

Unit-7: Karl Marx : Intellectual Background

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Objectives

After studying this unit, the students will be able to:

- Know about the life of Karl Marx.
- Will gain knowledge about the Intellectual background of Karl Marx.
- Study the influence of contemporary environment on the thinking of Karl Marx.

Introduction

Karl Marx is considered all over the world the father of modern and scientific Bolshevism and most socialistic ideologies. While scholars like Plato, St. Simon, Fourier, Louis Blanc, Robert Owen, etc have been discussing about Bolshevism from ancient times, laying stress on presenting plan for a new system in which there was equitable distribution of national wealth, and amity between the different classes. But the thinking of these socialist thinkers was based mainly on political or religious foundations. Marx was the first to give **Bolshevism** a new and unique/separate form, but based it on strong respected scientific foundation, that is becoming stronger day by day. Today there will hardly be a country that will not have people who believe in this ism. The whole world's labour and revolutionary movements have been influenced by Marx's influential thinking. Therefore he is called 'the great teacher and leader of internation'. From this view-point, Marx is this world's not only great but age-changing thinking. It is the claim of Stepanova that Marxism is "the polar-star that guides humanity on the right path of Communism".

7.1 Intellectual Background

'Great teacher and leader of the international proletariat, Karl Marx was born in the town of Trier in the Rhine province of Prussia on 5th May, 1818. His father, a lawyer, had embraced Chris Tianity. Marx was educated in a good school of Trier - Trier Gymnasium - from 1830 to 1835. For the passing out examination, he choose to write an essay which was title - "**The thoughts of Youth on selecting a profession**". From this essay, we realize that even at the tender age of seventeen, this youngster thought that in the selfless service of mankind, lay his life's fulfilment. After passing the last school

examination, Marx entered first Bonn, then Berline University, where he was admitted into the Law Department. He had chosen law as his' main subject, but he was very interested in Philosophy and History too.

Karl Marx was very clearly influenced in his thinking by the many important events of his times. The development of capitalism was the reason that in many nations of Europe, the relationship between the remaining feudal lords and their serfs had become uneasy. Every-where in a big way, new capitalist industry was being created and developed. Side by Side the condition of farmers and craftsmen – artisans was worsening, and a new marginalized proletariat class was being born. This class was bereft of all methods of production. At that time, the ordinary people were being grinded between two mill-stones. On one hand the remnants of feudalism, and on the other unformed capitalism, were the reasons for their suffering. The effect of these conditions on Marx's thinking was very clear.

Marx had introduced himself, in his student life, to the writings of Hegel, and had started establishing relationship with leftist followers of Hegel. Marx presented his definitive essay in Geneva University, which was titled – "The difference between the Natural Philosophy of Democrytus and Epicurus." From the definitions in this essay, we come to know that, at that time his view, though emotional, then too he was atheistic and revolutionary conclusions from the Hegel's philosophy. For example, Hegel had criticized Epicurus for his hedonism and atheism.

On the contrary, Marx praised and appreciated the brave struggle of this ancient Greek philosopher against religion and. Marx received his Doctorate title for this essay in philosophy, in April 1841.

Marx wished to become a profess in Bonn University, but being denied this convenience, he started working for the 'Rhine gazette' (Rhinisch Zaitung) named periodical in 1842 and even became its editor. Through its columns Marx raised his voice in favour of the welfare of the ordinary population and the religious and political exploitation of the masses in Germany and Asia. He experienced many times that the governments in Asia were indifferent and heartless towards the basic necessities of the masses. On the basis of these facts he arrived at this conclusion that governments, their officials and laws favoured the well – being of the ruling classes, whom they represented and supported, and not the welfare of the ordinary population.

'Marx clashed with the shareholders of the periodical, because of his bold aggressive views, and on 17th May 1843, resigning from the editor's post, he left Germany for Paris. Before this incident, he had married Jenny Von Westkalen. She was his childhood friend, and had been engaged to him since his student days.

In the 1844 A.D. in August there took place in Paris that historical meeting of Marx and Engels in which they discovered that their thinking was mostly similar. After this, a creative collaboration started between these two friends, of which no other example exists in history. Lenin has correctly stated that, "In the tales of ancient times we come across heart-touching, references of friendship, but Europes proletariat class can claim that their science was created by two such instructors/teachers and soldiers, whose relation of reciprocal friendship was exemplary. Besides which would pale, the most heart-warming tales of human friendship of ancient times.

Self Assessment

Fill in the blanks –

1. Marx had introduced himself to the writings of Hegel during his _____ and started increasing his closeness to the leftist followers of Hegel.
2. It was _____ wish to become a professor at Bonn University.
3. Marx _____ with the sharehoders of the above mentioned periodical because of his aggressive views, and resigned from the post of the editor on 17th May 1843.

Notes

Marx welcomed with great enthusiasm the rebellion of the weavers of Silesia. Due to this the Prussian government pressurized the french government to banish Marx. In February 1845 he went to Brussels, and started living there. Around this, the co-authored text of Marx and Engels, 'Holy Family' was published, in which the universal historical objective of the proletarial class and its related ideas were of expressed in a complete course programme. Holy family contains new revolutionary world philosophy and the fundamental theories of the prolatearial class.

To present worldly theories of history related to social science in a clearer and orderly manner, Marx and Engels presented their second united effort "German Thinking". In this, they criticised Hegel's emotion, and Hegel's followers mentally emotional philosophy in detail. The main theoretical pillars of communism are dialectic materialism and historical materialism.

Marx and Engels paid great importance to preparing the, second congress of the 'Communist League'. This Congress took place in the end of November and beginning of December 1847 in London. In it, the theories promulgated by these two friends were accepted with the agreement of all, and they were given the task of preparing a communist declaration letter—a Manifesto.



Task

What is an intellectual background? Describe briefly.

This manuscript is concerned with the activity programme of scientific communism.

In 1847 Marx wrote 'The **Poverty of Philosophy**'. In this text, he presented for the first time the main principles of dialetic and historical materialism. In it are mentioned for the first time, all the fundamental faults and weakness of the whole capitalistic economic system. Marx opposed the beliefs and logic of capitalist economy and its supporters, and stated that the different beliefs of society and economy express about social relationship in a theoretical way. These beliefs are everchanging historically, and after removing the situations that gave birth to them, these beliefs too will disappear. The supporters had presented a solution to bring about improvement in capitalism. Marx called them illogical, and tried to prove that in capitalistic society, exploitation, poverty and problems are a part of the system; and they can only be removed if the capitalist system method of production is removed.



Did You Know?

Marx wrote 'The Poverty of Philosophy' in reply to Prados book 'The Philosophy of Poverty'.

In his text named "**Class Struggle in France**" (1848-1850), Marx attempted to use the famous principle of '**the rule of the proletariat**'. In this book, he has clearly attempt to show that scientific socialism is completely different from the various types of capitalism, sub-capitalism and welfare socialism. It has been said here that scientific socialism is "the declaration of the stability of the revolution, it removes without differentiating all class-differences; it breaks all production relationships based on those differences; and destroys social relationships developed because of these production-method; and brings a revolution against all thinking born of these social-relationships, so that the Proletariat can be declared the ruler in this system which will be brought about by the necessary aggressive programme to bring about a revolution of the Proletariat."

In 1857, the first part of Marx's world-famous text '**Das Kapital**' was published. The second and third volume of this book could not be published in his lifetime; Engel published them in 1885

and 1894 approximately. 'Capital' is a great gift of Marx. In the words of Lenin: "This text is the main fundamental writing, in which a definition of scientific socialism is given." Contained in this book are the theories of historical duties of the proletariat, socialist revolution and deep philosophy related to and described from the viewpoint of economics about the rule of the Proletariat.



Notes

According to the belief of Stepanova, "This great text of Marx, 'Das Kapital' is a powerful theoretical weapon in the proletariats' struggle against the slavery imposed by Capitalism."

Because of these many qualities, that the '**Capital**' is considered the **Bible** of the socialists.

In the letters Marx wrote in the later part of his life, reflect an obvious hope of future revolution. He had predicted the Russian Revolution would be quick turning point in flow of world history.

Marx's strong physique was ultimately weakened by hard mental labour, continuous poverty. His wife died on 2nd December, 1881. This was a great shock to him and his health deteriorated further. There was inflammation in his lungs and chronic coughing. He went to southern France and Algeria for treatment, but without any gain. During this time, he received another shock, when his eldest daughter, Jenny died. In 1883 there was another attack on him of the old malady of coughing, due to which complications arose. The state of his health worsened, and he said good bye to this world in 14th March 1883.

Engels send letters all over the world, and informed his friends and followers of the great harm done to the cause of international revolutionary movement by this sad event. He wrote, "The greatest mind of our party has stopped thinking; today a determined heart has stopped beating, something that I have never seen or heard before."

Marx was buried on 17th March, 1883 in Highgate Cemetery in London. Engels gave a heart touching speech next to his grave. In this speech, he gave a true and evident description of this founder of scientific communism, of the great attempts by this leader for the benefit of the working-classes; for all labourers, for the exploited for the objective of the upliftment of the proletariat, his contumacious mental, and ideological struggle his sacrifices, Engels presented on eye-witnessed realistic picture - and finished his speech with this declared prediction, "His name will be remembered for ages, and his deeds will be immortalized."

7.2 Summary

- Marx because of his revolutionary thinking was acceptable by the system.
- He stuck to his ideological beliefs to the end.
- Marx, who gave the slogan, "Workers of the world, unite," saw a vision of a revolution, in which there was no class system.
- Marx dearest friend was Engels, who supported him to the very end.

7.3 Keywords

1. **Dialectical Materialism**: Dialectical indicates a reaction, according to which creation/nature develops and changes. Materialism denotes creation/nature's original element/principle.

Notes

In this development, is the result of worldly materialistic wealth, and is collected/created by internal opposition. After this, there are the three steps of argumentation and dialogue.

2. **Poverty of Philosophy** : Marx calling it illegal, tried to prove that in a capitalist society, exploitation, poverty, problems were compulsory elements.

7.4 Review Questions

1. Discuss the influence on Marx of the contemporary environment.
2. What do you know about Intellectual Background? Describe briefly.

Answers: Self Assessment

1. Student-Life
2. Marx
3. Disagreement

7.5 Further Readings



Books

1. Sociological Theory - *Abraham and Morgan*.
2. Structure of Sociological Thought - J.H. Turner.
3. Encyclopedia of Sociological - *Harikrishna Rawat*.