



MARXISM: THEN AND NOW

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to have a glance over the valuable ideas of Karl Marx and his followers well known as the Marxists. The paper throws a light on those ideas which have been propounded by them. It also talks about how Marxian thought took its root in various parts of the world and sustained for decades till its little decline in the present globalised world order. The Paper also makes a comparison between the Liberal and Marxist ideology to show the relevance of Marxism in the present scenario. Also the paper puts an optimistic view on revival of Marxian thought in present and the time to come.

KEYWORDS: Capitalism, Bourgeoisie, Proletariat, Surplus Value, Class Struggle, Communism, Socialism, Shock Therapy, Brexit.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Marxism is a body of social, economic and political principles and ideas propounded by Karl Marx, a German philosopher. Its concerns are brutal impact of capitalism on proletariat, production and economic development. As capitalism exploits the workers in all the spheres, Marxism advocates workers revolution to overthrow the capitalists to establish communism in its place. Marxism does not mean only the ideas of Marx rather it is the combination of the ideas of Marx, Friedrich Engels and other supporters of Marx. The Marxist philosophy is indeed a living one as the Marxist thinkers are continuously contributing to the Marxist philosophy. Hence, it is aptly and widely considered that Marxism is still alive even though Marx is dead.

Basic tenets of Marxism:

(1) Historical Materialism :

It explains how the human history has changed from time to time right from the primitive communal society to socialist society. In conformity with the change and development of the productive forces of the society in the courses of history, men's relationship of production also changed and developed.

(2) Theory of Surplus value:

Surplus value is the difference between the value gained from the sale of goods and the amount spent by the capitalist to produce that product i.e. cost of raw materials, capitals and labour etc. Here it is shown how the bourgeoisie accumulate surplus by exploiting the proletariat.

(3) Class Struggle:

Marx has shown that there is always a dialectical relationship between different classes in a society especially between the Haves and Have-nots or capitalist and working class or bourgeoisie and proletariat.

(4) Revolution:

Since there is always a conflicting relationship between different classes, revolution is inevitable in the society.

(5) Dictatorship of proletariat:

After the workers' revolution capitalism will be overthrown and dictatorship of the proletariat will be established.

(6) Communism:

Dictatorship of proletariat will eventually lead to socialism which is again a transitional stage. Socialism will eventually turn into communism. After the establishment of communism, social change will come to an end and the dialectical process also will come to an end. In communism the means of production will be in the hands of community and all will enjoy it without any discrimination of any kind. In fact, communism will be a classless, stateless, private property less and exploitation free society.

Spread of Marxism:

The rise of liberalism in the 17th century had made widespread changes in the modern nations. It grew in the form of classical liberalism then took other forms like modern Liberalism and changed the entire social, political and economic structure of the society worldwide. Individual liberty, minimal state, constitutional government, minimum government, market economy etc. have been the core principles of Liberalism. As the spread of Liberalism



progressed, economic inequality also took its grip in the society. Hence, as an anti thesis of Liberalism the socialist thought gained popularity among the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe and in other parts of the world.

As a result of the growth of liberalism and capitalist ideology, urbanization industrialization and private property emerged. It also resulted into economic disparity in the cities. The working class was living like slave. Capitalism promoted competition, profit and efficiency against which St. Simon, Robert Owen, Charles Fourier and Henry George raised their voice. According to them, there was a decline of humanity due to the rise of capitalism. Though the thought propounded by them was termed as utopian as they didn't give any proper idea as how to create an egalitarian society yet their efforts had far-reaching implications on the later thinkers. After them came the era of 'scientific socialism' as propounded by Karl Marx. Marx has given scientific analysis of the bad impact of capitalism and also talked about how to destroy the same and establish communism in its place. Communism is stateless classless society.

Marxist ideology brought about far reaching change in the world as many nations adopted his philosophy either in its original form or in a modified version. Soviet Marxism was worked out by Vladimir Ilich Lenin and modified by Joseph Stalin, which under the name of Marxism-Leninism became the doctrine of the communist party set up after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Offshoots of this included Marxism as interpreted by the anti-Stalinist Leon Trotsky and his followers, Mao Zedong's Chinese variant of Marxism-Leninism, and various Marxism in the developing world. There were also the post-world war 2 non-dogmatic Marxism that have modified Marx's thought with borrowing from modern philosophies, principally from those of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger but also from Sigmund Freud and others.

Where Does Marxism Stand Today?:

There has been a partial decline of Marxian thought in today's globalised politics which have raised a doubt in the minds of many political scientists and scholars about the relevance of Marx. The biggest reason to put question mark on Marxism is the collapse of communism around the world. The Marxist philosophy that erupted in the USSR after the Russian Revolution of 1917 had been a successful regime to a far extent. However, in 1991 the disintegration of the USSR has made the world stunned resulting the fall of decade old socialist society. In the name of 'Shock Therapy'

Russia had to adopt the liberal economy imposed by the capitalist world.

It is also to be noted here that the countries which once had adopted Marxism or socialist notion of economy have also stepped towards adoption of liberal economy. China under the leadership of Mao Zedong had embraced Marxism-Leninism in 1950s has been following the neo-liberal economic model since 1970s itself. India, after the adoption of resolution called socialistic pattern of society by Indian National Congress in its Awadi session in 1955 had been following socialist pattern. Even the Indian constitution also adheres to the socialistic ideals in various provisions enshrined in it. For instance, the word 'SOCILIST' was added to the preamble by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976. However, in order to mitigate the economic crises prior to 1990s, India had undertaken Liberalisation Privatization Globalisation reform in 1991 which is popularly known as LPG reform.

At the end of 1990s the neo-liberal ideals have been dominating the world and Globalisation is fast spreading based on neo-liberal idea. The period after the collapse of USSR in 1991 marked the end of cold war between the USA-led capitalist block and USSR-led socialist block. However, this incidence is often regarded not only as the end of cold war but also the end of history and end of ideological differences or war. The emergence of neo-liberal democracies worldwide has been described as the end point of human ideological development.

Relevance of Marx has also been questioned as Marxism is a utopia. It is because wherever communism was established till today has been described by Western scholars as totalitarian regime. Marx has been described as the enemy of open society.

Relevance of Marxism:

Despite the above questions about the loss of relevance of Marxism, if we closely see the development worldwide especially since September 11, 2001, it becomes clear that the popularity of Liberalism has not been accepted to the fullest as vouched for by the Liberal thinkers. History has not ended as it is thought of. Recent regime change in Afghanistan by the Talibani fighters is a burning instance of this.

In context of India, the LPG reform has not been much fruitful as it was assumed to be. It has led to 'Jobless Growth' in India to a large extent. It is quite evident from the fact that since 1951 to 2000s India's growth rate increased from 3.6 per cent to 8 per cent whereas, the job growth declined from 1.5 per cent to 1 per cent in the same period.



Moreover, India has been facing different insurgency and separatist issues like north east insurgency, naxalite movement so on and so forth. All these clearly show that all is not well with the liberal philosophy.

The western world has been passing through economic crises since 2008. The economic disabilities of world has shifted the interest in the 'Das Capital'. Globalisation has been facing anti-globalisation movement. It is widely argued and accepted that Globalisation is harming the third world countries and the fruit of it is being enjoyed by the developed world. In the globalised world order of today the developed countries are dominating the developing nations and the under developed nations by deteriorating the environment and culture and misusing the resources of the later. Hence, as Globalisation progressed, it also has led to widespread inequality worldwide where the poor countries are the worst sufferers.

In modern times all the liberal economies have adopted welfare state model of development where the states look after all the necessities of the downtrodden right from 'cradle to grave'. This is to show that in conformity with the socialist society, the Liberal economies are also humanitarian in nature. This change in the liberal democratic nations is a result of the communist movement worldwide.

The future of the neo-liberal projects like European Union remains under threat. It has been facing multiple issues. For instance, the United Kingdom has left the European Union in 2020 which is popularly known as 'Brexit'. Brexit will weaken the EU economically and politically. The U.K was EU's second biggest economy (After Germany) a major budget contributor and key military force. It means the future of the E.U. is under a grave threat.

II. CONCLUSION:

To conclude, it is to be born in the mind that it is wrong to call Marx as enemy of open society or Marx is dead. Marx's concern is freedom. His freedom is freedom from necessities. It is wrong to blame Marx for the totalitarian regime that emerged in the USSR or in China or in other parts of the world. Marxism will always remain relevant as a critique of capitalism. It is impossible for us to understand the contradictions of capitalism without Marx's insight. Marxism is essential to make capitalism humane.

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