

KARL MARX (1818- 1883)

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INTRODUCTION:

- He was the Father of Scientific socialism.
- He was a Political Economist and also a social revolutionary.
- He edited and published a paper called Rhenish Gazette.
- At Paris with the association of Fredrick Engels published the work “The Communist Manifesto”.
- He wrote “Das Capital” (1867), “The Poverty of Philosophy”1847, “The Critique of political Economy”1859, “The Value, Price and Property”1865, “The Civil War in France” 1870.

BASIC IDEAS OF MARX:

- Marx is rightly regarded as the father of Scientific Socialism which has been better known as Communism.
- Marxian theory of communism is broadly based on the following principles -
 1. Dialectical Materialism,
 2. Historical Materialism,
 3. Theory of Surplus Value,
 4. Theory of Class War.
 5. Destruction of Capitalism,
 6. Dictatorship of the Proletariat,
 7. Withering Away of the State,
 8. Theory of Revolution'
 9. Dynamics of Social Change,

1. DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM:

- ◉ Dialectical materialism is one of the basic principles of Marxism.
- ◉ The word dialect means to discuss or debate.
- ◉ Dialect is the study of contradictions to discover the truth.
- ◉ Marx borrowed this method from the German thinker Hegel.
- ◉ Historical changes takes place in a dialectical process.
- ◉ According to this process, every stage in the history is a thesis and the opposite of it is the anti-thesis and the confrontation between the two give rise to the birth of snthesis.

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM....

- ◉ This **thesis, anti-thesis and its synthesis** is a continuous process in history.
- ◉ This process keeps on repeating itself and historical changes occur through this process.
- ◉ According to Hegel, dialectical change in history is due to the impact of ideas.
- ◉ However, Marx said that the dialectical changes are not due to ideas but due to material conditions.
- ◉ To Marx, ideas are not the motivating factor in human history but these ideas are the product of material conditions of society.

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM ...

- ◉ To Marx, world is by nature material.
- ◉ To him, material life is primary and spiritual life is secondary.
- ◉ However, Marx did not tell us what he meant by materialism.
- ◉ He only made it clear that his materialism was dialectical.
- ◉ it implies that ideas, beliefs, religions, creeds and so on emerge from the material conditions of life.
- ◉ To him, the mode of production in material life determines the general character of social, political and spiritual processes of life.

2. MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY/HISTORICAL MATERIALISM:

- ◉ Marx applied the principle of dialectical materialism to the interpretation of history.
- ◉ Materialistic interpretation of history simply means the economic factors determines the social existence of men.
- ◉ Thus, historical events are the products of economic factors and the society changes through materialistic conditions.
- ◉ To him, the economic sub structure determines the political superstructure.
- ◉ To him, the mode of production in material life determines the general character of social, political and spiritual processes of life.

MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY...

- Marx spoke of five stages in the development of society which depended on the mode of production. They are -
 - a. **Primitive communist stage:** in this stage there was no private property and hence the production is owned by the community.
 - b. **Slave ownership stage:** during this stage there was slavery in which one class owns and exploits the other.

MATERIALISTIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY...

- c. **Feudal stage:** in this stage, the aristocratic land owning class exploit the mass of peasants and serfs.
- d. **Capitalist stage:** in this stage the capitalists own all the important means of productions and exploited the working classes by paying very less wages to them.
- e. **Communist stage:** this is the final stage, where the mode of production is socialist based on social ownership where there are no classes as such.

3. THE THEORY OF SURPLUS

VALUE:

- ◉ The principle of surplus value is the central point in Marxian theory.
- ◉ To Marx, labour is the sole source of value.
- ◉ The value of any commodity is determined by the labour spent on producing it.
- ◉ Factors other than labour are insignificant in the creation of economic value.
- ◉ Though the labourer is the real creator of value, the capitalist pays him only a part of it.
- ◉ The major share of value is appropriated in the name of profit by the capitalists who owns the tools of production, this is what Marx called as surplus value.
- ◉ Surplus value is equal to the market value of the commodity minus the actual payment made to the labourer.
- ◉ He calls the surplus value or profit as the illegal income of the capitalist and this is nothing but the exploitation of the worker.
- ◉ By this doctrine, Marx tried to show the exploitative nature of capitalism

4. THEORY OF CLASS WAR:

- ◉ All history is the history of class wars, says Marx.
- ◉ Marx believes that at every stage in history there was a war between classes.
- ◉ The land owners exploits the workers.
- ◉ Class war is a corollary of the materialistic interpretation of history and surplus value.
- ◉ Marx believes that there is hatredness between the classes.
- ◉ For instance, in feudal society, barons exploited the serfs, in the capitalist society the capitalist exploited the workers.
- ◉ Thus Marx wanted to prove that class struggle has been a permanent feature of human history. This is because the economic system makes one class 'exploiter' and the other 'exploited'.

THEORY OF CLASS WAR

- ◉ Marx, thus became the prophet of great revolutions of the 20th century.
- ◉ He provided enough inspirations for the outbreak of the Russian revolution and the Chinese revolution.

5. DESTRUCTION OF CAPITALISM:

- ◉ Capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction, says Marx.
- ◉ In a capitalist economy there is a tendency towards the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few people.
- ◉ Due to this there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor.
- ◉ The rich are the owners of the means of production and are able to multiply their capital.
- ◉ Therefore, the rich become richer and richer whereas the poor people become poorer.

DESTRUCTION OF CAPITALISM....

- To him, the wealth of the capitalist is swelled by large profits with corresponding increase in the mass of poverty of the proletariat.
- Marx says that poverty is the result of exploitation and not of scarcity.
- This law of concentration of capital is applicable not only to the industrial capitalist but also to the landlords.
- Therefore, the proletariat will overthrow both landlords and the industrial capitalists.

6. DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT:

- ◉ Proletarians are the landless and property less masses of people and their number is very large.
- ◉ The aim of revolution is to establish a classless society.
- ◉ In the class war the proletariat overthrows the capitalists and captures power.
- ◉ The dictatorship of the proletariat is an interim or temporary arrangement before the final establishment of a classless and a stateless society.
- ◉ In this period the state machinery is monopolized by proletariat and establishes a dictatorship for a short period.

Dictatorship of the Proletariat...

- The state becomes an instrument in the hands of the proletariat for crushing bourgeois elements in the society, during this stage.
- This is only a transitional stage which ultimately paves the way for the establishment of perfect socialism.

7. WITHERING AWAY OF THE STATE:

- ◉ When all the bourgeois elements in society are crushed, there is no need for the state.
- ◉ In the final stage the state withers away or disappears and thus the stateless and classless society prevail.
- ◉ The establishment of a classless and stateless society is the final stage of communism.
- ◉ Under the perfect communism, the state as a machinery of coercion is no longer necessary.

WITHERING AWAY OF THE STATE...

- It is a free society of voluntary associations.
- There are no policemen and military people.
- This is the climax of scientific socialism of Marx and this is the ultimate stage of communism.
- Communism aims at classless society and perfect economic equality.
- It abolishes all forms of exploitation and hence there is no necessity of the state at all.
- A communist society functions on the principle of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.

8. THEORY OF REVOLUTION:

- ◉ Marx is a prophet of revolutionary creed.
- ◉ He explained as to why and how revolution cannot be avoided.
- ◉ He believed in violence and force to solve the problems of the proletariats.
- ◉ He advocated revolution as the only way to get rid of mankind from inhumanity and exploitation caused by capitalism.
- ◉ He gave a call to the workers of the world to unite and revolt as they have nothing to lose but their chains.

9. DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL CHANGE:

- ◉ Communism believes in the dynamics of social change, as it is a progressive philosophy.
- ◉ It opposes various forces including religion which hinders the human progress.
- ◉ Marx was convinced that religion retards the progress.
- ◉ Hence, he said that religion is the opium of the people.
- ◉ Marx is a great humanitarian and a philanthropist.
- ◉ He advocated rapid progress for the poor and downtrodden in the society.

EVALUATION OF MARX'S IDEAS:

- ◉ Marxist ideas has its own plus points and limitations.
- ◉ Some of its merits are as follows -
 1. Highlighted the evils of capitalism,
 2. Brought out the negative role of the state,
 3. Scientific theory,
 4. Inspiration to working classes,
 5. Checked exploitation,
 6. Economic equality and social justice,
 7. Provoked great revolutions,
 8. Classless society, etc.

1. HIGHLIGHTED THE EVILS OF CAPITALISM:

- His ideas on capitalism are valued very much by people and all over the world.
- One cannot ignore the indictment that Marx makes of capitalism.
- Marxism is the only theory that gives persons a clear and strong realization of the evils done by capitalism in contrast with the justice and fairness promised by it.

2. BROUGHT OUT THE NEGATIVE ROLE OF THE STATE:

- ◉ His ideas on state indicates the negative role that the state plays in the life of the individual i.e. suppression.
- ◉ State is an instrument of exploitation of the proletariats on behalf of the bourgeois in a capitalist society.
- ◉ State misuses its bureaucracy, police and military to suppress the common man.
- ◉ Above criticisms of Marx against the state has brought about changes in the style of the functioning of the state.

3. SCIENTIFIC THEORY:

- ⦿ Karl Marx's theory of communism is regarded as a scientific theory.
- ⦿ It is a clear-cut theory which can be easily understood.
- ⦿ The socialist principles are explained in a methodical manner.
- ⦿ Marx has been rightly regarded as the father of scientific socialism.

4. INSPIRATION TO WORKING CLASSES:

- ◉ Communism has brought about great hope to the exploited class of workers and a great source of inspiration to them.
- ◉ Workers have been treated as the creators of the value of the commodity.
- ◉ It helped them to unite together for the upliftment of their own class.
- ◉ Communism is highly favourable to the labourers and workers.
- ◉ It upholds the dignity of labour and right to work.

5. CHECKED EXPLOITATION:

- ⦿ His theory of communism was able to check the exploitation of the workers.
- ⦿ It was a warning given to all capitalists of the world.
- ⦿ The theory checked the exploitation of not only industrial workers but also of the agricultural labourers and peasants.
- ⦿ Thus, communism is against exploitation and injustice.

6. ECONOMIC EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

- ◉ The greatest merit of communism is that it lays great emphasis on economic equality and social justice.
- ◉ The state owns all the means of production and property and private property is not permitted.
- ◉ Under communism nobody is allowed to suffer and starve likewise nobody is allowed to exploit others.

7. PROVOKED GREAT REVOLUTIONS:

- ◉ Marx himself did not engineer any revolution but he provided enough combustible material for a revolution.
- ◉ It is Marx's ideas which led to Russian revolution of 1917 and the Communist revolution in China in 1949.

8. CLASSLESS SOCIETY:

- ◉ Communism stands for a classless society and perfect economic equality.
- ◉ It abolishes the distinction between the rich and the poor.
- ◉ Only one class that is the working class should exist.
- ◉ No exploitation of one by other is permissible in communism.
- ◉ He who does not work shall not eat.

DEMERITS/CRITICISM OF COMMUNISM:

- ◉ Communism may be criticized on the following grounds -
 1. Creed of violence,
 2. Non-economic factors ignored,
 3. Concept of class war is wrong,
 4. The theory of surplus value is wrong
 5. Revolution is not inevitable,
 6. The state is not withering away,
 7. State is not obstructive but useful,
 8. Injustice to Religion, etc.

1. CREED OF VIOLENCE:

- ⦿ Communism is criticized as a creed of violence and hatred.
- ⦿ It openly preaches the theory of revolution and class war.
- ⦿ Revolution and bloodshed perpetuates hatredness among the classes.
- ⦿ There will be no place for discussion and compromise.

2. NON-ECONOMIC FACTORS IGNORED:

- ◉ Communism puts emphasis only on economic factor.
- ◉ To Marx, economic or materialistic factor alone is responsible for the social, political and economic changes in any society.
- ◉ He has ignored non-economic factors like religion, language, political condition, science, etc.

3. CONCEPT OF CLASS WAR IS WRONG:

- ◉ To Marx, all history is the history of class war between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.
- ◉ But history does not prove his claim.
- ◉ The concept of class war is artificial as it does not reflect the reality since there does not exist two clear cut opposing classes during any period of human history.
- ◉ Perhaps the concept of class war has been used by him to capture the minds of the workers.

4. THE THEORY OF SURPLUS VALUE IS WRONG:

- His concept of surplus value is one sided as he attached undue importance to labour as the means of production, ignoring other factors of production like land, capital and organization.
- Thus, it overestimated the role of labour and ignored the other factors of production.
- The capitalist takes risks while undertaking production. Hence it is wrong to say that profit is the illegal income of the capitalist.

5. REVOLUTION IS NOT INEVITABLE:

- ⦿ Revolution is not inevitable in any country.
- ⦿ The problems of the workers in a capitalist society can be solved by understanding and compromises.
- ⦿ The concept of welfare state is a remedy and revolution cannot.
- ⦿ Violence and revolution creates hatredness and bloodshed.

6. THE STATE IS NOT WITHERING AWAY:

- ◉ The idea of withering away of the state is a wrong prediction.
- ◉ Marx argued that in a classless society the state has no reason to continue has been found incorrect.
- ◉ Even after the revolution in communist countries like Soviet Union & China instead of its disappearance the institution of state has been strengthened there.

7. STATE IS NOT OBSTRUCTIVE BUT USEFUL:

- ◉ It is also wrong to say that the state is an instrument of oppression and exploitation.
- ◉ According to Aristotle, the state originates in bare needs of life and continues for the sake of good life.
- ◉ The state is a very creative and useful institution without which individual cannot lead a good life.
- ◉ Thus, the state is a benevolent institution.

8. INJUSTICE TO RELIGION:

- ⦿ He has done a great injustice to religion when he says that it is the opium of the people.
- ⦿ Religion is also plays a very important role in the life of the individual and society that one cannot ignore.
- ⦿ Marx should have criticized those who are misusing the religion.
- ⦿ Religion that brings some order and discipline in the society.

CONCLUSION:

- ◉ In spite of the above criticisms of communism, it has become the popular philosophy in the modern world.
- ◉ His ideology has changed the entire thinking of the world.
- ◉ His ideas led to undertake many a benevolent measures for the welfare of workers in order to keep them away from revolution.
- ◉ Marx left a message of hope for the oppressed humanity.
- ◉ No political philosopher has ever exercised such a great influence on millions people like Marx did.