



4

MAJOR POLITICAL THEORIES

You will learn, in this lesson, about major political theories : liberalism, Marxism and Gandhism. Liberalism and Marxism have caught the attention of the people in most parts of the twentieth century. Liberalism emerged from the Enlightenment, the Glorious revolution in England, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. It has been with us as the political philosophy of the capitalist West. Marxism rose as a reaction against the liberal-capitalist society. With the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the last major socialistic/Marxist state, Marxism has lost much of its popularity. Gandhism, while challenging the ideals of both liberalism and Marxism, presents not only a critique of both these ideologies, but also provides relevant alternative theories.



Objectives

After studying this lesson you will be able to

- explain the meaning of liberalism and its features;
- identify the basic tenets of Marxism;
- describe the theory of dialectical materialism, historical materialism; theory of surplus value, theory of class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of proletariat, and the classless society;
- know contribution of Lenin and Mao to Marxism;
- analyse the relevance of Marxism;
- explain Gandhi's views on state, decentralization, democracy, swadeshi, trusteeship, cottage/ small scale industries etc.;
- describe the significance of purity of means to achieve ends;
- highlight Gandhi's emphasis on Swaraj, Satyagraha, Non-violence; and
- explain Gandhi's steadfast opposition to discrimination based on race and his life-long efforts for the upliftment of the Harijans / Dalits.

4.1 Liberalism

Liberalism is fairly an old political ideology. Its roots can be traced to the days of the sixteenth century. Since then it has passed through numerous stages. The Western Enlightenment had refused to accept moral goals as absolute truths; the English Glorious revolution (1688) had denounced the divine rights of the kings;

The French Revolution gave the cardinal ideas of 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' and the American War of Independence a little earlier (1775-76) laid emphasis on the declaration of human rights.

4.1.1 Meaning of Liberalism

Harold Laski, an English scholar of Political Science once wrote: "It (liberalism) is not easy to describe, much less to define, for it is hardly less a habit of mind than a body of doctrine". What it means is that liberalism is too dynamic and too flexible a concept to give it a precise meaning. And yet the scholars have made attempts to define it. Sartori says, 'Very simply, liberalism is the theory and practice of individual liberty, juridical defense and the constitutional state.' According to Koerner, "Liberalism begins and ends with the ideals of individual freedom, individual human rights and individual human happiness". Encyclopaedia Britannica defines liberalism "as an idea committed to freedom, as a method and policy in government, as an organizing principle in society and as a way of life for the individual and the community."

Liberalism is a theory of reforms, for it has stood for reforms in economic, social and political fields. It is a theory of liberty, individual liberty, individual autonomy, for it has argued in favour of the development of human personality. It is a theory of democracy, for it has favoured constitutional government, government based on the consent of the people, rule of law, decentralization, free and fair elections. To conclude, we may highlight three aspects of liberalism which clearly help us in understanding its meanings: in social sphere, liberalism stands for secularism and a society that opposes, all kinds of social discrimination; in economic sphere, it favours a capitalistic economy, individual ownership of the means of production and maximum profit-earning motive, in political sphere, it stands for a democratic polity, individual rights and liberties, responsive and responsible government, free and impartial judiciary and the like.

4.1.2 Features of Liberalism

We may identify certain characteristics of liberalism. These characteristic features are :

(1) Individual Liberty : Liberalism is essentially an ideology of liberty. Its love for individual liberty is unquestionable. It has become libertarianism. For the liberals, liberty is the very essence of human personality. It is a means to one's development.

(2) Individual-centred theory : Liberalism begins and ends with individual. For liberals, individual is the centre of all activities, the focal point; individual is the end while all other associations, including the state, are the means, which exist for the individual. individual is the centre around which all things move.

(3) Capitalistic Economy : Liberalism advocates free-market economy, i.e., the capitalistic mode of economy. It believes in private property system, regarding property rights as sacrosanct; maximum profit as the only motive; capitalistic mode of production and



Notes

distribution as the only essence; the market forces as the controlling means of economy.

(4) Limited State : Liberalism advocates the concept of limited state. The liberals view the state as a means for attaining the good of the individual. They oppose every type of totalitarian state. They are of the opinion that a more powerful state means a less free individual. Locke used to say, “because the functions of the state are limited, so are limited its powers.”

(5) Opposed to Traditions/Superstitions : As liberalism rose as a reaction against traditions/superstitions, it is, by its nature, opposed to all reactionary measures. Liberalism, emerging from Renaissance and Reformation, stood, and actually stands, for reason and rationalism. As against the feudal model of man as a passive being, liberalism favours a model of man who is more active and more acquisitive.

(6) Democracy : Liberalism is an exponent of democratic government. It seeks to establish a government of the people, by the people and for the people; a government that functions according to the Constitution and constitutionalism; a government that upholds the rule of law; a government that secures rights and liberties of the people. Liberalism, McGovern says, is a combination of democracy and individualism.

(7) Welfareism : Liberalism is closely associated with welfarism. Welfarism, as a state activity, is the idea that state works for the welfare of the people. The liberal concept of state activity is one where the state serves the people. In other words, the welfare state is a ‘social service’ state.

4.1.3 Weaknesses of Liberalism

Liberalism has its own inherent defects. It is a philosophy full of tensions. On the one hand, it unfurls the flag of liberty, and on the other, it argues for equality. On the one hand, it works, within the framework of market society, it promises equal opportunities to all. On the one hand, it asks for unlimited rights to acquire property, and on the other, it seeks to demand a share of profit for the welfare of those who are unemployed and the needy. On the one hand, it builds a capitalistic economy, ending up ultimately in inequalities, and on the other, it endeavours to establish an egalitarian society.



Intext Questions 4.1

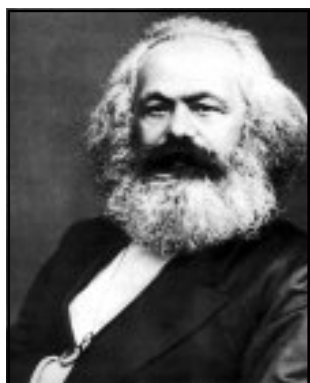
Fill in the blank

1. The Enlightenment had refused to accept the moral goals as truths.
2. The French Revolution declared equality and fraternity as great political values.
3. The 17th-18th century was also known as negative liberalism.
4. McGovern said liberalism is composed of two elements: democracy and
5. Liberal economy is..... economy.
6. The liberal state is a socialstate.
7. Liberalism is the political philosophy of the class.



Notes

4.2 Marxism



Karl Marx
(1818 – 1883)

Following the establishment of factories and the capitalistic mode of production during the 17th-18th centuries West, the conditions of the workers deteriorated. The workers who entered the factories were subject to all sorts of exploitation : long hours of work, life in slums, ill-health etc. The result was exploitation of the workers, ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor, economic inequalities, degradation and alienation. Karl Marx and Frederich Engels realised clearly the adverse effects of capitalism and in the process, brought out what is called scientific socialism or Marxism (after the name of Marx). Those who contributed to the Marxian philosophy after Marx and Engels include, among others, V.I. Lenin (Russia), and Mao Zedong (China).

Alienation means aloofness, estrangement, apathy, cutting off. Marx finds alienation in extermination i.e., man finds himself external (alien) to his activity, his self.

4.2.1 Marxism and its Basic Postulates

Marxism is the political philosophy of the working class as liberalism is the political philosophy of the capitalist class. It is a theory of social change : why social changes take place and how do these changes come into effect? The social changes take place because of the material factors and through a method called 'dialectical materialistic' method.

Marxism is based on certain assumptions/postulates. These are :

- 1) Nothing happens in the world on its own; there is always a cause -effect relationship in what we see around. The relations of production (i.e., material relations among the people), as the basis of society, provide the cause while the productive forces constitute the effect.
- 2) The real development is always the material development (i.e., the economic development). The progressive development of productive forces indicates the progressive level of development.
- 3) The material (i.e. economic) factor is the dominant factor in both individual life and social life.
- 4) Human being is born at a particular stage of social / material development, i.e., born in a social setting which exists independent of him. But being an active being, human being makes his own social setting. Marx had said, human beings are born in history, but they make history.
- 5) Social classes, especially the opposing classes, through their struggle and following the process of revolution, move in the forward direction. That is why the Marxists say that every subsequent society is better than the preceding society.
- 6) Revolutions mean total and wholesome changes; they are not a negative force, but are what Marx had called, the locomotives of history. When launched and successful, revolutions take the society to a higher stage of development.



- 7) The state, being the result of a class society, is a class institution. It is neither impartial nor just; it is a class institution. It is a partisan, oppressive and exploitative institution; it exists to serve the dominant class of which it is an instrument. In the capitalist society, the capitalist state protects and promotes the interests of the capitalists while in the socialist society, it protects and promotes the interests of the working class. By the time the socialist society becomes fully communistic, the state would, by then, have withered away.

Withering away of the state, according to the Marxists, means disappearing of the state, i.e., slowly and gradually the state apparatus would go the whole way.

Thus, Marxism advocates communism as the highest form of society where men would work as they wish and would get what they want : “from each according to his ability to each according to his needs.”

4.2.2 Highlights of Marxism

Marxism revolves around the following theoretical propositions.

Dialectical materialism is the sum-total of the general principles which explain as to why and how social changes take place. The social changes take place because of the material factors and through the dialectical materialistic method. The dialectical materialistic method is a triple method. According to Marx,

Relations of Productions constitute the basis of the society at any given point of time. What are called the social relations among the people are, for the Marxists, the relations of production.

Productive Forces constitute those elements which originate from the relations of production, but which, though opposite to the latter, promise more production through newer methods/devices.

In very simple words, the Marxian theory states that all development takes place through struggle between opposites and because of factors which are economic.

New Mode of Production is the result of the struggle between the relations of production and productive forces at a matured stage of their development. The new mode of production has the merits of both the relations of production and productive forces; hence a higher stage of economic development.

Historical Materialism is also called the economic/materialistic/ deterministic interpretation of history. The Marxian explanation of history is that it is a record of the self-development of productive forces; that the society keeps marching on its path of economic/ material development; that each stage of development indicates the level of development attained; that history is the history of numerous socio- economic formations: primitive communistic, slave-owning, feudal, capitalist and thereafter the transitional socialist followed by the communist society; that each succeeding society is an improvement over the preceeding one; that the socialist society, after the abolition of the capitalist society would be a classless society but with a state in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the communist society, which follows the socialists society, would be both classless society and stateless society.

Theory of Surplus Value is another characteristic of Marxism. Marx says that it is the

Individual and the State



Notes

worker who creates value in the commodity when he produces it. But he does not get what he produces, he gets only the wages: over and above the wages is what goes to the employer. That is the surplus value. The surplus value is the difference between what the value a labourer produces and what he gets in the form of wages. In simple words, the labourer gets the wages; the employer, the profit. This surplus value makes the rich, richer and the poor, poorer. It is through surplus value that capitalists thrive.

Theory of Class Struggle is another tenet of Marxism. In the Marxian view, all hitherto history has been the history of class struggle between opposing classes. Class struggle is the characteristic of class societies. In the classless societies, there is no class struggle because there are, in such societies, no opposing/ antagonistic classes. Class struggle, in class societies, (i.e., in slave-owning society, the feudal society, the capitalist society) is of mainly three types: economic, ideological, political.

Marxism advocates **revolution**. Revolutions, the Marxists say, are locomotives of history. Revolutions occur when the relations of production come into conflict with the productive forces, leading, thus, to a new mode of production. They bring about a complete transformation of society, without violence if possible, and with it, if necessary. Revolutions, indicate changes: wholesome changes, changes in the very character of a given society. They signify the coming up of a higher stage of social development. Accordingly, the Marxists regard revolution as a positive phenomenon.

Dictatorship of the proletariat means the rule of the working class. It is a state of the workers in the socialist society which follows the capitalist society. It is the dictatorship of the workers in the socialist society in the sense there is the dictatorship of the capitalists in the capitalist society. There capitalists rule the way they want; now the workers' rule in the socialist society the way the workers want. Nevertheless, Marx makes it clear that the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the workers' state, is an interim or a transitional arrangement which functions between the capitalist society and the communist society. Once the socialist society is completely established, the workers state will not be needed, i.e., it will wither away (disappear slowly). Lenin insists that the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the bourgeois state, both quantitatively and qualitatively (at it looks after the interests and welfare of the whole multitude of the workers rather than handful of capitalists).

The socialist society that follows the capitalist society after its abolition is a **classless society**. It is a classless society in the sense that all are workers wheresoever they work, in the office, in the factory or on the fields: each gets job according to one's ability ('from each according to his abilities to each according to his work'). The communist society which follows the socialist society, will be both the classless society and the stateless society.

4.2.3 Relevance of Marxism

Marxism, both as a philosophy and also as a practice, has attained a position unparalleled in social and political thought. Its appeal crosses all boundaries, and in fact, all limits. Its adversaries are as much convinced of its strength as are its admirers. And yet its shortcomings are obvious.

Changes do not occur simply because of the clashes between the opposing classes. History is indebted to class cooperation as well for its development. Material factor, though important and dominating it may be, is not the sole factor in explaining the whole complex of society's intricacies. Indeed, man does not live by bread alone, but it is also true that he can not live



Notes

without it. Marxism has underestimated the worth and strength of national/ patriotic sentiments. To say that the workers have no fatherland of their own, as Marx used to say, is to make them parentless. Marxism also underestimated the importance of the state. To say that the State is a class institution and therefore, an oppressive and exploitative one is to oversimplify things.

The Marxian formulations, in practice, have been really disappointing. Marxism, as a practice, has failed, whatever be the reasons. One chief reason has been its centralizing tendency: the dictatorship of the proletariat becomes the dictatorship of the communist party, the party's dictatorship becomes, ultimately, the dictatorship of one man: be that a Stalin or a Mao. In the Soviet Union, reform movement (Glasnost, especially) initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev marked the beginning of the end of the communist movement not only in Europe but almost the world over. The communist China has introduced numerous liberalization measures in its economy and polity. The relevance of Marxism as an alternative ideology before the world is no more unquestioned.



Intext Questions 4.2

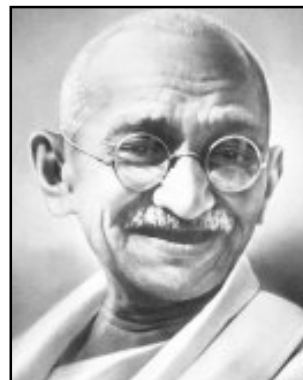
Fill in the blanks :

1. Marxism is a reaction against(feudalism capitalism)
2. Marxism is regarded as the political philosophy of theclass. (working, capitalist)
3. For the Marxists, the factor is the decisive factor in individual/ social life. (political, cultural, material)
4. In Marxian scheme, the relations of production give birth to of(forces, production, antithesis, synthesis)
5. From each according to his abilities to each according to his'. It is the essence of socialism. (work, needs)
6. From each according to his work to each according to his'. It is the essence of communism. (work, needs)
7. For Marx, revolutions are of history (engines, ends).

4.3 Gandhism

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was the supreme leader of the Indian nationalist movement which he had led for about thirty years, between 1917 and 1947. He was a thinker in so far as he had challenged most of the assumptions and doctrines of his times, and in their places, provided possible and plausible alternatives.

It is really difficult to project Gandhiji in any particular frame. He was more than a Plato, one can possible call him a Socrates; he was more than an Aristotle, one can call him a Buddha; he was more than a Mill or a Marx, one can call him



Mahatma Gandhi

Individual and the State



Notes

a Guru Nanak. Gandhiji was a liberal among the Marxists, and a Marxist among the liberals; he was a democrat among the individualists and an individualist among the socialists. He was an idealist among the realists, and a realist among the idealists. He had combined in himself the virtues of all the known ideologies, past and present.

4.3.1 Gandhi as a Critic of Western Civilization

Gandhiji was a critic of Western Civilization. His complaint against western materialism is that it destroys the very essence of spiritualism. He regarded the western type of man as an atomistic individual, with all flesh and no soul.

As against the state that existed in the West, Gandhiji advocated what he called, the Ramrajya; as against the western style of managing things through the centralizing forces, he stood for a decentralized polity. As against materialism, industrialization and capitalism, he made a strong plea for Swadeshi, cottage industries and the theory of Trusteeship.

4.3.2 State, Decentralization, Cottage Industries, Trusteeship

Gandhiji is not an admirer of the type of the state that exists in the Western Society. For him, the Western state represented 'violence in a concentrated form'; it is a soulless machine. Accordingly, Gandhiji, as a philosophical anarchist, admitted the state, but very unwillingly, only when it is most needed.

Anarchist is one who is opposed to every type of state; anarchism is a theory of lawlessness: without state, without government, without law.

Gandhism stands for a non-violent state based on (i) the consent of the people (ii) the near unity in the society. Gandhiji advocated decentralization of power: both political and economic. The spirit of Gandhian democracy is the spirit of decentralization. Decentralization means devolution of power at each level beginning from individual/ local unit and reaching the apex. The essence of decentralization, according to Gandhiji, is that all powers flow from below and go up, in ascending order.

So considered, political power, in the Gandhian scheme, is vested in the individuals: the centre of all activity, the repository of Swaraj; from individual, power is transferred to the village; from village, the power goes to the higher unit, and ultimately, ends up with the central/ national government which, practically performs only the coordinating functions. Thus what is or what can not be done by the individual is done by the village, what is not done by the village is done by the local/ regional government; what is not done by the regional/ provincial government is done by the central/ national government. The spirit of the Gandhian Ramrajya is that it is a self-regulating system where everyone is one's own ruler, and not a hindrance to one's neighbours.

Gandhiji's concept of decentralization has an economic aspect. He argued for the devolution of economic power as well. He advocated village economy through the promotion of village, small, cottage industries. In fact, he was for the self-reliant village economy. His concept of Swadeshi is "that spirit which requires us to serve our immediate neighbours and use things produced in our neighbourhood in preference to those more remote."

Gandhiji favoured the revival of indigenous industries so that people could have enough to eat. In his opinion, any kind of economy which exploited people and helped concentrated wealth in fewer hands, stands condemned.



Gandhiji's idea of trusteeship was unique. It was unique because it aimed at establishing cordial relations between the capital and the labour. Declaring all property to be the property of the community as a whole, Gandhiji pleaded that all the employers (industrialists, capitalists and the like) are the trustees of what they hold. As such, they all are entitled only for the money they need to satisfy their necessities as do the employees (the workers etc.). For Gandhiji no individual is the owner: all work and all are the workers; everyone gets for the service one renders; the profit is not of the owner, but is what belongs to the community. The employers are the trustees, and not the masters; the employees as necessary components of the enterprises, are the workers and not the slaves.

4.3.3 Ends and Means

According to Gandhiji, ends and means constitute two aspects of the same reality, i.e., two sides of the same coin. They form an organic whole. Ends grow out of the means "As are the means, so are the ends". Gandhiji used to say. He also said, the means may be likened to a seed; the ends, to a tree and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the ends as there is between the seed and the tree." He argued that the state can not attain its ideal character as long as the means are tainted with violence. That is why he always laid emphasis on the purity of means to achieve the ends. Impure means can not achieve pure ends. He said once: "I would not accept Swaraj if it comes through bloodshed". Again, "For me, Ahimsa comes before Swaraj." So close and inseparable is the relation between the two that if one takes care of the means, the ends will take care of themselves. Furthermore, the realization of the goal has to be, for Gandhiji, in proportion to that of the means.

Gandhiji was no Machiavelli. For Machiavelli, ends justify the means; for Gandhiji, means justify the ends.

4.3.4 Society and Sarvodaya

Gandhism is not only a theory of politics, economy, religion, strategy, but also is a theory of society. Gandhiji's whole social philosophy is a philosophy of equality: equality not in the sense of absolute equality, but in the sense that as human beings, all are equal. A society based on equality, according to Gandhiji, is a society which rejects any and every type of discrimination: either on the basis of caste, creed, class, sex, race, or region. We are born as human beings, not as Hindus or Muslims, We are born as human beings, not as an upper caste being or a dalit. Gandhiji is opposed to all types of discriminatory tendencies and trends. For him, there is only one caste, one class, one religion, one race, and that is humanity. He, therefore, did not admit any discrimination. In fact, he was more for the welfare of the weaker, i.e., for women as compared to men; for the weaker sections of society: the Harijans, the Dalits. It is not that he wanted to deprive 'A' and 'give' to 'B'; it is that he wanted to give 'B' more so as to enable him to get to the heights of 'A'. He advocated equality so as to level people in social, economic, and political hierarchy. His concept of equality aimed at bridging the gaps and not distancing them.

Gandhiji's concept of Sarvodaya sums up his views on the kind of society he used to dream. Sarvodaya, as Gandhiji had visualised, is the greatest good of all the members of the society. It is the welfare of all. It is the good of the individual together with the good of all the individuals, i.e., the good of each with the good of all. The concept of good in Sarvodaya is not merely material, it is moral and spiritual as well.

**Intext Questions 4.3**

Answer the following questions. Give one word only

1. What type of state Gandhiji had advocated?
2. What strategy did Gandhiji suggest for employer-employee cordial relationship?
3. With what name did Gandhiji address the people of the scheduled castes?
4. Which of the two ends and means, Gandhism advocated.
5. What did Gandhiji call the greatest good of all the individuals, especially of the poor, the poorest of the poor'?

**What You Have Learnt**

In this lesson, you have learnt about three major political theories: Liberalism, Marxism and Gandhism. You now know that liberalism is a political philosophy which advocates the autonomy of individual, the constitutional state, the responsive government, rights and liberties of the individual, free press, rule of law, impartial judiciary, decentralization and the like. You also know that Marxism is a political philosophy of the working class, which advocates equality, social justice, absence of all types of exploitation, a planned economy with employment for each and all. You also know that Gandhism is a political philosophy of Satya and Ahimsa, an alternative solution of all problems faced by humanity, a synthesis of all major political ideologies of the world.

**Terminal Exercises**

1. What is meant by liberalism?
2. What do you mean by 'withering away' of the state?
3. Discuss dialectical materialism as a feature of Marxism.
4. Is Marxism relevant today? Explain
5. Do you agree with the view that Gandhism is a critique of the western civilization?
6. What was Gandhiji's concept of Ramrajya?

**Answer to Intext Questions****4.1**

1. Absolute
2. Liberty
3. Liberalism
4. Individualism

**Notes**

5. Capitalistic
6. Service
7. Capitalist

4.2

1. Capitalism
2. Working
3. Material
4. Forces, Production
5. Work
6. Needs
7. Engines

4.3

1. Ramrajya
2. Trusteeship
3. Harijans
4. Means
5. Sarvodya

Hints of Terminal Exercises

1. Refer to section 4.1.1
2. Refer to section 4.2.1
3. Refer to section 4.2.2
4. Refer to section 4.2.3
5. Refer to section 4.3.1
6. Refer to section 4.3.2



Notes