

Q: Discuss Marx's views on class, state and religion.

Marx's Views on Class, State and Religion

Karl Marx, the father of communism, was a German philosopher of 19th century. He discussed his views on class, state and religion in his two magnum opuses, "The Communist Manifesto" and "Das Kapital". He believed that class, state and religion are all tools of exploitation used by the bourgeoisie (haves) to exploit the proletariat (have-nots).

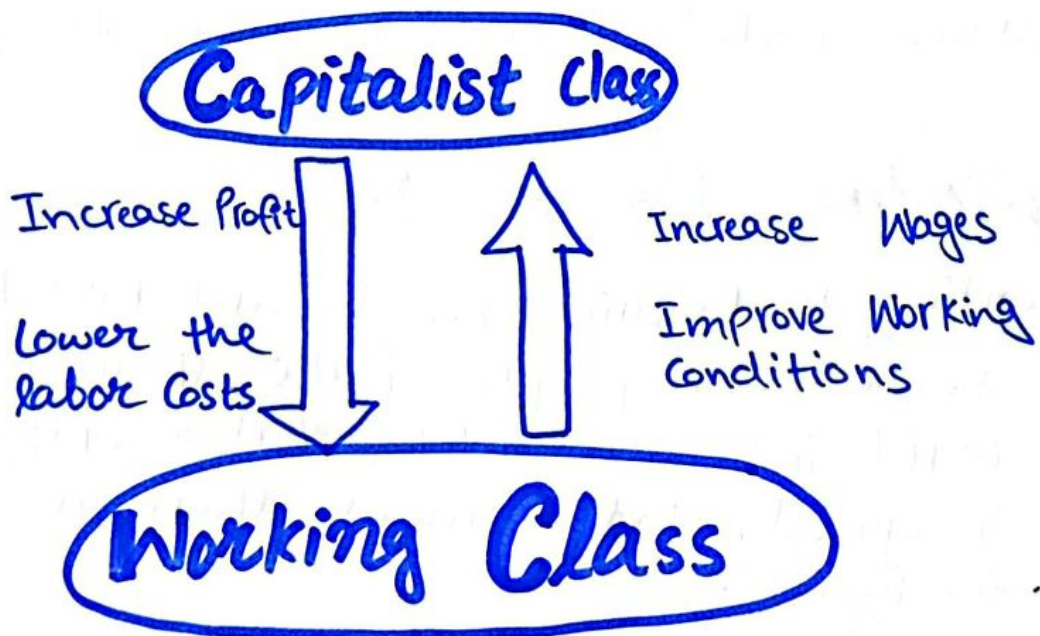


Figure: Neo-Marxist Model of Class Conflict

Explicating Marx's Views on Class

According to Marx:

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle."

Marx believed that there has always been a class struggle between the haves and have-nots.

DYNAMICS OF 'Class Conflict'

→ Exploitation of the have-nots by haves

Throughout the human history, Marx contended that the have-nots are being exploited by the haves. For instance in contemporary society the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat.

→ Control of the 'Haves' on Forces of Production

Marx asserts that with the emergence of capitalism, the forces of production have been totally under the control of capitalists.

And in slave society and feudalism, the forces of production were also controlled by the haves.

→ Imbalance between forces of production and relations of production

According to Marx, class conflict emerges due to imbalance between forces of production and relations of production. Because he believes that "any change in forces of production will demand a change in relations of production."

Explicating Marx's Views on State

The theory of state given by Marx is known as historical materialism which posits that material conditions of society particularly the modes of production, economic forces shape the structure of society. These are economic forces that have changed society from one stage to another.

Historical Materialism and Stages of Social Transition

Marx argued that the change in economic forces have led to social transition. He has discussed six stages of social transition.

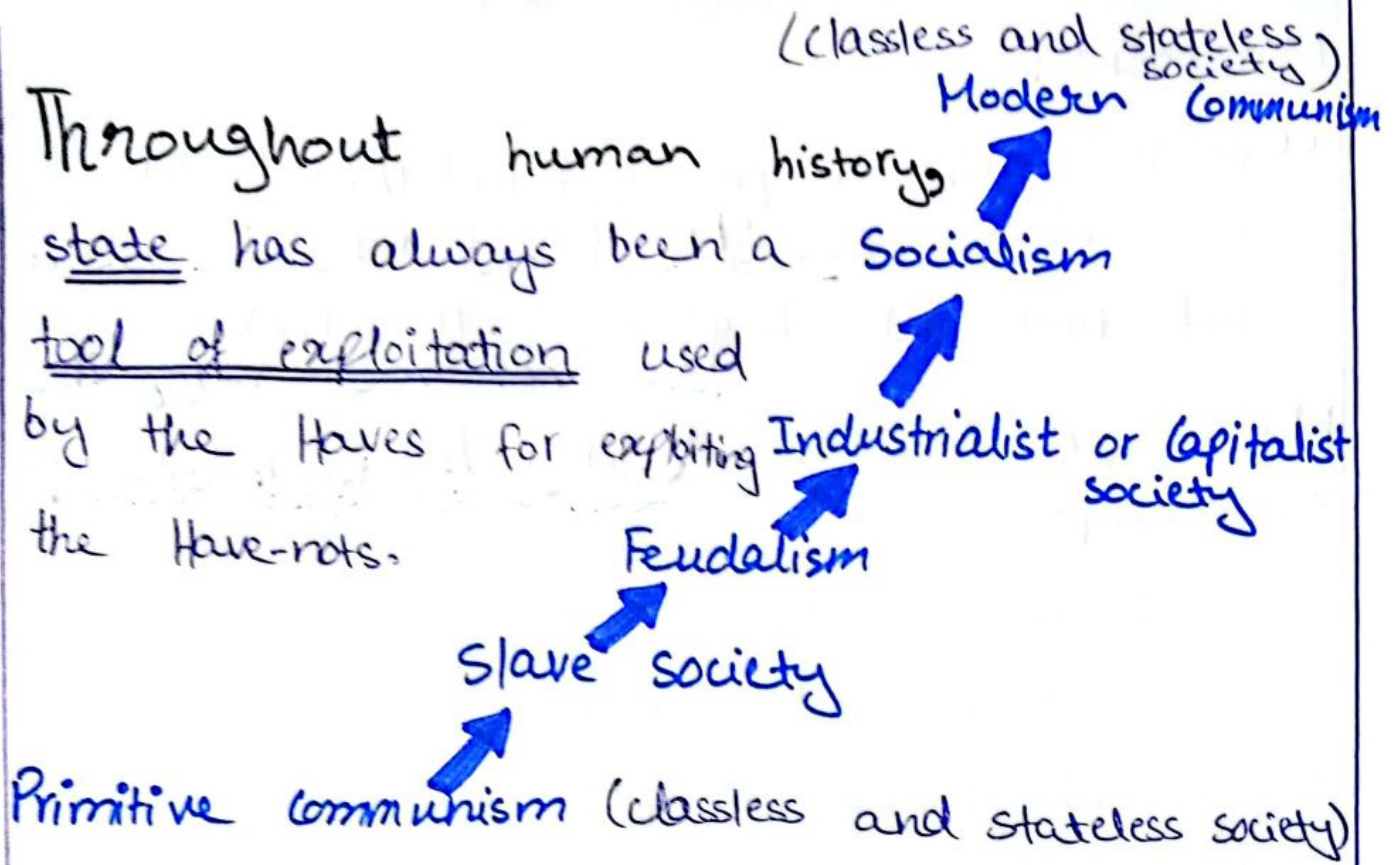


Figure: Six stages of Social Transition

Explicating the Marxist Views On Religion

Marx believed that religion was merely a tool of exploitation. He called it an 'opium'. He contended that the bourgeoisie use religious institutions to exploit the working class.

In Religion, people make their empirical world into an entity that is only conceived, imagined, that confronts them as something foreign. (Karl Marx)

Its one of the best example is of **Biblical statement**:

“It is easier to pass a camel through an eye of the needle than to enter a rich man into kingdom of Heaven.”

Moreover, a beautiful Victorian hymn relates to this concept:

The rich man in his castle
The poor man at his gate
God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate

Victorian hymn “All things bright and beautiful”

Incompatibility of Marx's Views with the Contemporary Era

Marxist views are incompatible with this contemporary era due to various deficiencies in his theory of socialism and communism.

None of the states have adopted communism. Majority ^{of the states} adhered to Marxist views have suffered a lot due to following inefficiencies.

→ Economic Inefficiency:

The idea ^{of state or society} proposed by Marx was economically inefficient. The Soviet Union suffered the same problem while implementing socialist economic system due to lack of proper market techniques for resource allocation.

→ Corruption and Cronyism:

Marxist views are incompatible with this modern world due to corruption and

cronyism instigated by poor administration of socialist economic system. Its best example is of North Korea which suffered same problem under this socialist system.

→ Humanitarian Crisis :

Socialism or Communism is incompatible with this ^{contemporary} world due to failure of many states like Venezuela where humanitarian crisis have plagued the state due to food shortages in socialist state.

→ Food shortages and Rationing:

Marxist views are incompatible with this age due to food shortages and rationing erupted in socialist states due to weak administration. This was the same problem that led to fall of Berlin Wall in 1989.

Criticism on Marxist Views by Philosophers and Economist

→ Critique of Ludwig Von Mises

Mises argued that due to lack of right to private property there can be no market of means of production, thus no ^{rational} price control system in the society.

→ Critique of John Stuart Mill

Stuart Mill favored individual freedom and warned against tyranny of the majority. He argued that by prioritizing community to individual, individual freedom would be suppressed.

→ Critique of Karl Popper

Karl Popper critiqued Marx' historical determinism (that history follows a fixed and predictable path) and argued that historicism was inherently flawed that underestimates unpredictability of history.

→ Critique of Jean Paul Sartre

Jean Paul Sartre criticized Marx' materialist approach to history. He critiqued Marx that his views explained only economic aspects of ^{human} society and ignored existential aspects of human society.

Concluding Thoughts

Marx theory of class, state and religion are, undoubtedly, very close to human history and contemporary society. But the transitional system that he has proposed to the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie is unrealistic and incompatible with

this modern world. But despite all these deficiencies, the importance of Marxist views on class, state and religion can never be ignored.