

11. Isaiah Berlin was a major proponent of Individualism; he advocated a fundamental pluralism of values.

12. Phenomenology and existentialism, though not self-consciously in a political context, put a lot of emphasis on the subject's interjection in constituting its social and political reality.

UNIT 6

DEMOCRACY*

Structure

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Democracy: Conceptual Evolution of its Definition in History

6.3 The Basic Institutional Principles and Ideas constituting Democracy

6.4 Democracy as a Value vs. Democracy as a Mechanism

6.5 Different Types of Democracy

6.6 Let Us Sum Up

6.7 Key Words

6.8 Further Readings and References

6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are:

- Understanding the integral nature and underlying principles of democracy.
 - Discussion on democratic ideals that substantiate its practice in various types.
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6.1 INTRODUCTION

The International Day of Democracy is celebrated on 15th of September since the year 2007.

The United Nations General Assembly declared that democratic principles hold universal values which enable people to express themselves freely, and that therefore, democracy should be strengthened and consolidated as a social and political system. This particular day dedicated to democracy celebrates it as a unique organised system of governance, which is relevant even in the contemporary times. Amartya Kumar Sen argues that democracy is universally valuable not because it is unanimously consented by every person on earth to be so, but because “people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable” (“Democracy as a Universal Value,” in *Journal of Democracy*, 1999)

The term democracy traces its origin to the Greek word *demokratia*. This word consists of two terms *demos* and *kratos*. Together these two terms mean ‘the rule of people’ as opposed to ‘the rule of elites’ and it was therefore the common people which were considered to be the power holders in a democracy. They were ascribed with the authority to partake in the

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rule-making procedure. Methodically they could either engage directly in the decision-making process, or engage indirectly through the elected representatives. This was a new way to run administration for Greeks because earlier, it was only the king who could make rules.

However, the idea of a democratic system in the Greek city-states was not flawless. On one hand, the Greeks realised that the decision-abiders must be the decision-makers, as this would be helpful for avoiding problems with legislation and implementation; while on the other hand, they did not believe that individuals are equal by birth. Slaves, women and non-natives were systematically excluded from the rule-making process. Thus, the right and the privilege for making rules was reserved for only a few.

Unlike the Greeks, the contemporary democratic systems do not make exclusions on the basis of gender and birth. Over time, several changes were brought in the system, such as women are now voters, slavery is outlawed and non-natives can apply for citizenship under certain legal conditions. The efforts of inclusion have been a gradual and are still ongoing. Nevertheless, achieving these revolutionary changes at the institutional level was not easy or immediate. The struggle to achieve democratic parameters of equality and justice has been a constant battle. The downtrodden, underprivileged, outcastes have endured hardships to find and raise their voices against the odds.

Deliberations have been going on in various parts of the world concerning the establishment and promotion of democratic ideals in governance. India, being the largest democracy in the world at present, presents a ripe example for observing and understanding the nuances of these debates.

6.2 DEMOCRACY: CONCEPTUAL EVOLUTION OF ITS DEFINITION IN HISTORY

Democracy as a concept has evolved throughout historical. In 430 B.C. Pericles, one of the democratic leaders of Athens, associated democracy with toleration. Later, in the book *The Republic*, Plato described it as the government of free people with authority (p. 295), though he also regarded it as an “agreeable anarchic form of society” (p. 294). In his view, people are inconsistent in rational decision making and thus tend to be biased towards their personal preferences. His student and philosopher, Aristotle, believed that democracy grants authority to the majority, at the same time deploring it for being the government by the poor.

Later, new ideas connected with democracy emerged which symbolized changes at the ideological, social, economic, and political levels. Around the seventeenth century i.e., in the medieval period, Protestant-Reformation defended democracy on the assumption of equal

rights for all citizens. Further, countries like Britain, France, and America were influenced by the age of revolutionary movements from the late eighteenth till mid nineteenth century.

Britain, the first democracy of the modern world, observed the decline of the empire system. The surge of Industrial-Revolution changed the political discourse of that time in favour of the parliamentary democracy. There were two houses of parliament viz., the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where the former House was constituted by elected representatives. Whereas earlier, the political contests were dominated by the elites, as only property holders and aristocrats were able to participate in elections. Revolutions like Chartism opened the gate for the Reform Act of 1832, which extended the electoral franchise to larger masses of the working class. Gradually, the right to suffrage was given to women after the Civil War in Britain. Thus, each and every citizen was eventually authorized to have the power to vote.

During the Enlightenment period, English philosophers like Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) and John Locke in *Second Treatise of Government* (1681) argued for the political equality of citizens. Both of them discussed that a legitimate government establishes social contract among the people, and that a Civil Law based on such a social contract will bring peace and cooperation in an otherwise conflict-ridden society. Locke's account was based on an eternal *Law of Nature* governed by the God, according to which, individuals are born equal and must not refrain others from practicing their rights. He developed a theoretical ground for liberal democracy, in which, individuals have the right to resist governmental failures in granting liberty, sovereignty and right to private property.

Thomas Hobbes' social contract theory, however, presupposed that humans by nature are 'brutish' and that is why they cannot sustain together unless they are forcefully united by the State. Though John Locke did not specify violence as a human characteristic, yet he believed in social contract theory that supported a strong single body State with maximum power to ensure liberty and equality among people. The idea of a strong State and government in a democracy is problematic because the common public is not entrusted with the ultimate power of contribute towards the decision-making process.

Therefore, to reduce the centralization of power as suggested by John Locke's theory, French thinker Baron de Montesquieu argued for the separation of powers in a government. Montesquieu provided a detailed treatise on the theory of governance in his work, *In the Spirit of Laws* (1748). According to him, the Legislation, Execution, and Judiciary must function as structurally connected yet independently working bodies so that they do not interfere with each other's decision-making process and do not hold ultimate power to

manipulate the public. Division of power was introduced as an idea to build a transparent democratic system, in which, power could not be corrupted. Another French thinker, Jean Jacques Rousseau proposed in *The Social Contract And Discourses* (1763) the idea that direct participation of citizens can be possible through forming a “general-will.” This process is a significant way of achieving the common good in democracy, because the power will lie directly in the hands of the people. The Revolution of 1789 in France, inaugurated a much more radical tradition of democracy by expanding its definition to three important terms i.e., Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The principle of Sovereignty was emphasized to empower people. The ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen’ (1789) proclaimed that people must have access to their freedom to end injustice. In 1946, the fight for universal adult franchise was won.

Although Baron de Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau identified the issue of incompatibility within the concept of democracy and a strong State, yet they did not stress on the part that the government must be welfare-oriented. Thomas Paine, an American philosopher, who was named as the ‘father of welfare state’, encouraged the inclusion of this idea in the concept of democracy. He insisted in the *Rights of Man* (1791) that the people must have the right of welfare, which means, enhancing their lives through equal economic opportunities.

Before even the French Revolution took place, The United States of America advanced the ‘Declaration of Independence’ in 1776 after the Civil War. But slavery was not abandoned until the nineteenth century and women were not allowed to vote till the twentieth century. Renowned thinker, Benjamin Franklin helped draft the ‘American Declaration of Independence’ (1776) and advocated for the representative form of democracy. American leader Abraham Lincoln who participated in Civil War to abolish slavery became the sixteenth President of the country and declared democracy as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Later in India, during the struggle for Independence, M.K. Gandhi pointed out that the western idea of democracy stresses more on rights rather than duties. He did not discard rights, rather he understood that the rights must be preserved but duties should be given equal weightage. In his view, western theories of democracy were insufficient in bridging the gap between public, power, and the State. He acknowledged that humans have the potential to act selfishly but they are not born with that nature. He explained in *Sarvodaya* that humans are cooperative by nature and can attain the ability of ‘self-restraint’ (1954). This quality enables

them to perform their duties and responsibly sustain an equal social and political environment in a country.

Though various concepts of democracy have been given, yet they seemed to be difficult in practice in modern times because of the observed rise in highly populated nations-states. Unanimous decisions became a difficult task in democracy. But, despite criticisms and problems, democracy remains relevant primarily because of its underlying design that vests sovereignty in the people. Due to its inclusivity, irrespective of the gender, race, birth, wealth, caste, creed, religion etc., it is considered to be a highly valuable form of government among other characteristic institutions of modernity. It is manifested through public policies that reflect the will of people. Such a governance involves a collective and continuous endeavor with the aim of common welfare for all.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the definition of Democracy? Explain.

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6.3 THE BASIC INSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES AND IDEAS CONSTITUTING DEMOCRACY

In democracy, that the political power to choose the government and its policies lies with the public implies that the state should not be an alienated body. Democratic decision-making process creates a scope for people to advance their views and actions regarding the social and political system, where the state has a limited role in social and political governance. However, people cannot practice their power according to whims and subjective inclinations. The decisions of people and government can be enforced only through laws for the democratic functioning of a nation. Thus, citizens are required to exercise authority within the framework of norms. Accountability towards laws is a basic requirement for both the people and the chosen government in a democracy.

Apparently, the two phrases ‘rule of people’ and ‘rule of law’ seem to be conceptually contradictory to each other but they are not. The rule of law enables people to rule themselves

fairly, where nobody can take disadvantage of the other. People are autonomous and sovereign in a democracy, which implies that no one can interfere with another's rights. All are equal, each citizen deserves to have a say in governance, and laws are necessary to protect every citizen from infringements. Laws ensure that every citizen has freedom to raise their voice and practice the democratic ideals. These principles are part of a group of associated concepts such as follows:

6.3.1 Principles considered as the three pillars of democracy

6.3.1.1 Liberty

The Latin word 'Liber' means 'free'. This principle is related to freedom, power, and authority. G.D.H. Cole defines liberty in *Social Theory* (1920) as the atmosphere which empowers citizens to express their personality without the fear of external hindrances. Liberty means practicing one's agency in a congenially suitable ambiance. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) was the first work that explained the difference between two kinds of liberty viz., "liberty to" act freely and "liberty from" coercion. Later Isiah Berlin exclusively distinguished between *positive* and *negative liberty* in *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1969). The liberty that renders equal opportunities and rights to the individuals in a just society is called 'positive' by Isiah Berlin and that which protects them from arbitrary exercise of authority is called 'negative'.

Democratic institutions protect liberty through the individual rights of people. Rights constitute natural, social, ethical and legal principles assuring freedom. They are the entitlements to act or refrain from doing something and the freedom to remain in or avoid a certain state. Rights are divided into two categories: claim and liberty right. Claim right implies that a person, as a law abider, holds immunity from violation of power to act in a certain way. In other words, each person has a duty towards the right holder. Liberty rights provide access to the privilege of performing any chosen act.

6.3.1.2 Equality

The state of being equal means that the public must not face discrimination on any social, political and legal basis in a democracy. It does not assume sameness in every respect among all. They all need not be treated in an exact same manner because people are different. Every citizen deserves dignity and respect equally before the law. They can claim to participate in development of public opinion and exercise their political power equally, given that there is access to possible opportunities.

The substantive moral equality presumes that all humans have the natural capacity of rationality. This argument was supported by Enlightenment period philosophers like Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651), John Locke in *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690), Jean Jacques Rousseau in *A Discourse on Inequality* (1755), Immanuel Kant in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals in Practical Philosophy* (1785). Moral equality is argued to be the very foundation of egalitarianism by Will Kymlicka in *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (1990). The theory of distributive justice is also constructed on presumption of equality in terms of division of properties, goods and services. John Rawls proposes in *Theory of Justice* (1971) that people should be treated with *fairness* based on the ideal of equality. Citizens cannot have control on their race, colour, caste and social status. Therefore, these distributive criteria should not seize the assurance of justice.

6.3.1.3 Fraternity (Latin, *frāternitās* or *frāter*; French, *fraternité*)

This is an ethical and political ideal implying brotherhood, friendship, community or cooperation. Aristotle's in his *Politics* emphasised on friendship and community as an essential constituent for harmonious engagement in politics. People as responsible citizens and representatives in government need to work together. Hence, fraternity is required for cooperation while legislating, implementing and evaluating the laws. The joint endeavours strengthen the united functioning of a nation. The communitarian dimension of the democratic state and society is retained through fraternity. Carl Cohen, in his work *Democracy* (1971), maintains that fraternity enables people to consciously recognise their common enterprise and thus it is the fundamental ideal of a democratic system.

6.3.2 Foundational ideas underlying the concept of democracy

6.3.2.1 Sovereignty

The French word *souveraineté* traditionally denotes the idea of “a supreme power”. The modern meaning of this term was interpreted by Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes who suggested that laws cannot be monopolised by a single person. According to them, the power and authority must lie with a body of individuals. Though they envisioned an absolute sovereignty, today the power is distributed among various authorities and is best considered to be non-absolute. The government in a democracy aims to deconcentrate the power, so that it reaches to the bottom of system (which consists of remote areas and people residing in them). M.K. Gandhi's political conception of the ‘panchayat system’ also captured such a decentralisation.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his *Annihilation of Caste* (1979) specified internal and external limitations of sovereign authority. The internal one exists within the source of authority itself, that is to say, a sovereign power is not ruled by its laws, but the external limitation includes the scope of revolt against the powerful and thus becomes crucial in democracy because it encourages values of cultivating an equal platform for all regarding participation in governance.

6.3.2.2 Autonomy

The principle of *autonomy* means the right of ‘self-governance’ by having independent control over one’s decisions. The underlying belief is that people are rationally capable of making informed and unforced decisions. Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of rationality (1785) and John Stuart Mill’s (1859) utilitarian liberalism evaluate the relevance of an individual’s autonomy. Jürgen Habermas in “*Three Normative Models of Democracy*” (1994, p. 111) emphasized that individual autonomy can remain protected when other members of society are consulted and hence institutionalization of public deliberation will strengthen the democratic rights of people. M.K. Gandhi in *Sarvodaya* (1954) elucidates that democracy must be a decentralised system in which people are the architects of the government and its decision-making process. Such a social and political system depends on a moral self-rule of and by the people themselves.

Freedom of choices is necessary to practice autonomy in one’s actions, i.e., the right to choose between various possible decisions and to express them are crucial aspects of democratic functioning. An example of such autonomous behaviour is exhibited during the elections, when a person X can freely vote for any particular candidate of his/her choice from among the competing contenders.

6.3.2.3 Justice

The idea of justice was considered as one of the cardinal virtues by ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. John Rawls (1971) believed justice to be the first virtue of social institutions. In modern times, a democratic government is regarded as being just if it legislates, implements, and executes equal and fair distribution of the entitlements (including material wealth and ideals like discussed above). A state must not disrespect the law, its abiders, and/or their rights. Justice is intrinsically valuable for democracy especially because people who are entitled to the latter’s ideals will not remain sovereigns without the former. Lack of a just government will undermine people’s decision-making power in democracy. The Liberal theory of democracy emphasizes on freedom and equality among the people, in

which, the government can assist them towards the good way of life but cannot dictate any such conception.

However, there are doubts regarding the freedom-oriented theory of democracy, i.e., if the government follows Rawlsian idea of distributive fairness and heavily taxes rich to balance out wealth among others then isn't it depriving them from the right to live as per their choices? An answer to this query could be that freedom without equality is unjust for the people of a democratic country. The Government in a democracy cannot favour a few and let the others remain suffering economically. But this equality must not be developed forcefully. Instead, the third principle of 'fraternity' encourages people to understand their duty and contribute in building equality for all. M.K. Gandhi proposed in his 'Constructive Programme' (1941) that the theory of trusteeship entails that people are responsible for others and that they assist them in maintaining human dignity within a democratic system.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the difference between the negative and the positive conceptions of liberty in a democracy?

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6.4 DEMOCRACY AS A VALUE VS. DEMOCRACY AS A MECHANISM

The concept of democracy has engaged philosophers in debates regarding democracy for decades. An important debate analyses whether the concept of democracy can be viewed as a value or as a procedural mechanism. The question of legitimacy too arises in this context. Do democratic procedures legitimise its value constituting various principles like liberty, equality, and fraternity? Or, are these procedures just the institutionalised medium for implementing electoral practices?

Let us see how procedural mechanisms evolved in democracy. Since the nation states comprise of huge population in modern times and managing the decision-making process can be a difficult task, direct participation of people in the process is not always possible.

Therefore, procedural mechanisms in representative system were designed to solve the problem. In such a political arrangement, people are free to vote for and elect their representatives. The representatives are held accountable for the legislative and executive responsibilities on behalf of the people. Moreover, democracy in today's world constitutes mainly representative assemblies to run the administrative business. But people can show dissent and elect someone else if they are not satisfied with their work.

Ian Shapiro in his text *The Moral Foundations of Politics*, discusses that democracy is legitimised when its procedures like regular elections, collection of cumulative data on per capita income and competitions among parties are adequately performed (2003, p.149). Philosophers like him, emphasise on procedural mechanisms that determine the general pattern of successful democracy. Thus, they consider that studying the behavioural and structural approach predominates the concept of democracy. Based on this type of philosophy, political theorist like Rajni Kothari in *Context of Electoral Change in India General Elections 1967* analysed the data regarding the governmental procedural systems in India after Independence.

However, the mechanism-based concept of democracy ignores the possible unequal power equations within the social and political system of a country. Certain people can secure more power to themselves as compared to others because of their advantages. So, suppose a person A has a political lineage and another person B has no such reference, then A can exercise that advantage to his leverage over the other while competing as a candidate in elections. Therefore, Michel Foucault argues in *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings* that, power can manipulate the truth in political and social structures (1972-77, p. 133). The people with lesser education, wealth, social status, etc. may be exploited by the powerful. Hence, the principle of equality suffers due to the uneven power equation. Procedural methods presuppose that democracy holds an instrumental value of bringing in features such as a competitive environment among political leaders which minimizes power imbalances in politics.

Contrary to the procedural system, a few thinkers critique the mechanistic explanation of democracy. They believe that although mechanisms assist in conducting democratic procedures, yet democracy is more than the institutional settings of free and fair elections, universal adult franchise, political parties, constitution etc. Democracy is a value that is intrinsically significant because of its strong moral ground. Democracy's chief characteristic that accepts people as capable of making rules and expressing their interests in a fairest manner makes it morally superior to other political systems. Democracy has a constructive

role of political participation that keeps governments accountable, responsible and therefore in check. Although, people are entitled to different opinions about the varied meanings of good life, and procedures to achieve it in everybody's interests, yet, they can collectively pursue that goal in democracy. The foreground to achieve such a goal is that all are equal on social and political platforms. Democracy that caters to this principle rather than simply relying on procedural and mechanistic approach is understood to be substantive in nature.

D. Beetham (1993) believed that democracy must be located in the values grounded in social realities. Citizens need to be equal and power must not be concentrated in the hands of few. The decision making process and the mechanisms need to keep these considerations in centre while forming policies. However, this theory which is named as substantive, seems to be an ideal one that is difficult to achieve in practice. Similarly, communitarians support that democracy has its roots in social foundations. These foundations need to be nurtured by encouraging organic community life. In return these communities strengthen the values of democracy. Charles Taylor in *Degenerations of Democracy* (2022) emphasises the renewal of such communities to develop the scope for ideal like equality.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Do you think democracy is intrinsically valuable? Yes/No, explain why?

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6.5 DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

6.5.1 Representative Democracy

A Representative Democracy is an indirect type of democratic government. People elect candidates who represent them on their behalf. It can function within a parliamentary system as well as a presidential system of government. In United Kingdom and India, representative government works in lower house or Lok Sabha respectively. USA has the presidential form of government. Elected officials are designated with a political seat so that they can work for the people. Social contract theorists like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke argued in favour of the representative form of government, whereas Jean Jacques Rousseau critiqued representative government and proposed that 'general will' must be generated, so that people

are directly involved in decision making. Joseph A. Schumpeter believed that representative democracy is merely a leadership competition rather than being people's government and hence it is inadequate. The main challenges of this type of government include the possible manipulation of the electorate, that there can be a conflict of interests between the elected representatives and their constituents, as well as the possibility of the concentration of power in the hands of few.

6.5.2 Direct Democracy

The policy initiatives and decisions are made directly by the people in this form of government. The intermediaries like elected representatives are not necessary for political and social delegation of responsibilities. Thinkers like John Stuart Mill, G.D.H. Cole and Jean Jacques Rousseau commended this type of democracy. In India, M.K. Gandhi's theory of Self-Rule or 'Swaraj' explained through his concepts of 'Panchayat System', 'Constructive Programme' and 'Sarvodaya', provided an insight into the practice of direct democracy which stands firmly grounded on two basic moral principles of 'Truth and Non-Violence.'

There are semi-direct democracies as well in which representatives take the charge of administration but people are involved in legislation through 'referendums' and 'initiatives.'

There are two types of direct democracies: Participatory and Deliberative.

6.5.2.1 Participatory Democracy

The public participates in the process of polity because this type of government ensures that citizens are directly involved in decision making. Citizens Assembly and conventions are created for an efficient system. John Stuart Mill believes that participation has educative effect on citizens. People are the sovereign and they work collectively. They understand that they are mutually dependent on each other. He supported popular democratic government in which citizens are actively indulged in polity. Joel D. Wolfe states that individuals and groups can realistically achieve their interests while addressing the criticism that there may be self-interested members who have little incentives, skills and knowledge to participate in the decision-making process ("A Defense of Participatory democracy," 1985). Contemporary democratic theorists like Carol Pateman and Benjamin Barber also favour this kind of government.

6.5.2.2 Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democracy is also called discursive democracy because it adopts the procedure of consensus based decision-making. Apart from voting, deliberation about various issues is prioritized among citizens to practice self-governance. Public consultations with citizens is

crucial to keep a check on accountability of political power and its ability for governance. Joseph M. Bessette proposed this form of government in his book *Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government*. Deliberation does not merely mean aggregation of views and preferences. Deliberation implies that people are autonomous individuals sharing an equal platform to discuss and find solutions to their social and political issues. Aristotle had held that the notion of politics constitutes the deliberative element. Jürgen Habermas emphasised that communicative rationality within the public sphere paves the way for deliberative attempts in governance.

6.5.3 Social Democracy

The concept of democratic socialism has evolved into the idea of social democracy. The aim of this government is to establish socialist values through a democratic political processes. Such values include a well regulated market economy to avoid disparities and unequally divided class system. It is influenced by the socialist theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, though it is not as radical as them. The principle of equality is fundamental to the social democracy. The Welfare state is supported with the idea of redistribution of wealth and goods among citizens. Social democrats advocate a liberal representative system which delivers justice in the social and political arena. Social democracy is an amalgamation of socialism and democratic viewpoint. The State holds the power to resolve property disputes and reallocate them to underprivileged.

6.5.4 Cosmopolitan Democracy

The word cosmopolitan stands for the transnational identity. Therefore, the political theory which embraces the idea of global governance is called cosmopolitan democracy. It argues that social and political authorities cannot be limited to nation-states having a hierarchical form of authority. This form of government advocates decentralized and confederal governance with democratic values expanded across the world. Supranational organisations, like the European Union, United Nations, World Bank, World Trade etc., respond to the global challenges in economic, social and political terms. Political philosopher Jürgen Habermas and sociologist Ulrich Beck support this type of government. However, Robert Dahl doubts that democracy can possibly be broadened at the global level or be an inclusive mechanism for international organisations.

6.5.5 Egalitarian Democracy

The egalitarian democracy is grounded on three preconditions viz., a) freedoms and rights of the people must be protected equally in all social groups b) the power equation among

citizens must not lose its balance, c) resources must be accessible to individuals equally. Both direct and representative methods can be used to achieve such goals. This form of government asserts that democracy cannot be founded on inequalities inhibiting the exercise of social and political participation. The roots of such a democratic ideal can be traced to John Locke's idea of rights on private property, and Karl Marx's idea of equal social and political opportunities.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the different types of democracy?

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit discussed the conceptual evolution of democracy in the world history. Further, it proceeded to study the theoretical grounds for the development of democracy including the three basic principles and other foundational ideals that constitute it. It examined how democracy is considered to be an effective government for balancing the power equation in the social and political realm. It explored the question of whether democracy is a value or just a mechanism-oriented system. Distinctive types of democracy were briefly taken up for discussion to highlight the depth and versatility of this conception, showing how it has been applied and practiced in different ways all over the world. Democracy appears to be an institutional system prioritizing people's freedom of choices, with the underlying presupposition that the governed understand what is in their best interest and that they must participate in the decision-making process of policy making.

6.7 KEY WORDS

Equality : Thriving in an unbiased and non-discriminatory environment.

Fraternity : Cooperative endeavours towards the advancement of communal existence.

Democracy : The social and political system that enables the governed to participate in governance.

Liberty : Exercise of fear-free life.

Participation : Involvement in the decision-making process.

Sovereignty : Autonomous political agency.

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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Democracy as a concept has evolved through a rich historical background. Pericles was one of the democratic leaders of Athens, who associated democracy with toleration. Later, in the book *The Republic*, Plato described it as government of free people with authority but he feared that people could be irrational sometimes. His student, Aristotle believed that democracy grants authority to the majority and deplored it for being the government of the poor. Further in the enlightenment period, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke argued that whether poor or rich, people are by nature rational and that is why political equality of citizens must be ensured. However, Montesquieu criticized Hobbes' and Locke's theory as it advocates a powerful State. To ensure fair power distribution within democratic institutes, Montesquieu proposed that there should be division of power in the form of Legislation, Execution and Judiciary. Social contractarian, Jean Jacques Rousseau improved John Locke's theory and proposed that direct participation of citizens can shift the power from the State to the people. Building on the previous theories in Greece and Europe, American President Abraham Lincoln declared democracy as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In another part of the world, disagreeing with the European idea of democracy, Indian freedom fighter and thinker M.K. Gandhi emphasized 'self-governance,' where duties are prioritized over rights. Despite the difference, all these theorists from Greece to Europe to Asia, favoured democracy for its foundational definition that vests sovereignty in the people, and inclusivity irrespective of the gender, race, birth, wealth, caste, creed, religion etc. Such a governance involves a collective endeavor with the aim of common welfare for all.

Check Your Progress II

1. Isaiah Berlin exclusively distinguished between *positive* and *negative liberty* in *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1969). According to him, the liberty that renders equal opportunities and rights to the individuals in a just society is called 'positive.' The rights that protect them from arbitrary exercise of authority is called 'negative.'

Check Your Progress III

1. Yes, democracy is a value that is intrinsically significant because of its strong moral grounding. Democracy's chief characteristic accepts people as capable of making rules and expressing their interests in a fairest manner. This feature makes it morally superior to other political systems. Democracy has a constructive role of political participation that keeps governments accountable, responsible and therefore in check. Although, people are entitled to

different opinions about the varied meanings of the good life and the procedures to achieve it in everybody's interests, yet they can collectively pursue that goal in democracy. The foreground for achieving such a goal is that all are equal on social and political platforms. Democracy, that caters to this principle rather than simply relying on procedural and mechanistic approach, is understood to be substantive in nature.

Check Your Progress IV

1. There are five different types of democracy. They are as follows:

1. Representative Democracy: Indirect form of government in which people elect candidates to represent them on a political platform and make decisions on their behalf.
2. Direct Democracy: A form of government in which the people do not rely on intermediaries for legislation of policies. It has two kinds:
 - a) Participatory Democracy: Public is directly involved in the decision-making process.
 - b) Deliberative Democracy: Public consults collectively to formulate decisions.
3. Social Democracy: Political system that advocates balanced amalgamation of socialist ideas like welfare state, and democratic principles like equality and liberty.
4. Cosmopolitan Democracy: Government that embraces the idea of global or international democratic way of life.
5. Egalitarian Democracy: It ensures that equality is restored in terms of freedom of choice, power equation, and resources.

UNIT 7 COMMUNISM*

Structure

7.0 Objectives

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Life

7.3 Marx and Philosophy

7.4 Dialectic Materialism

7.5 Ideology

7.6 Class

7.7 Alienation

7.8 Exploitation

7.9 Communism and the *Communist Manifesto*

7.10 Rethinking Communism

7.11 Let Us Sum Up

7.12 Key Words

7.13 Further Readings and References

7.14 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are,

- To discuss communism and Marxism.
- To elaborate upon various concepts used in Marxism
- To give a critical assessment of Communism, in general and Marxism, in particular.

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

Communism is an amorphous term that encompasses a vast range of imagined utopias. The word itself originated with an eighteenth-century French aristocrat called Victor d' Hupay, who envisioned living in “communes” as an ideal form of social life. In its current usage “communism” refers to a political and economic ideology that is opposed to liberal democracy and capitalism because of an individualism that is integral to both. It offers to us a version of society that has been brought into existence through the struggles of the working class. The two thinkers who conceptualized the theoretical underpinnings of communism, the way it would unfold, and the historical conditions that would be required to bring it to fruition, were Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). In 1847, as members of the Communist League, an organization of German émigré workers, both Marx and Engels were commissioned to write a Communist Manifesto, which they did. The *Communist Manifesto*, a bible on communism, was published in 1848.

The unit begins by discussing briefly, the lives of Marx and Engels and their lifelong intellectual partnership. This would be followed by how Marx perceived philosophy, what were his “debts” or “borrowings” from thought on the Continent, and how did he critique the mainstream philosophical movements. The focus would then shift to the substantial part of this Unit, viz. the principal tenets of communism. The final section of the Unit would engage critically with the communist ideology.

7.2 LIFE

Marx was born to Jewish parents in Triar, Germany, into a family that was comfortable in its material endowments. He studied Law at the University of Bonn where he was, temporarily, mesmerized by romanticism. The following year saw him at the University of Berlin, debunking romanticism for Hegelianism. Not able to take up a career in the University because of a ban on the same by the Prussian government, Marx moved into journalism and, in 1842, assumed the editorship of *Rheinische Zeitung*. His writings centered on a vigorous critique of Christianity and Prussian autocracy. Such was the provocative nature of his writings, the government closed the paper, and Marx moved to France, a fertile ground for many sects of socialism. It was here that Marx became a doctrinally convinced communist, he put down his views in a series of writings known as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. Inspired by Feuerbach, he discerned the alienated nature of labor in a capitalist

society as against a communist society that facilitates a non-hierarchical interaction among human beings in cooperative production. In general, Marx studied the various modes of production, found capitalism the most reprehensible among these, and predicted the eventual triumph of communism. At this juncture Engels came into Marx's life, the two were to remain collaborators over their joint resolve to fight capitalism and bring about communism. Expelled from Paris in 1844, Marx moved to Brussels with Engels. Here he undertook an intensive study of history and elaborated his unique thesis about a materialist conception of history in a manuscript which was published posthumously as *German Ideology*. In 1849, hounded by the political authorities on account of his political writings, Marx sought refuge in London, it proved to be the final terminus for him. He incurred considerable hardship because he had six children, his writings as a foreign correspondent for a newspaper did not suffice. Finally, in 1869, Engels settled a substantial income on his companion, and Marx's situation eased. For the rest of his life, he devoted his energies to writing on political economy, capital, landed property, wage-labor, the State and the world market. He passed away in 1883.

Engels was born to a textile manufacturer in Westphalia in 1820. Though trained for a merchant's profession in Bremen, Engels developed literary ambitions, and like Marx, fell captive to Hegelianism. He moved to England in 1842 to work in his father's firm in Manchester. A couple of years of residing in the textile district sensitized him to the working class, he shed off his Hegelian idealism, and began believing that the potential for a revolutionary transformation lay in the labor class. Thus was born his alliance with Marx. For a time, he left his business to devote himself full time to political work with Marx in Brussels, Paris and Cologne. In 1850 he rejoined the family business and extended continuous financial assistance to the Marx family that was going through straitened circumstances.

As Marx's health declined Engels got more actively involved in the political work that he had been doing with Marx. The credit for expounding and disseminating the Marxist position to the general public goes to Engels. He also authored *Origin of the Family* and *Ludwig Feuerbach*; these publications cemented his reputation as a philosopher in his own right. After Marx's death Engels devoted himself to the onerous task of editing and publishing the second and third volumes of *Capital*. He died of cancer in 1895.

7.3 MARX AND PHILOSOPHY

The title of Marx's doctoral thesis was "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature." While he perceived Democritean atomistics as being no more than a physical theory, the Epicurean model excited him. An important aspect of Epicurus's atomic theory was the idea of the atom's random declination. This connoted for Epicurus the atom's negation of all motion and relation by which it is defined as a specific being by another being, thus ensuring its singularity. Marx, though attracted more to Epicurus than to Democritus, found in this view a concept of freedom that was abstract and acquired non dialectically. True freedom, for communism, is procured in an interpersonal context through *praxis*, and not by relinquishing the social. The communist will celebrate an equitable and just society, not *freedom from the world* which is implicit in Epicurean atomistics. Nonetheless, Epicurus had stimulated Marx to think in a certain fashion.

From Aristotle Marx inherited his conviction that the economic aspect of our life has a strong relationship to the political, and, by implication, the ethical. Enlightenment movement in Europe in the eighteenth century, with its attendant privileging of science, and the resultant materialism as a worldview, impacted Marx and Engels too. However, one must remember that there was no straight-forward, uncritical borrowing from philosophical traditions by communism, rather, each of the strands from other philosophical traditions, when it appears in communism, has been reappropriated in a materialist context.

In his young age Marx was attracted to an amorphous group called the Young Hegelians. It comprised some of the celebrated intellectuals in Germany, such as Bruno Bauer, Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Feuerbach. The Young Hegelians drew on Hegel's veneration of Reason and Freedom as the guiding forces of history. These young men believed that change was inevitable, hence they began arguing for political and social reforms. Feuerbach was the unchallenged leader of this group. Later, Marx and Engels left the group because they felt that there was an idealist trend in the thinking of the Young Hegelians. Marx himself perceived philosophy as an endeavor to offer rationalist accounts of the world, and the human experience of it. This remained a primordial philosophical project from the pre-Socratic Greeks to the key thinker of Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant. Kant gave a pivotal place to autonomy in his writings, perceiving it as *the* central philosophical concern. However, there were some serious flaws that a close reading of *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* disclosed. Hegel took over this incomplete task. He affirmed what came to be a famous remark, that the Real is structurally Rational. For Hegel, this structure is dialectical, which means that it evolves by a series of negations. The real, at any given time, can be

called a *thesis*. Gradually, because the real is always dynamic, there comes into being an *antithesis* of the thesis. The antithesis can be called a contradiction of the thesis. In this interplay of oppositions, we witness a third movement, called *synthesis*, in which both the thesis and the antithesis are incorporated into a higher unity.

From the vantage point of Marx, the Hegelian dialectics, though certainly a significant concept, however, remains confined to *ideas* at best. If freedom has to be won in the real world then we have to transition to real experience as *materialists*. What the Young Hegelians failed to accomplish is undertaken by Marx, who propounded an explicitly materialist conception of history, and the dialectical movement that characterizes all historical events. In the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), Marx himself observed that he developed a theory of action, a goal-directed material activity in which the subject and object of knowledge mutually constitute one another.

In the famous eleventh *Thesis on Feuerbach*, Marx observed, “the philosophers have so far only interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it.” Feuerbach looked upon religion as offering to humanity an idea of God that is completely immaterial. “God” indicates the myriad ways in which humans have perceived the world. He believed that this meaning can be unraveled only by undertaking a criticism of religion. While criticism does not effect a change in the world, it does help in reorienting one’s perspective to the subject being criticized. Feuerbach’s attempts to construct a philosophical anthropology inspired Marx, who turned from religion to the real world and human suffering. Suffering that, as observed by Marx, makes religion, the “opium of the people,” necessary.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Who are the philosophers that influenced Marx, either positively, or negatively?

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7.4 DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

A paramount precept of Marxist philosophy is Dialectical Materialism. It is a synthesis of a scientific materialism and Hegelian dialectics. The net result of this endeavor is a theory according to which reality comprises a unity of two contraries, mind and matter, and in which matter is foremost. The interaction between any contradictories generates a constant movement, and this is lent to history. In other words, history unravels as perpetual movement, it is never stagnant. Unlike Hegel's dialectic that charted the movement only among ideas, Marx employs dialectic in a materialist context.

At any given time, a society should be seen in terms of its economic organization, the other aspects of its structure are derivative from this highest-ranking factor. To put it simply, the legal and political system of a social body, its culture, prohibitions and injunctions, in other words, its dominant moral perceptions, can be best explicated through its economic organization. This view is called Historical Materialism.

According to Marx, a society is structured by three inter-related elements. These are as follows:

The productive forces of a society, which refer to the productively used material resources available at any given time, including natural resources, the labor that is employed to work on those resources, and the level of technological development that is going to impact on production. The productive forces get enlarged over time due to new discoveries of natural resources and improved technologies.

The relations of production, meaning thereby, the ownership of these resources as formally awarded by the law of the land. Put more simply, the property rights which are legally recognized over these productive forces.

“The Superstructure”—or, the other features of the political, moral, cultural and religious constituents of a society that serve to validate existing social relations. An example will help here. We know that feudalism in Europe produced a markedly hierarchized society in which the landed gentry repressed the serfs. Over a period of time, the serfs began small, individual enterprises of sorts as attempts to overcome their penury. These ventures were forerunners of capitalism. Additionally, the discovery of the “new world,” the sighting of recently developed trade routes to Africa and Asia and the increase in human personnel as potential labor, helped generate a capitalist economy. However, because of the capitalist mentality to manipulate the labor and exploit material resources, there was a perceived need for change, and socialism,

followed by communism, transpired. The point is that no economic organization was permanent, variations within it, small or major, resulted in changes all along in the superstructure.

7.5 IDEOLOGY

Ideology can be described as a set of beliefs that hold currency in a society because they buttress the ruling class. These beliefs may be philosophical, religious, moral or cultural in nature, the point is that they are held by the ruling class, for example, the capitalists here who possess the economic power. The capitalists begin believing that their wealth is a legitimate acquisition, and harbor the hallucination that their proposed self- enrichment and progress is actually beneficial to the class from which its wealth has been taken, namely, the labor. As Marx observes,

Morality, religion, metaphysics and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter along with their actual world, also their thinking and the product of their thinking.*

Here, it must be stressed that there is no straight-forward, mechanical correspondence between base and superstructure. In a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890, Engels makes this clear:

According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into a statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its consequences...political, legal, and philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogma—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.

7.6 CLASS

The concept of class has a centrality in communist theory though it did not receive a systematic exposition at the hands of either Marx or Engels. At the same time, both of these thinkers were fully aware of the class- character of capitalism, and, by implication, about the

* Marx, Karl, *The German Ideology*, in David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, Oxford University Press, 1977.

class struggles in a capitalist society. An oft-quoted remark in the *Communist Manifesto* is, ‘the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.’ Two primary classes in the capitalist society are the bourgeoisie, or the owners of the capital, and the proletariat, or the workers who are employed in the industry without any capital in their name, they sell their labor power. It is clear that the interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are opposed to each other. Thus is generated the famous class- struggle. The strength of the capitalists is their wealth, their control of political power, and their general dominion over key institutions of society, such as the media, schools, churches. Through the latter they propagate their power and engage in indoctrination of the masses. The power of the workers lies in their numerical strength, and a tacit fraternity with their fellow-workers which is the unintended consequence of working in the factories together, and identifying the commonalities in each other’s working conditions.

7.7 ALIENATION

Workers in a capitalist society do not own the means of production, which means, the raw materials, the machines, and the factories, and yet, the workers are engaged with each of these. These are the possessions of the capitalists, who “lend” them to such workers who sell their labor power in return for a wage. This inherent asymmetry between the two classes leads to alienation among the laboring class. The worker is alienated from his/her productive capacities since these are, in a sense, “pledged” to the capitalist. The conditions for the exercise of these capacities are formulated by the capitalist. Further, the worker is alienated from the product of his labor, he/she is not a part of decision-making regarding *what* is to be produced, or how it is to be distributed once it has been “produced.” Moreover, alienation is evidenced in the workers in a social sense as a cooperative society of a pre-capitalist era gives way to a competitive one under capitalism. Mutual suspicion replaces trust as workers endeavor to survive to the best of their abilities. Production under a capitalist economy has an overall dehumanizing effect on the workers as their creative potential gets compromised in an organization where “mass manufacture” is the need of the hour.

7.8 EXPLOITATION

It broadly means that we extract more from an interactive situation than is warranted, simply put, exploitation implies taking advantage. For instance, the capitalist seeks a large profit margin, and profit is income that remains after all costs of production, including the costs of

the materials and wages disbursed to the workers, have been settled. According to Marx, labor is the principal source of all value, this value exceeding the investment that the capitalist had made in any venture. Evidently, the profit-motive that drives the capitalist determines to a large extent the subsistent wages that are given to the workers, given the vast “army of the unemployed.” Exploitation is the outcome because of the vast difference in the income between the workers and the capitalists, the latter getting from production a disproportionately larger income than the workers. The singular intention of the capitalist class is to multiply its profits, and this is done by modernizing machines and increasing production, the requirements of the workers for safety at work, higher wages and job security for them, are patently overlooked.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Examine Marx’s views on religion, alienation and exploitation.

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7.9 COMMUNISM AND THE *COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*

Marx employed the term “communism” to connote a working-class movement in a capitalist society, as also the instantiation of a society as an outcome of this movement. Together with Engels he asserted in the *Communist Manifesto* that the Communists are not antagonistic to the working-class, but represent the interests of the proletariat as a whole. Socialism and communism appeared on the intellectual scene as synonyms in the second half of the nineteenth century. Marx and Engels tacitly consented to their movement being described as ‘Social Democratic’ at one point. However, Engels did observe that the latter term was inappropriate to apply to a party that explicitly advocated the absence of the entire state, including the state as democratic. To put it in clear perspective, let us say that while communism was a form of prescribed revolutionary action, which aimed at a violent overthrow of capitalism, socialism was, by contrast, a peaceful and constitutional movement of gradual reforms.

It was significant that Marx was cynical of the achievements of the French Revolution. He believed that political emancipation was incomplete without a complete overhaul of the material conditions of humanity at large. According to Marx, comprehensive freedom can be attained only by focusing on the sphere of production, distribution and exchange. He was averse to an understanding of human as a mere being, he opposed Aristotelian understanding of Man as Rational. Marx stressed the potential that was latent in *praxis*, the essential human trait for him lay in productive activity, rather than in mere contemplation. A world where labor was alienated was a world in which autonomy was undermined. The workers were enslaved by capitalism, an arrangement conceived by humans, but that has been transformed into a Frankenstein. Capitalism has become the sovereign that is the primary cause of alienation among the workers. Once the workers become conscious of the causative factors that have impoverished them, they resolve to overthrow this system. This is what is celebrated by communism, this revolutionary *praxis* by the proletariat that will actualize a world from which capitalism has been ejected.

In *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx writes, “Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.”* The “dictatorship” that Marx talked about does not refer to the non-judicious/ violent rule of either one monarch, or a small group of people. It is, rather, about the empowered working class, and their democratic rule. This power is provisional, one that is invoked to oversee the transition in a society from capitalism to communism. Unlike the bourgeoisie, the proletariat forms a numerical majority, and once they gain political power, they have to employ it to eliminate capitalism in its material and human aspects. The dictatorship of the proletariat lasts only till such time that we arrive at a communist society, one in which the state is rendered superfluous.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx has listed ten measures that the proletariat, upon its victory over the bourgeoisie, will immediately put into effect. They are as follows:

- 1) Abolition of property in land and application of all rents on land to public purposes: Marx believed that landless peasants must be collectivized on the estates of their former landlords. In other words, the communist society would transition from private property in land to property that is communally owned.

* Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program, Selected Writings II*, Moscow, 1951, p21.

2) A heavy progressive or graduated income tax: In an industrialized society there are bound to be inequalities of income because of the unequal skills that prevail in the labor class, and some specialization that exists among those skills. The resultant inequality of incomes is sought to be equalized by this measure.

3) Abolition of rights of inheritance: This principle aims to achieve wealth equality after those living have passed away. A level playing field in terms of material advantages and equality of opportunity was the guiding idea for Marx.

4) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels: The victory of the proletariat will often be challenged by some sections of the bourgeoisie, this measure is intended as a punishment for them.

5) Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly: Through the control of credit, the state can take an informed decision about which parts of the economy should be strengthened, and which ones wound up because of non-performance.

6) Centralization of communication and transport in the hands of the state: Free transport for the poor is an immediate implication of this principle.

7) Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state, the bringing in cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.

8) Equal liability of all to labor: Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture. The inability to work on account of age or disability apart, the privilege not to work has been abolished by this principle.

9) Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country. Marx observes that, "The abolition of the antagonism between town and country is one of the first conditions of communal life."^{*}

10) Free education for all children in public schools: Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc. Marx was clear that the educational system manifested in schools should be unpenetrated by either the

^{*} Marx and Engels, *German Ideology*, trans. Pascal, London, 1942, p.44.

government or the church, people themselves should formulate the guidelines about the running of the schools.

7.10 RETHINKING COMMUNISM

The key idea here is that social ownership of productive goods must replace privately owned property. Now, this solution that has been offered to combat the exploitation of the workers, has been criticized on the grounds that collectively owned assets will incapacitate the system because of its inefficiency. Moreover, there is no guarantee that a socially-owned capital will remove inequality since the majority in the aforementioned society may monopolize the greater share of resources for itself, leading to a deprivation of the minority. In a situation of a “level- playing field,” which is the claim of the Communist, disparate levels of wealth will come into existence as people do not exercise their choice in the same manner, and perceptions of risk and consumption- patterns differ among people. The view that the abolition of capitalism will annihilate all competition seems too far-fetched to command conviction.

In 1899, there appeared a criticism of Marx’s theory within Marxism, by Eduard Bernstein. His principal contention was that the predicted polarization of the classes was not taking place. This was due to elevated levels of living and the expansion of the middle class. This observation was subscribed to by many Marxists. Crucially, this perception also generated the study of non-class social movements, such as racism and feminism in relation to class conflict. A mention must be made of the post-modern critique of grand foundationalist theories that were an outcome of the Enlightenment, and that assume that our employment of reason enables us to discover universal truths about the world. Jean-Francois Lyotard was one such prominent thinker who cast a suspicion on all “metanarratives,” such as Kantianism, Hegelianism and Marxism. These philosophers have been teleological, and post-modernism is suspicious of any endeavor to apply overarching and normative propositions that ostensibly apply to persons regardless of their specificities, such as race, gender or caste.

Last, but most significant, is the post-modernist's dismantling of the traditional, Cartesian subject— rational, coherent and fully transparent. Such a subject is a presupposition of communism. Supported by psychoanalysis, there has been a progressive whittling away of a fully self-conscious subject, and a recognition of the Unconscious that is integral to a self, and that renders it therefore, as opaque. The class-subject of the communist theory, aiming at its self- transformation, becomes a chimera.

PONDER BOX-I

Are economic forces the only factors driving historical and social change?

What about racial and gender inequalities? Do the latter receive a satisfactory treatment at the hands of Marx and Engels

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss the salient features of communism.

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7.11 LET US SUM UP

We can summarize our discussion with the help of the following points,

- Communism refers to a political and economic ideology that is opposed to liberal democracy and capitalism because of an *individualism* that is integral to both these theories.
- Communism offers us a version of society that has been brought into existence through the struggles of the working class.
- Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) published the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, it was a programmatic statement on Communism. These two thinkers had a lifelong intellectual partnership.

- Early Greek philosophers, Kant, and Hegel were closely studied by Marx and Engels. Marx believed that philosophy had got mired in idealism, and, over the millennia had only interpreted the world. The point was, emphasized Marx, to *change* it.
- Communism inherits from Hegel the concept of the *dialectical method*, however, unlike Hegel, applies it to understand the progress in human history. A materialist outlook is fundamental to communism.
- According to communism, society is constituted by three inter-related elements: material and natural resources, worked upon by the laboring class, the ownership over the resources and the machines, and the factories, and, finally, those features of the political, moral, cultural and religious constituents of a society that serve to validate existing social relations.
- The moral, religious and metaphysical beliefs that hold currency in a society are not independent but a direct outcome of the material behavior of humans.
- The principal history of a society has to be understood through *class*. There are two major classes, the bourgeoisie, or the propertied class, and the proletariat, or the wage laborers who offer their services to the bourgeoisie or the capitalists.
- Rampant alienation among the workers, and their blatant exploitation by the owners of the capital are intrinsic to capitalism. The wages given to the labor class are subsistent wages, the major share of the profits being monopolized by the bourgeoisie.
- In a major departure from liberal egalitarianism (with its focus on the *individual*) Marx perceives exploitation and inequality as pertaining to the *group* of workers, being perpetrated by the capitalists as a group.
- The communist solution to these ills is to socialize the means of production. A working-class movement is required in order to abolish private property, bring in a provisional ‘dictatorship of the proletariat,’ and centralize credit in the hands of the state. As the situation all around improves after the demise of capitalism, a time will come when the state will erode. Communism has no need for a state.
- Communism has been perceived as offering too parochial a perspective to look at social ills, namely, through the economic lens. There are many major issues that afflict a society at any given time, such as race, gender, and caste. These require an independent analysis, to view them only through the economic criterion is to do them injustice.

7.12 KEY WORDS

Bourgeoisie : Engels described the bourgeoisie as ‘the class of the great capitalists who, in all developed countries, are now almost exclusively in possession of all the means of consumption, and of the raw materials and instruments necessary for their production.’

Capitalism : A term denoting a mode of production in which capital in its various forms is the principal means of production. Capital can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labor power and materials of production. Whatever the form, it is the private ownership of capital in the hands of a class.

Communism : an actual political movement of the working class in capitalist society, and as a form of society which the working class, through its struggle, would bring into existence.

Proletariat : Or, the working class. For Marx and Engels, the working class, engaged in a struggle with the bourgeoisie, was the political force which would accomplish the destruction of capitalism and a transition to socialism—‘the class to which the future belongs.’

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7.14 ANSWERS TO KNOW YOUR PROGRESS

Some Questions and Their Answers in an Outline

Check Your Progress I

1.

1. Marx wrote his doctoral thesis on Democritus and Epicurus. He perceived in Epicurus an anticipation of a political theory that celebrated freewill. However, Marx believed that the freedom being talked about was abstract. Freedom, for Marx, presupposes an interpersonal context, freedom can never connote an extrication from human society. It must be realized in this world itself. For some time, Marx was under the sway of Aristotle who, unlike the utilitarians, had stressed on functioning rather than on well-being. This impressed Marx who had a decided preference for *doing* rather than *being*.

2. Marx and Engels believed that philosophers have engaged in varying degrees of idealisms, so they are ineffective in bringing about an actual change in the world. We need *praxis* if we are to alter our oppressive social and political environments. Kant is a case in point.

3. Both Marx and Engels became members of a philosophical group called Young Hegelians who perceived themselves as heirs of the materialist tradition of Hegel, and, therefore, committed to carrying forward his project of human emancipation. Marx and Engels left this group because they believed that it was leaning towards idealism.

4. Hegel, whom Marx went on to criticize in several of his writings had a substantial influence on Marx. The notion of the dialectical method, which was applied to understand historical movement by Marx, was a direct inheritance from Hegel. Dialectical materialism, a key concept in communism, is a synthesis of scientific materialism and the dialectical method of Hegel. While Hegel employs this method to understand ideas, Marx deploys it to see how history moves forward.

Check Your Progress II

1.

1. Marx was immensely influenced by Feuerbach concerning his views on religion. According to Feuerbach, God is insubstantial and immaterial, it is a human projection of all that is not to be found in the humans. Simply put, God is an alienated image of a perfected human, in which the perfections are not to be found in the human beings themselves. Marx found in Feuerbach's critique of religion the beginnings of a philosophical anthropology.

2. Marx looked upon religion as an opiate of the masses, but he did not discount it. He observed, on the contrary, that "religion is the sigh of the oppressed creatures."

3. Marx remarked about the alienation of the worker from his labor since his employers alone the conditions under which he must work. He is alienated from his fellow-workers since the capitalist creates a competitive environment in which suspicion replaces affection. Capitalism focuses on growth, and growth is generated only through profits. Even though labor is the chief source of all value, it is the most unremunerated section of society. The profits are monopolized by the capitalist, the worker remains underpaid. Alienation and exploitation are intrinsic to capitalism.

Check Your Progress III

1.

1. First envisioned by Marx and Engels. In 1848, they published the *Communist Manifesto*, which is a programmatic statement on what communism is, and how it could to be realized in our society.

2. A communist society emerges from the ruins of a capitalist society.

3. Capitalism is an economic arrangement in a society that produces inequality in wealth and class. The two main classes which are evidenced in a capitalist economy are the bourgeoisie, or the owners of the capital, and the proletariat, comprising the workers who are employed by the capitalists in their factories in exchange for a wage.

4. Capitalism can be described as a political regime in which the political power rests in the hands of the capitalist, the mass of the workers is precluded from participating in the governance. The productive process present in the factories is inhuman, there is complete absence of any pro-worker legislation. Long hours of work, absence of safeguards at work and really low wages for the service rendered, are some of the problems that are present in an industry that is privately owned. Blatant exploitation of the labor class is in evidence.

5. The worker grows alienated from the product of his labor because of the specialization of labor.

6. A consciousness arises in the worker about his abysmal conditions of work and subsistent wages.

7. The task of changing this radically unequal world falls to the proletariat who has “nothing to lose but their chains.” A social revolution will overthrow the capitalist organization of society, and bring in the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

8. Under communism, there is a social ownership of the means of production. There is an amelioration of the working conditions inside the factories along with a shortening of the working-day. A high degree of cooperation and concern for everyone is a feature of communist society.



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