

SEMESTER-IV

PAPER-EC 1 : RURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM

UNIT-V

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Meaning :

According to Marx, social change occurs as a sequel to class struggle. The seeds of class struggle which generate change are found in the economic infra-structure of society. At the dawn of human history, when man used to live, in the words of Marx, in a state of primitive communism, those contradictions or conflicts of interest among classes did not exist.

Both the forces of production and the products of labour were communally owned. As such, class distinctions did not exist. With the emergence of the private ownership of the forces of production, however, the fundamental contradictions or class distinctions were created.

In other words, the forces of production give rise to particular relations of production. Through its ownership of the forces of production, a minority is able to control command and enjoy the fruits of the labour of the majority.

This dominant group also determines the superstructure in keeping with the interest of the group. Law, literature, philosophy, etc. are all created accordingly. In other words, the impact or influence of the dominant group is discernible in all areas of social life.

The forces of production do not, however, remain unchanged. Whenever the forces of production undergo a change, there is a corresponding change in the relations of production also. A new class emerges as dominant and seeks to control command and enjoy the fruits of the labour of the majority.

A conflict naturally ensues between the emerging dominant group on the one hand and the group which had hitherto enjoyed all the privileges. The emerging dominant group endeavors to determine the superstructure in terms of its own interest. The society, as a whole, thus undergoes a change.

Explanation of Marx's views / Theory :

Marx seeks to explain all social changes in terms of the contradictions which are found in the economic infrastructure of society. **“The history of all hitherto existing society”**, says Marx “is the history of class struggle”. In his view, class struggle will continue till class distinctions are completely obliterated and a classless society comes into being.

Marxian theory of social change has been criticized from various points of view. To begin with, it has been argued that the forces of production do not uniquely determine the relations of production.

Thus, the same mode of production may be applied in situations that differ radically from one another in terms of social and economic systems. The technological bases of the American and the Soviet economy are not as different as are the relations of production obtaining in these countries.

Moreover, the influence of science and technology is very widespread and far-reaching, in so far as thinking, behaviour-pattern and value-systems are concerned. In this context, it is not unrealistic to assume that the people of two different societies may share similar thinking, behaviour-pattern and value-systems despite the fact that the economic systems in these countries are different.

Another important factor should not also be overlooked. The terms ‘socialism’ and ‘communism’ do not convey today the same meaning as they did a few decades ago. Both the systems are undergoing transformation in response to the demands of technology.

The new economic experiment that is being tried in the Republic of China, Soviet Russia and socialist countries of Eastern Europe, dramatically illustrates this point. Marx recorded his observations at the dawn of industrial revolution. It was not, therefore, possible for him ‘to anticipate the far-reaching and all-embracing developments in the sphere of science and technology.

Secondly, the Marxist thesis that those who are economically dominant become, by virtue of their economic power, dominant in society is not fully supported by historical facts, thus, the organized religion, such as the Church in Europe, the Brahmin priesthood in India, etc., established its domination in almost all societies in the past through non-economic influence.

It is true that economic power helps one to gain other forms of power. But it is equally true that other forms of power help one to gain economic power. The conclusion of the Marxist doctrine that economic power is primary and that other forms of power are consequential cannot, therefore, be accepted.

Thirdly, the Marxist thesis that politics and culture of a particular epoch are explained by the fact that they sub-serve the interest of the economically dominant class in that epoch is also open to several objections. All human actions cannot always be explained in terms of economic motivations. Religious pursuits, for example, cannot be explained in economic terms.

The prayerful attitude of a true devotee has nothing to do with considerations of economic gain or loss. The motives which impel a poet to write a poem are, in most cases, non-economic. Again, the pursuits of eminent scientists are inspired by non-economic motives. It is also wrong to assume that those who exercise political power are always influenced by economic motives.

If we try to analyse closely the motives of some of the well-known figures of history, we shall find that sometimes purely non-economic motives, such as the desire for distinction or personal glory or a desire for doing good to people, deeply influenced their thoughts and actions. King Ashoka, for example, decided to give up warfare as a means of winning other kingdoms from motives that were decidedly non-economic.

Hitler was probably more influenced by the lure of personal glory than by the balanced calculations of probable material gain. A consideration of the motives that inspire art, culture, music, painting, and sometimes even politics of a country will show that human nature is too complex to be explained simply in terms of economic motives.

It is, of course, true that sometimes art and culture are made to sub-serve the interests of the economically dominant class in society. But such cultural products cannot permeate the whole of society because they lack the qualities, such as spontaneity of expression, strength and vitality, which characterize genuine works of art.

Fourthly, all the aspects of social dynamics, barring economic forces, are ignored in Marxian analysis. For example, can disputes between two religions or racial groups be explained simply in economic terms? Economic reasons may or may not generate such conflicts.

Even when economic reasons are responsible, there may be many other non-economic reasons which are no less responsible for fanning the fire of dispute. If we view the genesis of such disputes from this angle, it is apparent that emphasis on economic reasons, to the exclusion of all others, makes the study biased and partial.

Fifthly, the assumption of Marxism that the establishment of classless society would bring to an end the exploitation of man by man is too simple to be accepted.

As Maclver and Page have pointed out:

“The power of man over man has deeper roots than economic advantage and that it can be at least as formidable and as tyrannical under a socialist economy as under any other kind of regime”.

In conclusion, we may say that it is undeniable that the economic factors exert a very important influence on politics and social philosophy of a given society. But to regard the economic system as the sole determinant of legal codes, political and cultural system, is evidently wrong. There are other aspects of human life, besides economic, which are equally significant

It should, however, be borne in mind that Marx was not a determinist. According to him, class struggle will not ensue automatically when the objective situation seems to be favourable for the same. Till the people

become class-conscious and consciously work for the struggle, no revolution will take place, even if the objective situation may be ripe for the same.

It may be said that Marx anticipated what Talcott Parsons developed much later as the voluntaristic theory of social action.

The observations of Hoselitz, the noted economist, will be in order:

“.... he (Marx) was perhaps the first scholar to anticipate what Talcott Parsons calls the voluntaristic theory of social action. Marx’s conception that revolution, although in an ultimate sense inevitable, occurs only when people are motivated to carry it out (when they have become ‘class conscious’) implies that deterministic social forces exist, but that they become operative only through affecting voluntary action —an important insight made explicit and elaborated by Max Weber”.