

Q)What is Marxist perspective of political theory? Describe the basic principles/tenets of Marxism.

Ans: The Marxist perspective of political theory was a reaction against the unrestricted individualism and capitalism. It is completely different from the liberal principles, values and beliefs of politics. Marxism is the scientific outlook of the working class. They see politics as a struggle and their concept of man and society is different from the liberals. Marxism talks of classes rather than individuals. In its proper sense, it first appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century in response to the oppressive conditions created by the capitalist system. Marxism views class as the basic unit of the socio-political community. Marxism prioritizes class or community over individuals and is critical to the liberal concept of abstract individualism. They are of a view that the prevailing political ideology, the institution of State and individual notions, emotion and intellection are controlled and nourished by the economic base formed by the nature and mode of production.

Marxists use politics to politicize conflicts and conflicts as the beginning of social change. According to them, conflicts mirror the fact that the oppressed, suppressed and the depressed classes became 'class consciousness' of themselves being exploited by the rich class. They become aware of their exploitation and take the path of revolution. The revolution alters the economic base and consequently, changes the superstructure. They view the capitalist State as the oppressor of the proletariat. According to Marx, the State will 'wither away' and he envisages a classless, stateless, moneyless and ideology less society. Hence, Marx views the State as an 'unnecessary evil'.

Basic principles of Marxist perspective of political theory:

The basic principles of Marxist perspective of political theory are as follows:

- 1) **Dialectical Materialism:** It is an important part of the philosophy of Marxism. It is a scientific way of understanding the process of social evolution. Marx said that material factor forms the basis of this universe as matter is the final reality. All thoughts and ideas are a result of man's material conditions. The progress of material world goes on with the help of contradictions. Marx calls this conflict of contradictions as Dialectics. There are three stages of Dialectics: i) Thesis, ii) Antithesis and iii) Synthesis.

As regards the evolution of society, the condition of Feudalism is the thesis, then in reaction arises capitalism, which we may call anti-thesis. Capitalism contributes to the progress of the world for some time, but then contradictions arise and the social progress stops. Communism is born out of the contradictions within capitalism and we may call it as synthesis. Dialectical materialism states that no material change is permanent.

The idea of dialectic has been adopted by Marx from the German philosopher Hegel. But Marx rejected Hegelian philosophical idealism and adopted Materialism in its place. Hegel said that spirit is the ultimate reality but for Marx, it is matter.

- 2) **Economic Interpretation of History:** Marx interprets history in the light of dialectical materialism. The economic conditions influence the historical events. The historical evolution is determined by economic factors. All historical changes are traceable to the methods of production or changes occurring in economic forces. The changes in the process of production bring changes in social relations.

The process of production has passed through four stages and is about to enter the fifth. These stages are **1) Primitive communist stage, 2) Ancient stage, 3) Feudal stage, 4) Capitalist stage, 5) Communist stage.**

- 1) **Primitive communist:** In this stage, there is no private property. The people lived on fruits or herbs or by hunting animals. The natural resources were used as common property. There was no distinction as of rich and poor.
- 2) **Ancient stage:** There were certain changes in the economic conditions. People took to farming and rearing animals. This was the beginning of private property as domestic animals were the private property. The individuals having large number of animals were rich and the rest were poor. In this stage, the system of slavery emerged.
- 3) **Feudal stage:** In this stage, the property was land. As society was progressing, human beings learnt to cultivate. The individuals who were able to occupy large area of land for cultivation, became the land lords or feudal lords and others became tenants or serfs. The farmers were not their slaves, but they were completely under the feudal lords or zamindars.

- 4) **Capitalist stage:** This stage started almost with the industrial revolution. Several big factories were set up in cities and the feudal lords transformed themselves to capitalists and the serfs to labourers. The workers were exploited by the capitalists and the society got divided into two classes-the workers and the capitalists.
- 5) **Communist stage:** There will be the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The workers shall have full control of all means of production and capitalism will be abolished. In the final stage, the State will disappear and a State-less and Class-less society will be established.
- 3) **The Doctrine of class struggle:** The doctrine of class struggle is the outcome of economic interpretation of history by Marx. At every stage of history,society has been divided into two classes -the exploiter class or the class with special privileges and the exploited class i.e the rich and the poor, master and slave,lord and serf,capitalist and workers. According to Marx,"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave,patrician and plebian,lord and serf,Guild master and journeyman, in a word ,oppressor and oppressed stood in constant opposition to one another."
- 4) **The Theory of Surplus Value:** This theory occupies a central place in Marxist tradition. Marx was deeply influenced by David Ricardo's views. This theory is based on Marx's labour theory of value. According to this theory,the wealth of capitalists societies is an enormous collection of commodities having value. As a result of the progress of science and technology,the instruments of the creation of value have also increased. These instruments are owned bythe capitalists. They buy the labour power of the workman,applies it to the machinery and raw material which he owns and produces a commodity having exchange value. The difference between the exchange value of the manufactured commodity and the price paid to the workman for his labour is called surplus value. It is the product of unpaid labour.
- 5) **Concept of Freedom:** Human freedom aims at the liquidation of the conditions of domination and subjection in society. It consists not only in securing material satisfaction of human needs,but also in

removing the conditions of dehumanization, estrangement and alienation.

- 6) **Marxist Concept of State:** The State is considered as an institution of violence. It is nothing more than a machine for the exploitation and oppression of one class by another. It is not a natural institution, but comes into being when the society is divided into irreconcilable and antagonistic groups.
- 7) **Marxian concept of Alienation:** The idea of alienation is mainly drawn from Marx's Economic and Political Manuscripts (1843). He has given a new meaning to the idea of alienation and has identified four levels of alienation.
 - i) Firstly, man is alienated from his own product and from his work process because the worker plays no part in deciding what and how to produce.
 - ii) ii) Man is alienated from nature as his work does not give him satisfaction as a creative worker.
 - iii) iii) Man is alienated from other men through the competitive character of the economic system.
 - iv) iv) Man is alienated from himself as the realm of necessity dominates his life and reduces him to the level of an animal existence.
- 8) **Theory of Revolution:** Revolution is social, technological, political, legal and ideological phenomenon. The theory of revolution is set in the frame of materialist conception of history. Class struggle and revolution were the driving forces of history. Class struggle in society would move ahead in the direction of revolution. The Marxian theory of revolution fits all the revolutions. For him, revolution was not merely a way to capture political power, also the means of transforming the society as a whole.
- 9) **Dictatorship of Proletariat:** The dictatorship of the proletariat is a condition in which the proletariat holds state power. It is the intermediate stage between a capitalist economy and a communist economy. During this stage, the State will be under the control of the working class and they will use it to crush the capitalists and other opposing elements.
- 10) **Stateless and Classless Society:** Marx supported a Stateless and classless society. All kinds of class distinctions shall vanish. No one will

be either poor or rich. Each individual will get work according to his ability, capability and get wages as per his needs.

__Thus ,the Marxist perspective of Political theory is well accepted as a revolutionary philosophy of the working class . In the present century,it has helped in bringing about socialist revolutions. It is a great revolutionary,humanistic,philosophy and has facilitated the emancipation of millions of poor people in the world.