
UNIT 2 EARLY SOCIALIST THOUGHT AND MARXIAN SOCIALISM

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Origins of Socialist Thought
 - 2.2.1 Early Socialist Thinkers
 - 2.2.2 St. Simon
 - 2.2.3 Charles Fourier
 - 2.2.4 Robert Owen
 - 2.2.5 Proudhon
- 2.3 Marxian Socialism
 - 2.3.1 Economic and Social Analysis
 - 2.3.2 Political Theory
 - 2.3.3 Theory of Revolution
 - 2.3.4 Impact of Marxism
- 2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept and central ideas of socialism;
- analyse the historical conditions that gave rise to socialist ideas;
- trace the main stages of the development of socialist ideas;
- distinguish between utopian and what came to be called scientific socialism;
- discuss the contribution of Marx to social and political theory;
- have an idea of the variants of socialist thought;
- list some of the important names associated with socialist thought and their ideas; and
- assess the impact of socialist ideas across the world.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

You would have noticed in your readings of European history that changes in economy and society brought forth changes in ideas and in culture. The emergence of modern economy is inseparably linked with modern politics and birth of new concepts like liberty, equality and fraternity encapsulated in Enlightenment thought. The rise of modern industry and its repercussions on

society brought new intellectual and emotional urges to the fore. Socialist ideas and a yearning for an equal society as a whole became the preoccupation of a number of thinkers to begin with, and then went on to inspire movements that were characterized as socialist movements. They were oppositional movements in the context of nineteenth and twentieth century societies and politics.

Although some of the elements that we find in socialist ideas can be traced to earlier periods, modern socialist ideas and movements arose in the context of capitalism and industrialization and were a response to the inequalities and the injustice in capitalist societies. Since capitalism first developed in Western Europe, its opposition in the form of socialist ideas also first emerged in Western Europe. The first revolution based on socialist ideals and the first attempt to transform society in keeping with socialist ideals was the Russian revolution of 1917, which you will read about in a later Unit.

The historical setting for the emergence of socialism was modernity and its discontents. The ideas of socialism therefore made a critique of both capitalism and modernity, but it was a critique that did not hark back to an utopian past, but rather looked towards an equal and just future built on the foundations of all that was positive and valuable in modern societies. In short, socialist thought did not reject or negate the achievements and values of modernity, but rather to enhance that which modernity had promised or envisaged.

Equality, freedom and fraternity were to be extended to those that modern capitalist structure of society had excluded from its benefits. That was the motivational aspiration and goal of socialist ideas and movements. The socialist ideas and movements were varied, diverse and quite differentiated within themselves, a fact that has not been much commented upon. Not only did they differ in time, in the different settings of the 19th and the 20th centuries, and over different terrains from Europe and in the colonial countries, they were quite distinct from the 19th century itself and within Europe too. The pursuit of social justice led to intense debates, a flowering of ideas and strategies and of the definitions and projections of socialism as a system and society.

Broadly, however, as Sharon Kowalsky has pointed out in a seminal essay, “modern socialism developed two distinct strands.” ...“One branch focussed on working within established systems to promote and implement socialist-oriented reforms that would improve the conditions of the laboring classes”, while the “other avenue focussed on the necessity of revolutionary change”, emphasizing the limited possibilities in the existing bourgeois institutions of state and power, and to argue for destroying these through a revolution. (Kolowsky in Vandana Joshi p. 190). Modern socialism was also internationalist in spirit, and leaders of socialist movements never tired emphasizing that the interests of the oppressed people all over the world were linked and similar, and those of the ruling classes everywhere were also similar, lying in defense of privilege as opposed to extension of benefits to all. They were the first to form organizations that were international in nature or internationally linked, even as they worked within their national boundaries (ibid.)

Socialist ideas and movements played an important role in modern societies, creating significant historical junctures of challenges to capitalism and its injustices. In this Unit we will first introduce you to the origin of early socialist ideas and some prominent early socialist thinkers, and then we will discuss various aspects of Marxist ideas and its impact in the form of socialist revolution.

2.2 ORIGINS OF SOCIALIST THOUGHT

It is not known who first used the words 'socialism' and 'socialist'. About the year 1800, in both England and France, the 'evils' of capitalism were written about and brought into the public domain in pamphlets, books, and speeches. But the word 'socialism' was noticed to make its appearance in print in a French periodical known as *Le Globe*, in 1832. Critiques of injustices in societies and aspirations for a better world can be traced from ancient times, but socialist thought as we know it is a product of capitalism and its forms of oppression. A specific analysis of capitalism is crucial to and seminal in socialist ideas. For example, Aristotle and Plato were important critics of their societies, but Aristotle justified slavery and for Plato equality was envisaged only within the range of the privileged in Greek society. In medieval times, there were millenarian urges for equality and freedom, and in early modern society Anabaptists represented protests against established Church and society sanctioned by it, but it was only in the modern world that there grew a concept of equality that was secular and spoke for all the oppressed of the world, and drew blueprints for establishing states and polities that ensured justice and equality.

Why, you may wonder, did socialist ideas become feasible and took strong roots only at a particular stage in history, despite the fact that urges for a better world were quite old? Marx and Engels were quite clear that the conditions for ideas and a feasible socialist society were created only by capitalism. Mankind can think about a problem only when a problem exists: only the workings of capitalism could give rise to ideas of how to challenge and overcome its injustices, they pointed out. For example, going to the moon could only be a dream, until knowledge and technology and resources could make it a realizable possibility. Thus socialist ideas could become pervasive only in the context of increased production and resources in the first place, although for them to find fruit other factors too are necessary, as they pointed out again and again. How else can education, health and leisure be possible for all, without the abundance of production and knowledge?

In short, ideas for betterment of mankind existed almost as long as man himself has existed and been capable of thought, but the ideas of socialism could emerge only in the 19th century with the growth of factory production and increased agricultural production. The socialists built upon the preceding legacy of ideas of freedom to a vision of an equal and just society.

2.2.1 Early Socialist Thinkers

The first modern socialistic stirrings can be traced to the revolutionary era of the French Revolution when Francois Noel Babeuf (1760-1797) organized, what he called, the 'Conspiracy of the Equals' to overthrow the Directory

which had put an end to the Constitution of 1793. He was inspired by the Enlightenment advocacy of natural rights and even argued social harmony and happiness could only emerge from social equality and the elimination of private property. He was among the first to make a distinction between notions of freedom that still allowed for exploitation of the laboring poor and equality that would put an end to it. he was executed by the government in May 1797.

Robert Owen in England and Charles Fourier in France can be termed the pioneer socialists of the early 19th century because around each of them there developed movements that tried to implement their ideas. Claude Henri de St Simon, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Etienne Cabet, Louis-Auguste Blanqui were other well known names. Their books were widely read and their ideas disseminated through pamphlets and debated in the press. Their speeches drew large audiences, and were seen to have some influence even in the United States. Their advance, beyond the activities of what Babeuf had envisaged, lay in that they also pioneered a comprehensive critique of capitalist society, and, consequent upon that, each of them worked out in detail, his own vision of how society should ideally be. Unlike for the French Enlightenment thinkers, for them equality had necessarily to encompass social and economic equality: equality before law and freedom of religion and speech for everyone were not enough for a just society. They were not satisfied that everyone should be considered citizen, they desired the abolition of class distinctions as they existed in their time.

They also had a 'long duree' sense of history and saw capitalism as one stage of history that need not be permanent, and would not be permanent precisely because it was unjust and exploitative and because it was characterized by irreconcilable contradictions and conflicts. They saw private property as foundation of profit and exploitation and were consistent in advocating common or social ownership of all resources that were productive. It is for this reason that we consider them as socialists, despite their not advocating revolutionary overthrow of the system by popular violence or revolt.

They, however, belonged to the period when capitalism was emerging and its full contradictions were not developed, and the inevitable crises within it were not so clear. Workers movement was still in its infancy and the bourgeoisie had yet to reveal the many ways in which it could take hold of society and politics. Therefore, they envisaged that transformative policies and a properly representative system may allow for capitalism to become socialism as its content changes. Their theories and programs were, thus reflective of the undeveloped stage of capitalism. And they laid great stress on change of hearts, the power of argument and development of a new morality: through a new and correct education, through sustained propaganda and by the example of model experiments that they tried to implement during their lifetime. A major assessment of their thought was made in the 19th century itself, by Marx and Engels, who recognized the value of their concern for the oppressed and the stirrings towards social and economic equality inherent in their thought, but also made a critique of their failure to give credence to the material basis of society, which created the conditions for equality to be realized. Without sufficient development of productive resources, there would not be sufficient resources to distribute among all sufficiently and equally. That is why, since this critique they have been called Utopian Socialists.

2.2.2 St. Simon

St. Simon recognized the different stages of history, through savagery to capitalism, the inevitability of progress in society as a whole and the necessity of socialism for a just society. He also wanted to study how society developed and changed through history, and advocated restructuring of society and redistribution of wealth, and the need for planning to ensure this. He analyzed society as consisting of two main classes, the 'idle proprietors' and the 'working people', which for him included not just the peasants and artisans, but also the rich factory owners who exploited the workers. Not surprisingly, his emphasis was not on abolition of private property in means of production, but only its misuse, which he considered not just desirable but also feasible within the capitalist system. In short, for him, change in heart could prevent misuse of wealth and property and use of resources for all people.

2.2.3 Charles Fourier

Charles Fourier had a more comprehensive critique of capitalist society, including on the position of women. He went a step further and argued that the wealth in the hands of some few was the cause of poverty of the majority in a capitalist society. His vision of the different stages of history was accompanied by the recognition that every stage had its own period of rise and decline, and he aimed at discovering "the laws of social motion" just as other scientists had discovered the "laws of material motion" of the Universe. Most importantly, he linked each stage of history to the state of production in that society, and by doing so paved the way for the concept of socio-economic formations introduced by Marx.

2.2.4 Robert Owen

Robert Owen gave more emphasis to the material conditions of society, arguing that man is a product not only of inherited hereditary characteristics, but also of his environment and the society around him as it has been developing. He recognized the significance of industrial growth that will create the plenty on which a whole society, not just some few, may thrive. His vision was that of a society of plenty where property will be common and worked by all for the good of all. He understood that in his day the worker was not getting much out of the labour he put into production, while owners of factories were. To him it all seemed the result of monetization. He did not analyze the mechanics of how all this came about. He thought factory owners should create co-operatives of their factories and ensure more just and equal distribution of what came out of it. He himself was a factory owner and created one such "model cooperative", by which he sought to show that a certain standard of living could be maintained for workers without losing out on profits. His goal was "social harmony" rather than disruption of existing society. And his followers too demanded the distribution of goods according to labour and were critical of private property in resources.

2.2.5 Proudhon

Proudhon, on the contrary considered private property as "theft" that had been usurped from common rights in earlier forms of society. He also emphasized that inequality was created by unequal value of inputs into

production: labour was devalued, while ownership of enterprise was overvalued. He was sympathetic to the small property owner who did not have potential to exploit the labour of others and distrusted state power which he saw as aligned in the interests of the rich. There were other thinkers also who advocated socialist ideas. Cabet did not support revolutionary methods of struggle, emphasized equality which he believed could be achieved through harmony in society and through small production of artisans. For him that was a form of communism. Blanqui emphasized the necessity of revolution, and overthrow of state power as a precondition for socialism, but believed this could be done only through conspiratorial violent methods by bands of elite committed groups, and he had no trust in popular struggles because they were, according to him, uninformed and without knowledge and education.

These individual thoughts of the early socialists had the common threads discussed above, which characterized them as being “Utopian socialists”, not as termed by themselves but others who analyzed their thinking and actions.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Write in brief about the conditions giving birth to socialist ideas.

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

- 2) What do you understand by ‘Utopian socialists’? Write note on early socialist thinkers.

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

2.3 MARXIAN SOCIALISM

Marxism was the stream in socialist thought that gained public visibility in mid 19th century and came into its own in the second half of the 19th century, which influenced and soon became linked with the growing workers movements and organizations, and with those of various other sections of society in late 19th and early 20th century. Its first public manifestation was *The Communist Manifesto* published in 1848. Today it is “among the texts most widely read and disseminated in the world”. Just as in the case of Utopian socialism, this trend came to be known as Marxism only later in the analyses of various social scientists and political thinkers, after the most prominent and path breaking individual who represented this trend and gave body and coherence to the various ideas of the time, upholding some and rejecting and critiquing others, Karl Marx. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and his friend and collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), were the founding fathers of the revolutionary socialist trend, known thereafter as Marxism. Their books came to be translated in many languages.

Marx and Engels did not develop up their ideas out of the blue. They incorporated and developed further, and also integrated in a new way the teachings and ideas of the greatest representatives of German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism. They took from Ludwig Feuerbach, from Hegel and from the Utopian socialists, and paid great attention to the writings of Ricardo, the Physiocrats and Adam Smith.

In 1848, Marx and Engels gave a “popular form to their understanding of philosophy, history, economics and politics” in *The Communist Manifesto*, and on the basis of this comprehensive understanding framed a practical political programme of emancipation.

The Communist Manifesto came like a thunderbolt in the world of 19th century politics. Its immediate contact was the storming of the barricades by the workers during the 1830 revolution and the realization soon after by socialists that the European bourgeoisie would support the established regimes rather than those who fought for a just and more equal society. It was a call for revolution. It was a political pamphlet, written for the Communist league, a party of German workers. Not a complete document of Marx’s thought during his lifetime, it nevertheless is an embryo and contains in capsule form the core of his thought and a blueprint for revolution and historical development. It takes as its starting point the analysis of capitalism in mid 19th century, underlines the trends of its future development, argues for the immediacy and necessity of revolution and the leading role of the workers, and the nature of class struggles and the eventual overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. It also offers a critique of other socialist trends and advocates the importance of a political party of the working class. It makes three very significant formulations: that all history has hitherto been the history of class struggles and will continue to be so; that the workers of the world need to unite (international nature of the fight for equality and emancipation); that workers are the most revolutionary among the existing classes because they have absolutely no stake in the established system (“nothing to lose but their chains); that socialism is the vision of future society and historical development; that the purpose of human beings’ critical thinking is not just to ‘interpret’ the world but to ‘change’ it for the betterment of all.

The Communist Manifesto was an outcome of these ideas worked on by Marx in the first half of the 19th century, and in turn became the foundation for their further refinement and development post 1848 revolution. The Manifesto “both built on older socialist traditions and broke with them, establishing communism as a distinct political movement and setting out its political agenda.” (Kowalsky, p. 200) In this sense Marx’s ideas played a central role in defining the scope and direction of the modern socialist movements.

For Marx, the evolution of material life was the basis of understanding history and dialectical materialism was the philosophy. Materialism plus dialectics was at the core of Marxism. From that perspective, Historical Materialism and a new analysis of political economy became the central and singular contributions of Marx to the understanding of the peopled world.

2.3.1 Economic and Social Analysis

Marx's starting point in the formulation of historical materialism is the key idea asserted by German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach that: "*reality shapes ideas and ideas reflect material conditions*".

Philosophically, Marxism adopted a materialist outlook on life and history. Marx explained it thus: that the way in which people produce their requirements of life and the way in which they organize their labour to do it, determines the way they build their society and political structure, and ultimately also the way they think. In short, it was being that determined consciousness and not vice versa, because a thing existed independently and prior to what people thought about it. For example, a tree existed, therefore people saw it, recognized it, studied it and gave it a name. Had they not done so, it would still have existed. Applied to human history, Marx argued that what decided the particular stage of history was, therefore, the prevailing mode of production and the relations of production in society. Slavery, feudalism and capitalism represented different socio-economic formations, different class relations, different dominant ways of thought. For him, these developments were not mechanical and predetermined, (unlike in Feuerbach's thought). At the centre of this material development were human beings who determined outcomes in history through their labour, their force of ideas and their activities.

It is not just being that determined consciousness is a one way process; human actions were central to and an important equation in the material life of any society. Therefore, even when circumscribed by limits of the development of their society, it is men who made and moved history. And when he said "men", he used it for human beings, both women and men, it must be noted. Women were equal in his scheme of thought. Fire, tools, domestication of animals, and agriculture were intrinsically linked with what people did with nature. Family, tribes, clans and other social organizations were linked with labour and how humans interacted through labour. Change was thus a constant and continuing feature of history, aided by developments in material life. A change necessarily changed equations with nature and with each other. Change was thus the only permanent fact of reality.

But what contributed to creating the conditions for change and for people to act as agents of change? It was, he argued, the conflicts and contradictions within societies that came with every major change. History never developed linearly; it was always a process of dialectical movement. Since the beginning of history human beings acted within nature and in conflict and partnership with nature; and, with time, within societies, in cooperation and opposition to other human beings. Progress was thus a "dialectical process".

Change was engendered by contradictions which led to class struggles. Class struggles were, thus, the pivots of historical development. They were, in turn, the result of the hard reality that in every society since primitive communism, some sections of people became privileged and ruling classes, and others were unprivileged, oppressed and ruled classes. Inequality was the logical ground that gave birth to class struggles. The inequality derived from their relationship to the sources of income or wealth — whether they owned them and employed others to work on them and for them, or whether they worked on them and produced profit or surplus for others. Naturally the interests of

the two kinds of people were opposed and irreconcilable, which made class struggles inevitable, though not its outcomes were not necessarily so at all times and in all stages, because relative strength varied through history.

Engels has an important work titled '*Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*', which describes the process in the early phases of historical development. These observations came to Marx from his comprehensive analysis of capitalism in his times.

2.3.2 Political Theory

Marx himself expanded his ideas on politics in his major work *Das Kapital*, in three volumes written over a number of years. The major themes in these volumes was the analysis of capitalism and the elements intrinsic to it: class exploitation that was built into it; class struggle that was the logical outcome of this exploitation; the tendency of accumulation and crisis, both of which emerged out of it; and the history of capitalism based on these elements inherent in the system. Engels contributed to this study in his '*Condition of the Working Class in England*'.

These works were a thorough and scathing criticism of capitalist society, particularly of the manner in which it resulted in the exploitation of the working class, its dehumanization and alienation of the worker from his own creativity and self. They showed how under capitalism a worker spends one part of the day covering the cost of maintaining himself and his family (wages), while the rest of the day he works without remuneration, because now he is spending time producing over and above what he would be paid for. It is through this that he creates surplus value, which is the source of profit for the capitalist and the means whereby the worker is denied the full fruits of his labour. This the worker cannot circumvent, because what he sells is his labour power, but what his labour collectively with that of his co-workers produces at the end of the day sells for much more than the cost of producing the product, including investment in raw material, machinery, maintenance and the running costs of the enterprise, and the wages that he is paid. Thus, capitalism is not just an economic system but also, as Marx showed, a specific set of relationships between the capitalist and the worker, which is against the interests of the worker and is socially unjust and exploitative. Labour is the necessary part of the production system, because without labour nothing can be produced: land, machinery, capital (money) would lie idle without the worker to work them. And in a capitalist factory system a worker cannot produce alone, nor can he sell what has been collectively produced through use of the machinery and capital investment of the factory owner. So, as Marx pointed out, there is necessarily a certain social organization of labour. But this social organization of labour is dominated by capital or wealth (also a major and basic component of production), which is owned by the capitalist and not the worker.

With an increase in scale of capital utilized and the mechanization and machinery used the production also increases by leaps and bounds. But the worker is paid by the hour, he sells his labour for a certain number of hours, no matter however much gets produced in that time. He gets paid by the hour even as value in the market (i.e. what it sells for) of what has been produced is many times more than what he has been paid for plus the costs incurred in producing the product. It was Marx, with his discovery of value and surplus

value being enabled by the labour of the worker, who laid bare the mechanics of the capitalist system and how exploitation of the worker was intrinsic to it. If worker was to be paid the full value of his labour there would be no profit for the capitalist.

This brings us to the second aspect, uncovered by Marx and Engels: the crises that inevitably occurred from time to time as the contradictions disturbed its balance, particularly the unending requirements of capital and market without which the profits would remain at one level but not expand. While capitalism produced more and more, the people became more and more poor and were unable to purchase all that is produced. This leads to what Marx has called the crisis of over production and under consumption and underlined the irreconcilability of the interests of the capitalist and the workers. One needed to sell, but the very system restricted people from buying what they needed. In order to retain maximum profit, the capitalist pays as little as possible to the worker, but in order to sell his products the workers must have more money i.e. he needs to pay them more because they have no other source of income. Obviously, he cannot maintain a balance that takes care of both at optimal level. For a time those crises can be temporarily overcome by searching for new markets, for example in colonies (for obtaining cheaper raw materials or selling produced goods), or by waging wars for the re-division of markets, or by taking some welfare measures for the workers to appease them. But there is no permanent solution, given the basic contradiction between the capitalist (property owners and holders of resources) and wage workers (“nothing to lose but their chains”). So there was poverty amidst plenty, which is the second ongoing feature of capitalism (and any class society with gross inequalities).

To understand better we need to look at a third aspect, also essential to capitalism: the initial and continuing inputs into capitalism from *outside* the system, some of which is referred to above. Marxists asked themselves two questions: where did the initial capital and private property come from? How did the system allow replenishments and enhancements of investment to meet every crisis? Marx and Engels wrote copiously on these aspects. The rapacious plunder and robbery of the colonial system was a running thread in their writings, for example the famous articles on India by Marx in the New York Daily Tribune, which showed the systematic drain of wealth to England, which as later researches showed played a significant role in the industrial revolution in England. So also the colonies of other advanced European countries. You would have learnt something about this in the Unit on colonialism.

Marxism also engages with how the small artisans’ economy and agriculture, land and peasant economy figure within the capitalist system. The separation of agriculture and manufacture, the transformation within agriculture from small peasant economies to large scale agriculture (as with Enclosures in England, one example), market relations and the various types of rent (from payments on crops to ground rent etc.) shaped the emergence of capitalism within agriculture, transforming agricultural economies into capitalist economies. Through provision of raw materials, markets for finished goods of industry and agricultural products, through loss of ownership of land by small peasants, by production of market by big farmers and rent by big landlords, agricultural economy and rural society in general became part of

capitalism. This process constituted one aspect of primary or primitive accumulation of capital for capitalist industry. (By primary or primitive accumulation is meant the initial wealth that was converted into capital)

Colonies and de-industrialization in colonies that were mainly agricultural but also rich in small artisan based production led to shift of wealth that constituted a second source of primary or primitive accumulation for capitalism.

Marx and Engels pointed out very clearly that wealth became capital only when it was converted into investment for earning more wealth or profit, and when what is produced became a “commodity”, that is something that could be sold for profit. Market then became the crucial aspect of capitalism and “labour power” or the worker’s work itself became a commodity to be sold for survival and living. The exploitation of nature, of resources from the earth (minerals, water, forests) nothing remained uncommodified. According to Marx, then: “It is always in the relationship between the owner of the instruments of production and the real producers....that we can find the inner secret, the hidden basis of the whole structure.” (quoted in Kolowsky, p.199)

And this, he pointed out does not change despite improvements in wages or higher standards of living: the essential relationship remains exploitative and permeates through all aspects of life, from the political and cultural to the personal and even within families. The position of women, gender relations in society and within families, their lack of or unequal control over resources both outside and within families, their role in society and politics became permeated through how family and society in general developed through the ages. The forms of many of these features have changed through history since then, and these have been studied from time to time by political leaders and academicians, but as major Marxist thinkers have pointed out, the essential features remain through all the stages.

2.3.3 Theory of Revolution

From an analysis of the economic systems through history, Marx and Engels drew the political conclusion that the overthrow of capitalism is necessary and inevitable, and the second conclusion that it is something that would not happen on its own, it would need a revolution by people to do so.

The class that would play the major role in this would be the working class. As capitalism develops the production becomes more *social* in character, that is collective (a worker does not produce a whole product, he does only one or two functions within a factory) and the profit from it is *individual*, that of the owner. The class of workers has no stake in maintenance of the system, including private property in means of production, because it owns nothing except its ability to work, and no interest in sustaining a system that prevents him from leading a meaningful life and in which what he does for the whole day goes in enriching not himself but the capitalist whom he may have never seen. Only the collective fight of the workers could lead to shorter hours of work, better working conditions, higher standards of living, more leisure and cultural and educational access. With the emancipation of the workers would become possible the emancipation of all other sections of society. Marx and Engels,

on the basis of their roles and place in capitalist society also analyzed and somewhat outlined the likely behaviour of peasants, women, small bourgeoisie, the big bourgeoisie, landlords etc., those who would be for revolution and socialism and those who would oppose it, and also those who would come part of the way.

In this way, capitalism created the conditions for the growth of the very elements that would or could overthrow it!

Marx asked the question — will the capitalists voluntarily and of their own give up their profits? History showed that apart from little charity, this did not happen, and that whatever the working people had gained was through struggle and fighting for it. A reform could be won through strikes, collective bargaining and unionism, but for overturning the entire edifice of exploitation nothing short of a revolution would suffice. As wealth became concentrated in fewer hands (a tendency under capitalism), and more and more people suffered sections of middle classes and peasantry would raise their voice and movements against the ruling dispensation, but could withdraw once they felt the fight was for going too far, because the fight would be against the governments, against the judicial systems, against unequal social norms and old ways of thinking which upheld the rule of the profiting ruling classes and the edifice of inequality.

The first such broad movements emerged during Marx's lifetime, the first being the 1848 revolution that made Marx think of the leading role of the working classes and the "betrayal" of the bourgeoisie, which came out in support of the established governments, despite the autocratic rule of some of them, and the denial of democratic constitutions they had themselves demanded. The *Communist Manifesto* encapsulated this experience for the workers and strengthened the support for socialism among them, leading to the formation of working class organizations and parties all over Europe. The first attempt to capture state power by the working class was made in Paris in 1871. Hundreds of workers were killed defending the first workers government, and the workers were defeated. Some more lessons were learnt, essentially that it is necessary to destroy the machinery of the capitalist state and create a new socialist state. Women's organizations and women's emancipation became a popular movement after the rise of socialism and socialist organizations. In fact the first mass organizations of women were started by socialists. Issues of working women were also first taken up by them, while they formed the main inspiration and support base for women's vote campaigns.

2.3.4 Impact of Marxism

While Marx and Engels wrote extensively about the capitalist society, they presented only some kind of a blue print of what socialism in practice would be like, as there was no existing socialist society in their lifetime.

- a) From a study of capitalism and its mechanics they derived the understanding that it was necessary to extend political and legal rights into the realm of economy and society: there could be no real equality without social and economic equality.

- b) A socialist society would thus be a classless society, with the means of production and resources owned by the State of the people and public expenditure equally and sufficiently on health, education and culture for all, and an assurance of gender equality.
- c) An overthrow of state structure and state machinery was necessary as the old machinery would be in the hands of the old ruling classes and would defeat the revolution.
- d) For sometime 'dictatorship of the working class was necessary, to lay the foundations of the new socialist state and to formulate and implement policies in favor of the general populace, the working people. This would in fact be more democratic than the earlier bourgeois regimes because it would be a real rule of the majority over a minority of former ruling classes.
- e) He emphasized the creation of organizations of the working people and formed the first International Working men's Association, which recognized that interests of the working people everywhere were similar, with the slogan, 'Workers of the World Unite!'

Marxism did not imply prediction like astrology, but on the contrary laid bare the interests that would create a drive towards socialism: whether they succeeded or not would depend on the nature of struggles and their outcome. It is people who make history; not destiny. Human life contained a lot more variables than did nature; and history was open to these variables within the general tendencies of social development. He visualized struggles and debates even within socialist societies which would work towards the creation of communist societies. While socialist societies, free of exploitation would make possible 'to each according to his/her work' the communist societies at a higher level of development could make possible 'to each according to his/her need', where people would be content to share with each other and let each one have what he or she needed and not be personally greedy for more. He visualized a shorter working day and more time for leisure and culture. He visualized a more humane consciousness. He even wondered whether the peasantry would not play a major role in societies where industry was a smaller sector, and whether revolution may not occur first in countries where capitalism was most developed and consequently the bourgeoisie more strong. A weak bourgeoisie and a different kind of alliance between the working classes and the peasantry may yield better results. In fact, it did so happen that way.

The first successful revolution by the working class was in Russia in 1917, rather than in Germany or England. Not only did the new Soviet state abolish private property in resources and means of production in industry, it nationalized all land in alliance with the peasantry. It created a new state and established socialist democracy. The story of this first socialist experience is the subject of a later Unit.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

Socialist ideas emerged in the immediate context of industrialization and capitalist society, were diverse in their expression and advocacy of methods for social transformation. Essentially, there were two trends: those who thought that socialism could emerge gradually through the transformation of capitalism and far reaching reform, others who argued that revolution and overthrow of capitalist regimes was a necessary precondition for socialism.

History of Modern Europe-II (C.1780 To 1939)

In the initial years of emerging capitalism, the dominant trend of socialist ideas were those characterized as ‘utopian’ because they thought a change of hearts and reforms were sufficient for socialism, in contrast to which Marx emphasized that the contradictions within capitalism were intrinsic to the system and would not allow any reconciliation or resolution of the basic roots of exploitation.

The *Communist Manifesto* and the political emphasis on revolution gave a new dimension to socialist thought, as did the uncovering and dissection of the roots of exploitation and the place of different calluses in the defense of capitalism and also its overthrow.

The emphasis on women’s emancipation and the anti-colonial thrust of many of the writings was crucial in the recognition of capitalism as a world system, the emphasis on internationalism and building of workers organizations and national liberation movements.

Most important, Marxism gained popularity as a tool of analysis rather than a static doctrine and saw contributions of many political leaders and intellectuals in applying the Marxist ideological perspective to analyzing and changing societies all over the world. It became an ideological vehicle for revolutions in the 20th century, beginning with Russian Empire in 1917, through Eastern Europe, China and Vietnam to Cuba, and liberation of colonies. Socialism and socialist ideas remain an inspiration in today’s unequal and unjust world, more so as production increases rather than increasing access of all to the earth’s resources are leading to greater exclusions.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Explain in about 100 hundred words major tenets of Marxism.

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

- 2) Discuss the Marxist theory of revolution.

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

2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 2.2
- 2) See Sub-section 2.2.1

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Section 2.3
- 2) See Sub-section 2.3. 3