utopian Socialism** as they provided only a superficial understanding of capitalism and their alternative schemes are wishful and utopian in nature.

-He claimed that, in contrast his communism is based on scientific understanding of capitalism meriting the name of **Scientific Socialism**

2. Democratic Socialism

- Democratic Socialism as the nomenclature indicates combines the two systems of socialism and democracy to provide a unique political and economic system to promote equality and freedom.
- It differs from Marxism in its conception of state. It believes that the state is not an instrument of exploitation of workers by the capitalists. Rather the state is an instrument of social welfare.
- The state must be made democratic. All classes in society own the state. Socialism can be established only through the state. It will not and should not wither away as Marxism predicted.
- Democratic Socialism argues that socialism can be established through **evolutionary and peaceful means**. It's methodology of change characterized as **gradualism or ballot box socialism**.
- It dismisses revolutionary, violent struggle as unnecessary. Democratic Socialism argues for harmonious relationship among classes and class differences must be solved through peaceful methods.
- The right to property need not be abolished. Rather for the sake of social welfare the right to property must be limited.
- There are crucial differences between Marxism and Democratic Socialism. Many basic concepts of Marxism are either modified or rejected by Democratic Socialism.
- Nevertheless both of them have certain similar goals like ending the exploitation of workers and promoting equality among people.

Differences Between Communism and Socialism

Communism

- 1. Revolution is the midwife of change. Only through revolution changes can be implemented
- 2.. the state is an instrument of exploitation of the property-less classes by the property class and therefore it should be abolished
- 3. Class struggle is the fundamental force of human societies in history. The workers should conduct their struggle against the capitalists to bring in proletarian revolution
- 4.The right to private property must be abolished as it causes exploitation and inequality
- 5.History of humankind can be explained by Historical Materialism. Economy alone drives human history

Socialism

- 1. Evolutionary and peaceful changes are more enduring, plausible and beneficial
- 2.State should not be abolished. It should be made more democratic decentralized and social welfare oriented.
- 3.Violent class struggle is unnecessary
- 4. Violent, Class struggle is unnecessary
- 1.1The right to private property should be modified and limitations must be imposed for general welfare
- 5..Historical Materialism is not adequate to explain human history. Apart from economy other factors like culture, politics, religion etc are also important to explain human history

3. Fabian Socialism

-Fabian Socialism was the British version of Socialism propagated by the Fabian Society from 1884.

-They chose the nomenclature Fabianism inspired by the **great Roman General Fabius** who was historically very famous for adopting the **military strategy of “wait and hit hard at the right moment”**.

-Sidney Webb and Sidney Oliver H.G Wells brought out the ideology of Fabianism. The famous English playwright George Barnard Shaw was one of the greatest proponents of Fabianism.

-As an ideology Fabianists attacked capitalism as an exploitative system and advocated a thorough reorganization of economy and politics of their contemporary period.

- It expressed its resolute support for democratic state. There are two important attributes of the Fabian State. Firstly it should be based on decentralization of power.

-Secondly it should be led by experts. Fabianism rejected Marxist call for the abolition of the state. It wanted the state to exist on the foundations of decentralized power and expert leadership to promote social welfare.

-Fabianism believed that **socialism and democracy are complementary and supplementary** to each other. They are to be appreciated as noble ideals of equality and justice as very dear to them.

-The Fabians did not advocate the abolition of private property. On the contrary they supported existence of limited right to property governed by the principle of social welfare.

-Fabianism as an evolutionary socialism rejected communist revolutionary methods of change.

-It staunchly supported peaceful methods of change in society. The Fabian ideologues depended on persuasion tactics to realize socialism.

-Bernad Shaw said “Poverty and riches together mean the perversion of our capital and industry to the production of frippery and luxury whilst the nation is rotting for want of good food, thorough instruction, and wholesome clothes and dwellings for the masses.”

Bernad Shaw said ‘Socialism means equal rights and opportunities for all’

4. Evolutionary Socialism

-Evolutionary Socialism was initially advocated by Lassalle, one of the earliest leaders of the German Social Democracy tradition.

-The ideals of Evolutionary Socialism were formally expounded in the Gothe Program in 1875, an important document in the evolution of socialism in Germany and Europe.

-Later on Eduard Bernstein wrote the book “Evolutionary Socialism” that attracted the many supporters like Jaures in France, Anseele in Italy, Bauer in Austria.

-It argues for an evolutionary change in capitalism. It believes that along with economic factors non-economic factors are also important to explain human life. Democratic Socialism and Evolutionary Socialism are innately interrelated.

Marxism attacked Evolutionary Socialism as “revisionism”, “Broker’s view of socialism”

5. Guild Socialism

-It is a kind of evolutionary socialism that emerged in Great Britain in the first two decades of twentieth century.

-The English political thinker and the founder of National Guilds League in England, **D.H.Cole** was the leading advocate of this brand of socialism.

-He wrote the book “ **Guild Socialism A Plan for Economic Recovery**” to propagate the tenets of guild Socialism.

-Guild Socialism criticized the exploitation of workers by the capitalists in the western world and arose essentially as a protest ideology against capitalism

-**The word Guild refers to the association of craftsmen and artisans of a particular profession in the medieval period in Europe.** It acted as a source of mutual support, as a medium to pass on the professional knowledge to new entrants.

-**Guild Socialism combines the medieval guild with modern socialism and envisages a political organization in which organized workers based associations will discharge most of the political functions.**

-This ideology believes that in any society there are numerous professions, trades and occupations and a member of one profession cannot represent the interests and welfare of members of another profession and therefore every profession must have its own organization.

- All such organizations must come together to form a governing council at the district, state and national levels to administer the system. A national level confederation of Guilds will govern the country.

-Guild Socialism does not call for the destruction of state. It endows the state with certain common functions like providing education and health services to the people.

- Guild socialism firmly supported the principle of gradualism to bring about change in the existing capitalist system.

-It abhorred the revolutionary methods of struggle associated with Marxism. All changes in society should be brought through peaceful and democratic means was a cardinal principle of Guild Socialism.

-Though Guild Socialism was laudable in its commitment to the welfare of workers it was criticized as an **impractical alternative**.

-Its attempt to reduce the state to the position of an ordinary Guild was not accepted by many political theorists who asserted that the weakened state of Guild Socialism cannot maintain law and order and protect its people from invasions and insurrections

6. Syndicalism

-It is an extreme form of socialism based on trade union movement

- The French thinker George Sorrel propagated it

- Establishment of socialism through violent means is the goal

- It appealed to the workers to overthrow capitalism

- It advocated Direct Action

- It believed in the strategy of strikes and continuous strikes

Sabotage was supported as a strategy for workers

- It favoured the establishment of a new society rooted in trade unions

- As it was very extreme and violent syndicalism was described as the Revisionism of the Left
- I arose in the French soil that was emotional and radical in temperament
- “All the future of socialism resides in the autonomous development of workers’ syndicates”
- “Syndicalists advocated direct action, including working to rule, passive resistance, sabotage, and strikes, particularly the general strike, as tactics in the class struggle, as opposed to indirect action such as electoral politics”

For Further Studies

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