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# UNIT 1 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF KARL MARX'S WORK\*

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe biographical details of Karl Marx;
- outline main intellectual ideas and perspectives that influenced his writings;  
and
- explain central ideas in his writings.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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Karl Marx was a German philosopher. He wrote on a wide variety of themes including capitalist mode of production, class and class conflict, political economy, alienation and many others that have provided meaningful insights in the disciplines of economics, history, political science and of course sociology. In this Unit we begin with a biographical outline of Karl Marx in order to familiarize you with the social, economic and political environment in which his ideas developed. We then examine the specific intellectual ideas that influenced him. Finally, we will understand some important ideas in his writings.

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## 1.2 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF KARL MARX

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### 1.2 Biographical Sketch

We can divide the life of Karl Marx into five phases. Let us look at each phase closely.

#### 1.2.1 Early Years

Karl Heinrich Marx was the second child and eldest son of Heinrich and Henrietta Marx. He was born on the 5th May, 1818, in Trier, in the German Rhineland, where his father, Heinrich Marx practised law.

Heinrich Marx belonged to the small but widely dispersed Jewish community of Germany. In the period that Napoleon ruled Germany the Jews had taken advantage of the opening of trades and professions which were previously barred to them. For enjoying the prospects of wider opportunities, many Jewish families had departed from their traditional style of life. In 1828, after Napoleon's defeat, the Congress of Vienna assigned the German Rhineland to the Prussian Kingdom. This meant that Germany was again divided into feudally organized kingdoms and the Jews once more faced racial, political and religious barriers. Some of them could not retrace their path and Karl Marx's father was also one of them. [...] In 1817, one year before the birth of Karl Marx, Heinrich became a member of the Christian Church. The hostile attitude of Karl Marx to religion may well be partly due to the peculiar and embarrassed situation in which such converts sometimes found themselves' (Berlin 1939: 33). [...]

On his father's advice, Karl Marx joined the University of Bonn as a student in the faculty of law. In the autumn of 1836 he was transferred to the University of Berlin. [...]

#### 1.2.2 Berlin Days

Karl Marx's years in the University of Berlin were spent under the impact of Hegelian philosophy. He joined the group known as Young Hegelians. These were also the years of a period of dejection among the German intellectuals. [...] As a student of the faculty of law Karl Marx attended the lectures of Eduard Gans, who was one of Hegel's favourite disciples. We find that Eduard Gans had considerable influence on him. Marx learnt from him the method of theoretical

criticism. Gans showed Marx in jurisprudence the legitimate field for applying and verifying every type of philosophy of history. This led young Marx to try and construct a rival system of Hegelian ideas of positivism. Despite his father's advice to abandon metaphysical speculation, Marx gave up his studies of law and immersed himself in philosophy. [...]

A Cologne publicist, Moses Hess, helped Karl Marx to be invited to write articles for a journal (*Rheinische Zeitung*). Later, Karl Marx became its chief editor. When it became clear to him that in Germany he could not speak and write freely, he decided to emigrate to France. After his marriage in 1843, he left for Paris.

### 1.2.3 In Paris

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when Karl Marx arrived in Paris, the French capital mirrored the unparalleled phenomenon of socio-economic, political and cultural upheaval in Europe. As far as Karl Marx was concerned, he had uppermost in his mind one question. What was the reason for the failure of the French Revolution? Do you know what Karl Marx did to find answer to this question?

He studied historical records of the revolution and huge body of works written in France on this and other associated subjects. Can you believe that this hard working young man of 25 years finished the gigantic exercise within one year! He read for night and days just as he had done when he joined the group of Young Hegelians and wanted to know all about Hegelianism. Marx's reading of the economists from France and England clarified for him a great deal of issues related to Hegelianism. He began comparing the socio-economic conditions of France and Germany. Though influenced by French socialist writers and English economists, Karl Marx was not any the less critical of their scholarship. According to Karl Marx, they lacked a sense of history. He thought that their scholarship lacked seriousness and integrity.

Interestingly, although very critical of Hegelianism, Karl Marx accepted Hegel's view of the structure. In other words he believed in the fact of formal relations between the elements of the process of human history. But, his understanding of the elements themselves was based on his study of the views of the French thinker Saint Simon and his disciples. This is how the critique of Hegel provided Karl Marx a basis for creating a new outlook and a plan of action. This was also the time when he met in Paris a revolutionary by the name of Friedrich Engels, who was a German radical and son of cotton manufacturer. In connection with publication of economic articles for Marx's Journal, the two had met in the autumn of 1844 and thus began a long lasting phase of friend and partnership between them. Karl Marx who wrote in an obscure and clumsy manner, benefitted by collaborating with Engels who had a remarkable capacity 'for sifting, assessing and perceiving the practical applicability of the discoveries of others' (Berlin 1939: 100). Not only this Engels provided Marx with the feeling

of security which the latter lacked. It is said that on his part, Karl Marx gave his friend an affection which he gave only to his wife and children. [...]

Marx's brief but very productive spell in Paris ended in the beginning of 1845 when he was expelled from Paris. Comments against the ruling Prussian King had appeared in the socialist journal, Vorwarts and the Prussian authorities had demanded expulsion of the entire group connected with these activities.

Karl Marx was one of them. He left Paris for Brussels with his wife and one-year-old daughter. He was joined in Brussels by his friend Engels. While in touch with the various German communist workers' organizations, with branches in various European cities, Karl Marx decided to set up an international organization of workers. This was the beginning of the period when the scholar Marx turned into a visionary of revolution.

#### **1.2.4 Revolutionary Marx**

Working with the Communist League, a federation of workers, Karl Marx became an organizer and leader of a revolutionary party. In 1847, the London branch of the Communist League entrusted him with writing of a document which would spell aims and objectives of the party. Karl Marx welcomed this idea and produced the document early in 1848. Just a few weeks before the Paris revolution of 1848, this document was published. It was called the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848). [...] As a result of producing the Manifesto of the Communist Party, Karl Marx and his family were expelled from Belgium and its territory. He was, on the other hand, invited back to Paris by the new French Government. Long awaited revolution had broken out in Paris and Marx immediately left for the French capital. Marx was generally not very much taken in by this revolutionary and he once again left Paris and went to Cologne to find out what he could do to propagate his idea in his native Rhineland.

He started a new journal and named it The New Rheinische Zeitung after his first journal. Articles in this journal were read avidly by the public. But soon, owing to rather radical position taken by Karl Marx regarding the Prussian Government, the paper was suppressed and its last issue came out in red letters. For his article in this issue, Marx was arrested for sedition and tried in Cologne court. Here, during his trial, Karl Marx delivered a speech on socio-economic conditions in Germany and other countries. The jury thanked him for an enlightened lecture and acquitted him. All the same the Government had already taken away his citizenship and therefore he was expelled from Rhineland in July 1849. As he had very few alternative places to go to, he went once more to Paris where the French Government ordered him to either leave France or to retire to the obscurity.

#### **1.2.5 Exile**

With the help of funds collected by his friends, Karl Marx bought his fare to England and arrived in London in August 1849. His family joined him after a month. In November, Engels also arrived in London. Do you know that Marx

expected to be in England for only a few weeks? But, in fact, he lived there until his death in 1883.

Because England in those days was not much affected by goings-on in Europe, it was possible for Karl Marx to continue to live there without problems. He was, on the other hand, isolated and cut off from the ferment of intellectual and political activity. With his family and close friends, he led a life of relative inactivity and material poverty. This forced inactive life, of course, helped him to develop as a thinker. [...]

In 1864, when Worker's International was formed in London, Marx joined its executive committee as the representative of the German artisans in London. Marx, in fact, took charge of the organization and delivered its Inaugural Address, which contained a socio-economic survey of the working class from 1848 to 1864. The International grew fast and Marx controlled its activities from London. While involved in these pre-occupations, Karl Marx published in 1867 the first volume of *Das Kapital*, his magnum opus. The second and third volumes of this treatise were edited after Marx's death by Friedrich Engels. *Das Kapital* created a stir and it was soon translated into French, English, Russian and Italian. Sure enough, now we have its translations available in many of the regional languages of India. [...]

Marx's writings and speeches of thirty years were mainly directed against the country which eventually welcomed his ideas and turned him into the greatest hero of modern times. This country was Russia. Russians visited Karl Marx in London. He welcomed them and talked about his mission in life. The mission was to overthrow capitalist society. He inspired the Russian revolutionaries. Himself he spent his days in writing and making notes. After a prolonged illness of lungs, his health failed and he died in his sleep on 14th March, 1883 (excerpted from Biographical Sketch—Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-83), ESO 13: 5-9).

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### 1.3 SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed wide-sweeping economic changes across Europe. These changes particularly affected England. Most of the changes were taking place in the economic sphere due to the introduction of an industrial economy. With the coming of industrial economy, the earlier form of feudal society underwent significant changes. There was a shift from the feudalism to capitalism. There was a stream of migration from the rural hinterlands to the emerging urban, industrial and modern centres like Manchester, Liverpool etc.

Simultaneously, there was decline in the influence of trade guilds. Such decline gave more space to the capitalist expansion in the economy of that time. The aforesaid variables deeply impacted the European society. Along with it, the process of rapid industrialization and horrible working situations of the industrial workers (working class) led to wide spread poverty and social distress among them. In a way, it all culminated in the social revolution in France and throughout

Europe. These specific historic conditions influenced Marx very much and gradually his increasing engagement with economic questions and economic problems was articulated in his numerous writings. An important influence on him was his reading of Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844 which made him aware of the nature and extent of misery of industrial workers. Subsequently his engagement with the workers' movement became more and more passionate. Marx and Engels developed their philosophy of communism and became the intellectual leaders of the working-class movement.

As you learnt in the previous section, in 1847 Marx was asked to write the Manifesto of a society made up of revolutionary German workers living in London. Marx and Engels renamed the group the Communist League and began writing a manifesto summarizing the doctrines of the League. Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* in January 1848 in which the historic statement was made:

'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world, unite!' The emergence and gradual consolidation of industrial capitalism made him more aware and articulate towards critiquing the exploitative system. (excerpted from *Biographical Sketch – Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-83)*, ESO 13: 5-9).

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## 1.4 INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

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Marx's work can be appropriately understood in light of the intellectual context from which it emerged. Let us now look at the intellectual ideas that influenced Marx.

### 1.4.1 German Philosophy and Idealism

In early years of studentship, Marx was largely influenced by the German Philosophy and Idealism of his days. More specifically, influence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach is noticeable in his writings. Hegel's ideas can be located in the broad framework of idealist philosophy. In a general sense, idealist philosophy lays emphasis on ideas i.e., reason for the understanding of social change. Further, Hegel explains dialectics in terms of three elements: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Thesis is the dominant form of ideas prevalent in society at any given point of time which are perceived to be 'true'. Antithesis is the contrary set of ideas which are formulated over a period of time. Over time, the thesis and antithesis reconcile in the form of synthesis. In due course, this synthesis serves as thesis. Opposing the new thesis emerges new antithesis and subsequently new synthesis arises. Seen in this way, progress in history happens by way of series of clashes between an idea (i.e., thesis) and its contradiction (i.e., antithesis) leading to the rise of a new idea (i.e., synthesis).

Marx accepted Hegel's idea of dialectics but did not agree with the emphasis on ideas. Instead of ideas, Marx brought in material forces and developed the idea of dialectical materialism. You will read more about dialectical materialism in Unit 2. He examined the dialectical relationship between capitalists and the proletariat. Also, he traced the dialectical history of changes in society from

primitive through feudal to capitalist society. Further, dialectical approach takes a view that various aspects of society are in constant conflict with each other. Following this understanding, Marx saw the contradiction between capitalists and the proletariat. He maintained that while the very basis of capitalism is exploitation of the working class. This exploitation will create conditions for the working class to revolt and overthrow capitalism itself.

Another set of writings which influenced Marx came from Ludwig Feuerbach who was a German Philosopher. While Hegel believed that 'real man' emanates from the divine, Feuerbach argued that 'real man' is one living in the 'real, material world'. According to Feuerbach, human beings create an image of God to which they ascribe ideal qualities that they cannot attain. Human beings strive to be like God but this is not possible. In the process, however, they are not able to appreciate human qualities and in this sense suffer from religious alienation. What attracted Marx to Feuerbach's ideas was the emphasis on material bases of religion. Marx, however, felt that Feuerbach should have related religious alienation with economic activity. Marx felt that alienation originated from social and economic activities of human beings. You will learn more about the concept of alienation in section 1.5.1. Marx elaborated it in his own materialist perspective and stated that religion is the handiwork of those who are rich class i.e. own the means of production and politically powerful. Religion in a way masks the everyday pain and suffering and justifies the same on account of religious ideals.

### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Name two scholars who influenced Karl Marx's ideas.

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- 2) What is the main focus of dialectical approach? Use the space below to write your answer.

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### 1.4.2 Materialist Perspective

The materialist perspective is at the centre of Marx's analysis of society. You may be curious to know what materialism is. Let us refer to Box 1.1 to understand the meaning of materialism.

#### Box 1.1 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”. (ESO 13, Block 2: 16)

According to Marx, the structure and development of society is conditioned by the material conditions or economic factors of that society. The notion of Materialism as given by Marx can be compared and contrasted with Idealism which is much associated with Hegel. While, Idealism refers to a theory that ultimate reality can be understood and interpreted through ideas, Materialism argues that everything, that exists, depends upon matter. It studies the real conditions of human existence. One can thus see that both these perspectives are bi-polar in nature. One gives importance to the idea and the other to the material conditions of existence. Marx’s general ideas about society are known as his theory of historical materialism. Let us refer to Box 1.2 to learn little more about historical materialism.

#### **Box 1.2 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. [...] 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. [...]

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” (ESO 13, Block 2:12-13)

Major tenets of historical materialism are: (i) economic structure of society is the most important one; (ii) economy determines politics and culture in society; and (iii) instead of ideas, economic structure determines political and legal superstructure. Historical materialism is a materialist interpretation of social, cultural and political phenomena. His theory of historical materialism is both historical and material in nature. It is historical because Marx has traced the evolution of human societies from one stage to another. It is materialistic because he has interpreted the evolution of societies in terms of changes in their material



or economic bases. In evolutionary perspective, the history of society is seen through the successive stages of evolution.

Marx outlined his theory of historical materialism in 'Preface' to A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy stating, 'It is not the consciousness of men, therefore, that determines their existence, but instead their social existence determines their consciousness.' The society is seen as a structure having at its base the economy - the infrastructure so to speak. This economic infrastructure of society is made of forces and relations of production. You will read about these concepts in section 1.5.3. The superstructure of society is based on relations of production. Other aspects of society as history, politics, law, religion, education are influenced by the economic structure. Historical materialism is also the cornerstone of Marx's understanding of the process of social change. Over time, forces of production evolve. When this happens, they contradict existing relations of production. When the contradiction intensifies, the existing mode of production and its superstructure breaks down. New relations of production that match with forces of production emerge. This dialectic between forces of production and relations of production lies at the root of societal development that explains history of societies. Thus, conflict is viewed as a creative force that triggers progress.

Marx described stages of human history in terms of the four modes of production: the Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. According to him, ancient, feudal and capitalist modes of production followed each other one after the other in western societies. Asiatic mode of production is a feature of those societies in which ownership of land is communal, kinship relations predominate, and production process and labour are controlled by the State. He predicted that capitalist mode of production will be followed by socialism/communism. Ownership over means of production in each mode of production lies in the hands of one class. This determines the relations of production and class relations that emerge from production process. Ancient mode of production is characterized by slavery, feudal mode of production is characterized by serfdom and capitalist (bourgeois) mode of production is characterized by wage earning.

Asiatic mode of production is characterized by the subordination of all people to the state or the state bureaucracy. You will read about modes of production in section 1.5.3. Can Marx's historical materialism be equated with economic determinism? Let us refer to Box 1.3 to find out.

**Box 1.3 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". (ESO 13, Block 2:21-22)

### 1.4.3 Political Economy Perspective

Before discussing how Marx was influenced by the political economy perspective, let us understand what is meant by 'political economy'. In its simplest sense, political economy refers to the interface between politics and economy. In this sense, politics and economics are treated as inseparable from each other. Political economy addresses the question: how do politics and policies influence economic outcomes (e.g., economic growth, trade, employment, income inequality across different sections of society and regions)?

Engels explained political economy in terms of laws that govern production and exchange of 'material means of subsistence'. Marx, however, did not discuss the concept of political economy but developed a critique of it. Giddens (1998) mentions two main criticisms of political economy that Marx proposes. The first one attacks the basic assumption that conditions of production that are characteristic of capitalism can be found in all forms of economy. Marx's argues that capitalism is not the only form of productive system. As you have seen in the previous section, there have been other forms of productive systems before capitalism and that other forms of productive systems may emerge after capitalism. The second criticism attacks economists' practice of reducing everything to economic value and economic relations. For them, 'commodities', 'prices' etc. are independent of human intervention. In the political economy framework, those people who are not engaged in the production process (like the unemployed, beggars etc.) do not exist. Reduction of both commodities and people to economic categories is not agreeable. Class division in society is conveniently ignored by economists. The fact, however, is that there is perpetual conflict between working class and the capitalist class over wages and profit.

Marx argued that major share of the profits in capitalist mode of production is taken away by capitalists (i.e., those who own the land and capital). The workers lack control over both: the production process and the commodities they produce. They are not able to relate with what they produce. This is what Marx referred to as 'alienation' of the workers.

According to Marx, every commodity has two kinds of value attached to it 'use-value' and 'exchange-value'. Use-value of the commodity is in its consumption and exchange value denotes the value of a product when it is exchanged with the

other products. Labour Theory of Value according to both Adam Smith and David Ricardo suggests that it is the human labour power which makes any commodity valuable in terms of its use and exchange value. This proposition influenced Marx to a great extent which he subsequently modified to explain the emergence of surplus value and surplus labour. For him, the production of any commodity involves costs of human labour, raw material and machinery which are borne by the owner of the industry or factory / the capitalist. Capitalists buy human labour and thus produce and sell the commodity. In order to have surplus value which is the source of profit, the capitalist maximizes the production and tries to keep down the human labour cost. In this way, the capitalist gains surplus value which though is an economic concept, yet is configured by the relation of domination and sub-ordination among the capitalist and the industrial worker. It is in such a heightened sense of exploitation and appropriation of human labour that first the sense of alienation enters in to the worker which effectively channeled gives way to the social revolution. Thus we see that the pure economic categories like 'use-value' and 'exchange-value' and human labour cost are modified by Marx within the framework of political economy so as to explain the rise of capitalism.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) What are the major tenets of historical materialism? Use the space below to write your answer.  
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- 2) What is meant by political economy? Use the space below to write your answer.  
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**1.5 CENTRAL IDEAS**

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Let us discuss some of the important ideas in Marx's writings.

**1.5.1 Alienation**

The concept of alienation used by Marx in his writings is derived from Hegel. In fact, according to Hegel, Idea was the Universal Absolute from which man was alienated i.e., estranged. In simple words, according to Hegel, we see our own

ideas and creations as external and alien to us. In the long run, we overcome this alienation. Feuerbach did not agree with Hegel that Idea was more important than man in the metaphysical sense. According to Feuerbach, man projected the best attributes that he can think of in an entity called 'god'. This externalized, objectified creation of man i.e., god represents man as alienated from his own self. While Marx accepted Hegel's notion of alienation, he rejected the idea that alienation has to do with consciousness alone. For Marx, alienation involves a sense of detachment of workers from their own labour and the objects they create. Consider the case of a carpenter who makes a chair but cannot use it for himself. The chair which he has made himself is for sale but not for his own use.

In a shoe factory, for example, a worker produces say only the heel while someone else produces the upper part and yet another worker assembles all the parts and forms the shoe. The work of each one is mechanical and not creative. According to Marx, alienation takes place in four ways: (i) workers lose control over what they produce; (ii) workers lose control over their own work activity since they sell their labour for wages and treat the productive process only as a means of subsistence; (iii) workers have to produce mechanically with no creativity or mental engagement; and (iv) private labour of workers makes them self-centered and individualistic, they compete with each other. This estranges them from each other.

### **1.5.2 Class and Relations of Subordination**

The notion of class is central in the writings of Marxist analysis of society. According to him a social class occupies a fixed place in the production process and thus in the relations of production. According to Marx, in the beginning of the human history, as the land was collectively owned or was not owned by any one person or a group, it was seen as a classless society. One explanation is that class emerges as the corollary of property and ownership of property. Marx in *Capital* (1894) 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. It needs to be mentioned that in two of Marx's writings *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* and *The Class Struggle in France*, we find two different class structures.

However, the other explanation suggests that with the ownership of the means of production, there emerges two classes; one who owns it i.e. 'Haves' (bourgeoisie/capitalists who appropriate surplus value) and those who do not own it, i.e. 'Have nots' (proletariats who possess only their labour power). The latter in order to survive often submits to the former and thus theirs is a relation marked by superordination and subordination - oppressors and oppressed. Bourgeoisie is the class of capitalists who control means of production. One can also look in to 'Class in itself' notion which means that all those who are sharing the same relationship to the means of production comprise a class; and 'Class for itself' where the

members of a class are aware of their exploitative situation and come together to resolve it through revolution.

Outlining the relations of subordination, Marx notes that in every historical stage of the human society, we find the presence of two antagonistic classes i.e. Masters and Slaves in Ancient society, Lords and Serfs in Feudal society and capitalist and industrial worker in capitalist society. However, he sees class as a unique feature of capitalist societies because it is here that exploitation reaches its peak and through revolution waged by class conflict and class struggle the capitalism is overthrown. The cause of exploitation is the intense desire of the capitalist for profit making in form of surplus value. Finally, capitalist mode of production will be replaced by communism in which abolition of private property, self-alienation are abolished. You will learn more about Marx's notion of class and class struggle in Unit 3.

### **1.5.3 Means, Relations, Forces and Mode of Production**

By 'means of production' Marx refers to things that are used for production (e.g., land, raw material, technology etc.) . Now, there is a class of people who own the means of production but it is not possible to produce anything with only tools, machinery, and technology. For production process all these have to be put to use. When this happens, people have to interact with each other. The social relations that they enter into for production are called 'relations of production'. Relations of production include both: relations between owners of means of production and workers; and relations among workers themselves. Relations of production between owners and workers are characterized by dominance and exploitation while those among workers are characterized by cooperation. The way commodities are produced is referred to as 'forces of production'. This is a combination of means of production and labour power. In simple words, forces of production refers to all the factors that contribute to the process of material production directly. According to Marx, each stage of social history of the society is differentiated with each other by how, or by what means, the members of society produce the material goods for their survival and thus fulfilling their needs. Each mode of production associated with a specific stage in the human history has its specific relations of production. As explained in section 1.4.2, Marx identified four modes of production: the Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. Let us understand each mode of production in detail.

The Asiatic mode of production is feature of primitive communities in which ownership of land is collectively owned. Here the sense of individual 'ownership' is absent. As a result, the notion of property or private property is also absent. In the absence of both, this is called as a 'classless' society.

In the Ancient Mode of Production, slavery is seen as the basis of the process of production. Herein for the first time in the human history, that we come across two distinct and opposing classes i.e. Masters and the Slaves. One can see the emergence of large scale agricultural practice as its reason. The relation of

masters to slaves is considered as the very essence of slavery as it is exploitative in nature and Master appropriates the labour of the slaves.

Feudal Mode of Production is marked by two mutually antagonistic classes' i.e. landed nobility feudal lords and their tenants or 'serfs'. As Serfs were legally not free they were deprived of property rights. In order to survive, they used to work on the landed properties of their feudal lords. The feudal lords appropriated land rent from their serfs.

Capitalist Mode of Production is a feature of the industrial era. There are the two antagonistic classes: capitalist or the bourgeoisie and the worker/ labourer or the proletariat. As a mode of production, capitalism first emerged in Europe. Here capital is the dominant means of production. Subsequently, the world witnessed the rapid growth of technology and rise of capitalist economies. The means of production is in the absolute control of the capitalist who exploits the labour of the proletariat for profit making. In Marx's view, capitalism will be eventually replaced by communism.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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The Unit discussed key influences on Marx's writings and discussed in brief his central ideas. One can see that his idea on understanding history as the continuous line of development marked by the successive evolutionary stages of human society is very much influenced by the evolutionary thoughts of that time. Similarly the dialectics of idealism by Hegel was modified and 'turned upside down' by Marx when he applied his dialectics of materialism. The core values of thesis, antithesis and synthesis remained the same but their inherent nature change from Hegel's progress of ideas to Marx's progress of means of production thus leading to progress of human history. The labour theory of value given by classical economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo were influential in Marxist writings on use value, exchange value and surplus value.

Along with class and relations of subordination, the central ideas of Marx included means of production, relations of production, mode of production and forces of production which in the ultimate analysis provide a picture of Capitalism. Needless to say, as a philosopher and economist of the times of revolutions of 18th and 19th centuries, Marx's writings still resonate in the contemporary times.

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## 1.7 REFERENCES

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## 1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach
- 2) The main focus of dialectical approach is on (a) relationships between these components; and (b) totality of social relations and the relation of this totality to those components. The dialectical approach is also concerned with how social phenomena exist in a dialectical relationship to one another across space and time.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Major tenets of historical materialism are: (a) economic structure of society is the most important one; (b) economy determines politics and culture in society; and (c) instead of ideas, economic structure determines political and legal superstructure.
- 2) Political economy explains how politics and economics influence each other. Political economy addresses the question: how do politics and policies influence economic outcomes (e.g., economic growth, trade, employment, income inequality across different sections of society and regions).

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