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6.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with Historical Materialism. After studying it you should be able to

- discuss the theory of historical materialism
- describe Marx's view of society and social change
- outline the contribution of historical materialism to sociology.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already studied the context in which sociology emerged in Europe and learnt about the impact of the Industrial Revolution on its founders.

Here we will deal with one of the founders, namely, Karl Marx. His ideas were full of sociological insights. Historical materialism, the subject matter of this unit, is the scientific core of Marx's sociological thought. Therefore, it is necessary to situate historical materialism within the overall context of Marx's work and his contributions to sociological theory. For this purpose the unit deals first with the brief background of the philosophical and theoretical origins of historical materialism in the context of its intellectual and social milieu. Then we go on to a discussion of certain basic assumptions upon which the theory of historical materialism is built. This is followed by an exposition of the theory of historical materialism and Marx's reasons for refuting economic determinism. Finally, the unit lists certain important contributions of historical materialism to sociological theory. A proper understanding of the above sections will help you to study the coming units related to other aspects of Marx's thought.

6.2 HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Marx's general ideas about society are known as his theory of historical materialism. Materialism is the basis of his sociological thought because, for Marx, material conditions or economic factors affect the structure and development of society. His theory is that material conditions essentially comprise technological means of production and human society is formed by the forces and relations of **production**. Later in this unit, and in the next unit you will learn about the meaning of the forces and relations of production. Here, let us tell you why Marx's theory of society, i.e., historical materialism is historical. It is historical because Marx has traced the evolution of human societies from one stage to another. It is called materialistic because Marx has interpreted the evolution of societies in terms of their material or economic bases. Materialism simply means that it is matter or material reality, which is the basis for any change. The earlier view, that of Hegel, was that ideas were the cause of change. Marx opposed this view and instead argued that ideas were a result of objective reality, i.e., matter and not vice versa.

In his efforts to understand society in its entirety, he has not confined himself to examining the structure of human societies at a given point of time. He has explained the societies in terms of the future of humankind. For him it is not enough to describe the world. He has a plan for changing it. Thus, his sociological thinking largely concerns the mechanism of change. To understand social change, he has derived its phases from the philosophical ideas of Hegel, the German philosopher. About these phases also, we will learn later in the last unit of this block.

At this point, let us clarify that we are here concerned with Marx's sociological ideas only. We are not dealing with various brands of Marxism and the interpretations of Marx's ideas which became the official ideology of Communist regimes.

To turn back to Marx's theory of historical materialism, you need to look at it as Marx's general theory of society, which deals extensively with the contradictions found in the capitalist societies of his times. According to Friedrich Engels the theory of historical materialism was discovered by

Karl Marx, but Marx thought it was Friedrich Engels who had conceived the materialist formulation of history independently. We shall say that both of them used this theory, to quote Marx, as the ‘guiding thread’ of all their works.

In Engels’ view the theory of historical materialism takes a special view of history. In this view Engels seeks the final cause and the spirit behind historical events. Both Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels stress the scientific nature of their views of history. In the *German Ideology* (1845-6) Marx and Engels assert that their views of history are based on observation and an exact description of actual conditions. For discussing all parts of this theory you will need to follow the background which has provided a framework to his ideas about society.

6.2.0 Background

Marx’s childhood and youth fell in that period of European history when the reactionary powers (favouring monarchical political order) were attempting to eradicate from post Napoleonic Europe all traces of the French Revolution. There was, at the same time, a **liberal** movement (favouring autonomy of the individual and standing for the protection of political and civil liberties) in Germany that was making itself felt. The movement was given impetus by the Revolution in France. In the late 1830s a further step toward radical criticism for extreme changes in existing socio-political conditions was made by the young Hegelians (a group of people following the philosophy of Hegel). To learn about Hegel and his philosophy see Box 6.1 and 6.2. This was the group with which Marx became formally associated when he was studying law and philosophy at the University of Berlin.

Although he was the youngest member of the young Hegelians, Karl Marx inspired their confidence, respect and even admiration. They saw in him a ‘new Hegel’ or rather a powerful anti-Hegelian.

Box 6.1: G.W.F. Hegel

Georg Wilhelm Hegel was born in Stuttgart on August 27, 1770 and died in Berlin on November 14, 1831. He was the son of a revenue officer. He studied classics, theology and philosophy at the University of Tubingen and became in 1805, at the age of 35, a professor at the University of Jena. His main works are *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), *The Science of Logic* (1812), *The Philosophy of Right* (1821), and *The Philosophy of History* (1830-31).

In the context of Hegel’s influence on Marx, you need to note that Marx was influenced by (i) Hegel’s philosophy of history and (ii) his science of logic. Both these aspects of Hegel’s theories are given in Box 6.2.

Among other influences the intensive study of **B. de Spinoza** (1632-1677) and **A. Hume** (1711-1776) helped Marx to develop a positive conception of democracy. It went far beyond the notions held at the time by radicals

in Germany. The radicals consisted of a political group associated with views, practices and policies of extreme change.

6.2.0.0 Marx's Faith in Democracy

The intellectual heritage from which Marx drew his insights, attitudes and concepts was a synthesis of many ideological currents in Europe of the early and middle nineteenth century. These included the basic assumptions of democratic faith and slogans of the French Revolution.

6.2.0.1 Democracy and Communism

Marx's adherence to a radical view of democracy was also based on the study of such historical events as the revolutions in England, France and America. From these historical studies he concluded that a transitory stage of **Proletarian** democracy must normally and inevitably culminate in communism. According to Marx, communism is a system in which goods are owned in common and are accessible to all. After his conversion to communism Marx began his prolonged studies of economics. While he was still developing from a liberal into a communist, he learned a great deal from European thinkers, such as B. de Spinoza, L. Feuerbach and Alexis de Tocqueville.

Activity 1

Do you think that Karl Marx's ideas are useful for studying Indian society? Give at least two reasons for your negative/positive answer.

6.2.0.2 Conception of History

The epoch to which Marx belonged had its beginnings in the French Revolution. But its historical dimensions coincided with those of the whole era of industrial and social revolutions and extended into modern era. This is the reason for the lasting appeal of a body of thought that is by no means free from history.

Before the age of thirty, Marx produced a number of works which together provide a relatively adequate outline of his "materialist conception of history". Though Marx never wrote explicitly on historical materialism, his writings during the years 1843-8 refer to it in a fragmentary fashion. For him, it was not a new philosophical system. Rather it was a practical method of socio-historical studies. It was also a basis for political action. The framework for this theory was obviously derived from Hegel. Like Hegel, Marx recognised that the history of mankind was simply a single and non-repetitive process. Likewise he also believed that the laws of the historical process could be discovered. You will soon see in Box 6.2 how Marx deviated from Hegelian philosophy. Many others among the Young Hegelians found defects in Hegel's ideas and they proceeded to build a new system of thought. But only Marx could consistently develop a new set of ideas which in fact superseded Hegelian theories about society.

Box 6.2: Hegel's Philosophy of History

Hegel was a liberal in the sense that he accepted the rule of law rather than the rule of individual persons. In this way, he accepted the authority of the Prussian **state** (former kingdom and state of Germany). His philosophy belonged to the idealist tradition. This tradition began with Immanuel Kant and reached its zenith with Hegel. According to the idealist tradition, reason is the essence of reality and the spirit of Reason expresses itself during the course of history. Hegel also argued that history comprises the growth of Reason to awareness of itself. He considered the constitutional state to be the summit or highest point of history. Hegel views history as 'progress in the consciousness of freedom'. This consciousness of freedom, according to Hegel, is best expressed in religion, and development in religious concepts and ideas shows the degree of the consciousness of freedom in particular forms of social organisation. In other words, advances in religious and philosophical ideas correspond with socio-political progress. For Hegel, human history was progressing in the direction of Christianity, the Reformarian, the French Revolution and constitutional monarchy. He also held that only educated state officials, administering a constitutional monarchy, understood the ideas of human progress. Followers of Hegel's ideas came to be known as the Young Hegelians. Marx was also one of them. The Young Hegelians went further and asserted that not only the educated officials but all citizens could acquire the ability to understand the ideas of human progress. Karl Marx also developed his ideas of human history initially on the basis of Hegel's views. But in course of time he too joined hands with the Young Hegelians and eventually evolved his own ideas on the history of human society i.e., historical materialism. In doing so, he is said to have put Hegel on his head, i.e., Marx criticised Hegel's conservative ideas on religion, politics and law.

Hegel's Science of Logic

Marx rejected Hegel's faith in Idealism but adopted and adapted Hegel's use of the dialectical methodology. We will discuss this topic in Unit 9 of this Block, but let us here mention Hegel's basic position regarding dialectics.

According to Hegel, each thesis has its antithesis. The thesis represents the positive view and the antithesis represents the opposite or negative view. It means that each statement of truth has its opposite statement. The antithesis or the opposite statement is also true. In course of time, the thesis and antithesis are reconciled in the form of synthesis. The synthesis is the composite view. As history progresses, the synthesis becomes a new thesis. The new thesis then has an antithesis, with eventual prospect of turning into a synthesis. And thus goes on the process of dialectics.

While Hegel applied this understanding of the process of dialectics to the progress of ideas in history, Marx accepted the concept of dialectics but did not, like Hegel, perceive truth in the progress of ideas. He said that matter is the realm of truth and tried to reach the truth via materialism. This is why Marx's theory is known as historical materialism while Hegel's system is called dialectical idealism.

You may ask what is materialism? Materialism seeks the scientific explanations of things, including even religion. The idea of materialism may be opposed to the concept of idealism. Idealism refers to a theory that ultimate reality lies in a realm of transcending phenomena. Materialism, on the other hand, contends that everything, that exists, depends upon matter. We can speak of three kinds of materialism, namely, philosophical materialism, scientific materialism and historical materialism. Without going into terminological details of the first two kinds, we clarify that historical materialism emphasises the fundamental and causal role of production of material conditions in the development of human history.

Marx traced historical events in the light of materialistic understanding of reality. You may also be interested in learning about Marx's approach to history.

6.2.0.3 Sociological Approach to History

In sketching out his theory of society and history, Marx repudiated Hegelian and Post-Hegelian speculative philosophy. He built on Feuerbach's anthropological naturalism and developed instead a humanist ethics based on a strictly sociological approach to historical phenomena. Drawing also on French materialism and on British empiricism and classical economics, Marx's theory sought to explain all social phenomena in terms of their place and function in the complex systems of society and nature. This was without recourse to what may be considered metaphysical explanations clearly outlined in those early writings of Hegel and his followers. This eventually became a mature sociological conception of the making and development of human societies. Before turning to basic assumption of the theory of historical materialism, let us learn in Box 6.3 about Feuerbach whose ideas influenced Karl Marx in a tangential manner only.

Box 6.3

L. Feuerbach was born on July 28, 1804 at Landshut, Bavaria and died on September 13, 1872 at Nuremberg. He was a materialist philosopher. His criticism of Hegel's ideas on religion had influenced the writings of the young Marx. Feuerbach was a student of theology and later became interested in philosophy. In 1824, he attended Hegel's lectures and as a result he gave up his religious faith and turned to Hegelian philosophy. In his book, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (1830), he denied the immortality of the soul. This idea caused a great deal of stir among the intellectuals of his day. Because of his anti-religious views he was denied the professorship of philosophy. As a protest he stopped teaching and became a private scholar. He published many critical articles on Hegel's idealism and developed his ideas on materialism. In 1850, Feuerbach became fully convinced of medical materialism and held that humans are determined by the nature and quality of their food. We find that interest in Feuerbach's ideas was only a passing phase in Karl Marx's intellectual growth.

6.2.1 Basic Assumptions

Historical materialism is based upon a philosophy of human history. But it is not, strictly speaking, a philosophy of history. It is best understood as sociological theory of human progress. As a theory it provides a scientific and systematic research programme for empirical investigations. At the same time, it also claims to contain within it a revolutionary programme of intervention into society. It is this unique combination of scientific and revolutionary feature which is the hallmark of Marx's original formulation. The complex and at times uneasy relationship between the scientific and revolutionary commitments of this theory of society (historical materialism) has been one of the principal grounds of debate among Marxist sociologists. However, here we will be primarily concerned with only the scientific aspect of historical materialism. Before proceeding to discuss the theory of historical materialism, let us also tell you briefly about Marx's views on human society and human nature.

6.2.1.0 Society as an Interrelated Whole

Marx views human society as an interrelated whole. The social groups, institutions, beliefs and doctrines within it are integrally related. Therefore, he has studied their interrelations rather than treating them separately or in isolation. Such aspects as history, politics, law, religion or for that matter education cannot be treated as separate spheres.

6.2.1.1 Changeable Nature of Society

Marx views society as inherently mutable, in which changes are produced largely by internal contradictions and conflicts. Such changes, if observed in a large number of instances, according to Marx, show a sufficient degree of regularity to allow the formulation of general statements about their causes and consequences. Both these assumptions relate to the nature of human society.

6.2.1.2 Human Nature and Social Relationships

There is one other assumption behind historical materialism without which the theory cannot be held together. This relates to the concept of human being in general. According to Marx there is no permanent persistence of human nature. Human nature is neither originally evil nor originally good, it is, in origin, potential. If human nature is what human beings make history with, then at the same time it is human nature which they make. And human nature is potentially revolutionary. Human will is not a passive reflection of events, but contains the power to rebel against circumstances in the prevailing limitations of 'human nature'.

It is not that people produce out of material greed or the greed to accumulate wealth. But the act of producing the essentials of life engages people into social relationships that may be independent of their will. In most of human history, according to Marx, these relationships are **class** relationships that create **class struggle**.

Check Your Progress 1

Tick the correct answer in the following questions.

- i) Who among the following scholars did Marx draw his philosophical inspiration from ?
 - a) Comte
 - b) Spencer
 - c) Hegel
 - d) Aristotle
 - e) Confucius
- ii) Which of the following statements are not acceptable to historical materialism?
 - a) Humans are the most biologically determined species of all.
 - b) Human nature is basically evil.
 - c) Humans are forever happy to live in a class society.
- iii) Which of the following is an essential feature of historical materialism?
 - a) Society takes birth, grows and changes like an organism.
 - b) Society is inherently mutable in which changes are produced by internal contradictions.
 - c) Society starts as a small aggregate and with the passage of time grows in size.
 - d) Society develops with the development of its scientific personnel.

6.2.2 The Theory

Here, we will put in simple words Marx's views about the happenings within the society. His thought is essentially confined to interpreting the capitalist society of his times. He shows contradictory or antagonistic nature of capitalist society. Let us see how he goes about this task. This exercise will lay threadbare Marx's theory of historical materialism.

Clearer exposition of the theory of historical materialism is contained in Marx's 'Preface' to *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Here, he says that the actual basis of society is its economic structure. For Marx economic structure of society is made of its relations of production. The legal and political **superstructure** of society is based on relations of production. Marx says that relations of production reflect the stage of society's force of means of production.

Here, you have come across terms, such as, relations of production, **forces of means of production** and superstructure. Let us tell you that these terms carry special connotations in Marxist thought. You will learn in detail about each of them as you read further units of this block (also see Key Words in this unit). At present, you need to focus on the thrust of Marx's argument.

His contention is that the process of socio-political and intellectual life in general is conditioned by the mode of production of material life. On the basis of this logic, Marx tries to construct his entire view of history.

He says that new developments of productive forces of society come in conflict with existing relations of production. When people become conscious of the state of conflict, they wish to bring an end to it. This period of history is called by Marx the period of social revolution. The revolution brings about resolution of conflict. It means that new forces of production take roots and give rise to new relations of production. Thus, you can see that for Marx, it is the growth of new productive forces which outlines the course of human history. The productive forces are the powers society uses to produce material conditions of life. For Marx, human history is an account of development and consequences of new forces of material production. This is the reason why his view of history is given the name of historical materialism. In a nutshell, this is the theory of historical materialism.

In brief, we can say that Marx's theory of historical materialism states that all objects, whether living or inanimate, are subject to continuous change. The rate of this change is determined by the laws of dialectics (see Box 6.2 and Unit 9). In other words, there are forces which bring about the change. You can call it the stage of antithesis. The actual nature of change, i.e., the stage of synthesis, will be, according to Marx, determined by the interaction of these two types of forces. Before explaining in some detail further connections which Marx makes to elaborate this theory, it is necessary to point out that different schools of Marxism provide differing explanations of this theory. We are here confined to a kind of standard version in our rendering of historical materialism. We should keep in mind that materialistic conception of history is not a rough and ready formulation for explaining different forms of social organisation. Let us now, once again explain Marx's theory of historical materialism by explaining, in brief, the terms mentioned above.

6.2.2.0 Social Relations, Over and Above Individuals

Marx says that as a general principle, the production of material requirements of life, which is a very basic necessity of all societies, compels individuals to enter into definite social relations that are independent of their will. This is the basic idea of Marx's theory of society. He stresses that there are social relations which impinge upon individuals irrespective of their preferences. He further elaborates that an understanding of the historical process depends on our awareness of these objective social relations.

6.2.2.1 Infrastructure and Superstructure

Secondly, according to Marx, every society has its infrastructure and superstructure. Social relations are defined in terms of material conditions which he calls infrastructure. The economic base of a society forms its infrastructure. Any changes in material conditions also imply corresponding changes in social relations. Forces and relations of production come in the category of infrastructure. Within the superstructure figure the legal,

educational and political institutions as well as values, cultural ways of thinking, religion, ideologies and philosophies.

6.2.2.2 Forces and Relations of Production

The forces of production, according to Marx, appear to be the capacity of a society to produce. This capacity to produce is essentially a function of scientific and technical knowledge, technological equipment, and the organisation of labour. The relations of production arise out of the production process but essentially overlap with the relations in ownership of means of production. Relations of production should not be entirely identified with relations of property. At certain points in time, Marx speaks in terms of transformation of society from one stage to another. In explaining the process of transformation, Marx has given us a scheme of historical movement.

6.2.2.3 Social Change in Terms of Social Classes

Marx elaborates the significance of the infrastructure of society by tracing the formation of the principal social classes. He develops the idea of social change resulting from internal conflicts in a theory of class struggles. For Marx, social change displays a regular pattern. Marx constructs, in broad terms, a historical sequence of the main types of society, proceeding from the simple, undifferentiated society of 'primitive communism' to the complex class society of modern capitalism. He provides an explanation of the great historical transformations which demolish old forms of society and create new ones in terms of infrastructural changes which he regards as general and constant in their operation. Each period of contradiction between the forces and the relations of production is seen by Marx as a period of revolution.

6.2.2.4 Dialectical Relationship between the Forces and Relations of Production

In revolutionary periods, one class is attached to the old relations of production. These relations hinder the development of the forces of production. Another class, on the other hand, is forward looking. It strives for new relations of production. The new relations of production do not create obstacles in the way of the development of the forces of production. They encourage the maximum growth of those forces. This is the abstract formulation of Marx's ideas of class struggle.

Revolutions and History of Societies

The dialectical relationship between the forces of production and relations of production provides a theory of revolution. In Marx's reading of history, revolutions are not political accidents. They are treated as social expression of the historical movement. Revolutions are necessary manifestations of the historical progress of societies. Revolutions occur when the conditions for them mature. Marx (1859: Preface) wrote, 'No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed; and the new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society'.

Let us take an example. Feudal society developed capitalist relations of production. The French revolution occurred when the capitalist relations of production reached a degree of maturity in Europe. Marx here spoke of another process of transformation from capitalism to socialism. Now capitalist societies became the arena for development of socialist relations of production. This is how Marx interpreted historical movement of societies.

6.2.2.5 Social Reality and Consciousness

We have said before that Marx has made a distinction between infrastructure and superstructure. At the same time he has also distinguished social reality and consciousness. For Marx, reality is not determined by human consciousness. According to him, social reality determines human consciousness. This results in an overall conception of the ways of human thinking that must be explained in terms of social relations of which they are a part.

Besides the forces and relations of production Marx has spoken about the modes of production. Accordingly, he has described stages of human history in terms of the four modes of production, namely, the Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. The history of the West according to him, tells us about the ancient, feudal and capitalist (bourgeois) modes of production. The ancient mode of production is characterised by slavery, the feudal mode of production by serfdom, and the capitalist mode of production by wage earning. They constitute three distinct modes of exploitation of human labour in Western societies. Asiatic mode of production which does not constitute a stage in Western history is distinguished by the subordination of all people to the state or the state bureaucracy.

The above discussion of the theory of historical materialism should not lead you to consider it a case of economic determinism. Next section (6.3) will explain why we should not look at the theory of historical materialism in mere economic terms. Let us complete Activity 2 before going on to the next section.

Activity 2

What are the words for materialism, production, revolution and consciousness in your mother tongue? To explain these terms, give examples from your own social life.

6.3 HISTORICAL MATERIALISM IS NOT ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

It is possible that you may consider Marx as a proponent of economic determinism or the view that economic conditions determine the development of society. But you will here see how historical materialism is different from economic determinism. Marx recognised that without culture there can be no production possible. For him, mode of production includes social relations of production which are relations of domination

and subordination into which men and women are born or involuntarily enter. The reproduction both of life and of the material means of life cannot be understood without turning to the culture, norms and the rituals of the working people over whom the rulers rule. An understanding of working class culture contributes to an understanding of the mode of production.

Class is a category that describes people in relationships over time, and the ways in which they become conscious of these relationships. It also describes the ways in which they separate, unite, enter into struggle, form institutions and transmit values in class ways. Class is an 'economic' and also a 'cultural' formation. It is impossible to reduce class into a pure economic category.

6.4 CONTRIBUTION OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

The theory of historical materialism played an essential part in the formation of modern sociology. Marx's ideas had been foreshadowed in the works of earlier thinkers as diverse in other respects as Hegel, Saint-Simon and Adam Ferguson. All of them greatly influenced Marx. He elaborated his conception of the nature of society, and of the appropriate means to study it. He did so in a more precise, and above all more empirical fashion than did his predecessors. He introduced an entirely new element to understand the structure of each society. It was derived from the relations between social classes. These relations were determined by the mode of production. It was this feature of historical materialism which was widely accepted by later sociologists as offering a more promising starting point for exact and realistic investigations of the causes of social change.

Secondly, historical materialism introduced into sociology a new method of inquiry, new concepts, and a number of bold hypotheses to explain the rise, development, and decline of particular forms of society. All of these came to exercise, in the later decades of the nineteenth century, a profound and extensive influence upon the writings of sociologists.

Thirdly, originality of historical materialism was in its immense effort to synthesise in a critical way, the entire legacy of social knowledge since Aristotle. Marx's purpose was to achieve a better understanding of the conditions of human development. With this understanding he tried to accelerate the actual process by which mankind was moving toward an association, in which the free development of each was the condition for the free development of all. The desired system would be based upon rational planning, cooperative production, and equality of distribution and most important, liberated from all forms of political and social exploitation.

Lastly, historical materialism not only provides a method to understand the existing social reality; it is a method to understand the existence of other methods. It is a persistent critique of the aims and methods of social sciences.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Define, in three lines, relations of production and forces of production.

.....

ii) List, in three lines, the various components of the superstructure.

.....

iii) Define state. Does it belong to

- a) infrastructure or
- b) superstructure?

6.5 LET US SUM UP

In summing up what you learnt in Unit 6 of Block 2, you may state the following three points.

- 1) Historical materialism is a materialist interpretation of social, cultural and political phenomena. It propounds that social institutions and related values are determined by the mode of production processes rather than ideas in the explanation of history. However, the word ‘determined’, in the Marxian sense, refers to determination in the last analysis and should not be taken in an absolute sense.
- 2) Historical materialism is a dialectical theory of human progress. It regards history as the development of human beings’ efforts to master the forces of nature and, hence, of production. Since all production is carried out within social organisation, history is the succession of changes in social system, the development of human relations geared to productive activity (mode of production) in which the economic system forms the base and all other relationships, institutions, activities, and idea systems are “superstructural”.
- 3) History is progress because human beings’ ability to produce their “forces of production” continually increases. It is regression because in perfecting the forces of production they create more and more complex and oppressive social organisation.

6.6 KEY WORDS

Class A fundamental social group or a tangible collectivity which has the capacity to act as a real social force. It

Class Struggle

is positioned in relation to the (non) ownership of the means of material production.

Conflict between two antagonistic social classes which is the motive force of history.

Class Interest

The aims, aspirations and assumptions of a social class which are collectively shared by the members.

Class Consciousness

Awareness of the objective class position vis-à-vis others and an awareness of its historic role in the transformation of society.

Forces of Means of Production

Both the materials worked on and the tools and techniques employed in production of material goods. These material-technical aspects should not be confused with social relations of production.

Hume

A. Hume was an agnostic philosopher and believed that any ultimate reality is unknown.

Infrastructure

Metaphor to express the basic theoretical priority of the mode of production in relation to the rest of society. It includes the means of production and relations of production.

Liberal

One who believes in progress, the essential goodness of human beings and autonomy of the individual.

Mode of Production

The actual relationship between the relations of production and the forces of production.

Proletarian

Representative of the lowest socio-economic class of a community

Relations of Production

Social relationships that directly or indirectly arise out of the production of material conditions of life.

Superstructure

Metaphor to represent the social conditions of the existence of the infrastructure. It includes *state*, schools, religions, institutions, culture, ideas, values and philosophy, etc.

State

A set of institutions and apparatuses that serve as an outpost of the dominant class and further its interests. It enjoys a relative autonomy from the infrastructure and belongs to the superstructure.

Historical Materialism**Spinoza**

B. de Spinoza taught that reality is one substance with many attributes of which only thought and extension are understood by the human mind.

Tocqueville

Alexis de Tocqueville is regarded as a great political thinker of the nineteenth century France. He wrote two major books – (i) *Democracy in America* and (ii) *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. In the first book he gave a portrait of a particular society, American society and in the second book he gave his analysis of a historical event, the French Revolution. Marx was quite influenced by Tocqueville's ideas of democracy.

6.7 FURTHER READING

Aron, Raymond. 1965. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*. Vol. 1, Penguin: Harmondsworth. P. 111-82

Bukharin, N.I. 1926. *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*. Allen and Unwin: London

6.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) (c)
- ii) (a), (b) & (c)
- iii) (b)

Check Your Progress 2

- i) See Key Words
- ii) State, education, religion, values, ideas and philosophies, etc.
- iii) See Key Words.

UNIT 7 FORCES, RELATIONS AND MODES OF PRODUCTION

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Production
- 7.3 Forces of Production
- 7.4 Relations of Production
- 7.5 Mode of Production
- 7.6 Four Modes of Production
 - 7.6.1 Asiatic Mode of production
 - 7.6.2 Ancient Mode of Production
 - 7.6.3 Feudal Mode of Production
 - 7.6.4 Capitalist Mode of Production
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Keywords
- 7.9 Further Reading
- 7.10 Specimen Answer to Check Your Progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with forces, relations and modes of production. After studying it you should be able to

- explain each of the three concepts: force, relation and mode
- distinguish the concepts from one another
- locate the concepts in the overall Marxian view of society.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Unit 6 on Historical Materialism, we discussed the Marxian social theory of human progress. Here in Unit 7, we focus on three major concepts which constitute the core of that theory. These concepts, namely, forces, relations and modes of production have been introduced to you in Unit 6. The same concepts are now explained in greater detail so that you can appreciate how Marx used these ideas. The unit addresses itself to the concepts with which Marx constructed the theory of historical materialism. The core concepts and related concepts which this unit attempts to explain are more or less like tools with which Marx explained the laws of motion of capitalist society in particular and that of society in general. Using these concepts, Marx developed a theory aimed at understanding contemporary society. He also formulated a programme of action to change society.

In order to expose you to the Marxian concepts in a systematic manner, this unit is broadly divided into four sections in the following order:

Firstly, section 7.2 provides a general understanding of the concept of production.

Secondly, you learn in section 7.3 about the concept of **forces of production**. This section attempts to provide the meaning and significance of the concept.

Thirdly, you will learn in section 7.4 about the concept of **relations of production**. The explanation emphasises the fact that these are social relations and must not be confused with the material, technical aspects of production.

Fourthly, you will learn in section 7.5 about the concept of **mode of production**. In the last section that is section 7.6 we will discuss the four modes of production.

The unit ends with separate sections on summary of the contents of the unit, key words, further reading and specimen answers to check your progress exercises.

7.2 PRODUCTION

People need food, clothing, shelter and other necessities of life in order to survive. They cannot get all these things ready-made from nature. To survive, they produce material goods from objects found in nature. Material production has always been and still is the basis of human existence.

For Karl Marx, the history of human societies is the story of how people relate to one another in their efforts to make a living. He said, “The first historical act is...the production of material life. This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history” (see Bottomore 1964: 60). According to Marx, economic production or production of material life is the starting point from which society as an inter-related whole is structured. He speaks of a reciprocity between economic factors and other aspects of historical development of mankind. The factor of economic production is all the same a key concept in explaining the changes that occur in society. He considers that forces of production along with relations of production form the basis of economic and social history of every society. In his Introduction to the *Grundrisse* (1857-58), Marx says that although the three processes of production, distribution and consumption are not one and the same, they represent a totality. It is so because after completion, each of the three processes creates the other process. In this way, one mediates the other. For example, production, once complete, becomes an object of consumption. Similarly, distribution and production are closely related processes. In this way, these economic categories carry definite relations between them. For Marx, a certain type of production creates a certain type of distribution, exchange and consumption. On the basis of all these economic categories are formed certain types of relations of production. Marx argues that production itself is based on other economic categories

and clear-cut relation between production and other economic processes. What is evident is that material production is basic to human societies.

For Marx, production is at once both a general and a historical category. In *Capital* (1861-1879) Marx has made use of the term 'production' as a general category to highlight specific forms of production in capitalist societies. On the other hand, speaking about production with definite social and historical characteristics, Marx discusses the concept of mode of production. About this you will read in the last section of this unit.

Here, we need to remember that the role of production in human history became a guiding thread in Marx's writings. Let us follow this thread in order to understand his thought. We begin with a consideration of forces of production.

7.3 FORCES OF PRODUCTION

The forces of production express the degree to which human beings control nature. The more advanced the productive forces are, greater is their control over the nature and vice versa. You can say the forces of production are the ways in which material goods are produced. They include the technological know-how, the types of equipment in use and goods being produced for example, tools, machinery, labour and the levels of technology are all considered to be the forces of production.

The forces of production, according to Marx, include means of production and labour power (see Box 7.1). The development of machinery, changes in the labour process, the opening up of new sources of energy and the education of the **workers** are included in the forces of production. In this sense science and the related skills can be seen as part of the productive forces. Some Marxists have even included geographical or ecological space as a productive force.

Involuntary changes in technology, demography, ecology in 'material life' affect the mode of production itself and perceptibly alter the balance of productive relations. But involuntary changes do not spontaneously restructure or reorganise a mode of production. Any restructuring of relations of power, forms of domination and of social organisation has been mostly the outcome of struggles. The condition and character of the struggle are determined by changes in material life.

In every social order there is a continuous change in the material forces of production. Sometimes, as in tribal societies, this change is produced by some natural and ecological phenomena, such as the drying up of rivers, deforestation in or exhaustion of the soil etc. Usually, however, this change is produced by a development in the instruments of production. Human beings have always attempted to better their lives and overcome scarcity. The development of forces of production reflects the constant struggle of human beings to master nature through their labour.

The development of the forces of production is primary because it results from a factor, which is, in a sense, exogenous. The motive force lies outside the forces and relations of production and acts first upon the former. The

motive force is the rational and ever-present impulse of human beings to try to better their situation and overcome scarcity by developing the productive forces. Human beings are, above all, like animals producing society by acting upon nature through their labour.

Productive forces transform nature into use values and exchange values. The productive forces compel the creation and destruction of successive systems of production relations between human beings.

Productive forces have an intrinsic tendency to develop, as human beings' knowledge and mastery over nature increase. As these forces develop, successive social relations of production develop and consequently give way. At a particular point of development the productive forces and the production relations enter into conflict: the latter being unstable to contain the former. Society then enters a period of revolution. People become conscious of this by recognising the existence of class struggle, between those whose activity fits them for the new economic structure, and those who are guardians of the old.

Different socio-economic organisations of production, which have characterised human history, arise or fall as they enable or impede the expansion of society's productive capacity. The growth of the productive forces thus explains the general course of human history. The productive forces, however, include, as we have already noted, not just the means of production (tools, machines, factories and so on), but labour power, the skills, knowledge, experience, and other human faculties used in work. The productive forces represent the powers society has at its command in material production.

Box 7.1: Labour Power

According to Marx, labour power is the capacity to do such useful work which increases the value of products. Workers sell their labour power i.e. their capacity to do work which adds value to commodities. They sell their labour power to capitalists for a wage paid in cash.

We should distinguish labour power from labour. Labour is the actual exercise of one's power to add value to commodities. The category of labour power is used by Marx to explain the source of surplus value. Let us say that the capitalists invest money to buy goods and later sell them for more money than they invested. This is possible only if some value is added to those goods. Labour power, according to Marx, is precisely that capacity which adds value to a commodity. In buying and using labour power the capitalist is able to extract labour and labour is the source of value.

The source of surplus value in capitalist system of production is located in the process whereby the value paid by capitalists for labour power is smaller than the value which labour power adds to a commodity.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Which of the following cannot be conducted as a force of production?
- a) Tractor
 - b) Labour power
 - c) Steam engine
 - d) Windmill
 - e) Computer
 - f) Missile

- ii) Tick mark the correct statement.

With the increase of productive forces,

- a) our mastery over nature increases.
- b) we become enslaved to nature.
- c) we becomes more conscious of nature.
- d) we turn into a guardian of nature.

- iii) Tick mark the correct statement.

Material forces of production are

- a) more or less stagnant.
- b) continuously expanding.
- c) moving towards scarcity.
- d) potentially destructive.

7.4 RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

The forces of production are not the only factors in material production. People are able to produce jointly by organising in a society. In this sense, labour is and always has been social in character. According to Marx, in order to produce, people enter into definite relations with one another. Only within these social relations does production take place. You can easily say that the relations of production are the social relations found among the people involved in the process of production. These social relations are determined by the level and character of the development of productive forces.

‘Forces’ and ‘relations’ of production are strongly interrelated. The development of one leads to a growing incompatibility or contradiction with the other. In fact, the contradictions between the two aspects of production ‘act as the motor of history’ (Bottomore 1983: 178). The chain of causation in historical development runs like this. The forces of production determine the superstructure. There is, however, quite a good

deal of controversy regarding the primacy of the forces of production over the relations of production. As we said earlier we shall not go into the detail of these interpretations of Marxism. In Marx's own writings, you may like to remember, there is ambiguity on this matter. In places, he gives primacy to the relations of production while in other places he describes forces of production as the prime mover of social change.

The relations of production, which are said to correspond to society's productive level, link the productive forces and human beings in the process of production. These relations are of two broad types. The first refers to those technical relations that are necessary for the actual production process of products. The second refers to the relations of economic control, which are legally manifested as property ownership. They govern access to the forces of production and products.

Relations of production are the social relations of production. As such they include both the relations between the direct producers or workers and their employers or those who control their labour, and the relations between the direct producers themselves.

Relation of production is not merely the ownership of means of production. The employer's relation to the worker is one of domination and the worker's relation with co-workers is one of cooperation. The relations of production are relations between people and people whereas means of production are relations between people and things. The relations of production can influence the momentum and direction of the development of the productive forces.

Relations of production are reflection in the economic ownership of productive forces. For example, under capitalism the most fundamental of these relations is the **bourgeoisie's** ownership of means of production while the proletariat owns only its labour power.

The relationships of production can also dominate and generate changes in the forces. For example capitalist relations of production often do revolutionise the instruments of production and the labour process.

Activity 1

Describe briefly in about 250 words the process of industrialisation in India in terms of forces and relations of production. Discuss this topic with your counsellor and fellow students at your study centre before completing this activity.

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production. The contradiction between forces and relations of production accounts for history existing as a succession of modes of production. The contradiction leads to the necessary decline of one mode and its replacement by another. Forces and relations of production, in any mode of production underline not just the economic progress, but a movement of the whole of society from one stage to another. Let us in the next section discuss Marx's concept of mode of production.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Tick the correct answer.

Relations of production primarily consist of

- a) individual motives for acquisition in society.
- b) asymmetrical exchange of goods in the market.
- c) ideal material needs of humans in history.
- d) differential requirements of classes in society.
- e) social relationship arising out of the production process.

ii) Tick the correct answer.

Relations of production constitute relationships between

- a) things and things.
- b) people and things.
- c) people and people.
- d) none of these.

iii) Which of the following statements is correct?

- a) Relations of production is not merely the ownership of means of production.
- b) Relation of production is not a human relationship at all.
- c) Relation of production is not a cooperative relationship between individuals.
- d) Relation of production is essentially an exploitative relationship between producers.

iv) Which of the following statement is correct?

- a) Relationship of production can also dominate and generate changes in the forces of production.
- b) Relationship of production have essentially no relationship to forces of production.
- c) Relationships of production can be at conflict with forces of production.
- d) Relationship of production can generate changes in forces of production.

7.5 MODE OF PRODUCTION

In Marx's writing, stages of social history are differentiated not by what human beings produce but by how, or by what means, they produce the material goods for subsistence. In this way, we can say that historical periods

are founded and differentiated on the basis of the modes of material production. In other words, at the basis of history are successive modes of material production. You can also say that the forces and relations of production are two aspects of mode of production. The productive forces of society reflect the degree to which human beings control nature. The more advanced the productive forces, the greater is their control over nature. In order to produce, people enter into definite relations with one another. This is the relations of production aspect of how material goods are produced. Production takes place within these social relations. You can say that any historical mode of production is an integral unity between the forces of production and the relations of production. You can also say that the forces of production shape the relations of production and the two together define the mode of production. That is the general economic frame or particular manner in which people produce and distribute the means to sustain life. In this sense, the successive modes of production are the basic element of a systematic description of history.

Keeping aside the debate among the Marxist scholars concerning the definition of 'mode of production', we can say that crucial element in defining mode of production is 'the way in which the surplus is produced and its use controlled' (Bottomore 1983: 337). Surplus means the amount that remains when use or need is satisfied. According to Marx, under capitalist mode of production, the surplus takes the form of profit. Surplus is produced by exploiting the working class and is sold for more than the wages given to the workers. Because production of surplus enables societies to grow and change, this factor is taken to be most important in defining mode of production.

Each mode of production has its specific relations of production. These are not developed by chance or by accident. They are deliberately ordered because they help the property owning class extract the surplus from the working people. Take an example. The relations of production under feudalism, in which the serf is dominated in all respects by the feudal lord, are necessary to enable the feudal lord to appropriate the surplus from the serf. If such a relationship is continued under capitalism it will fail. Therefore a new set of production relations develops under capitalism that enables the capitalist appropriate surplus value from the workers.

It should also be noted that neither the forces of production nor the relations of production are fixed and static. Even within a given mode of production the forces of production may change. In any society, we may find that over the years greater production follows improvements in technology. The capitalist nations are very different from what they were two to three hundred years ago, when capitalism was born. This change in the productive forces has resulted in changes in the relations of production. The workers in the twenty first century, may not be as exploited as the factory workers in the nineteenth century. Marxists would, however, argue that exploitation still remains, because the modern workers, with modern technology, produce more surplus value than their predecessors, and they do not proportionately earn that much more.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Tick mark the correct answer.
- According to Marx, mode of production is
- a) an empirical concept.
 - b) a psychological phenomenon.
 - c) a biological fact.
 - d) an economic variable.
 - e) an abstract construct.
- ii) Which of the following statements is correct about the nature of humans? It is
- a) not immutable but historical.
 - b) a manifestation of ecological factors.
 - c) determined by psychological traits.
 - d) an indeterminate unconscious state of mind.
- iii) Which of the following can be appropriately called a mode of production?
- a) Pastoral
 - b) Agricultural
 - c) Feudal
 - d) Tribal
 - e) National

7.6 FOUR MODES OF PRODUCTION

More than one mode of production may exist within any particular society at a given point in time. But in all forms of society there is one determinate kind of production which assigns rank and influence to all the others. Here we shall discuss each of the four modes of production, identified by Marx during his studies of human societies.

7.6.1 Asiatic Mode of Production

The concept of **Asiatic mode of production** refers to a specific original mode of production. This is distinct from the ancient slave mode of production or the **feudal mode of production**.

The Asiatic mode of production is characteristic of primitive communities in which ownership of land is communal. These communities are still partly organised on the basis of kinship relations. State power, which expresses the real of imaginary unity of these communities, controls the use of essential

economic resources, and directly appropriates part of the labour and production of the community.

This mode of production constitutes one of the possible forms of transition from classless to class societies; it is also perhaps the most ancient form of this transition. It contains the contradiction of this transition, i.e. the combination of communal relations of production with emerging forms of the exploiting classes and of the State.

Marx did not leave behind any systematic presentation of the history of India. He set down his observations on certain current Indian questions which attracted public attention, or drew materials from India's past and present conditions to illustrate parts of his more general arguments. The concept of Asiatic mode of production is therefore inadequate for an understanding of Indian history and society.

Box 7.2: Marx and Indian Society

Marx made no full-scale study of Indian society. The ideology of Hinduism was to him an ideology of an outdated social milieu. He was most skeptical of a Hindu golden age of the bygone era. British rule in India was seen by Marx as a graft on to Asiatic despotism.

7.6.2 Ancient Mode of Production

Ancient Mode of Production refers to the forms which precede capitalist production. In some of these terms slavery is seen as the foundation of the productive system. The relation of **masters** to **slaves** is considered as the very essence of slavery. In this system of production the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of the slave's labour. The slave is not allowed to reproduce. If we restrict ourselves to agricultural slavery (see box 7.3), exploitation operates according to the following modalities: the slaves work the master's land and receive their subsistence in return. The master's profit is constituted by the difference between what the slaves produce and what they consume. But what is usually forgotten is that beyond this, the slaves are deprived of their own means of reproduction. The reproduction of slavery depends on the capacity of the society to acquire new slaves, that is, on an apparatus which is not directly linked to the capacities of demographic reproduction of the enslaving population. The rate of accumulation depends on the number of slaves acquired, and not directly on their productivity.

Slaves are different from the other members of the community in that they are rightfully deprived of offspring. Their status as 'foreigners' is permanent. A profit is made out of the 'foreigner'.

Hence, if one wants the system to have a certain continuity and to become organic, then one must not allow the slave to have dependents. In each generation one must provide the means of introducing foreigners as replacements for worn-out slaves. We find an intimate and necessary liaison between these two levels of exploitation: a relation through pilfering between one population and another, and a relation of exploitation between the class of slaves and the class of masters.

In slavery, the growth of the labour force is independent of effective demographic forces. It rests not on the demographic growth which is due to natural increase, but on the means devoted to the capture (as in war) of foreign individuals. The possibility of accumulation comes about through the multiplication of slaves independently of growth in the productivity of labour.

Box 7.3: Agricultural Slavery

Slavery mode of production, which Marx referred to, was found in Italy during formation of the Roman empire. Around 200 AD this empire included western Asia, the whole of northern Africa from Egypt to Morocco and most of Europe, including Britain. It had a territory of about one million seven hundred and fifty thousand square miles and a population of about sixty million. Such a large empire was obviously a mixture of heterogeneous societies with various modes of production. Only in Roman Italy slavery on the land (agricultural slavery) assumed an importance beyond anything experienced before. Also, in some of the city-states. Such as Athens, slavery was a dominant mode of production. The ruling classes in these regimes acquired their wealth from slave labour. In the western half of the Roman empire the production transformed from ancient to feudal mode.

This mode of exploitation permits a demographic manipulation of society. It permits the modification of the birth rate, the manipulation of the 'age' at birth, and the manipulation of the duration of life, especially active life.

The test of the dominance of slave mode of production lies not in the numbers of the slaves but in their location, that is, in the extent to which the elite depend on them for their wealth.

7.6.3 Feudal Mode of Production

Marx and Engels were primarily interested in the definition of the capitalist mode of production. Their writing about feudalism tended to mirror that interest, as well as focusing on the transition between the feudal and the capitalist modes of production. They were concerned with the 'existence form' of labour and the manner in which the products of labour were appropriated by ruling classes. Just as capitalists exploited the workers or the 'proletariat', so did the feudal **lords** exploit their tenants or '**serfs**'. Capitalists grabbed surplus value and feudal lords appropriated land rent from their serfs.

Serfs, being legally unfree, were deprived of property rights, though they could use the lord's property. They were obliged to surrender their labour, or the product of their labour, over and above what was needed for family subsistence and the simple reproduction of the peasant household economy. Serfs or the producers were forced to fulfil the economic demands of an overlord. These demands could be in the form of services to be performed. These could also be in the form of dues to be paid in money or kind. The dues or taxes were levied on the family holdings of the peasants. Thus feudal rent whether in the form of services or taxes was an important component of the feudal mode of production. The feudal lord was able to

force serfs on the basis of military strength. This power was also backed by the force of law. In this mode of production, serfdom implied a direct relation between rulers and servants. In feudal serfdom, the instruments of production were simple and inexpensive.

Feudal (see Unit 1 in Block 1 of ESO–13) society was seen by Marx and Engles as intermediate, i.e., between the slave society of the ancient world and capitalists and proletarians in the modern era.

The evolution of the feudal system brought about the development of exchange of agricultural and manufactured products in regional markets. Special needs of the ruling class and high ranking Church officials gave an impetus to the growth of commodity production, including consumption goods such as silks, spices, fruits and wines. Around this activity developed international trade routes and mercantile centres. It laid the foundation for capitalist relations of production, which were to become the main contradiction of the system and cause its downfall. In the course of this transformation, many peasants were expropriated from their lands and forced to become wage-labourers.

Activity 2

Do you think that agrarian society in any part of India was ever dominated by feudal lords? If yes, describe in two pages how during this period peasants were deprived of property rights though they had rights of use. Were the peasants expected to give their labour or product of their labour to feudal lords? Write your answers to these questions on a sheet of paper and compare them with those of other students at your Study Centre.

7.6.4 Capitalist Mode of Production

Capitalism refers to a mode of production in which capital is the dominant means of production. Capital can be in various forms. It can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labour power and materials of production. It can be money or credit for buying physical machinery. In **capitalist mode of production**, the private ownership of capital in its various forms is in the hands of a class of capitalists. The ownership by capitalists is to the exclusion of the mass of the population. You can take this to be a central feature of capitalism as a mode of production.

As a mode of production, capitalism has the following characteristics (see Bottomore 1983: 64).

- Goods are produced for sale rather than own use.
- The capacity to do useful work or labour power is bought and sold in a market. For a period of time (time rate) or for a specified task (piece rate) labour power is exchanged for money wages. In ancient mode of production labourers were obliged or forced to surrender their labour. Contrarily, in capitalist mode of production labourers enter into a contract with employers.
- The use of money as a medium of exchange. This gives an important role to banks and financial intermediaries.

Karl Marx

- The production process is controlled by the capitalists or their managers.
- Financial decisions are controlled by the capitalist entrepreneur.
- Individual capitalists compete for control over the labour and finance.

As a mode of production, capitalism first emerged in Europe. The shift from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe has been discussed in Unit 1 of Block 1 of Eso-13. You may like to go back to this discussion for recapitulating the growth of merchant capital, overseas trade colonisation. The industrial revolution starting in England and spreading across different countries saw a rapid growth of technology and corresponding rise of capitalist economies. Marx viewed capitalism as a historical phase, to be eventually replaced by socialism.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) Tick mark the correct answer.

In which mode of production is there communal ownership of land?

- a) Asiatic
- b) ancient
- c) feudal
- d) capitalist

- ii) Tick mark the correct answer.

In which mode of production are the producers considered private property?

- a) Asiatic
- b) ancient
- c) feudal
- d) capitalist

- iii) Tick mark the correct answer.

Under which mode of production is labour power bought and sold?

- a) Asiatic
- b) ancient
- c) feudal
- d) capitalist

- iv) Tick mark the correct answer.

In feudal mode of production surplus is expropriated through

- a) profit
- b) rent

- c) speculation
- d) surplus value
- e) trade.

7.7 LET US SUM UP

The concepts of forces, relations and mode of production are central to Marxist social theory. The mode of production, which for Marx is the main determinant of social phenomena, is made up of the forces of production and relations of production.

The forces of production refer to both the material worked on and the tools and techniques employed in production of economic goods. The relationships of production refer to the social relations arising in the process of production, especially between the owners and non-owners of the means of production. Relations of production include the control and the capacity to possess the products.

Thus in capitalist societies, for example, the relations of production are those relations that obtain between capitalist and worker such that the former (relations of production) both controls the means of production and can dispose of the goods and services that are produced by the worker.

The forces and relations of production are fundamental to the constitution of any society. The different ways in which different societies are organised depend upon the relationship of the forces of production to the relations of production. The concept of the social relationships of production does not so much refer to the relationship between individuals as between social classes. Because the relationships of production are essentially antagonistic (for example, the capitalist appropriates the product of labour of the worker), so are the relations between the classes.

A mode of production is the relationship between the relations of production and the forces of production. Modes of production can be distinguished from one another by the different relationships between the forces and relations of production. For example, in the feudal mode of production, the lord does not possess direct control over the peasant's forces of production, tools and land, but does have control over the disposition of the peasant's produce. In the capitalist mode of production, on the other hand, the capitalist controls both the forces of production and the disposition of the product.

Mode of production is an abstract analytical concept. In any particular society at a particular point in time there may exist more than one mode of production. However, it is possible to identify a dominant or determinant mode of production which gains primacy over all the other production systems. Particularly during the period of social revolution more than one mode of production co-exist in the same society. However, Marx has left behind the theoretical conceptualisations relating to four modes of production; Asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist. This last mode of production was his major theoretical concern. In the next unit, i.e. unit 9

on Class and Class Conflict, we will discuss the Marxian concept of class, which is the bedrock of his analysis of the economic formation of capitalist societies.

7.8 KEYWORDS

Ancient Mode of Production	Refers to a production system where the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of his labour through servitude, without allowing the slave to reproduce.
Asiatic Mode of Production	Refers to community-based production system where ownership of land is communal and the existence of <i>is</i> expressed through the real or imaginary unity of these communities.
Bourgeoisie	The class of capitalists who, in all developed countries, are now almost exclusively in possession of all the means of consumption and of all the raw materials and instruments (machines, factories necessary for their production (Engels in <i>Principles of Communism</i> , 1827)
Capitalist Mode of Production	Refers to a production system where the owners of means of production, capitalists, extract surplus labour from the proletariat in the form of profits.
Capitalists	The ruling class in capitalism who control the means of production.
Feudal Mode of Production	Refers to a production system where the lords appropriate surplus labour from the serfs in the form of rent.
Forces of Production	Refers to the material technical aspect of production as well as the corresponding labour power and its competencies required in the production process.
Lords	The ruling class in feudalism, who exercise indirect control over serfs.
Masters	The ruling class in slavery who exercise control over slaves.
Mode of Production	A mode of production is the relationship between the relations of production and the forces of production. Modes of production can be distinguished from

one another by different relationships between the forces and relations of production.

Relations of Production

Refer to social relationships that arise directly out of the process of production. These social relationships include the relationships between the owners and non-owners of the means of production. These relationships decide and even determine the control and the capacity to possess the product.

Slaves

Class of producers in the ancient mode of production, who are directly controlled by the masters as their private 'property'.

Serfs

Class of producers in the feudal mode of production whose surplus labour is appropriated through rent.

Workers

Class of producers in the capitalist mode of production who have nothing except their labour power as their only means of livelihood. Their surplus labour is appropriated by the capitalists through profit.

7.9 FURTHER READING

Bottomore, Thomas B., 1975. *Marxist Sociology*. Macmillan: London

Huberman, Leo 1969. *Man's Worldly Goods*. People's Publishing House: New Delhi

7.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) (f), ii) (a), iii) (b)

Check Your Progress 2

- i) (e), ii) (c), iii) (a), iv) (b)

Check Your Progress 3

- i) (e), ii) (a), iii) (c)

Check Your Progress 4

- i) (a), ii) (b), iii) (d), iv) (b)

UNIT 8 CLASS AND CLASS CONFLICT

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 The Class Structure
 - 8.2.1 Criteria for Determination of Class
 - 8.2.2 Classification of Societies in History and Emergence of Classes
 - 8.2.3 Intensification of Class Conflict Under Capitalism
 - 8.2.4 Class and Class Struggle
- 8.3 Class Struggle and Revolution
- 8.4 Marx's Concept of Alienation
- 8.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.6 Keywords
- 8.7 Further Reading
- 8.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to

- define the concept of **class**
- describe the various criteria for class formation
- identify the various stages involved in the history of society that change due to class conflict or change in **mode of production**
- discuss what is social **revolution** and how it will be reached
- understand Marx's concept of alienation.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already studied two units on Karl Marx's ideas about human society and its historical development. This unit will explain the key notion of class as used by Karl Marx. We shall study in detail about the various criteria that are basic for calling any collectivity a class. Also we shall discuss how and why classes come into conflict with each other. We will seek to understand the impact of these class conflicts on the history of development of society. Finally, the present unit will give you a brief overview of history including the future of human society on the basis of Marxian framework.

The entire unit is divided into four sections. The first section deals with the class structure, including the classification of societies in history and

class conflict. Within this section we go on to elaborate the intensification of class conflict under **capitalism**. The third section deals with class struggle and revolution, while the fourth section explains Marx's concept of alienation.

8.2 THE CLASS STRUCTURE

The word 'class' originated from the Latin term 'classis' which refers to a group called to arms, a division of the people. In the rule of legendary Roman king, Servius Tullius (678-534 B.C.), the Roman society was divided into five classes or orders according to their wealth. Subsequently, the word 'class' was applied to large groups of people into which human society came to be divided.

Marx recognised class as a unique feature of capitalist societies. This is one reason why he did not analyse the class structure and class relations in other forms of society.

Marx's sociology is, in fact, a sociology of the class struggle. This means one has to understand the Marxian concept of class in order to appreciate Marxian philosophy and thought. Marx has used the term social class throughout his works but explained it only in a fragmented form. The most clear passages on the concept of class structure can be found in the third volume of his famous work, *Capital* (1894). Under the title of 'Social Classes' Marx distinguished three classes, related to the three sources of income: (a) owners of simple labour power or labourers whose main source of income is labour; (b) owners of capital or capitalists whose main source of income is profit or surplus value; and (c) landowners whose main source of income is ground rent. In this way the class structure of modern capitalist society is composed of three major classes viz., salaried labourers or workers, capitalists and landowners.

At a broader level, society could be divided into two major classes i.e. the 'haves' (owners of land and / or capital) often called as **bourgeoisie** and the 'have-nots' (those who own nothing but their own labour power), often called as proletariat. Marx has tried to even give a concrete definition of social class. According to him 'a social class occupies a fixed place in the process of production'.

Activity 1

Can Indian society be divided into classes in Marxian sense of the word 'class'? If yes, describe these classes. If no, give reasons why Indian society cannot be divided into classes in Marxian sense of the word 'class'.

8.2.1 Criteria for Determination of Class

In order to have a better understanding of the concept of class and class structure, one must be able to respond to the question – "What are the criteria for determination of class"? In other words, which human grouping will be called a class and which grouping would not be considered as

class in Marxian terms. For this exercise, one could say that a social class has two major criteria: (i) objective criteria (ii) subjective criteria.

- i) **Objective Criteria:** People sharing the same relationship to the **means of production** comprise a class. Let us understand it through an example – all labourers have a similar relationship with the landowners. On the other hand all the landowners, as a class, have a similar relationship with the land and labourers. In this way, labourers on one hand and landowners on the other hand could be seen as classes. However, for Marx, this relationship alone is not sufficient to determine the class. According to him it is not sufficient for class to be ‘class in itself’ but it should also be class for itself. What does this mean? By ‘class in itself’ he means the objective criteria of any social class. Obviously, Marx is not simply satisfied with objective criteria above. Hence he equally emphasises upon the other major criteria i.e., “Class for itself” or the subjective criteria.
- ii) **Subjective Criteria:** Any collectivity or human grouping with a similar relationship would make a category, not a class, if subjective criteria are not included. The members of any one class not only have similar consciousness but they also share a similar consciousness of the fact that they belong to the same class. This similar consciousness of a class serves as the basis for uniting its members for organising social action. Here this similar class consciousness towards acting together for their common interests is what Marx calls – “Class for itself”.

In this way, these two criteria together determine a class and class structure in any given society.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Define a social class in two lines.
.....
.....
- ii) Name the two criteria for determining a class.
.....
.....

8.2.2 Classification of Societies in History and Emergence of Classes

Marx differentiated stages of human history on the basis of their economic regimes or modes of production. He distinguished four major modes of production which he called the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the bourgeois or capitalist. He predicted that all social development will culminate into a stage called communism. Let us simplify this classification of societies or various stages of human history into (i) primitive-communal, (ii) slave-owning, (iii) feudal, (iv) capitalist and (v) communist stages. In this sub-section we will discuss the first three stages.

i) **The Primitive-communal System**

The primitive-communal system was the first and the lowest form of organisation of people and it existed for thousands of years. Men and women started using primitive tools like sticks and stones for hunting and food-gathering. Gradually they improved these tools, and learned to make fire, cultivation and animal husbandry. In this system of very low level of **forces of production**, the **relations of production** were based on common ownership of the means of production. Therefore, these relations were based on mutual assistance and cooperation. These relations were conditioned by the fact that people with their primitive implements could only withstand the mighty forces of nature together, collectively.

In such a situation, exploitation of humans by humans did not exist because of two reasons. Firstly, the tools used (namely, means of production) were so simple that they could be reproduced by anyone. These were implements like spear, stick, bow and arrow etc. Hence no person or group of people had the monopoly of ownership over the tools. Secondly, production was at a low-scale. The people existed more or less on a subsistence level. Their production was just sufficient to meet the needs of the people provided everybody worked. Therefore, it was a situation of no master and no servant. All were equal.

Gradually with time, people started perfecting their tools, their craft of producing and surplus production started taking place. This led to private property and primitive equality gave way to social inequality. Thus the first antagonistic classes, slaves and slave owners, appeared.

This is how the development of the forces of production led to the replacement of primitive communal system by slavery.

ii) **The Slave-owning Society**

In the slave-owning society, primitive tools were perfected and bronze and iron tools replaced the stone and wooden implements. Large-scale agriculture, live stock raising, mining and handicrafts developed. The development of this type of forces of production also changed the relations of production. These relations were based on the slave owner's absolute ownership of both the means of production and the slave and everything they produced. The owner left the slaves only with the bare minimum necessities to keep them from dying of starvation. In this system, the history of exploitation of humans by humans and the history of class struggle began. The development of productive forces went on and slavery became an impediment to the expansion of social production. Production demanded the constant improvement of implements, higher labour productivity, but the slaves had no interest in this as it would not improve their position. With the passage of time the class conflict between the classes of slave-owners and the slaves became acute and it was manifested in slave revolts. These revolts, together with the raids from neighbouring tribes, undermined the foundations of slavery leading to a new stage i.e. feudal system (See Box 8.1).

Box 8.1: Feudal System

The term **feudalism** is derived from the institution of ‘fief’, which was a piece of landed property. During the medieval period of European history, this form of property was given to a vassal by a lord in return for military service. In this sense feudalism was a relationship between a vassal and his Lord. This relationship was expressed in terms of property holding through the fief. The relationship was exercised through jurisdiction. Lords held courts for their vassals, settled disputes and punished breaches of law and custom. The court was also an administrative body which levied taxes and raised military forces. Landowners maintained control over the peasantry. By the twelfth century, landowners’ control over tenants and others had increased to a very great extent.

iii) **The Feudal Society**

The progressive development of the productive forces continued under feudalism. People started using inanimate sources of energy, viz., water and wind, besides human labour. The crafts advanced further, new implements and machines were invented and old ones were improved. The labour of craftsmen was specialised, raising productivity considerably. The development of forces of production led to emergence of feudal relations of production. These relations were based on the feudal lords’ ownership of the serfs or landless peasants. The production relations were relations of domination and subjection, exploitation of the serfs by the feudal lords. Nevertheless, these relations were more progressive than in slavery system, because they made the labourers interested, to some extent, in their labour. The peasants and the artisans could own the implements or small parts of land. These forces of production underwent changes due to new discoveries, increasing demands for consumption caused by population increase and discovery of new markets through colonialism. All this led to the need and growth of mass scale manufacture. This became possible due to advances in technology. This brought the unorganised labourers at one place i.e. the factory. This sparked off already sharpened class conflict leading to peasant revolution against landowners. The new system of production demanded free labourer whereas the serf was tied to the land, therefore, the new forces of production also changed the relations of production culminating into a change in the mode of production from feudalism to capitalism. In the next sub-section we will talk about class conflict in capitalist societies. So, the next section will cover our discussion of the fourth stage of social development. But before going to it, let us complete Check Your Progress 2.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Give the five stages of society as given by Marx.

.....
.....
.....

ii) Mark True or False against each of the following statements.

- a) History of class antagonism begins with salary systems. True/False
- b) There was no private ownership of property in primitive-communal system. True/False

8.2.3 Intensification of Class Conflict under Capitalism

Large-scale machine production is the specific feature of the productive forces of capitalism. Huge factories, plants and mines took the place of artisan workshops and manufacturers. Marx and Engels described the capitalist productive forces in the '*Manifesto of the Communist Party*'. "Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground". In a century or two capitalism accomplished much more in developing the productive forces than had been achieved in all the preceding eras of human history.

This vigorous growth of the forces of production was helped by the capitalist relations of production based on private capitalist ownership. Under capitalism, the produces, the **proletariat**, are legally free, being attached neither to the land nor to any particular factory. They are free in the sense that they can go to work for any capitalist, but they are not free from the bourgeois class as a whole. Possessing no means of production, they are compelled to sell their labour power and thereby come under the yoke of exploitation.

Due to this exploitation the relatively free labourers become conscious of their class interest and organise themselves into a working class movement. This working class movement intensified its struggle against the bourgeois class. It begins with bargaining for better wages and working conditions and culminates into an intensified class conflict, which is aimed at overthrowing the capitalist system. Marx said that the capitalist system symbolises the most acute form of inequality, exploitation and class antagonism. This paves the way for a socialist revolution which would lead to a new stage of society i.e. communism.

Box 8.2: Communism

The word 'communism' originated in the mid-1830s, when it was used by members of the secret revolutionary parties in Paris. It referred to political movement of the working class in capitalist society. It also referred to the form of society which the working class would create as a result of its struggle.

During the later half of the nineteenth century, both terms, socialism and communism, were used interchangeably to describe the working-class movement. Marx and Engels also used these terms in a similar fashion.

With the advent of the Third (Communist) International in 1917, the term communism was applied to a form of revolutionary programme for overthrowing capitalism. We can say that the term socialism began to be applied to a more peaceful and constitutional action of long-term changes, while communism referred to a revolutionary action, involving violent forms of changes.

Marx discussed communism as a form of society. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) he wrote that 'Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature, through and for man'.

8.2.4 Class and Class Struggle

It is clear that according to Marx the mode of production or economic structure is the base or foundation of society. Any change in this **infrastructure** (see sub sub-section 6.2.2.1 of Unit 6) will cause fundamental changes in the **superstructure** (see sub sub-section 6.2.2.1 of Unit 6) and consequently in a society. The changes in the mode of production are essentially changes in the forces of production and relations of production. In primitive communal stage there was no surplus production and hence it had no inequality and exploitation caused by the private ownership of means of production. The means of production were common property of the community. With the development and improvements in the forces of production there was increased productivity. This caused private ownership of means of production and change in the relations of production. This marked the end of primitive-communal system and thus began the long history of inequality, exploitation and class conflict, coinciding with the emergence of slave-owning society.

In the slave-owning society the class conflict between the slave owners and slaves reached a peak causing a change in the mode of production from slavery to feudalistic mode of production. Marx has said that the history of hitherto existing society is a history of class struggle. This means that the entire history of society is studded with different phases and periods of class struggle. This history of class struggle begins in the slave-owning society and continues through feudal society where this class struggle is between classes of the feudal lords and the landless agricultural labourers or serfs. Due to change in mode of production and class struggle a new stage of society i.e., capitalism replaces the age-old feudal system.

In the capitalistic mode of production the class antagonism acquires most acute dimensions. The working class movement begins to concretise and reaches its peak. Through a class conflict between the class of capitalists and the class of industrial labourers, the capitalist system is replaced by socialism. This violent change has been termed as revolution by Marx. We shall deliberate on this concept of revolution in detail in the next section. This marks, according to Marx, the fifth stage of social development. Before reading about the fifth stage in the next sub-section (8.3), please complete Activity 2.

Activity 2

Do you think that Indian history provides us with some examples of class conflict? If yes, elaborate at least one such example. If no, then give reasons for the absence of class conflict in Indian history.

8.3 CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION

Marx said that the class antagonism and subsequently the class conflict in the capitalist system will usher in socialism in place of capitalism through a revolution. Here the question arises what is the basis of this antagonism? Marx's answer is that the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production is the basis of this antagonism. The bourgeoisie is constantly creating more powerful means of production. But the relations of production that is, apparently, both the relations of ownership and the distribution of income are not transferred at the same rate. The capitalist mode of production is capable to produce in bulk, but despite this mass production and increase in wealth, majority of the population suffers from poverty and misery. On the other hand, there are a few families who have so much wealth that one could not even count or imagine. These stark and wide disparities create some tiny islands of prosperity in a vast ocean of poverty and misery. The onus of this disparity lies on the inequal, exploitative relations of production which distribute the produce in an inequal manner. This contradiction, according to Marx, will eventually produce a revolutionary crisis. The proletariat, which constitutes and will increasingly constitute the vast majority of the population, will become a class, that is, a social entity aspiring for the seizure of power and transformation of social relations.

Marx asserted that the progress of society meant the succession of victories of one class over the other. He assigned his life to planning a victory for the proletariat. In a way, he became a commander, engaged in a campaign. With his solitary aim of defeating the enemy, Marx stressed on acquiring the knowledge of the history of society and the laws that regulate its organisation. His monumental work, *Das Kapital (Capital, 1861-1879)*, provided an analysis in which Marx was not concerned with arguments for a class-war. He treated the necessity for such arguments as an unnecessary task. He had no love for emotionalism and humanitarianism and appeal to idealism etc. He conceived of the class conflict on every front and proposed the formation of a political party which would eventually gain victory and be the conquering class.

You do not have to imagine that it was Marx who, for the first time ever, advanced the idea of conflict between classes. Saint Simon wrote about human history as the history of struggles between social classes. In the 1790s Babeuf, a French political agitator, spoke of the dictatorship of the proletariat and Weitling and Blanqui (Babeuf's disciple) developed Babeuf's ideas in the nineteenth century. The French State Socialists worked out the future position and importance of workers in industrial states. In fact in the eighteenth century many thinkers advanced such doctrines. Marx

did the admirable task of sifting all this material and constructed a new set of social analysis. His analysis of class struggle was a unique mix of simple basic principles with down-to-earth details.

According to Marx, the bottom rung of the social stratification is the proletariat. Below it there is no class and therefore emancipation of the proletariat will, in fact, be the emancipation of mankind. Marx accepts the right of the bourgeoisie to fight the final war. But for the proletariat the battle is for its very survival and it has to win.

The revolutions of the proletariat will differ in kind from all past revolutions. All the revolutions of the past were accomplished by minorities for the benefit of minorities. The revolution of the proletariat will be accomplished by the vast majority for the benefit of all. The proletarian revolution will, therefore, mark the end of classes and of the antagonistic character of capitalist society. This would mean that the private ownership of property will be abolished. The proletariat will jointly own means of production and distribute the produce according to the needs of the members of the society. This stage is called the stage of dictatorship of proletariat. This stage will later on convert into a stateless society where the communist system will finally be established in the society. This will also end all kinds of social classes and of all kinds of class conflicts for future. This will also mean de-alienation of the proletariat. Since the concept of alienation is now regarded as one of the main ideas of Marxism, after completing Check Your Progress 3, you will also learn a little about this concept, and its relevance to Marxian analysis of class conflict.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Discuss the main features of communism in three lines.

.....
.....
.....

ii) Mark True and False against each of the following sentences.

- a) The private ownership of property will not be abolished in communism. True/False

- b) Communism is characterised by stateless and classless society. True/False

8.4 MARX’S CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

Alienation literally means “separation from”. This term is often used in literature and Marx has given it a sociological meaning. Marx has conceived of alienation as a phenomenon related to the structure of those societies in which the producer is divorced from the means of production and in which “dead labour” (capital) dominates “living labour” (the worker). Let us take an example of a shoemaker in a factory. A shoemaker manufactures shoes but cannot use them for himself. His creation thus becomes an object which

is separate from him. It becomes an entity which is separate from its creator. He makes shoes not because making shoes satisfies merely his urge to work and create. He does so to earn his living. For a worker this 'objectification' becomes more so because the process of production in a factory is divided into several parts and his job may be only a tiny part of the whole. Since he produces only one part of the whole, his work is mechanical and therefore he loses his creativity.

A systematic elaboration of the concept appears in *Capital* under the heading "Fetishism of commodities and money". But the ethical germ of this conception can be found as early as 1844, when Marx unequivocally rejected and condemned "the state" and "money", and invested the proletariat with the "historical mission" of emancipating society as a whole. In Marx's sense alienation is an action through which (or a state in which) a person, a group, an institution, or a society becomes (or remains) alien

- a) to the results or products of its own activity (and to the activity itself), and/or
- b) to the nature in which it lives, and/or
- c) to other human beings, and in addition and through any or all of (a) to (c) also
- d) to itself (to its own historically created human possibilities).

Alienation is always self-alienation, i.e., one's alienation from oneself through one's own activity. To quote Gajo Petrovic (1983: 10) we can say, "And self-alienation is not just one among the forms of alienation, but the very essence and basic structure of alienation. It is not merely a descriptive concept, it is also an appeal, or a call for a revolutionary change of the world".

De-alienation

Mere criticism of alienation was not the intention of Marx. His aim was to clear the path for a radical revolution and for accomplishing communism understood as "the re-integration of one's return to oneself, the supersession of one's self-alienation". Mere abolition of private property cannot bring about de-alienation of economic and social life. This situation of the worker, or the producer does not alter by transforming private property into state property. Some forms of alienation in capitalist production have their roots in the nature of the means of production and the related division of social labour, so that they cannot be eliminated by a mere change in the form of managing production.

Far from being an eternal fact of social life, the division of society into mutually interdependent and conflicting spheres (economy, politics, laws, arts, morals, religion, etc.), and the predominance of the economic sphere, are, according to Marx, characteristics of a self-alienated society. The de-alienation of society is therefore impossible without the abolition of the alienation of different human activities from each other.

Alienation in the Marxian sense of the term cannot be overcome by the reorganisation of the economy, however radical the programme of such

transformation may be. Alienation of the society and of the individual are integrally connected. Therefore, the de-alienation of neither can be carried out without the other, nor can one be reduced to the other.

The concept of alienation is a key tool of analysis in Marx’s thought. According to Marx, one had always been self-alienated thus far. The bourgeoisie relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production causing alienation. At the same time, the production forces developing in the womb of bourgeoisie society create the material conditions for the solution of that antagonism and alienation. This social formation constitutes, therefore, the closing chapter of the “prehistoric” stage of human society. Our discussion of the concept of alienation closes Unit 8 on Class and Class Conflict. Before moving on to a summary of the unit, let us complete Activity 3.

Activity 3

Is there a word for alienation in your mother-tongue? If yes, provide the term and explain it by giving examples from your day-to-day life.

8.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the concept of class and class conflict in the history of development of society as given by Karl Marx. He defined class in terms of people’s relationship to the means of production and their class-consciousness. In Marxian terms, the history of society, so far, is the history of class struggle. This means that ever since the social inequality and exploitation started in human history, that is, beginning from slavery system, society has been divided into mutually warring classes of Haves and Have-nots. This successive class conflict and change in mode of production has led to change in the stages of society from slavery to feudalistic and feudalistic to capitalistic system. The final social revolution would transform the capitalistic system into communist system where there would be no more classes, social inequality and class conflict. In other words, there will be de-alienation of the proletariat.

8.6 KEYWORDS

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Bourgeoisie | Also known as ‘Haves’ are those people who own the means of production for example – landowners, capitalists in industrial societies. |
| Capitalism | It is one of the historical stages of society where the means of production are mainly machinery, capital and labour. |
| Class | When people share the same relationship to the means of production and also share the similar consciousness regarding their common interest, they constitute a class. |

Class-conflict	When two classes having basic antagonism of class interests struggle or clash in order to safeguard their class interests then it is called class conflict.
Feudalism	It is also one of the historical stages of society where the means of production are mainly land and labour.
Forces of Production	Forces of production mean the ways in which production is done; the technological 'know-how', the types of equipments in use and types of goods being produced, e.g., tools, machinery, labour, etc.
Infrastructure	According to Marx, the materialistic structure or economic structure is the foundation or base of society. In other words, it is also called the infrastructure. The superstructure of society rests on it. Infrastructure includes mode of production and hence forces of production and relations of production.
Means of Production	It includes all the elements necessary for production, e.g., land, raw material, factory, labour and capital, etc.
Mode of Production	It refers to the general economic institution i.e., the particular manner in which people produce and distribute the means that sustain life. The forces of production and the relations of production together define the mode of production. Examples of modes of production are capitalistic mode of production, feudal mode of production, etc.
Proletariat	These people are also known as 'Have-nots' and these are the people who do not own any means of production except their own labour power. Hence all the landless peasants or agricultural labourers in feudal societies and industrial workers in capitalist societies are the proletariat.
Relations of Production	According to Marx, the forces of production shape the nature of the 'relations of production'. These are, in fact, the social relations found in production i.e., economic roles, e.g., labourer, landowner, capitalist, etc.
Revolution	It is the sudden, total and radical change in society brought in by the matured conditions of class conflict.

Superstructure

All social, political and cultural institutions of societies excepting economic institutions constitute the superstructure of a society.

8.7 FURTHER READING

Coser, Lewis A, 1971. *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Inc: New York (Chapter 2, pp. 43-88).

8.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) It comprises people sharing same relationship with the means of production and having similar consciousness regarding their class interests.
- ii) A social class can be determined by two major criteria, namely,
 - a) objective and
 - b) subjective criteria.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Five stages of society as given by Marx are
 - 1) Primitive-Communal System
 - 2) Slavery
 - 3) Feudalism
 - 4) Capitalism
 - 5) Communism.
- ii) a) True
- b) True

Check Your Progress 3

- i) It will be characterised by a classless society, devoid of private ownership of means of production. There will be no stateless society.
- ii) a) False
- b) True

UNIT 9 DIALECTICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 The Concept of Dialectics
- 9.3 Laws of Dialectics
 - 9.3.1 The Law of the Unity and Conflict of Opposites
 - 9.3.2 The Law of Negation of the Negation
 - 9.3.3 The Law of Transition of Quantity into Quality
- 9.4 Application of the Laws of Dialectical Materialism
 - 9.4.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society
 - 9.4.2 Slave-Ownning Society
 - 9.4.3 Feudal Society
 - 9.4.4 Capitalist Society
- 9.5 Social Change and Revolution
- 9.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.7 Keywords
- 9.8 Further Reading
- 9.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

9.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with **dialectics** and social change. After studying it you should be able to

- discuss the Marxian concepts of dialectics and social change
- describe the laws of dialectics
- show the application of the laws of dialectics to understand social change
- outline Marx's ideas on social change and revolution.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units of this block, you learnt the fundamental conceptual and theoretical structure of Marxian thought on the history of development of society. After having read his specific contributions to the materialistic and scientific interpretations of human history in terms of forces of production, relations of production and modes of production one required an understanding of his ideas on class and class conflict. This understanding was rendered to you through Unit 8 on class and class conflict.

Unit 9 undertakes two major tasks: (i) to introduce the significant Marxian concept of dialectics and change and (ii) to summarise the entire conceptual and theoretical structure relating to dynamic and social change as envisaged by Karl Marx. Hence, this unit is divided in four major sections.

The first two sections (9.2 & 9.3) introduce the concept of dialectics and then discuss the laws of **dialectical materialism** and social change in a theoretical perspective.

The third section (9.4) is related to the second task of this unit, i.e., summarising the Marxian structure of thought on social change, with a major difference. This section deals with successive forms and modes of production and social change. This has been dealt in earlier units also, but here the emphasis would be on highlighting the dialectical aspect of the historical course of development of society.

The fourth section (9.5) deals briefly with Marx's ideas on social change and revolution.

9.2 THE CONCEPT OF DIALECTICS

The word 'dialectics' refers to a method of intellectual discussion by dialogue. It is a term of logic. According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), it referred to the art of deputation by question and answer. Before Aristotle, another Greek philosopher Plato (427-397 B.C.) developed this term in relation with his doctrine of ideas. He evolved it as the art of analysing ideas in themselves and in relation to the idea of ultimate good. Even before Plato, yet another Greek philosopher Socrates (470-390 B.C.) used this term to examine the presuppositions at the back of all sciences. Until the end of the middle ages, this term remained a part of logic. Carrying the same tradition of treating this term as reason, in modern philosophy of Europe, the word was used by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) to discuss the impossibility of applying to objects of a non-sensuous understanding the principles which are found to govern phenomena of sense-experience.

There is one more strand in the meaning of the term dialectics. It is the idea of dialectics as a process. This means the dialectics is a process of reason in ascending and descending forms. In ascending form of dialectics, one is able to demonstrate the existence of a higher reality, e.g., the forms of God. In descending form of dialectics, one is able to explain the manifestation of a higher reality in the phenomenal world of sense-experience.

In order to understand how Karl Marx made use of the term 'dialectics', we need to remember that Marx evolved his concept of dialectical materialism on the basis of his critique of the German philosopher Hegel's theories of idealism. Hopefully you remember that Hegel was introduced to you in Box 6.1 of Unit 6 as an idealist philosopher who saw reality as consisting in minds or ideas. You may once again read about him in Boxes 6.1 and 6.2.

Hegel combined the two strands of dialectic, i.e., the idea of dialectic as reason and as process. In broad sense, he used the notion of dialectics as a logical process and more narrowly he traced it as the generator or motor of the logical process. Hegel maintained that God or the Absolute comes to self-knowledge through human knowledge. In other words, the categories of human thought are equal to objective forms of being and logic is at the same time the theory about the nature of being. Further, Hegel proposed that dialectics can be conceived more narrowly as grasping of opposites in their unity. Hegel saw it as a process which brings out what is implicit. In this way, each development is a product of a previous less developed phase. In a way new development is a fulfilment of the previous state. Thus there is always a hidden tension between a form and its process of becoming a new form. Hegel interpreted history as progress in the consciousness of freedom (See Box 6.2).

Marx was initially influenced by Hegel's philosophy but later on he criticised it due to its idealist nature and propounded his own dialectical materialism. Marx criticised Hegel for deducing the laws of dialectics from consciousness instead of material existence. On this point Marx said that to get a scientifically sound dialectical method one will have to totally invert the logic of Hegelian dialectics. This is what Marx did in his dialectical materialism, where in contradistinction to Hegel, he said it is the matter which is supreme and determinant of consciousness and idea and not vice-versa.

Let us now discuss Marxian concepts and laws of dialectical materialism. But before you go on to the next section, complete Activity 1.

Activity 1

Compile a bibliography of books by Marx on the basis of references to them in this block. Compare it with the list of references under Marx, given at the end of this block. Remember that while making a bibliography, you need to state (i) name of the author of the book, (ii) year of publication of the book, (iii) full title of the book, (iv) place of publication of the book and (v) name of the publisher of the book. Without any one of these details, a reference is considered incomplete.

9.3 LAWS OF DIALECTICS

Dialectical materialism evolved by Marx is diametrically opposite to Hegelian dialectics. It seeks to explain everything in terms of contradictions of matter. Dialectical materialism provides abstract laws for natural and social change. Contrary to metaphysics, it believes that in Nature, things are interconnected, interrelated and determined by each other. It considers Nature as an integral whole. Dialectical materialism declares that the law of reality is the law of change. There is constant transformation in inorganic nature and human world. There is nothing eternally static. These transformations are not gradual but there is a violent, revolutionary shift. Marx's colleague Friedrich Engels put forward the following three major laws of dialectical materialism.

9.3.1 The Law of the Unity and Conflict of Opposites

We have studied that everything changes, we have also learnt about the nature and direction of change, but what remains to be seen is the cause behind change. What leads to change? The law of the unity and conflict of opposites is the core of dialectics. This law reveals the sources, the real causes of the eternal motion and development of the material world.

It states that there are internal sides, tendencies, forces of an object or phenomena, which are mutually exclusive but at the same time presuppose each other. The inseparable interconnections of these opposite tendencies or contradictions is responsible for the unity of opposites. This contradictoriness of objects and phenomena of the world is of a general, universal nature. There is no object or phenomenon in the world which could not be divided into opposites. These opposites coexist and one is inconceivable without the other. However, these opposites cannot coexist peacefully in one object: the contradictory, mutually exclusive character of opposites necessarily causes a struggle between them. The old and the new, the emergent and the obsolete must come into conflict. Here it is important to note that the unity of opposites is a necessary condition of the conflict, because it takes place only where opposite sides exist in one object or phenomenon. It is the contradiction, the conflict of opposites that is the main source of development of matter and consciousness. Development is the struggle of these opposites. Here, more often than not one opposite or tendency of the two tries to maintain the status quo and the other counterpart tries to radically change the status quo. This conflict leads to a new situation, object, phenomenon or stage or development, when the mature conditions come into existence after several **quantitative changes**. This radical change is the **qualitative** change. This is how one can find the logical interconnections between these three laws of dialectical materialism.

It would be erroneous to ignore the role of external influences which may help or hinder one form of movement or another. Nevertheless, each movement takes its source from internal contradictions, so that the emergence of new contradictions gives rise to a new form of movement, while their disappearance gives place to another form of movement for which other contradictions are responsible. The opposites can never become balanced completely. The unity, the equal effect of opposites, is temporary and relative, whereas their conflict is eternal.

Both the laws of transition from quantitative changes to qualitative changes and that of **negation** of the negation may be regarded as particular instances of the law of unity and conflict of opposites, which reveals the sources of all development and change.

This abstract law of the unity and conflict of opposites can be explained and understood if applied to successive modes of production in the history of development of society.

9.3.2 The Law of Negation of the Negation

The term 'negation' was introduced in philosophy by Hegel but with an idealist meaning. Hegel believed that the negation was present in the development of the idea, of thought. Marx criticised Hegel and gave a

materialistic interpretation of negation. He showed that negation is an integral part of development of reality itself. Marx wrote, "In no sphere can one undergo a development without negating one's previous mode of existence."

Let us explain it. For example, the development of the earth's crust has undergone a number of geological eras, each new era, arising on the basis of the preceding one, represents a certain negation of the old. In animal world also, each new species of animal, arising on the basis of the old, at the same time represents its negation. The history of society also consists of a chain of negations of the old social order by the new: as Raymond Aron (1965) puts it, capitalism is the negation of feudal society, and socialism would be the negation of capitalism i.e. **negation of negation**. In the realm of knowledge and science also, each new scientific theory negates the old theories, for example, Bohr's theory of atom negated Dalton's molecular theory or Darwin's theory negated earlier speculations about human evolution.

Here one thing should be kept in mind. Negation is not something introduced into an object or phenomenon from outside, but is the result of the object's or phenomenon's own, internal development. Objects and phenomena develop on the basis of their own inherent, internal contradictions: they themselves create the conditions for their destruction, for the change into a new, higher quality. Negation is the overcoming of the old through internal contradictions, a result of self-development, self-movement of objects and phenomena. Thus, socialism comes to take the place of capitalism because it resolves the internal contradictions of the capitalist system.

Dialectical negation, therefore, consists of the fact that something of a stage which is negated is lost, something becomes part of the new, negating stages (although in a modified form), and something entirely new is added. Thus, recognition of continuity, the connection of the new and the old in development is a feature of the Marxist understanding of negation. But we must bear in mind that the new never takes over the old completely, as it is. It takes from the old only certain elements or aspects. This too, it does not absorb mechanically, but assimilates and transforms them in conformity with its own nature.

For example, after throwing off the colonial yoke, in India we started building a new nation. In this process, we tried to do away with all the vestiges of oppression and the institutions that blocked national development. However, we did retain the educational, legal and bureaucratic structures along with the modern infrastructure of transportation and telecommunication.

Due to these reasons, the succession of developmental stages is progressive. Although no stage is ever completely repeated, some features of earlier stages necessarily recur, although in a different form, at later stages. In this way, the old is destroyed and the new arises. This is only one of the stages of development, not to end, because development does not stop here. Anything new does not remain new forever. While developing, it prepares the prerequisites for the rise of something newer and more progressive.

When these prerequisites and conditions ripen, negation again occurs. This is a negation of the negation, that is the negation of that which itself previously overcame the old: this is replacement of the new by something newer. The result of this second negation is again negated, overcome, and so on till infinity. Development thus appears as a countless number of successive negations, as an endless replacement or overcoming of old by the new.

9.3.3 The Law of Transition of Quantity into Quality

In nature, everything is in a state of continuous movement and change. Certain things are arising or coming into existence whereas certain things are developing, and/or decaying and certain things are dying or going out of existence at a given time. This means a state of continuous flux. As said earlier, Marx believed that law of reality is the law of change. Now the question arises regarding the nature of change. What kind of change is this? This law responds to this particular question. According to this law, process of change is not simple or gradual but it is a product of quantitative advances which result in abstract qualitative changes at a particular moment when mature conditions are present. There is never repetition of occurrences. This change is always from lower to higher, simpler to complex, homogeneous to heterogeneous levels of reality.

Let us elaborate this point of quantitative and qualitative changes. The appearance or the birth of the new and the death or disappearance of the old can be considered as qualitative changes, philosophically as well as logically. Whereas all other changes, whereby different parts or aspects of an object become rearranged increase or diminish (while the object retains its identity) could be considered as quantitative changes. To explain and simplify it further, one could say that the qualitative changes may be of two forms: (i) something did not exist, but now it does, and (ii) something existed but now it does not. Quantitative changes, on the other hand, are infinitely diverse, e.g., larger-smaller, more/ less, more often more seldom, faster-slower, warmer-colder, lighter-heavier, worse-better, poorer-richer, and so on.

In fact these quantitative changes occur continuously in every object of Nature and they reach to a limit determined by the nature of each process, after which a leap inevitably occurs. The limit beyond which continuous change is interrupted is described as measure philosophy. This leap is the qualitative change. To give a concrete example, Indian national movement for freedom was continuing for more than a century leading to continuous quantitative changes and when it reached its limit there was a leap at the midnight stroke of the clock on 15th August 1947. India was a free country. Independence from colonialism was the qualitative change. Similarly, the process of ageing in human being does not stop even for a fraction of a second. We keep getting older or in other words we keep undergoing quantitative changes and when we reach the limit prescribed by nature, we meet the qualitative change i.e. death. This example could also be applied to birth of an infant. Quantitative changes keep going on during gestation period right from the day of conception but the qualitative change occurs when the baby breaths air in this world i.e. when it is born.

Hence the dialectical level or law of transition from quantity to quality and vice-versa is that continuous quantitative changes, upon attaining measure, cause abrupt qualitative changes, which in their turn determine the character of the further continuous quantitative changes.

From this law, we move on the other very significant law of dialectical materialism known as the law of negation of the negation.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Name the laws of the dialectical materialism.

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.....

ii) Define quantitative change, in two lines.

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.....

iii) Define qualitative change, in three lines.

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9.4 APPLICATION OF THE LAWS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

The principles or laws of dialectical materialism hold good for nature, world and society alike. When these laws are applied to the history of society they take the shape of historical materialism. (We have already studied in the previous units that human society according to Marx has gone through four major modes of production viz., Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. Finally these successive forms of society would reach the stage of communism, as per the predictions of Marxian theory.)

Here we shall see how the laws of dialectical materialism are applied to understand the successive forms and modes of production and hence social change.

9.4.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society

This was the first, the simplest and the lowest form of mode of production. During the period of this form of mode of production, appearance of improved and also new implements, such as bows and arrows and learning to make a fire were examples of quantitative changes in terms of the laws of dialectical materialism. Even beginning of cultivation and herding were examples of similar type of changes. The extremely low level relations of production were based on cooperation and mutual help due to common,

communal ownership of means of production. These relations were conditioned by the fact that people with their primitive tools could only collectively withstand the mighty forces of nature.

Even in primitive society the productive forces developed steadily. The tools were improved and skills were gradually accumulated. The most significant development was the transition to metal tools. With the growth of productivity the communal structure of society started breaking into families. Private property arose and the family started becoming the owner of the means of production. Here the contradiction between the communal relations of production and the potential forms of exploiting classes led to the qualitative change i.e. transition into ancient mode of production. There was conflict of opposites within the system which led to the negation of primitive-communal system. Consequently, a new stage of slavery appeared. The slavery system can be described as the negation of primitive communal system.

9.4.2 Slave-Owning Society

In this form of society the primitive equality gave way to social inequality and emergence of slave-owning classes and slaves. The forces of production underwent further quantitative changes. In the slave-owning society, the relations of production were based on the slave-owner's absolute ownership of both the means of production and the slaves themselves and their produce.

In this society, there existed the contradictions between slave-owners and slaves. When the mature conditions were reached the struggle of these contradictions led to the qualitative change i.e. the negation of slave-owning society by way of its transition into feudal society. The conflict of the opposites i.e. the slave-owners and slave culminated into violent slave revolts ultimately effecting the negation. We can say that the feudal system stands as an example of negation of negation. It means that feudal society can be seen as an example of negation of slave-owning society which itself is a negation of primitive-communal society.

9.4.3 Feudal Society

Slavery system was the first stage where relations of production were based on domination and exploitation by the slave-owner class of the slave class. This was the stage, where the relations of production saw qualitatively fundamental differences compared to previous stage. In feudal stage, the forces of production saw rapid quantitative change where for the first time inanimate sources of energy such as water and wind were tapped. The development of these productive forces was facilitated by the feudal relations of production. The feudal lords oppressed and exploited their serfs. However, towns began to emerge at this time. Trade, commerce and manufacture began to flourish. Many serfs ran away from the feudal estates to pursue a trade in the growing towns. The conflict of opposites within the feudal system namely, that of landless serfs against feudal lords, reached its maturity. The feudal system declined and its negation was the capitalist system.

9.4.4 Capitalist Society

Based on private capitalist ownership the capitalist relations of production facilitated tremendous growth of the productive forces. With this growth of productive forces, capitalist relations of production ceased to correspond to forces of production in feudal system. The most significant contradiction of the capitalist mode of production is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation. Production in capitalist society bears a strikingly pronounced social character. Many millions of workers are concentrated at large plants and take part in social production, while the fruits of their labour are appropriated by a small group of owners of the means of production. This is the basic economic contradiction of capitalism. This contradiction or conflict of opposites gives rise to economic crisis and unemployment, causes fierce class battles between the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class), in other words, quantitative changes. The working class would help bring about a socialist revolution. This revolution would, according to Marx abolish the capitalist production relations and usher in the new qualitative change i.e. the communist socio-economic formation.

The new communist socio-economic formation, as we have seen earlier, passes in its development through two phases, socialism and communism. Socialism does away with private ownership of the means of production. It establishes public ownership of means of production. In such a society the proletariat will jointly own means of production and distribute the produce according to the needs of people. This is the stage of dictatorship of proletariat, which will later on also, do away with the state apparatus leading to a stateless society. This stage of the stateless society will be possible in communism, where the dialectic finally unfolds itself, ushering in a social system which would be free of any contradictions within classes. According to the laws of dialectics contradictions will remain as this is the basis of development. Under communism there will be contradiction between Human Being and Nature, as in Primitive-Communism. The basic difference now is that the level of technology will be higher and Nature will be exploited more efficiently. Thus we see how the three laws of dialectics operate in Marx's interpretation of the history of society.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Name the four modes of production.
 - (i) _____
 - (ii) _____
 - (iii) _____
 - (iv) _____
- ii) Class antagonism reaches its climax and it leads to which of the following formations?
 - (a) Revolution
 - (b) Slavery
 - (c) Bourgeoisie
 - (d) Proletariat
- iii) Name the stage marked by classless society and mention its main characteristics.

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iv) Which stage follows socialism and what is its characteristic feature?
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.....

9.5 SOCIAL CHANGE AND REVOLUTION

Let us now discuss the ideas of Marx on social change and revolution. In the *German Ideology* (1845-6), both Marx and Engels outlined their scheme of history. Here, the main idea was that based on a mode of production there was a succession of historical phases. Change from one phase to the next was viewed by them as a state of revolution brought about by conflicts between old institutions and new productive forces. It was only later on that both Marx and Engels devoted more time and studied English, French and American revolutions. They named them as bourgeois revolutions. Marx's hypothesis of bourgeois revolution has given us a perspective to look at social changes in Europe and America. But more than this, it has stimulated further research by scholars on this subject. Secondly, Marx spoke of another kind of revolution. It pertained to communism. Marx viewed communism as a sequel to capitalism. Communism, according to Marx, would wipe out all class divisions and therefore would allow for a fresh start with moral and social transformation. This was the vision both Marx and Engels carried in their minds for future society. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find that their vision has not come true and communism has not had its sway around the world. All the same Marx's ideas have influenced the nature of growth of capitalism. Tempered with socialist ideas it is now beginning to acquire a human face.

Marx's concept of socialist revolution presupposes an era of shift from capitalism to socialism. He explained bourgeois revolution as a defeat of the aristocracy. This defeat came at the end of a long period of growth of capitalism. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie is, on the other hand, only the first phase of the revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism. According to Marx the socialistic phase of revolution would not be without classes, occupational division of labour and market economy etc. It is only in the higher phase of revolution there would be distribution of goods to each according to his needs. This would be the phase of communism. Thus, change to communism was perceived by Marx as a series of steps to completely revolutionise the entire mode of production.

In fact, Marx conceived intensification of class antagonism in capitalism, because the new forces of production do not correspond to the relations of production. There will be increasing gap between the levels of distribution of gains between the two classes. This shall leave the have-nots extremely alienated and conscious of their class interests. The new forces of production in capitalism are capable of mass production and will dump heaps of prosperity at the feet of bourgeoisie without helping the lot of proletariat, who would continue to suffer from misery and poverty. This shall accentuate the class consciousness and hasten the maturation of the

conditions for socialist revolution. The socialist revolution according to Marx would be qualitatively different from all the revolutions of the past as it would for the first time, after the beginning of history of inequality and exploitation, usher in a stage of classless society with a hope for all members of society.

Activity 2

It is well known that Marxist thought has influenced many Indian scholars, politicians, litterateurs and other thinkers, try to identify them by answering the following questions.

- i) Who am I? I wrote a novel which gave a critical description of the evolution of Hinduism. One of my novels was also serialised on Doordarshan in 1990.
- ii) Who am I? I was inspired by Marx's theory of historical materialism while writing in 1966 '*Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*'.
- iii) Who am I? I am known as 'the Indian theoretician of the British Communist Party'.
- iv) Who am I? I am a communist party leader and a historian of Kerala.
- v) Who am I? I wrote a book on materialism and criticised Marxist historical theory. In 1920 I was sent to Tashkent to organise a training centre for Indian revolutionaries. I attended the second congress of the Communist International and drafted the colonial thesis adopted by the congress. My draft was modified by Lenin.

9.6 LET US SUM UP

In this concluding unit of the block, we studied Marx's most philosophically profound contribution of dialectics and social change. There was an introduction to the concept of dialectics followed by the fundamental laws of dialectics and change. This was followed by a discussion of the application of the laws of dialectical materialism in the successive modes of production and consequent social change in society. In this unit, we have therefore studied these successive forms of mode of production in the context of dialectical principles of Karl Marx. Finally, we discussed Marx's views on revolution and social change.

9.7 KEY WORDS

Dialectics	The conflict between two mutually opposite forces or tendencies.
Dialectical Materialism	It is the Marxian theory that seeks to explain everything in terms of change which is caused due to constant contradiction of mutually opposite forces found in matter.

Quantitative Change	All the changes, whereby different parts or aspects of an object become rearranged, increase or decrease while the object undergoing change retains its identity.
Qualitative	Appearance of new or disappearance of old is a qualitative change.
Negation	A new stage which is a product of a qualitative change and it is a progressive change to replace the old.
Negation of Negation	When something that came into existence as negation of the old, is in turn replaced by the new. It is a qualitative change.

9.8 FURTHER READING

Marx, Karl and Engels, F., *Collected Works*. Vol. 6, Progress Publishers: Moscow

9.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) It is the Marxian theory that seeks to explain everything in terms of change, which is caused due to constant contradiction of mutually opposite forces found in matter.
- ii) Law of transition of quantity to quality; law of negation of negation; law of unity and conflict of opposites.
- iii) Minor or major changes in any object whereby the object does not lose its identity.
- iv) Appearance of new or disappearance of old is a qualitative change.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) (i) Asiatic mode of production (ii) Ancient mode of production (iii) Feudal mode of production (iv) Capitalist mode of production.
- ii) (a)
- iii) Socialism. Two of its characteristics are (i) public ownership of means of production, (ii) the proletariat jointly own the means of production
- iv) Communism. It is characterised by a stateless society.

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