
Unit 1: Karl Marx: Dialectical Materialism, Alienation, Theory of State

Unit Structure :

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1.1. Introduction

Marx has committed himself for the welfare of the working class. Karl Marx is known as the father of scientific socialism. Before Marx there were many political philosophers who discussed socialism at length. But Marx was the first philosopher who gave a scientific analysis of socialism. He is regarded as the most influential political philosopher of modern time. His idea of dialectical materialism is one of the major contributions towards political philosophy. The whole Marxian philosophy rests on this concept of dialectical materialism. Though he borrowed this concept from Hegel, it should be mentioned that he did not follow the idea blindly. Hegel explained the concept of dialectics with the help of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Unlike Hegel who believes that idea is the essence of universe, Marx opines that matter is the essence of universe. The society progresses through the class struggle. The idea of historical materialism or materialistic interpretation of history too is Marx's contribution. This theory is the actual application of his theory of dialectical materialism. He believes that production is the main human activity and the ownership of means of production decides the course of history. The theory of class struggle is another contribution of Karl Marx. He is of the view that in every society there are two classes and one who owns the means of production dominates the other. As a result of this domination and difference of interest between these two classes, class conflict emerged. This unit also deals with Marxian concept of alienation and state. According to Marx, this loss of control over the products leads to alienation among the workers. In simple terms alienation refers

to powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self-estrangement. you will also learn that marx considered state as an instrument in the hands of the capitalist class to exploit the working class. He also believed that state will wither away and a classless and stateless society will be established.

1.2. Objectives

This unit will help you

- To examine Marxian concept of dialectical materialism.
- To explore Marxian concept of alienation
- To understand Marxian concept of state

1.3. Dialectical Materialism

Hegel was the chief exponent of the dialectic method of history. Dialectical implies the process where ideas are formed and clarified in the course of intellectual debate. Dialectic materialism involves thesis anti thesis and synthesis. Thesis is the proposition or the statement which is challenged by the counter proposition. This counter proposition is called the anti thesis. Both thesis and anti thesis are partly true. The outcome of the discussion between thesis and anti thesis is a revised thesis which is known as synthesis. Synthesis combines the valid elements of both thesis and anti thesis.

It must remember here that neither thesis nor anti thesis represent complete truth. Synthesis is nearer truth or perfection as it embodies the true elements of both thesis and anti thesis and free from the untrue elements of the two. Despite this, the synthesis does not present the whole truth. Therefore it again takes the form of thesis and a new anti thesis is formed to counter this thesis. This process of negation continues till it finds the absolute truth. The idea or reason develops through the history of the world. This reality is dynamic in nature and hence cannot be understood through the static concept of formal logic. The new logic formulated by Hegel is called dialectics.

Hegel opined that evolution happens through the process of thesis, anti thesis and synthesis. Marx was highly impressed by the Hegelian logic. But he rejected the Hegelian notion that idea is the principal cause of historical progress. According to Marx, the social ideas and theories of different times represent the material laws of the society. For Marx, the

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