

**MASTER OF ARTS
SOCIOLOGY
CENTRE FOR OPEN AND
DISTANCE LEARNING
(CODL)**



**MSO 101: CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL
THOUGHTS
BLOCK I**

**CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY (A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)
TEZPUR, ASSAM - 784028
INDIA**

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To grow to be a leading centre for human resource development through distance, open and universal learning system.

Mission

To provide quality higher education at door step through barrierless, flexible and open learning mode in conformity with national priority and societal need.

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- **To contribute to conserve and promote cultural heritage, literature, traditional knowledge and environment conducting short programmes, workshops, seminars and research in interdisciplinary field.**

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MSO-101: CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHTS

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BLOCK I

MODULE I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 1: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF
SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: ENLIGHTENMENT,
FRENCH REVOLUTION AND INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION

UNIT 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE
19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

MODULE II: KARL MARX

UNIT 3: THE SOCIOLOGY OF KARL MARX

UNIT 4: PRE-CAPITALIST ECONOMIC FORMATIONS,
CAPITALISM AND COMMODITY PRODUCTION

UNIT 5: CLASS AND CLASS CONFLICT

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course will introduce the learners to the intellectual forbearers of the discipline of sociology. It intends to highlight the conceptual contours of the discipline in terms of the theoretical formulations which are essential to comprehend the various social processes. To make sense of the everyday social life and to have a critical approach, a learner must first learn sociological theory. So, this course will first introduce the learners to the historical background of sociological theory and will then proceed to discuss the ideas and concepts of the classical social thinkers. Among these thinkers are Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, who are often referred to as the founding fathers of sociology.

The course is divided into five Modules, each consisting of multiple units. This has been done to discuss the major concepts more elaborately and, in a learner-friendly way.

Module I gives a gist of the historical background of sociology. This module has two units. **Unit 1** deals with the social and intellectual forces that gave shape to sociological theory. **Unit 2** discusses the development of sociology in the 19th and 20th centuries. This unit briefly explores the development of sociology in France, Germany, and Britain.

Module II is about Karl Marx and it is divided into three units. **Unit 3** gives an overview of the sociology of Marx, covering his basic ideas and concepts. **Unit 4** deals with economic formation, capitalism and commodity production. The works of Marx basically centre on the economic aspect and thus, this unit will help the learners to grasp the core ideas of Marx. **Unit 5** will help the learners to understand another important aspect of Marxist theory, that is the concept of Class. The unit discusses the concept of class as given by Karl Marx throwing light on class conflict.

Module III deals with another German social theorist, Max Weber. The module is divided into four units. **Unit 6** will introduce the learners to the sociology of Weber. The basic sociological terms and concepts of

Weber will be further elaborated in **Unit 7** which will cover social action and rationality. An important contribution of Weber has been in the field of religion and social change. **Unit 8** therefore, discusses Weber's views on the link between religion and the rise of capitalism in the West. It discusses one of the major works of Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. **Unit 9** discusses the methodology of Weber.

Module IV is about Emile Durkheim. Though Auguste Comte, the Father of Sociology, coined the term 'sociology' and was in the forefront in the development of a positive science of society, it was Emile Durkheim who gave an academic base to sociology. The first unit of Module IV, i.e. **Unit 10** gives an overall idea about Durkheim's sociology, while his basic ideas and concepts are further elaborated in the subsequent unit. **Unit 11** therefore, discusses Durkheim's concept of solidarity and division of labour. **Unit 12**, on the other hand, will familiarise the learners with Durkheim's contribution to the methodology of sociology, focusing on his ideas of *social facts, normal* and *pathological*.

Module V is devoted to two other social thinkers—Vilfredo Pareto and Georg Simmel. **Unit 13** deals with the major contributions of Pareto to the field of sociology, focusing on logico-experimental method and his theory of elites. **Unit 14** discusses the sociological ideas of Simmel including his concept of social type.

The complete course is divided into two Blocks. **Block I** contains Module I and II. **Block II** will have Module III, IV and V.

MODULE I: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 1: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: ENLIGHTENMENT, FRENCH REVOLUTION AND INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Forces that Developed Sociological Theory
- 1.4 Intellectual Forces that Shaped Sociological Theory
 - 1.4.1 The Enlightenment
 - 1.4.1.1 Rationalism and Emancipation
 - 1.4.2 The Conservative Reaction to the Enlightenment
- 1.5 Social Forces that Shaped Sociological Theory
 - 1.5.1 French Revolution
 - 1.5.1.1 What led to the French Revolution?
 - 1.5.1.2 Impact of French Revolution
 - 1.5.2 The Industrial Revolution
 - 1.5.2.1 Industrial Revolution and Capitalism
 - 1.5.2.2 Impact of Industrial Revolution
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 Questions
- 1.8 Recommended Readings and References

1.1 INTRODUCTION

To know what sociology is and what its scope and subject matter are, you first need to understand its historical background. This unit, therefore, will talk about the various developments and factors that led to the emergence of sociological theory. By now you must already have a general idea about sociology as a subject. Before proceeding with this unit, you are expected to stop and think about why you have chosen to study sociology and what you believe are the striking features of

sociology that makes it a discipline distinct from other social sciences. Take your time and reflect upon it and then note down your views in a notebook. As you proceed with this course, you will be able to compare and analyse your views with the concepts taught in this course which will help you in clarifying the doubts, if any in a better way.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, you will be introduced to the various forces and developments that led to the emergence of sociological theory. You will first learn about the two main forces- intellectual and social that led to a series of events and developments, and then you will also see how these forces are interrelated. Next, you will see how the changes brought in by these developments affected the thinkers that gave birth to sociological theory.

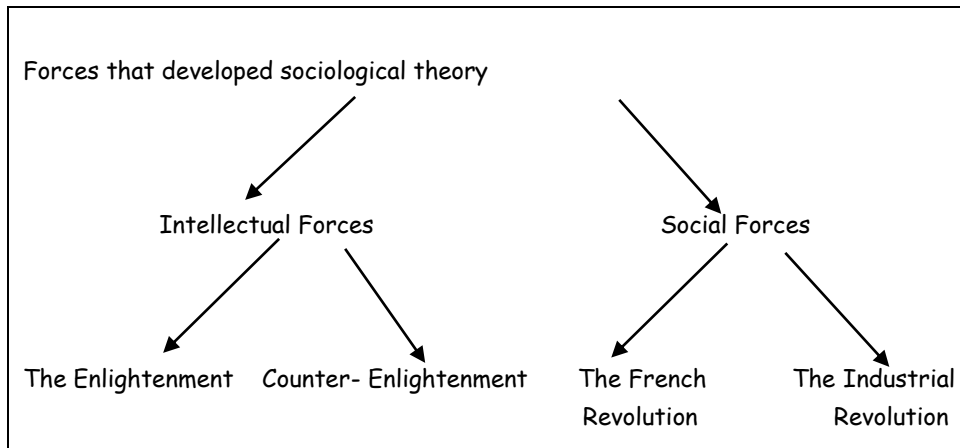
By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the social and intellectual forces that led to the emergence of sociological theory;
- Describe the Enlightenment and the conservative reaction to it;
- Describe the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution;
- Explain how the social and intellectual forces are connected and interrelated;
- Identify the major changes in the society that affected the social thinkers.

1.3 FORCES THAT DEVELOPED SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

While talking about the historical background of sociological theory, the first question that you may think of is when did sociological theory begin? Well, it is not possible to give a precise date when sociological theory began. However, it is to be noted that since early in history, people have been developing theories of social life, but the more sociologically relevant theories emerged in the 1800s, the period that witnessed thinkers who can be clearly referred to as sociologists. The

forces that led to the development of sociological theory can be placed into two broad categories: intellectual and social forces. (Ritzer, 2000: 4-6)



1.4 INTELLECTUAL FORCES THAT SHAPED SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Before looking at the intellectual forces that shaped sociological theory, you need to understand that both intellectual and social forces are interrelated. By intellectual forces we mean those forces that led to changes in the ideas and thinking. Here we will first understand what the Enlightenment is and how it shaped sociological theory. Next, we will move on to the conservative reaction to the Enlightenment.

1.4.1 The Enlightenment

You probably have some idea about what the Enlightenment is. Before proceeding with this section, take some time, think and write down what you understand by the Enlightenment in your notebook. After you are done going through this Unit, compare what you learnt with what you have written in your notebook. This will make your understanding about the Enlightenment clearer and you will be able to grasp the content discussed in this section better.

Now that you have written down your idea about the Enlightenment in your notebook, let us see what the Enlightenment is. To begin with, it is not easy to define the Enlightenment. This is because it is a broad term that encompasses several aspects. It is a bundle of ideas, an intellectual movement, a network of intellectuals, and a cluster of centres where these intellectuals gathered, a publishing industry, and a belief-system all at once. To give a very simple definition of the Enlightenment, we can say that the Enlightenment was the generation of new ideas about man, society and nature, which challenged the existing ideas based on a traditional view where Christianity played the dominant role. (Hamilton, 1995: 22-23). Some of the prominent thinkers associated with the Enlightenment were Jean Jacques Rousseau, Charles Montesquieu, and John Locke. To understand how the new ideas emerged, you first need to understand the Enlightenment as a movement.

To understand the Enlightenment as a movement, let us first travel back to the Middle Ages. During that period in the West, the dominant idea was that of a hierarchy where God was placed at the top, the human next to God, and the material world was placed at the lowest position. This idea which was promoted by the Church continued to remain important until the late eighteenth century. However, in the fifteenth century, some changes were brought in with a shift from the idea of God as the Supreme Being to the idea of God expressed in the laws of nature which could be explained through mathematics. In this context, Rene Descartes played a crucial role in identifying and explaining that science and mathematics constitute the basis for control over the physical world. (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 9). He, however, was of the view that it is by divine decree that mathematical conclusions are true. In other words, the authority of God continued to retain its importance. It was the post-Cartesian thought which identified that the mind alone establishes the truth without the will of the God. (Dupre, 2004: 3). Such a change established the importance of reason paving the way for the Enlightenment.

The social conditions around the philosophes greatly influenced their view of human beings and society. They were vehemently opposed to the Old Regime in France and became the supporter of free trade, free commerce, free industry, free labour and free opinion. The large and literate bourgeoisie formed the reading public who bought the books, papers and pamphlets of the Philosophers. These philosophers were concerned with the “laws of the human conditions” and probably more influenced by their moral, political and ideological commitments as by a dispassionate search for scientific laws.

The basic ideas generated during enlightenment, whether by Voltaire, Rousseau, Condorcet, Denis Diderot or others was that humans had certain “natural rights” which were violated by institutional arrangements. It would be necessary therefore to dismantle the existing order and substitute a new order considered more compatible with the essence and basic needs of human kind.

Stop and Read:

Rene Descartes was a philosopher and mathematician who is regarded as the “father of modern philosophy”. He is best known for his statement “Cogito ergo sum” which means “I think, therefore I am”. His philosophy was based in doubt and he was of the view that the existence of everything that we perceive can be doubted but the only thing that we can be sure of its existence is the mind which is doing the doubting. He rejected the mind-body dualism. He argued that the body which signifies matter and the mind which signifies intelligence are two independent entities and not one. He is the precursor of reason and science in the West. He advocated observation and experiment.

1.4.1.1 Rationalism and Emancipation

Two qualities are commonly considered as the characteristics of the Enlightenment: rationalism and emancipation. Rationalism attached to the Enlightenment assumes that the human mind is the sole source of truth and must reject faith as a possible source of truth. (Dupre, 2004: 7). In this

context, let us look at the views of Immanuel Kant on the Enlightenment. Kant wrote an essay in 1783 “Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?”. In it, he explains that human beings have always been endowed with reason, but they failed to use it on their own without direction from another. It seemed as if they had imposed restraint upon themselves which prevented them from using their reason without others dictating them how to use it. It was during the Enlightenment that human beings began to free themselves from this self-imposed restraint and began to muster the courage to use their reason without external guidance. This emancipation demanded that people should have the liberty to think for themselves.

It is to be noted that thinkers like Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke emphasized on producing grand, general, and abstract ideas that made rational sense. The later thinkers associated with the Enlightenment did not reject their idea altogether, but they emphasized more on extracting ideas from the real world which could be tested and made useful to the social world. In other words, they emphasized on combining empirical research with reason. (Ritzer, 2000: 10)

Thus, the Enlightenment began to emphasize on reason and in the process the thinkers associated with it began to question and reject the traditional belief system which were identified as irrational. They believed that the universe was governed by some established laws and such laws should also govern the social and political environment which will make man and society better. (Zeitlin, 1997: 45).

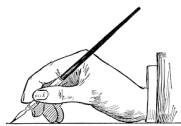
1.4.2 The Conservative Reaction to the Enlightenment

The ideas put forth by the thinkers associated with enlightenment soon began to be refuted by the conservatives. The conservatives feared that the changes in the social life brought in by the ideas of the Enlightenment would lead to chaos and disintegration of social order.

Even in the context of development of Sociology, you will find that the reaction to the Enlightenment played an equally important role as did the Enlightenment. It was mostly the concern of the thinkers towards the changes brought in by the ideals of liberalism and individualism advocated by the Enlightenment that led to ideas that paved the way for the emergence of Sociology.

It may be noted that some conservative thinkers were so dissatisfied with the changes brought in by the Enlightenment and its subsequent development in the form of French Revolution that they even suggested to go back to the Middle Ages. The conservatives were in favour of the traditional institutions such as patriarchy, monogamous family, religion, and monarchy and therefore the ideas of the Enlightenment seemed irrational to them. They believed that elements like tradition, emotion, and religion were essential to social life and in their absence, there will be complete chaos and disorder. (Ritzer, 2000: 11-12).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. What are the main intellectual forces that shaped sociological theory?

2. Name the two main qualities of the Enlightenment.

3. Name three thinkers associated with the Enlightenment.

1.5 SOCIAL FORCES THAT SHAPED SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

In this section, you will learn about the social developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that contributed towards the development of sociological theory. In this context, the French revolution and the Industrial revolution played the most crucial role. It may be noted that the ideas of the Enlightenment greatly inspired these social forces.

1.5.1 French Revolution

The French Revolution was a period of great upheaval and revolutionary movement in France that took place in 1789 and continued till 1799. During the era of the Enlightenment, France stood at the centre of the intellectual movements and the French thinkers who were known as *philosophes* began to challenge the existing regime in France which is referred to as the Old Regime. Montesquieu was one of the *philosophes* and he is well known for his critique of absolutism. During eighteenth century, Europe had absolute monarchy. Montesquieu therefore advocated separation of powers between the executive, legislature, and judiciary. However, he was in favour of aristocracy as opposed to democracy. Another important figure of this period was Jean Jacques Rousseau who was radical in his approach. He criticized the importance laid on reason by the Enlightenment thinkers as well as the changes brought in the society which he believed led to the corruption of goodness in man and deprived him of his freedom. However, he was also hopeful that there could be true social contract where natural liberty and natural inequality would be replaced by civil or moral liberty and equality respectively and the ‘general will’ or the opinions of the people who think for the good of the society would create a government which would focus on the good of the nation and not merely the individual interests. Such views had great impact on French Revolution. (Hanson, 2004: 2-4).

1.5.1.1 What led to the French Revolution?

In 1780, France had absolute monarchy and there was no parliament. It was ruled by Louis XVI who was believed to have the right to rule directly from God which is referred to as the theory of divine right of kings. However, in practice, his rule was not absolute as he had to follow the dictates of the Church while ruling. In other words the Church was not separated from the state. Moreover, the French society during that time was divided into three estates: the first estate constituted of the clergy, the second by the nobility, and the third by the common people who worked. The first two estates enjoyed certain privileges and they were exempted from paying tax. In other words, there was unequal distribution of taxes where all the taxes were paid by the third estate. Besides, the third estate did not enjoy any rights. The inequality that prevailed in France during that period had made the people of the third estate angry.

Moreover, the financial crisis that France was going through during the rule of Louis XIV due to reasons like war, lavish spending by the royal family, and unequal distribution of taxes made the king decide to tax all the three estates which was disapproved by the first two estates. To add to the crisis, there was also food crisis due to which the prices of bread soared high for which the peasants suffered the most. Finally, Louis XIV called the Estates General which was an assembly comprising of representatives of all the three estates. The meeting took place on 5th May, 1789. It may be noted that even though the third estate constituted the highest population, more than 90%, yet they did not have a say in administration and they could be easily outvoted by the other two estates. Therefore, the third estate demanded for equal say in administration and the abolition of the privilege of veto that the other two estates were enjoying. The first two estates, however, did not want to give up the privileges that they have been enjoying. Soon the hostility between the estates led to the third estate forming a National Assembly. They even took an oath at a tennis court that they would not disperse unless the king

agreed to a constitutional reform. Later, the clergy and the nobles also joined the National Assembly. On 14th July, 1789, a large crowd marched towards Bastille fortress leading to the fall of Bastille, setting the stage for the French Revolution.

1.5.1.2 Impact of French Revolution

The French Revolution led to the fall of the Old Regime. The feudal regime was abolished and there was the declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizens that guaranteed liberty, equality, right to property as well as right to resist oppression. The French Revolution set the stage of subsequent revolutions all of which had led to several changes in the society. Even though the Revolution brought in several positive changes, there were also negative changes in the society which drew the attention of many early theorists. The chaos and disorder that resulted after the Revolution, made them disturbed and they were united to find out ways and means to restore order in the society. In the process, some theorists were so radical in their approach that they even suggested going back to the Middle Ages while others felt that such a return was not possible and therefore they began to look for ways within the changed scenario for establishing order in the society. Such concern for order in the society was a key factor in the emergence of sociological theory (Ritzer, 2000, pp.6).

1.5.2 The Industrial Revolution

During the eighteenth century, when Europe was witnessing great political and social changes as a result of political revolutions, particularly the French Revolution that brought in drastic changes in France, there was also another revolution taking place in Europe that was bringing about economic changes which also influenced other aspects of the society. This revolution basically began in the mid eighteenth century which led to a series of developments in changing the

economy from agricultural to industrial. This revolution is popularly known as the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution brought in drastic changes as there was a change from labour being essentially manual to the introduction of artificial labour owing to the advent of machines in the system of production. Unlike other revolutions that take place in a short period of time, the Industrial Revolution was more like an evolution with gradual changes over several generations. However, its impact was so dramatic that it needs to be identified as a revolution and not an evolution. The most important invention that marked this revolution was the invention of the steam engine which was used in several industrial pursuits like mining, textile production, etc.

1.5.2.1 Industrial Revolution and Capitalism

The Industrial Revolution had close connection with the capitalist developments that began in the sixteenth century. In fact, the Industrial Revolution was fuelled by the capitalist developments leading to new social and political arrangements. There was the rise of the urban middle class as a significant social force and the wage labourers were becoming the standard in the competitive and largely unregulated marketplace that was gaining prominence. The capitalist developments brought about changes in the prevailing ideas about power and authority. The hierarchies of rank and status were replaced by class relations and the wealth acquired from industry and trade became as significant as land for acquiring power and authority (Adams and Sydnie, 2002: 20-21).

The growth of factories and industries opened up new opportunities for work. There was mass migration of people from the rural areas to the urban centres in search of work in the factories and industries. Such migration led to changes in the social fabric. There was the emergence of a

huge labour force who worked at the factories owned by a few wealthy individuals.

1.5.2.2 Impact of Industrial Revolution:

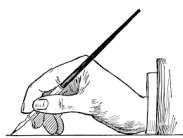
The Industrial Revolution changed the Western world from being essentially agricultural to an overwhelmingly industrial society. The migration of people from rural areas to the urban centres to work as labourers in the emerging factories to the emergence of large economic bureaucracies, all seemed to have changed the social fabric. Under this changed scenario, the free marketplace which offered the platform to exchange the number of products of the industrial system, emerged as the ideal. In this system, only a few profited greatly while the majority worked as labourers investing their time and labour only to get paid with a salary that was barely enough to keep them alive. (Ritzer, 2000: 7). In the process, the few who owned the factories and industries were getting richer and richer by making profits at the cost of the long hours of labour invested by the workers. The workers on the other hand were getting poorer and poorer.

It is also interesting to note that while the agricultural activity was more of a collective activity carried out by all the members of a family together, including children, the work in the industrial society was individualistic in nature. Each worker got paid for the labour and time s/he sold. As a result, the women who could manage their time for agricultural work and household chores by making adjustments with their male counterparts could no longer practice the same in the industrial society. They could either choose to be a full time worker or choose to stay back at home doing the household chores. (Hill, 1969:264, as cited in Adams and Sydie, 2002: 21-22). Another important point to be noted here is that even though it is the workers who produced the industrial products through their labour and time, they do not have control over them. The capitalist exercise

complete ownership on these products and workers feel themselves to be alienated from the products they made.

The workers soon found themselves in a disadvantageous position and a reaction against capitalism and Industrial Revolution started. There were labour movements along with various other radical movements aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system. The upheaval in the West resulting from capitalism, the Industrial Revolution, and the reaction against them affected the social thinkers to a great extent. The four eminent figures associated with Sociology—Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel, grew concerned about the changes brought in and the problems faced by the society and they started looking for ways to solve them. (Ritzer, 2000: 7). This attempt on the part of the sociologists to find ways to solve the newly emerged problems owing to the changes brought in by the social and intellectual forces, mainly contributed to the emergence of sociological theory.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. 1. What are the main social forces that shaped sociological theory?

2. When did the French Revolution start?

3. Why did the social thinkers grow concerned about the changes brought in by the Industrial Revolution and Capitalism?

1.6 SUMMING UP

This Unit has explained how sociological theory was developed, touching upon the various forces and developments that led to its development. These forces can be categorized as intellectual and social forces. In intellectual forces, we have touched upon the Enlightenment and the Conservative reaction against the Enlightenment while in social forces, we have learnt about a major political revolution—the French Revolution as well as the Industrial Revolution. The unit also explains that the social and intellectual forces are interrelated, and they together led to a series of developments that changed the then existing social fabric and ushered in several changes. With such changes, there also emerged several problems which can be identified as the negative consequences of the social and intellectual forces. The social thinkers of that time including the ones who are now referred to as the founding fathers of Sociology were no doubt, influenced by the positive changes in the society but they were more preoccupied by the negative changes brought in by these forces. It was in their attempt to tackle these negative changes that they came up with new ways to establish social order which ultimately led to the emergence of sociological theory.

Glossary:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Middle Ages: The period c.500-c.1453 is called the Middle Ages. This period saw the growth of trade and urban life, emergence of separate kingdoms and there was growth of powers of the monarchy and the Church in the West.2. Rationalism: View that regards reason as the chief source of knowledge.3. Emancipation: Setting free from social, political or legal restrictions.4. Empirical: Based on experience rather than theory which can be verified through experiment or observation. |
|---|

5. Conservatives: Those who were in favour of tradition and criticized their rivals for unduly emphasizing reason. The conservatives' prescriptions were based on experience rather than reason.

6. General Will: Jean Jacques Rousseau gave the concept of 'General Will' which means will held by the people collectively for the common good of the society.

1.7 QUESTIONS

1. What are the main social and intellectual forces in the development of sociological theory?
2. Write briefly about the Enlightenment and its impact on the sociological theory.
3. Why did the conservatives react against the Enlightenment?
4. Write briefly about the course and development of the French Revolution.
5. How did the Industrial Revolution contributed to the development of sociological theory?

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UNIT 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Development of Sociology in France
 - 2.3.1 Claude Henri Saint Simon
 - 2.3.2 Auguste Comte
 - 2.3.3 Emile Durkheim
- 2.4 Development of Sociology in Germany
 - 2.4.1 Karl Marx
 - 2.4.2 Max Weber
 - 2.4.3 Georg Simmel
- 2.5 Development of Sociology in Britain
 - 2.5.1 Herbert Spencer
- 2.6 Summing up
- 2.7 Questions
- 2.8 Recommended Readings and References

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will be introduced to the actual development of sociology as a discipline. By now you have already understood how the intellectual and social forces made the social thinkers concerned about the changes brought in the society. Next, we will move forward to the development of sociology first in France and then move ahead to its development in Germany, and in Britain. It is to be noted that a discipline cannot be developed by a single person. In the case of sociology too, there were many social thinkers that gave shape to it. It is however to be noted that Auguste Comte is often described as the

“father of sociology”. It was Comte who coined the term “sociology”. He advocated that just as the natural laws that apply to the natural world, we can also formulate social laws that can be applied to the study of society to make it scientific. You may also note that prior to the term “sociology”, Comte came up with the term “social physics” which shows his inclination towards developing a science of the society along the lines of the natural sciences like physics.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

In the first unit you have learnt about the historical background of sociological theory touching upon the social and intellectual forces that led to the development of sociological theory. In this unit you will move further and learn how sociology developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

By the end of this Unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the developments that led to the emergence of sociology;
- Describe about the contributions of various thinkers to the development of sociology;
- Explain the development of sociology in France, Germany, and Britain.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN FRANCE

In this section you will be introduced to three French thinkers—Claude Henri Saint Simon, Auguste Comte, and Emile Durkheim who were the prominent figures in the development of French Sociology.

2.3.1 Claude Henri Saint Simon (1760-1825)

Saint Simon was older than Auguste Comte who influenced the latter to a great extent. Since Saint Simon lived in France during the French

Revolution and its aftermath, he had a first-hand experience of the upheavals that led to several changes in the society along with social and economic disruptions. Those upheavals and changes had profound influence on his ideas about society. He was of the view that science would replace religion and he advocated that the science of society should be designed along the lines of the natural sciences. In other words, he was in favour of a positivist approach and he advocated the study of the society in a manner similar to the study of the natural world. (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 32).

It is interesting to note that Saint Simon contributed to the development of both conservative and radical theory. The conservative aspect reflects in his idea of preserving the society as it was. He however, did not advocate going back to the life that existed during the Middle Ages because he believed that such return was not possible. The radical side, on the other hand, reflects in his ideas of socialist reforms mostly in terms of the centralized planning of the economic system. However, even in this context, he did not go as far as Karl Marx did later. He knew that capitalists would replace the feudal nobility but unlike Marx, he was of the view that it was not possible for the working class to replace the capitalists. (Ritzer, 2000: 13). (You will learn about the ideas of Marx in detail in another sub-section). Saint Simon's views therefore, represented a perfect balance—he accepted the superiority of reason as advocated by the Enlightenment thinkers but at the same time he also did not reject the Middle Ages completely. He appreciated the unity and social order that existed during the Middle Ages. Since science and industry have ushered in a new era, he believed that it was not possible to return back to the Middle Ages rather effort should be made to maintain unity and order in the changed scenario.

The most important contribution of Saint Simon as you can see was the introduction of the scientific method to the study of society. The idea

that study of the society should employ the same scientific methods as the natural sciences use indeed opened new avenues for the development of sociology. This idea of employing a positivist approach to the study of social phenomena was further enunciated by Auguste Comte.

2.3.2 Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

Auguste Comte also developed his ideas as a response to the conflicts and chaos that followed the French Revolution. His ideas were greatly influenced by the ideas of Saint Simon. Just like Saint Simon, Comte did not think that it was possible to go back the Middle Ages since science and industry have completely changed the society. He was also positivist in approach just like Saint Simon. However, Comte's ideas were more sophisticated than Saint Simon's which greatly contributed to the development of sociology.

As you have already learnt, Comte coined the term "sociology" and prior to that he used "social physics" for the science of society. Since the term "social physics" had already been used by a statistician of his time, he settled for the term "sociology". He was of the view that sociology would be the last science to be added to the list of sciences but at the same time it would be the most complex and significant among all the sciences. To shape sociology along the lines of the natural sciences, Comte believed that some general social laws need to be discovered. He emphasized on the use of observation and experimentation in sociological theory.

Comte was of the view that the new science about society would take up both social statics and social dynamics. Social statics refers to the existing social structure while social dynamics refers to social change. Both, he believed would lead to the discovery of laws of social life. However, he also believed that social dynamics was more important than social statics. Change was needed to reform the ills created in the society by the French Revolution but for such a change to occur, Comte did not advocate revolution. He was of the view that the society undergoes a process of

natural evolution and that itself would make things better and reforms are needed only to assist the process. (ibid: 14). In this context, you need to understand the law of the three stages that explains the Comte's evolutionary theory. According to Comte, knowledge passes through the following stages:

1. **Theological or fictitious stage:** During this stage the knowledge system emphasized on the origins of all things with the basic idea that all phenomena are produced by supernatural beings.
2. **Metaphysical or abstract stage:** In this stage, the abstract forces like nature were identified as responsible for all the phenomena.
3. **Scientific or positive stage:** In this stage, the knowledge system centres on science. This stage is marked by observation of the social and physical world to discover the laws governing them. (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 41).

Comte therefore, contributed greatly towards the development of sociology particularly through his positivistic approach. He however, did not provide an academic base to sociology which was later provided by Emile Durkheim.

2.3.3 Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

You have seen that Auguste Comte coined the term "sociology" and he was in the forefront in the development of sociology emphasizing on positivism. The contributions made by him were further enhanced by Emile Durkheim who was able to obtain academic recognition. Durkheim's academic base led to the legitimization of sociology in France. In other words, his works had stronger impact modern sociology than that of his predecessors.

Just like Saint Simon and Comte, Durkheim was also preoccupied with the changes brought in the society after the Enlightenment and French

Revolution. It can be observed that he had inherited the conservative tradition as was seen in Comte's work. (Ritzer, 2000: 15). He was concerned about social disorder and therefore his ideas and works laid great emphasis on social order. He advocated social reforms to bring about social order.

In his famous work *The Rules of the Sociological Method*, Durkheim talked about **social facts**. According to Durkheim, to be scientific, sociology should study social facts. Now what did Durkheim mean by social facts? According to Durkheim, social facts are forces and structures that are external to and coercive of the individual. (ibid: 16). Social facts include institutions, statuses, roles, laws, beliefs, etc. Durkheim is of the view that the social facts should be considered as things that exist outside the individual. Studying of social facts as things reflects Durkheim's scientific approach. At the same time the social facts are referred to as coercive of the individual because they put a pressure on the individual to act and behave ways established in the society.

Other major works of Durkheim include *The Division of Labour in Society*, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, and *Suicide*. You will learn in detail about the works and contributions of Emile Durkheim in Module IV of this paper. All the works of Durkheim gave an academic base to sociology which was a crucial factor in the development of sociology in France.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Who coined the term “sociology”?

2. Who wrote *The Rules of the Sociological Method*?

3. Who are the major social thinkers associated with development of French sociology?

2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN GERMANY

In the section regarding the development of sociology in France you have seen that there is a systemic flow of development from Saint Simon to Comte to Durkheim. In this section, however you will see that such a flow is missing. Here you will get introduced to Karl Marx, Max Weber and Georg Simmel. You will notice that while Marx’s approach was quite different from that of Weber and Simmel.

2.4.1 Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Like the French thinkers that are discussed above, Karl Marx was also preoccupied with the changes brought in the society, more particularly by the industrial capitalism that flourished during the Industrial Revolution. He saw in capitalism the roots of the problems of the modern world. However, Marx was more radical in his approach and unlike Saint Simon,

Durkheim or Comte who were in favour of social reforms, Marx advocated revolution to deal with the problems faced by the modern world.

Stop and Read:

Marx was greatly influenced by Hegel and Feuerbach. Hegel's philosophy centred on two important concepts—dialectic and idealism. The dialectic is a method of philosophical argument wherein there is a contradictory process between opposite sides. Hegel used the concept of dialectics to ideas. His philosophy lays emphasis on the mind and ideas and not the material world. In other words, his philosophy is that of idealism. Feuerbach on the other hand, was critical of Hegel. He did not emphasise idealism more rather he was inclined towards materialism. Instead of focusing on the ideas, he focused on the real material aspects. Marx was influenced by the concept of dialectic, but he felt that it was the material aspects that were more important than the ideas. Thus, he took the concept of dialectic from Hegel but was critical of his idealism. Similarly, he took the idea of materialism from Feuerbach, but he did not totally agree with Feuerbach's idea of materialism. Feuerbach focused on the religious world whereas Marx applied the concept of materialism to every aspect of the social world and especially to the economic aspect. Marx then came up with his own idea of dialectical materialism. (ibid: 19-21).

The works of Marx basically centred on the economic aspect. He was of the view that the economic aspect is the base over which all other aspects—social, political, legal are embedded. In other words, change in the economic aspect leads to change in all other aspects. He therefore, gave a materialist conception of history. (Giddens, 1997:10). According to Marx, the society has gone through several phases. But he focused basically on capitalism. In capitalism, the means of production is owned by the capitalists and the workers sell their labour to the capitalists. This system creates two classes—one that owns the means of production i.e., the

capitalist class, and one that does not own the means of production i.e., the working class. According to Marx, in such a class system, class conflict is inevitable which will finally lead to revolution led by the working class. Such a revolution will overthrow the capitalists and will finally lead to a classless and stateless society.

2.4.2 Max Weber (1864-1920)

Max Weber was influenced by Marx but at the same time he was also strongly critical of some of the major ideas of Marx. He rejected Marx's idea of materialist conception of history and he did not emphasise class struggle much. According to Weber, ideas and values play equally important role as economic aspects. (ibid: 10). Central to the works of Weber is his concept of rationalization. Like other social thinkers, Weber was also concerned with the changes in the social life. In this context, he identified rationalization of economic structures that led to modern capitalism as an important historical transformation. (Adams and Sydie, 2002: 173).

According to Weber, capitalism is one of the factors that have led to social development. He is of the view that capitalism had existed in several societies prior to its advent in the West but it was the modern capitalism of the West that was well established and developed which was never seen before. (ibid: 173). In the context of the rise of modern capitalism in the West, Weber identified a link between religion and capitalism which was explained in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. He studied the religions of different parts of the world and found out that the rise of Protestantism was a significant factor in the rise of modern capitalism in the West.

Weber also identified the impact of science and bureaucracy in social development. Science led to the introduction of modern technology that has transformed the society from being traditional to modern. Bureaucracy on the other hand, has helped in organizing large number of people effectively

and thereby leading to economic growth and development. (Giddens, 1997:11).

2.4.3 Georg Simmel (1858-1918)

While Marx and Weber focused more on the larger issues like rationalization and capitalism, Georg Simmel concentrated his ideas more on the individual—how the changes in the social world has affected the individual. He was of the view that the major task of sociology should be to understand the interaction among the individuals. To do so Simmel identified some forms of interaction applicable to many social settings. He also identified some types of interactants. This concept of forms of interaction and types of interactants had great influence on symbolic interactionism.

One of the major works of Simmel is on the dyad and the triad. Dyad is the interaction between two persons whereas triad consists of the interaction among three persons. The interaction in a dyad is quite different from the interaction in a triad. When a third party enters a dyad to form a triad, there emerge some social possibilities that are absent in a dyad. For example, one of the members in a triad can play the role of a mediator between the other two or the other two members may unite and dominate him/her. (Ritzer, 2000: 28-29).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



1. Who are the major social thinkers associated with the development of German sociology?

2. Name the two thinkers that greatly influenced Marx.

3. Who wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*?

2.5 DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY IN BRITAIN

The British sociologists saw the market as positive force that could create order in the society. Therefore, they did not criticize the society rather they focused on the laws by which the society operated. They worked more like statisticians gathering facts and providing them to the government. In this process of gathering facts, the focus was on the individuals that made up the structures of the society. However, an important concept that was developed in British sociology in the late nineteenth century was social evolution. This concept was central to the ideas of the British sociologist Herbert Spencer. (ibid: 29-32).

2.5.1 Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Herbert Spencer was not interested in social reforms. He was rather interested in evolution. He believed that society should be allowed to evolve freely without any external control. Charles Darwin's works were reflected in Spencer's works. In fact, he is often referred to as Social

Darwinist. The theory of evolution along with the “survival of the fittest” was included in the works of Spencer. Spencer was of the view that while the fittest societies survived, the unfit ones eventually die off.

Spencer also saw society as an organism—an idea that he borrowed from biology. In an organism there are different parts that function individually but at the same time these individual functions ultimately contribute to the functioning of the organism as a whole. Similarly, in the context of society, Spencer explained that the different parts of the society function individually, but these individual functions ultimately maintain the system as a whole. Thus, each part of the society is interrelated and interdependent. (ibid: 32-33).

From whatever has been discussed till now in this unit, you have got a fairly good idea about how sociology was developed by different thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in France, Germany and Britain. Similarly, the Italian thinkers also contributed to the development of sociology, the key figure in this regard is Vilfredo Pareto. He is known for his elite theory of social change. You will learn more about his ideas and works in Module V of this paper.

2.6 SUMMING UP

In this unit, you have learnt how the different social thinkers gave shape to sociology. You have learnt how sociology developed in France, Germany, and Britain examining the major figures that contributed to the development of sociology. You have learnt that all the social thinkers were concerned about social order which led them to come up with their ideas and theories. Among the social thinkers that have been discussed in this unit, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim are often identified as the founding fathers of sociology.

Glossary:

1. Positivism: The application of the methods of natural sciences to the study of reality
2. Rationalization: By rationalization, Weber meant the organization of social and economic life on the basis of the principles of efficiency.
3. Protestantism: One of the major traditions of Christianity that rose as a protest against the Catholic Church.
4. Symbolic interactionism: Theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society.

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Saint Simon's and Comte's contribution to positivism in sociology.
2. Write briefly about Durkheim's contribution to the development of sociology.
3. How was Karl Marx's approach different from Max Weber's?
4. What do you mean by "social Darwinism"?
5. Write briefly about Georg Simmel's concept of dyad and triad.

2.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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MODULE II: KARL MARX

UNIT 3: THE SOCIOLOGY OF KARL MARX

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction

3.2. Objectives

3.3 Dialectical Materialism

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3.3.1.2 Feuerbach and Dialectical Materialism

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3.4 Laws of Dialectical Materialism

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3.5.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society

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3.5.4 Capitalist Society

3.6 Historical Materialism

3.6.1 Background

3.6.1.1 Marx and Democracy

3.6.1.2 Democracy and Communism

3.6.1.3 Marx's Interpretation of History

3.6.1.4 Sociological Approach to History

3.6.2 Postulate of Historical Materialism

3.6.2.1 Society as an Interrelated Whole

3.6.2.2 Changeable Nature of Society

3.6.2.3 Human Nature and Social Relationships

3.6.3 Theory

3.7 Summing Up

3.8 Questions

3.9 Recommended Readings and References

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you are going to study the important philosophical orientation of Karl Marx--Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism. While Dialectical Materialism is an essential prerequisite to understand the doctrine of Marxism, Marx's sociological thought is based on the doctrine of Historical Materialism. This unit will deal with the idea of Dialectics and discuss the "Laws of Dialectic Materialism". The Unit will give a brief sketch about philosophical and theoretical grounding on which historical materialism was rooted. Then we discuss about basic assumption upon which theory of historical materialism was built.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

This unit throws light on sociology of Karl Marx. As such it discusses the doctrine of Dialectical Materialism and theory of Historical Materialism. After studying it you should be able to

- Discuss the theory of Dialectical Materialism
- Outline the contribution of Dialectical Materialism in Marxism
- Explain Historical Materialism as Marxist Theory of society.

3.3 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Dialectical materialism is a philosophical tool to decipher reality and derived from Karl Marx's philosophy of social change. It is argued that Dialectical Materialism is a preliminary conceptual tool to understand the doctrine of Marxism. It provides philosophical foundation for the doctrine of Marxism.

3.3.1 Meaning and Background

The word 'Dialectics' is derived from the Greek word '*dialego*' which means to discourse or to debate. Hegel was one of the main proponents of dialectic. From the ancient times dialectics was used as a tool to perceive truth. This was possible with continuous debate and contradictions on an argument which ultimately give rise to truth. In ancient times, various philosophers believed that contradictions in thought and antagonistic opinions were most potent tool for arriving at truth. Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C) referred dialectic as "the art of deputation through interjection". Another predecessor of Aristotle, Greek philosopher Plato (427-397 B.C) also makes use of the term dialectic while developing his ideas. He evolved the concept of dialectic as a tool to analyse ideas. The Greek philosopher Socrates (470-390 B.C) much before Plato used dialectic to examine the postulates of both natural and social science. In the modern philosophy of Europe, the term 'dialectic' was applied by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) to understand "the impossibility of applying to objects of non-sensuous understanding of the principles which are found to govern phenomena of sense-experience."¹

There is another meaning attached to the term dialectics i.e. dialectics as a process. Thus, dialectics is a process of reason in ascending and descending forms. In ascending forms of dialectics, one is able explain the existence of a higher reality i.e. God whereas in descending form of dialectics, one can illuminate the manifestation of a higher reality in the phenomenal world of sense experience.²

3.3.1.1 Hegel's Influence on Marx's Dialectical Materialism

While describing the idea of dialectical materialism, Marx and Engels usually referred to Hegel. At the University of Berlin, Marx came in touch with the ideas of Hegel, post-Hegelian ideas which developed among

¹ IGNOU Course Material, "Unit 9: Dialectics and Social Change" retrieved from <http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/18932/1/Unit-9.pdf>

² Ibid.

Hegel's students after his death. The "Old Hegelians" continued to follow the idea preached by their master, while the "Young Hegelians," make a shift from Hegel's idea and find a different path but still they are working in the Hegelian tradition. "Young Hegelians" were critical about Hegel's philosophical discourse. The essences of Hegel's philosophical postulate were dialectic and idealism. Marx though accepted Hegel's dialectic but he was critical about the aspects of Hegelian understanding. As such, Marx and Engels extracted "rational kernel" from the Hegelian dialectics but they left apart Hegelian idealism and developed dialectic in a modern scientific way which is known as dialectical materialism.

*Marx in his Capital Voll mention that, "My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, ... the process of thinking which, under the name of 'the Idea,' he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos (creator) of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea.' With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought."*³

Hegel believed that reason embraced the whole universe, all its realms, the inorganic as well as organic nature as society was governed by dialectical idealism. In the natural world, development and change take place in a direct, unopposed and unhindered manner. It was peaceful process and has a necessity, but it is not possible in human world. According to Hegel, in human history development takes place in a dialectical process and in conflicting manner. Hegel believed that the form of a thing which appears before us is not the true form. Hegel pointed out that birth of a truth requires death of a given state of being. A given fact as they appear is only a partial truth. This is known as dialectical conception of reality which influenced Marx heavily.

³ Marx K (1873) "Capital Volume:1: Afterword to Second German Edition" retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/p3.htm> dated 2/1/2018

According to Hegel, each idea or thesis has its own antithesis or opposite idea. The thesis always represents a positive view whereas the antithesis represents a negative or opposite view. This eventually turn out that each statement of truth has its opposite statement, however, it does not mean that the antithesis is untrue, rather it helps to understand the thesis. The thesis and antithesis tend to collide, and it leads to synthesis, which is the combination of the both. As time flies, the synthesis becomes a fresh thesis along with its antithesis with eventual prospect for creating a new synthesis. Thus, the progress of knowledge goes on, which is known as Hegel's Dialectic Triad.

Hegel applied the understanding of dialectics to explain the progress of ideas in history. As already mentioned earlier, Marx was highly influenced by the Hegel's concept of dialectics, but Marx did not borrow Hegel's idealism i.e. how Hegel perceived truth in the progress of ideas, rather Marx believed that 'matter' is the crux of truth and hence truth can be reached via materialism. So, Marx's criticizes Hegel in "Communist Manifesto" as dialectics stands on its head and one must turn it up on the right way. The popular image of "turning Hegel upside down" or "standing Hegel on his head" is an illustration of Marx to Hegelian idealism. According to Hegel, idea is the foundation of society but for Marx it is the matter which governs the society. Marx staunchly believed that matter is the infrastructure of society and consciousness or ideas are superstructure. As a result, Marx's theory is referred as "Historical Materialism" and Hegel's idea as "Dialectical Idealism".

3.3.1.2 Feuerbach and Dialectical Materialism

Marx and Engel were influenced by Feuerbach's materialism. His ideas work as a bridge between Hegelian and Marxist dialectics (Staples, 2007) Feuerbach was also critical of Hegel like other young Hegelians. He criticizes the excessive emphasis of Hegel on consciousness and the spirit of the society. On the other hand, Feuerbach adopted materialist philosophy which helped him to move from Hegel's notion of idealism

and adopted materialism as the crux of human society. While criticizing Hegel, Feuerbach put emphasized on the role of religion in human society. He believed that god is simply a projection by people of their human essence onto an impersonal force. He said that real man should not follow abstract ideas like religion, but they are defied by a materialist philosophy in which people become their own highest object- ends in themselves. Marx followed Feuerbach and criticized Hegel's idealism. Marx borrowed -"inner kernel"- from Feuerbach's philosophy of materialism and evolved it into a more systematic scientific theory of materialism and cast aside its idealism and religious-ethical value ascribed to it. Feuerbach believed that ideas were a mere reflection of the material world and he found Hegel's belief baseless that idea leads to human progress. Although a staunch believer of materialism, Feuerbach was opposed to the categorization of materialism.

Marx and Engels started supporting Feuerbach. They follow Feuerbach not only because of his adoption of materialism but they were also influenced by Feuerbach's pragmatism. Hegel believed that social facts like wealth and state are ideas but in reality, they are material entities. Marx also felt that Hegel's idealism led to a conservative political thought. However, very soon they became critical to Feuerbach's ideas, and tried to restore the Hegelian dialectic which Feuerbach kept aside, but while doing so they did not follow the rigid Hegelian idealism, rather they strongly advocated for materialism.

“Hegel was an idealist. To him, the thoughts within his brain were not the more or less abstract pictures of actual things and processes, but, conversely, things and their evolution were only the realized pictures of the ‘Idea’, existing somewhere from eternity before the world was. This

*way of thinking turned everything upside down, and completely reversed the actual connection of things in the world.”*⁴

Although Marx and Engel adopted Feuerbach’s materialism, they felt that Feuerbach had focused non-dialectically on the material world. Feuerbach could not accommodate the dialectic in his doctrine of materialism. Finally, Marx argued that Feuerbach, like other philosophers, failed to emphasize praxis-practical activity-in particular, revolutionary activity (Wortmann 2007).⁵ As Marx put it:

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (cited in Tucker, 1970:109).

3.3.1.3 Marx’s Proposition of Dialectical Materialism:

Marx extracted two important elements from two thinkers to postulate his Dialectical Materialism. Marx borrowed the idea of Dialectic from Hegel and Materialism from Feuerbach. Then Marx fused these two elements together and postulated his distinctive orientation, dialectical materialism, which emphasized on dialectical relationships within the material world.

3.4 LAWS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Engels has postulated three different laws of dialectics in his work ‘*Dialectics of Nature*’ by reading the ideas from Hegel’s “*Science of Logic*”. Engels tries to explain these laws as the “**materialist dialectic**”. These are:

⁴Engels F (1880). “Socialism: Utopian and Scientific”, Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. 3, pp.95-151 retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/index.htm> dated 4/1/2018

⁵Wortmann, S. (2007). “**Praxis**” in George Ritzer (ed.), The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology. Oxford: Blackwell: 3612:3613

1. The law of the “unity and conflict of opposites”
2. The law of the “passage of quantitative changes into qualitative changes, and vice-versa”
3. The law of the “negation of the negation”⁶

3.4.1 Law of unity and conflict of opposites: Law of unity and conflict of opposites is the crux of dialectics in the materialist world. The change in the society is inevitable because of the law of unity and struggle of opposites. Here, unity is denoted as simultaneous presence of the “opposites” in the society. Unity does not mean the co-operation/co-ordination here, rather unity means their coexistence. If there is simultaneous presence of two different opposites in the same system, it will automatically create opposite ideas which are bound to conflict. This leads to contradiction and conflict in society.

The “unity of opposites” is an obvious result of the indivisible inter-relation between two opposite forces in the same system. According to Marx, these contradictions or opposition are inherent in a system. It is believed that contradictions of the opposites are the main cause for development of class consciousness. Progress makes its way only when struggle of opposites culminates. The “unity and conflict of opposites” is better understood when applied to successive mode of production in the history of mankind.

3.4.2 Law of transformation from quantity to quality: This law put emphasis about how society progresses and makes changes. The two terms in the law i.e. “quantity” and “quality” are core to this law. Quality manifests the characteristics of the object whereas quantity refers to the measurement index which gives the idea about the volume of an object. Marx elucidates that this law makes the prognosis that the unprecedented

⁶Engels, F. (1883). “Dialectics of Nature” is retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/EngelsDialectics_of_Nature_p_art.pdf

quantitative changes in a system will certainly bring about qualitative change in the system.

In fact, continuous occurrence of quantitative changes in every object of nature is a reality. When these quantitative changes reach to a saturation point which is determined by nature, after which a new stage is bound to emerge which will be qualitative and different from its previous stage. This new stage which is outcome of continuous quantitative change is known as qualitative change. For example: The freedom struggle for Independence in India is a continuous process which lead to various quantitative changes and when it culminated on 15th August 1947, India gained freedom from British imperialism. Thus, India's independence from British imperialism was a qualitative change.

3.4.3 Law of Negation of Negation: Hegel first coined the term “negation” with an idealist connotation attached to it. The notion of “negation” was used by Hegel to explain that realm of idea can make progress in society only with help of negation. But, Marx criticized Hegelian use of “negation” to understand the progress of the idea of thought. As such, Marx forwarded a materialist interpretation of “negation”. Finally, Marx argued that “negation” is an important tool to understand progress in materialistic society.⁷

The law of “negation of negation” elucidates how change in society takes place. Marxist ideas of social change are related to a linear theory of evolution. Here “negation” means a condition for positive advancement. Negation is a new stage in a system and it is a result of qualitative changes. The successive new stage in the society always tends to be progressive

⁷ IGNOU Course Material, “Unit 9: Dialectics and Social Change” retrieved from <http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/18932/1/Unit-9.pdf>

which is replaced by the regressive status quo. For example: India as a nation state was built only after the British imperialism. With the rise of Indian nationalism, administration of India made sweeping changes which are represented with institutions and organizations that work together for national development. As such, the successive development stage is always progressive in nature.

3.5 THE STUDY OF MODE OF PRODUCTION WITH LAWS OF DIALECTIC

The laws of dialectical materialism can be utilized in the study of mode of production in human history. Now, let us apply law of dialectics in understanding the successive modes of production in history of mankind which eventually causes social change.

3.5.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society

In human history, this is the simplest form of society and 'mode of production'. This type of society is characterized by very rudimentary relations of production which were based on co-operation and communal ownership of 'means of production'. During the primitive 'mode of production', new tools for agriculture were invented and even fire was made use of. According to law of dialectical materialism, the use of agricultural tools and fire are few examples of quantitative changes in the society. But even in primitive society the production system evolved in a very rudimentary state. The tools and techniques were gradually improved which led to accumulation of skills. The increasing productivity in the society with the help of the tools leads to fragmentation of communal structure of the society and people were divided into small units known as

family. The system of private property emerged, and families became the owners of 'means of production'. As a result, confrontation emerged between the existing 'relations of production' and this gave birth to exploiting classes in the society. This ultimately brought qualitative changes i.e. primitive-communal society turned into ancient mode of production. There was a conflict of opposites within the system between two newly formed classes which leads to destruction of primitive communal system. This led to the development of slavery stage in history of mankind.

3.5.2 Slave-Master Society

This society gave ample scope for the emergence of social inequality between rise of slave owning classes or masters and slaves. In this society, the 'relations of production' were based on the master's absolute control over both the 'means of production' and the slaves with their produce. Contradictions between slave owners and the slaves were prominent here. These contradictions between the two classes i.e., master and slave led to its qualitative change in the society. The 'negation' in slave owning society paved the way for feudal society. The feudal system is another example of 'negation of negation'. Feudal society emerged after the negation of 'slave-master society' which itself was an outcome of 'negation' of 'primitive communal society'.

3.5.3 Feudal Society

In feudal society, the 'relation of production' was quantitatively different from the previous society i.e. slave owning society. In feudal stage, rapid quantitative change took place in the 'forces of production' in the production system. It was in this stage where non-living objects were like

water, wind, etc. were converted into renewable source of energy. This stage was characterized by oppression of 'serfs' by the feudal lords and emergence of urban centres. Trade, commerce and manufacture began to flourish. The conflict of opposites in feudal stage was reflected in the conflict between the landless serfs and feudal lords. Ultimately, with the contradiction of opposites between two classes in feudal society led to its destruction and its negation led to the capitalist society.

3.5.4 Capitalist Society

This is based on private ownership of the means of production by small group of people who are known as capitalists or bourgeoisie. In this stage, the exploitative relation between capitalists and labourers facilitated tremendous growth of productive forces in the system. The inherent contradiction in capitalist mode of production is the incongruity between the private capitalist form of appropriation and the social character of production. In this stage, workers facilitate mass social production but unfortunately a small group of bourgeoisie garner the fruit of the former's labour. The workers are over exploited by the bourgeoisie in the production process which leads to their alienation. This is an obvious and fundamental economic contradiction of capitalist system. This rising conflict of opposites i.e. between bourgeoisie and workers leads to economic crises. As a result, class struggle takes place between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat leading to quantitative changes. The class consciousness of the proletariat class will bring revolution in the capitalist society. The capitalist mode of production will be ended through this revolution. This revolution will be accompanied with a qualitative change i.e., the emergence of the communist socio-economic formation.

The trajectory of new communist socio-economic formation has two phases: socialism and communism. Socialism is a stage, where the means of production will be commonly owned, not by private entity. In such a society the proletariat or the workers will have control over the means of production and they will distribute the produce equally among themselves according to their needs. This stage is often referred to as “Dictatorship of Proletariat”.⁸The second stage is communism. This is a stage of stateless society, where dialectics unfolds itself, which gives birth to a new social system which will be free from any contradictions. But, according to dialectics, contradiction is inevitable part of human society which brings social change in the society with subsequent progress. Under communism, there will be contradiction between human beings and their surrounding nature. Thus, three laws of dialectics are used in Marxian analysis of human history.

3.6 HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Historical Materialism is the Marxist theory of society. Marx differentiated the trajectory of various stages of economic development throughout history, which he referred to as historical materialism's "dialectical stages of development." This is clear in classical writings of Marx and Engel in the “Preface to a Contribution to the critique of Political Economy” (1859).

3.6.1 Background

When Marx was young, traces of French Revolution was removed from post-Napoleonic Europe through reactionary powers. Simultaneously, a

⁸ Draper, H. (1987). “The Dictatorship of the Proletariat in Marx and Engels”, retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/subject/marxmyths/hal-draper/article2.htm>

liberal movement in Germany was gaining ground. The French Revolution has given impetus to the rise of liberal movement in Germany. In the late 1830s, young Hegelians radically criticized the extreme changes in existing socio-political conditions. Marx took interest in Young Hegelians thought and formally associated with the group of Young Hegelians when he was studying in University of Berlin. Karl Marx became “new Hegel” among them. But Marx had strong anti-Hegelian elements. Marx was also influenced by B. De Spinoza and A.Hume which helped him to build a strong concept on democracy.⁹

3.6.1.1 Marx and Democracy

Marx was highly influenced by various ideological currents of Europe in the early and mid-nineteenth century which helped him to form his intellectual heritage. These included the slogans of the French Revolution and the basic assumptions of democratic faith.

3.6.1.2 Democracy and Communism

The revolutions in England, France and America shaped Marx’s radical view on democracy. From these events in history, Marx imagined that a transitory stage of proletarian democracy will culminate into a stateless society or communism. To Marx, communism is a stage where goods are commonly owned and can be accessed by everyone. European thinkers like B.de Spinoza, L. Feuerbach inspired him to become communist from liberal.

3.6.1.3 Marx’s Interpretation of History

Marx hardly had an open discussion on “Historical Materialism”. To Marx, historical materialism is not philosophical system, rather it was socio-historical studies. Marx borrowed the framework of Historical Materialism from Hegel. Like Hegel, Marx too believed that the history of mankind was a simple and non-repetitive process. Marx believed that the laws guiding

⁹ IGNOU Course Material, “UNIT:6, Historical Materialism”, retrieved from <http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/18927/1/Unit-6.pdf>

the principles of the historical trajectories can be traced. But Marx found fault with the ideas of Hegelian notion, so Marx built a new system of thought. As such, Marx traced each historical event of human society based on materialism.

3.6.1.4 Sociological Approach to History

While formulating theory of historical materialism, Marx refuted Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy which is based on idealism. Marx built Feuerbach's 'naturalism' and developed a sociological approach to historical phenomena based on humanist ethics. Marx's theory did not consider the metaphysical explanations of reality outlined in the writings of Hegel and subsequently by his successor. As such, this theorization of Marx has become one of the most critically acclaimed sociological theories of society.

3.6.2 Postulate of Historical Materialism

"Historical Materialism" is a sociological theory of human progress. This is a unique systematic scientific theory of social change. The inherent characteristics of this theory are contradiction and revolution in each stage of evolution. Before discussing Historical Materialism, let us throw light on Marx's views on social system and men's natural instinct.

3.6.2.1 Society as an Interrelated Whole

Marx holds the view that society is an interrelated whole. The elements of society like social groups, institutions, beliefs, doctrines are interrelated. As such, he studied their interrelation without treating them as separate entities.

3.6.2.2 Changeable Nature of Society

Marx believed that changes are part and parcel in human society and these changes are produced by internal conflicts and contradictions.

3.6.2.3 Human Nature and Social Relationships

Historical Materialism is also built on another assumption. Marx believed that there is no permanent form of human nature but revolutionary practices in human are inherent. Human conduct towards an event is not passive; rather it carries the power to revolt against the situation whenever necessary.

3.6.3 Theory

As discussed earlier, Marx and other philosophers of his generation were profoundly influenced by the philosophical tradition of Hegel. Hegel elaborated that dialectics can be applied in understanding development of human consciousness. The evolution of human thought process always takes place in linear manner i.e. from simple to complex. Hegel states that the human consciousness has developed from rudimentary attempts in order to understand various elements of nature which ultimately turn to be complex forms of self-awareness and intangible thoughts in human mind. Similarly, dialectic helps in making of the history, whereby the inherent contradiction between two groups of a given stage paves the way for a new stage. Marx's notion of history was similar to that of Hegel, i.e. inherent contradiction exists in the system, but Hegel's view on social change is different from Marx as Hegel believed in idealism, whereas Marx believed in materialism. To simplify, Hegel perceived that ideas are core theoretical tool which can be related to human world and history can be better analysed with the notion of idea. On the contrary, Marx perceived that the fundamental truth of a human society depends on how human beings are structured to satisfy their material needs. Hegel's philosophy is grounded in concepts which are very abstract in nature and he even traced the succession of history based on ideas. Marx on the other hand traced history as a series of economic systems or modes of production. The economic structure in different period of human history is ordered to satisfy human material needs, which simultaneously creates antagonistic relationship between various classes of people, which ultimately make way for the

development of new social order. His historical materialism is based on real man. History had been analysed from materialistic point of view. As man survives only when interaction with nature continues, nature-man interaction is indispensable. Unlike other animals, human beings do not simply collect food from nature, but they also produce the means for survival or means of subsistence. The necessity to produce is fundamental to human life in a society. In the process of social production, men are compelled to enter specific relations even against their will. These relations of production give rise to definite stage of human history. This relation of production constitutes the economic structure of society as the base, on which legal and political structure evolves which is the superstructure. And this superstructure corresponds to definite forms of social consciousness. Hence the general character of political, social and spiritual processes of life is ultimately determined by the base or the mode of production. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production come into conflict with the existing relations of production giving rise to class struggle. The two types of classes emerge in society i.e. haves and have not. So, conflict takes place between these classes. In the course of time, class struggle leads to social revolution or total transformation of society. For Marx, revolution was a historic necessity as revolution has some crucial functions to play in the society.

3.7 SUMMING UP

In this Unit on Marx, we studied Marx's most philosophically profound theory- *dialectic materialism*. The unit is introduced with the concept of dialectics with a few definitions by various scholars. Subsequently, the fundamental laws of dialectics were discussed. Then, Historical Materialism was explained as Marxist theory of society. Marx believed that the social, cultural and political phenomena in a system can be understood with materialistic interpretation. The mode of production

determines various social processes. Historical Materialism is a “dialectical theory of human progress”.

Glossary

1. Dialectics: The philosophical tool to derive truth while debating.
2. Dialectical Materialism: It is the Marxian theory that explains that social change occurs due to inherent contradiction between two opposite forces in the social system.
3. Historical Materialism: It is the Marxist theory of society which differentiates various economies throughout history
4. Negation: A new stage which is a product of a qualitative change and it is a progressive change to replace an old stage.

3.8 QUESTIONS

1. Define Dialectical Materialism?
2. Define qualitative change or quantitative change in relation to the law of dialectics?
3. Explain various mode of production in human history with the help of law of dialectics?

4. How Hegel's idealism shape Historical Materialism of Karl Marx?
5. Explain "Historical Materialism is a dialectical theory of human progress".

3.9 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4: PRE-CAPITALIST ECONOMIC FORMATIONS, CAPITALISM AND COMMODITY PRODUCTION

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objectives

4.3 Stages of Human History

4.3.1 Primitive Communism

4.3.2 Asiatic Mode of Production

4.3.3 Ancient Mode of Production

4.3.4 Feudal Mode of Production

4.3.5 Capitalist Mode of Production

4.3.6 Socialist Mode of Production

4.3.7 Communist Mode of Production

4.4 Capitalism

4.4.1 Origin of Capitalism

4.4.2 Marxian Analysis of Capitalism

4.4.3 Features of Capitalism

4.4.3.1 Goods are produced for sale rather than own use

4.4.3.2 The capacity to do useful work or labour power is bought and sold in a market

4.4.3.3 The use of money as a medium of exchange

4.4.3.4. The production process is controlled by the capitalists or their managers

4.4.3.5 Financial decisions are controlled by the capitalist entrepreneur

4.4.3.6 Individual capitalists compete for control over the labour and finance

4.5 Commodity Production

4.5.1 Simple Commodity Production

4.5.2 Capitalist Commodity Production

4.5.3 Socialist Commodity Production

4.6 Summing Up

4.7 Questions

4.8 Recommended Readings and References

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will deal with stages of human history in relation to mode of production. The unit deals with capitalism and how capitalism flourished with Industrial Revolution. It also throws light on Marxian analysis of capitalism and discusses the characteristics of capitalism. Finally, it also explains commodity production as simple exchange system in human history. It discusses three types of commodity production.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Analyse stages of human history starting from the simplest mode of production to complex mode of production;
- Define capitalism and its features;
- Outline the contribution of Marx in defining capitalism;
- Define commodity production and its types.

4.3 STAGES OF HUMAN HISTORY

Marx sketched the stages of human history based on mode of production or the economic regimes. Following are the different modes of production as given by Marx:

4.3.1 Primitive Communism: This stage is characterized by static society where there is absence of private property in land and which can be termed as “classless society” or “egalitarian society”. A traditional tribal structure was the order of the day. This type of society was found around Stone Age. During this period, human beings lived individually and fed themselves from the nature. They believed in subsistence living. Agricultural production was in a very rudimentary state which was practised by using

Palaeolithic and Neolithic tools. Rigorous ritualized social control over the productive forces was observed during this stage.

4.3.2 Asiatic Mode of Production: Asiatic mode of production was absent in Western society. It was found in river basin civilizations like the Indus valley, the Yellow river valley (Chinese), the Euphrates river valley (Mesopotamian) and the Nile river valley (Egyptian). The Asiatic society led to class formation in human history for the first time. Here, dominant powerful group of people overpowered other settled or unsettled communities through violent means and extracted economic and labour surplus.

4.3.3 Ancient Mode of Production: This stage is quite similar to the Asiatic Mode of Production which developed within the later stages of the Asiatic Mode of Production. The difference between the two stages was that within this stage property was the direct possession of individuals (total emergence of slavery). At this stage, there was also a shift of ideologies where the ruling class no longer saw themselves as gods but as the direct descendants of gods. This stage was economically supported by agriculture and there was also emergence of trade and further technological invention such as invention of the wheel. In this stage, slaves were exploited by their masters.

4.3.4 Feudal Mode of Production: Feudalism emerged because of wealth accumulation. This wealth accumulation was in the form of property. This age was characterised by the possession of land. In addition to the land, feudal lords or chieftains also possessed human beings as farm labourers or serfs who worked on the lands of chieftains/feudal lords. Barbarism and exploitation was very rampant. Within this stage the lords, noblemen and aristocrats exploited the peasants and serfs.

4.3.5 Capitalist Mode of Production: The emergence of modern industrial society in the West marked the beginning of capitalist stage. Here the state recognised contract guarantees the possession of private property in terms

of objects and services, and the primary form of exploitation is wage labour. Here, the bourgeoisie or capitalist class exploit the proletariat or working class.

4.3.6 Socialist Mode of Production: Socialist mode of production is marked by a system where instead of aiming at profit generation, production is carried out to directly produce use-value, precisely to directly satisfy human needs, or economic demands. Here, the state owns the means of production and distribute it equally among its members. In this stage of human history, state acts as a welfare state.

4.3.7 Communist Mode of Production: This utopian view on production system of human history was envisaged by Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels believed that a communist society would be less about management of things and more about of the management of people. They perceived that with the abolition of class differences in communism, there would only be one voice and one understanding. The exploitation of certain groups within society would end and hence there would be no situations of rich and poor.

4.4 CAPITALISM

Capitalism is the social system which is based on private ownership of means of production with profit being the main motive. In this system, capital is the dominant means of production. Here, means of production are owned by a small minority group of people which are referred to as “bourgeoisie” or capitalist class. On the other hand, most of the people in society sell their labour for which they earn a wage or salary. These people are referred to as “proletariat” or working class. B.R.Scott (2011) holds the view that “Capitalism is an indirect system of governance for economic relationships.”

Marx believed that the capitalism is an exploitative system in human history. It leads to polarization of classes. This means that social and

economic gap between the bourgeoisie or the owners of the means of production and the proletariat or the working class keeps increasing. The concept of class conflict is very important in Marxian analysis of capitalism.

The Macmillan Dictionary of Modern Economics (1986) defines capitalism as a:

“Political, social, and economic system in which property, including capital assets, is owned and controlled for the most part by private persons. Capitalism contrasts with an earlier economic system, feudalism, in that it is characterized by the purchase of labour for money wages as opposed to the direct labour obtained through custom, duty or command in feudalism.... Under capitalism, the price mechanism is used as a signalling system which allocates resources between uses. The extent to which the price mechanism is used, the degree of competitiveness in markets, and the level of government intervention distinguish exact forms of capitalism.”¹⁰

4.4.1 Marxian Analysis of Capitalism

The theory of capitalist society by Marx is based on his idea of basic instinct of human beings. To Marx, human beings produce from the raw materials provided by nature for their survival. This means that people have to toil to survive. In order to survive, they produce their basic needs such as food to eat, clothes to wear and shelter to live in and other basic necessities that permit them to live. But while doing so a human beings work together with their fellow beings in order to produce for survival. Capitalism is such an order in human history which helps human beings to produce abundantly.

As George Ritzer puts, “Capitalism is a structure that erects barriers between an individual and the production process, the products of that

¹⁰ Macmillan Dictionary of Modern Economics, 3rd Ed., 1986, p. 54 is retrieved from <https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Publication%20Files/07-037.pdf>

process, and other people; ultimately, it even divides the individual himself or herself. This is the basic meaning of the concept of alienation.”¹¹ Thus, alienation is a process in Capitalist society which separates human beings from what they produce. Alienation occurs due to the emergence of two antagonistic classes in capitalism. Bourgeoisie who owns the production process, the products, and the labour time of those who work for them, exploit the proletariat--those who sell their labour to survive. Marx was concerned with the structure of capitalism for its oppressive and exploitative nature of bourgeois class. As such, he wants to emancipate the proletariat from this oppressive structure of capitalism. He was convinced that the conflicts and contradictions within capitalist system would lead to destruction of capitalist system. He dreamed of a socialist state where oppressive structure of capitalism will end. The capitalists have huge reservoir of resources at their disposal to stop the growth of socialism, but according to Marx, capitalism can be overpowered by proletariat when they become “class for itself” from “class in itself”. He believed that in a socialist society human being would be no longer alienated.

4.4.2 Origin of Capitalism

Tom Bottomore (1983) aptly writes, “the origin of capitalism can be traced back to growth of merchant capital and external trade or to the spread of monetary transactions within feudalism via commuting of feudal rent and services.”¹² Thus capitalism was characterized by overseas trade and colonization with rapid industrialization and mechanization. The Industrial Revolution in Europe saw a rapid growth of technology which ultimately gave rise to capitalists’ economies. The Industrial Revolution

¹¹Ritzer, George (2012). **“Modern Sociological Theory”** Mc- Graw Hill International Edition, Rawat Publication.

¹²Bottomore(1983) “The Dictionary of Marxist Thought”, Blackwell Publication, pp.73 is retrieved from <https://gruppegrundrisse.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/bottomore-a-dictionary-of-marxist-thought.pdf>

phase also lead to the growth of *laissez faire* ideology in the West. Laissez fare economy always tries to minimize and gradually eliminate the control of state over the production system especially on the market where commodity exchange takes place. The middle phase of capitalism was characterized by small enterprise owned individually with minimal state participation and technological advancement that leads to rapid economic growth. Bottomore (1983) termed subsequent phases of capitalism as 'Monopoly Capitalism', 'Finance Capital' and 'Late Capitalism', etc. The monopoly (finance) capitalist phase is said to date from around the turn of 20th century when large-scale industrial processes became possible with the advent of the Second Industrial Revolution.¹³

4.4.3 Features of Capitalism

Bottomore (1983) listed few features of capitalism as a mode of production in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. They are:

4.4.3.1 Goods are produced for sale rather than own use: In capitalism, goods are not only produced for self-consumption, but they are produced for sale in market. In primitive or feudal society, farmers grew crops for their own use, only a small surplus is available for sale. This was because technology was not much advanced and only family labour was used in production. But in capitalism, a huge labour force works together in production system with division of labour and technology. Goods are produced in large quantities for sale in market. For example: Clothes are produced in factories not only for self-consumption of producers, but it is for sale in the market.

4.4.3.2 The capacity to do useful work or labour power is bought and sold in the market: In capitalist society labour power is exchanged for money wages for a specified task (piece rate) and for a period (time rate). In

¹³ Bottomore(1983) *The Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Blackwell Publication, pp.73 is retrieved from <https://gruppegrundrisse.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/bottomore-a-dictionary-of-marxist-thought.pdf>

ancient mode of production labourers were compelled to surrender their labour under force and intimidation. On the contrary, in capitalist mode of production, the condition of the labourers is better, where they enter into a contract with employers. Although, unlike in the earlier stages of human history, workers are not forced to work like slaves and serfs, but the nature of economic situation compels them to work for the bourgeoisie.

4.4.3.3 The use of money as a medium of exchange: Money is a well-accepted social bond that ties together various elements in the capitalist society. This gives tremendous power to the banks and other financial intermediaries to exert control over the market.

4.4.3.4. The production process is controlled by the capitalists or their managers: The capitalists control the working class and the production system. They decide what to produce, when to produce, what raw materials are to be used in production system and the way output is to be marketed.

4.4.3.5 Financial decisions are controlled by the capitalist entrepreneur: The capitalists also decide about the price of products, wages of the workers, the amount of financial investments and many more.

4.3.3.6 Individual capitalists compete for control over the finance and the labour force: The whole idea of capitalism is to produce goods and services for profit generation through sale. Hence the entire bourgeoisie are bound to be competing to accumulate more and more profit. This leads to the concentration and centralization of capital in a few hands.

4.5 COMMODITY PRODUCTION

Engels's Preface to his edition of *Capital* Volume III has first used the term commodity production. In common parlance, commodity means products of labour made for exchange. As such, production for exchange

in the market is commodity production. In other words, it is a form of production system that exists in human society in which goods are produced with labour not for self-consumption but for exchange.

There are three forms of commodity production in the history of mankind: simple commodity production, capitalist mode of commodity production and the socialist commodity production.

4.5.1 Simple Commodity Production

Simple commodity production is popularly known as "petty commodity production" which is derived from the German original phrase *einfache Warenproduktion*. The disintegration of primitive communal structure leads to the emergence of simple commodity production. The commodity production was first carried out between different communes. However, the system of exchange within communes took place with the gradual sophistication of forces of production and when individuals started production of food crops without depending on nature to produce for them. The first mode of exchange between the communes was barter system which means products were exchanged for products. But with the passage of time, money played an important role in commodity exchange. Simple commodity production was primarily based on individual's private ownership of the means of production and the individual's labour. The products of simple commodity production are also very simple like agricultural products, handloom and handicrafts products, etc. Historically, the simple commodity production laid the foundation for the development of capitalist production. The condition of production and working hours of a labour differed from commodity producer to producer. But the market value of same kind of commodities was constant. This gave rise to polarization. In other words, this means that a large quantity of commodities which were eventually converted into capital could be owned by small group of people whereas many people had to go penniless and they ultimately had to sell their labour in labour market. V.I. Lenin characterized commodity as an economic system whereby "*goods are*

*produced by separate, isolated producers, each specializing in the making of some one product, so that to satisfy the needs of society it is necessary to buy and sell products (which, therefore become commodities) in the market” (Lenin: 1958-65)¹⁴.*The polarization of the simple commodity producers in feudal society sowed the seeds of capitalism in the stages of human history.

4.5.2 Capitalist Commodity Production

The capitalist production is more complex than simple commodity production. As in capitalist mode of production, the means of production is privately owned by the bourgeoisie, they try to exploit the wage labourers by increasing surplus value. Capitalist system of production is regarded as the highest stage of the development in terms of production of commodity. This system not only creates commodities out of means of production but even converts labour power into commodity. Capitalist mode of production tries to reveal the relationship between the exploiters or the bourgeoisie and the exploited or the proletariat which is merely an exploitative relationship based on economy. The small-scale cottage industries and marginal farmers who satisfy personal needs constitute simple commodity production whereas in capitalist enterprise many labourers sell their labour and work together under the bourgeoisie who exploit them and are always driven by profit motive. In simple commodity production, the basic contradiction is between private and social labour whereas in capitalist commodity production, the contradiction is in between the social character of production and the private, capitalist form of appropriation.

4.5.3 Socialist Commodity Production

The overthrow of capitalism, however, does not necessarily put an end to the commodity production. Even in a socialist society, there will be

¹⁴Lenin, V. I. (1958-65). ‘Poln. sobr. Soch” 5th ed., Vol. 1., Moscow, p. 86-87 is retrieved from

<https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Commodity+Production>

production and exchange of commodity. However, the production of goods in a socialist society differs radically from capitalist commodity production. In socialism, the commodity production takes place in systematic manner which completely changes the socio-economic order of the social system. Such a social system does not reflect any kind of exploitation of workers by the capitalists. The anarchism which stifled the earlier system of commodity exchange has been removed from production system. Socialism is mainly characterized by absence of labour power exchange which is always marked by exploitation. The public ownership is the major essence of socialism which is an outcome of the direct relationship between labour power and means of production.

4.6 SUMMING UP

To sum up what you have learnt in this Unit, let us look at the following points:

- 1) Marx traced the stages of human history based on economic regimes or based on mode of production.
- 2) While describing Capitalism, Marx explained how capitalist relations can reproduce themselves. In doing so, a growing quantity of wealth accumulates in the hands of the capitalist class, and an ever-widening gulf opens up between the rich and the poor – between the capitalists and the labourers. To Marx, profit is the main motive of capitalism.
- 3) Commodity production is almost absent in primitive society. Private ownership and commodity production began to emerge in the wake of the development of social productive forces, social division of labour and conditions for commodity exchange.

Glossary:

1. **Commodity:** The products which are produced with the labour of the workers and exchanged in the market are called commodities. A commodity has two values: use value and exchange value.
2. **Commodity Production:** Production for exchange in the market is commodity production.
3. **Mode of Production:** The actual relationship between the relations of production and the forces of production.
4. **Forces of Production:** Raw materials, tools, techniques, etc. which are required in production process.
5. **Relations of Production:** Social Relationships that directly or indirectly arise out of the production of material conditions of life.
6. **Commune:** A group of people living together sharing property and responsibilities.
7. **Surplus Value:** The excess of value produced by the workers with their labour over the

4.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the stages of mode of production in pre-capitalist society?
2. Define Capitalism. Explain its features.
3. What led to the growth of capitalism in the West?
4. What is commodity production? How is simple commodity production different from capitalist commodity production?

4.8 RECOMMENDED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 5: CLASS AND CLASS CONFLICT

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Objectives

5.3 Marxian Interpretation of Class and its significance in society

5.3.1 Economic Regime in the History of Mankind and Emergence of Classes

5.3.2 Classes in Capitalism

5.3.2.1 Bourgeoisie

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5.3.2.3 Landlords

5.3.2.4 Petty Bourgeoisie

5.3.2.5 Lumpen Proletariat

5.3.2.6 Peasantry and Farmers

5.3.3 Class and Class Conflict

5.4 Class Struggle and Revolution

5.5 Theory of Alienation

5.6 Summing Up

5.7 Questions

5.8 Recommended Readings and References

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit will throw light on Marx's interpretation of class. It will elucidate the reason behind the class conflict in every economic regime. We will also try to analyse how class conflict impact on the history of development of society. Then we will discuss the classes in capitalism. Finally, the Unit will discuss about social revolution which Marx envisages through his writings.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define the concept of Class;
- Analyse class formation and various economic structures and their inherent contradiction which leads to class struggle;
- Discuss theory of alienation and social revolution.

5.3 MARXIAN INTERPRETATION OF CLASS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN SOCIETY

Marxist interpretation of human history as various economic regimes can best understood with the help of social class, class structure and changes in the structure.

The word “class” is derived from Latin term “classis” which means a division of people. The concept of class struggle is one of the major contributions towards sociology. From the beginning of human existence in community, society has been divided into classes because of its absolute dependence on division of labour which precipitated dominance among the ruling class and subordination among subjugated class. Marx’s classic statement i.e. “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle” is the core of his all theoretical work about enquiry on class.

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Free man and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeymen, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common run of the classes.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Marx and Engels (1848). “*Manifesto of Communist Party*”, Marx and Engels Selected Work, Vol.1, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1969, pp.98-137. retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

Marx recognises class as a unique element of capitalist system. Throughout his works, he has used the term 'Social Class'. The concept of class structure is very lucidly explained by Marx in his famous work Capital Volume III (1894). Under the title of "Social classes", based on their sources of income, Marx has distinguished three different classes.¹⁶

- (i) The labourers who earn their living by selling their own labour.
- (ii) The capitalists who earn their living through profit made from surplus value. In simple words, they own the capital.
- (iii) The landowners who own the land and lease out to make earning from it.

The society is tend to be divided into two major classes namely "the haves" which are also known as "bourgeoisie" in academic milieu and other is "the have-nots", which are known as "proletariat". According to Marxist understanding, class war is inevitable between the oppressor and the oppressed. Both the oppressor and the oppressed are major contenders in the social drama of conflict. Every historical period has its own sets of contenders or two hostile groups. In addition to recognition of the origin of class, Marx was even more interested in the future of class since that future relates to the emergence of collective class consciousness. The class consciousness is nothing but the consciousness among the members of a class about sharing common interests. It is an essential prerequisite of class struggle which is often laid by the oppressed class against the ruling class. Marx made a distinction between "class-in-itself" and "class-for-itself". "Class-in-itself" means the class which lacks class consciousness. On the other hand, when "class-in-itself" gains its consciousness, it is converted into "class-for- itself".

The class antagonism is very acute in capitalist mode of production because of organized working-class movement. Marx viewed that the

¹⁶Bottomore (1983) "The Dictionary of Marxist Thought", Blackwell Publication, retrieved from <https://gruppegrundrisse.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/bottomore-a-dictionary-of-marxist-thought.pdf>

capitalist system will be replaced by socialism through a class conflict between the capitalists (the owners of mode of production) and the industrial labourers. Karl Marx referred to this violent change as “Revolution”. The antagonism between the two classes i.e. the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are because of the contradiction between relation of production and forces of production. In capitalist society, in spite of flourishing economy and economic growth, poverty and pauperization is widespread among large number of people. Here, wealth is accumulated only by handful of people i.e. the bourgeoisie. The exploitative and unequal relations of production in capitalist society contribute towards this crisis situation and leads to unequal distribution of production among people. This will ultimately lead to Revolution when working class gains its consciousness that they are being exploited. The proletariat which constitute the vast majority of population in capitalist society will eventually become “a social entity aspiring for the seizure of power and transformation of social relations”. Marx believed that the emancipation of the proletariat is nothing but diminishing of pauperization of the masses.

Marx envisages that proletariat revolution will usher equality and ultimately put an end to the antagonistic character of capitalist society by ending the classes. This means that the system of private property will be abolished, and proletariat will commonly own the means of production leading to equal distribution of the goods among the people according to their need. Marx refers to this stage as the dictatorship of the proletariat. This will ultimately establish communist social order in society leading to a stateless society.

5.3.1 Economic Regime in the History of Mankind and Emergence of Classes

The stages of human history were differentiated by Marx based on their respective modes of production or economic regime. The Asiatic, the Ancient, the feudal and the bourgeoisie or capitalist were the four major

modes of production as classified by Marx. Marx postulated that Communism will be the last stage of economic regime in human history. You have already learnt about the stages of human history in the previous unit. Let us quickly recapitulate the stages here:

1. Primitive Communism: This stage was marked by a “classless society” or “egalitarian society”. This mode of production consisted in the use of agricultural tools of Palaeolithic and Neolithic age for subsistence living. There was absence of private ownership and the resources of the society were communally owned.

2. Asiatic Mode of Production: The production system in the Asiatic Mode of Production gave birth to classes in the society. Here, those who own the resources and the productive system with coercive power, extracted social surplus.

3. Ancient Mode of Production: Within this stage property became the direct possession of individuals (total emergence of slavery). At this stage, there was also a shift of ideologies where the ruling class no longer saw themselves as gods but the direct descendants of gods. In this stage, the two antagonistic classes were formed by the masters and the slaves. The slaves were exploited by their masters.

4. Feudal Mode of Production: This stage was characterised by the possession of land by feudal lords who eventually became powerful with the accumulation of land as capital. In addition to land, the feudal lords also possessed the labour of peasants or serfs. The serfs are oppressed in the hands of their chieftains or feudal lords. Barbarism and exploitation was very rampant.

5. Capitalist Mode of Production: The profit making through surplus value by the capitalist is the basis of this economic regime. Here, the bourgeoisie or capitalist class exploited the proletariat or working class.

6. Socialist Mode of Production: Socialist mode of production means a system which satisfies every basic need of human beings through equal distribution of goods and services and it does not aim at generating profit. Here, the state owns the means of production and distribute it equally among its members.

7. Communist Mode of Production: This is a utopian view which was perceived by Marx and Engels. In this mode of production there would be a classless and stateless society. The exploitation of certain groups within society would end and there would be no different classes of rich and poor.

5.3.2 Classes in Capitalism

To understand capitalism, class analysis and study of class struggle is very important. Marx defined and arranged classes based on two variables: (i) the hard toil of the labourers and (ii) the authority over the means of production. These two factors govern social relationships in capitalism. The two main classes in capitalism are: 1) the bourgeoisie and 2) the proletariat. However, along with the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, few other secondary classes also exist in capitalism. They are petty bourgeoisie, landlords, peasants and lumpen proletariat.

5.3.2.1 Bourgeoisie: In the capitalist system, the bourgeoisie owns the capital. To make profit, the bourgeoisie reap surplus value by exploiting the labourer class. Historically, the bourgeoisie emerged in medieval Europe, with rapid industrialization and trade. With the formation of the Bourgeois class, the feudalism ended in Europe and society turned to be progressive in nature. The bourgeoisie helped undermine the feudal and hierarchical order of contemporary Europe and contributed to the creation of a progressive society. The industrial capitalists formed the bourgeoisie class, whose rapid economic actions brought change to the society. Both politically and ideologically, this class began to rule the others in Britain by the mid-nineteenth century. Their main motive was the generation of profit through surplus value which was extracted by exploiting the labourers.

5.3.2.2 Proletariat: The proletariat do not own the means of production. The only thing that they own is their own labour which they have to sell in order to earn their living. In the process, they are exploited by the bourgeoisie whose only motive is generate more and more profit. With the downfall of aristocracy in later middle ages, those who work for the aristocracy lost their livelihood. The rapid population growth was responsible for unemployment and increased forced labour in few regions. While some of these people subsisted in allied economy like handicraft production, but such production system soon got undermined by rapid industrialization. A large section of landless and propertyless people emerged because of these sweeping changes, who had no choice but to join the labour force, leading to the rise of the proletariat.

5.3.2.3 Landlords: In addition to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Marx mentions about landlords as a class in Britain who own land. They were generally royal families in Britain. According to Marxist understanding, the landlords were once authoritative and dominant group but gradually lost their pivotal role in the organization and production structure of the society. In order to retain their privileged position in the society these landlords tried to capitalise their estates. Unlike the capitalists, they did not use the labour of workers to accumulate wealth, rather they used their land to accumulate wealth or capital.

5.3.2.4 Petty Bourgeoisie: The petty bourgeoisie constitute "the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant" (Giddens and Held, 1982:24). Unlike the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie own small property. They do not have adequate funds to employ workers/employees under them to earn profit. Marx considers this class to be 'conservative' and 'reactionary' in nature. Few Marxists consider them as a responsible for the rise of fascism during 1920s and 1930s.

5.3.2.5 Lumpen-proletariat: Marx considered this class as a "dangerous class". Bottomore argued that the members of this group are "ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, vagabonds, discharged soldiers,

discharged jailbirds, pickpockets, brothel keepers, rag-pickers, beggars" etc. (Bottomore, 1983: 292). Marx did not consider this group as important in terms of potential for creating socialism or to bring any social change.

5.3.2.6 Peasantry and Farmers: Marx considered the peasant or farmers as a muddled and scattered section. They do not possess the ability to fight a struggle for social change. Marx also asserted that this class would fade away in the pace of capitalism. Marx assumed that the peasantry section would eventually join the proletariat class. The successful peasants or farmers might become landowners or capitalist farmers.

5.3.3 Class and Class Struggle

According to Marx, the base or the foundation of the society is the economy or the mode of production. As such, society will automatically change with change in the base. If the 'mode of production' is changed then it will lead to the changes in 'forces of production' and 'relations of production'. However, in the primitive communal stage, since there was no surplus production, inequality and exploitation was absent in it. Here, means of production was owned communally. With the development of forces of production, productivity was increased. This ultimately changed the relations of production with private ownership of means of production. As such, a long history of exploitation, inequality and class struggle began with the downfall of the primitive communal stage. And this became a never-ending phenomenon in different stages of human history. As Marx pointed out quite aptly that "the history of hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle. This means that class conflict was inevitable with the emergence of exploitative production system and private ownership of means of production. According to Marx, the history of class struggle began with slave owning society and continued through feudal society to ultimately culminate in capitalist society. Class antagonism acquires the most acute dimensions in the capitalist system. The working class becomes conscious of their exploitation, and their movement begins to get a concrete shape to subsequently reach its peak. Marx put forward that class conflict between the class of capitalists and the class of workers would culminate in

a revolution leading to the collapse of the capitalist system and its replacement with socialism.

5.4 CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION

The theories of Henri de Saint-Simon and vague idea of socialism influenced Marx to shape the concept of class struggle in human history. Marx believed that class struggle is the fundamental fact of social evolution. In Marx's view, class struggle can be elucidated with the help of dialectic nature of history or an economic regime. "The bourgeoisie produces its own grave-diggers. The fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" (*The Communist Manifesto*) because

*"the bourgeois relations of production are the last contradictory form of the process of social production, contradictory not in the sense of an individual contradiction, but of a contradiction that is born of the conditions of social existence of individuals; however, the forces of production which develop in the midst of bourgeois society create at the same time the material conditions for resolving this contradiction. With this social development the prehistory of human society ends."*¹⁷

Marx envisaged that the class consciousness among the proletariat and the inherent contradiction in the capitalist economic regime would lead to socialism through a pre-determined violent revolution. According to Marx, the proletariat occupy the lowest strata of the social stratification. He believed that emancipation of the proletariat is emancipation of humankind. Marx believed that the revolution of the proletariat would be different from all the past revolutions which history has so far witnessed. The proletariat revolution will make way for classless society by destroying the inherent

¹⁷ Marx and Engels (1848). "*Manifesto of Communist Party*", Marx and Engels Selected Work, Vol.1, Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1969, pp.98-137. retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

contradiction in capitalist society. This stage is also known as “Dictatorship of Proletariat” which will lead to the end of all kinds of exploitation and inequality in the social system. This will also end all kinds of social classes and class conflict in future. According to Marx, the violent revolution by proletariat will be the essential prerequisite for the establishment of communism and automatically liberty will flourish.

5.5 THEORY OF ALIENATION

Lexically alienation means “the feeling that you have no connection with the people around you”¹⁸. The concept of Alienation was widely used by political philosophers like J.J. Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and Karl Marx. It was however Karl Marx who gave sociological meaning to the concept of alienation. A systematic explanation of the theory of alienation is observed in “Capital: A critique of Political Economy” under the heading “Fetishism of commodities and money”.¹⁹

Bottomore (1983) in “A Dictionary of Marxist Thought” define Alienation as:

*“In Marx’s sense an action through which (or a state in which) a person, a group, an institution or a society becomes (or remains) alien (1) to the results or products of its own activity (and to the activity itself) or to the nature in which it lives or to other human beings. Thus conceived alienation is always self-alienation i.e., the alienation of man (of his self) from himself (from his human possibilities) through himself (through his own activity). And self-alienation is not just one among the forms of alienation but the very essence and basic structure of alienation”.*²⁰

¹⁸ Cambridge Dictionary retrieved from

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/alienation> dated 18.1.2018

¹⁹ Marx K. (1867) “Capital: A critique to Political Economy” Vol: 1 pp 47. retrieved from

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf>

²⁰Bottomore, T. (1983) “The Dictionary of Marxist Thought”, Blackwell Publication is retrieved from

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

Marx emphasized that alienation is the primary cause of dehumanisation and both alienation and dehumanisation are curse of a capitalist society. In a capitalist society the nature of the economy and the system of production create an atmosphere which ultimately results in alienation. Alienation is therefore a part and parcel of capitalist society. In Marx's sense alienation is an action through which a human being becomes alienated from:

1. the products s/he produced in production system,
2. the nature in which s/he lives,
3. his/her fellow human beings.
4. and finally from his/her own species (from himself).

5.6 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we have discussed the concept of class and class conflict as reflected in different economic regimes of human history put forth by Karl Marx. He defined class in relation to means of production and class consciousness. Marx's central idea was that the human history is the history of class struggle. This means that exploitation and inequality exist in every stage of human history ranging from ancient mode of production to the present capitalist mode of production. Finally, Marx envisaged that social revolution would lead to the emergence of a classless society where there would be no inequality and exploitation. As such, it would lead to the emergence of communism and the downfall of capitalism.

Glossary:

1. Bourgeoisie: They are also known as "Haves", those who means of production in the production system.
2. Class: When people share the same relationship to the means of production and share the similar consciousness regarding their common interest, they constitute class.
3. Class Consciousness: Awareness about one's own class position.
4. Class Conflict: When two classes having basic antagonisms of class interests struggle or clash to safeguard their class interests then it is called class conflict
5. Infrastructure: According to Marx, the materialistic structure or economic structure is the foundation of a society. Infrastructure includes mode of production, forces of production and relations of production. The superstructure of a society rested on it.
6. Proletariat: These people are also known as "Have-nots" and these people do not own any means of production. They live on expenses of their own labour. They work as a labourer under bourgeoisie who exploit them.
8. Revolution: It is a sudden, total and radical change in society brought by the matured conditions of class conflict.
9. Superstructure: All social, political and cultural institutions of societies excepting economic institutions constitute the superstructure of a society.

5.7 QUESTIONS

1. Define the concept of social class?
2. Briefly explain various classes in capitalism?
3. Elaborate what leads to alienation of working class under capitalism?
4. What is 'class in itself' and 'class for itself'?
5. "The bourgeoisie produces its own grave-diggers. The fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable"- Explain?

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