

**SOCIOLOGICAL  
FOUNDATION OF  
MARXISM:CLASS  
CONFLICT**

Karl Marx has been the most influential political philosopher and his work “Communist Manifesto” has been described by Laski as “one of the most outstanding political documents of all times”. Among others, the Marxist doctrine of class conflict and the theory of surplus value forms the core tenets of Marxism and its theory of social change.

# DOCTRINE OF CLASS CONFLICT

- ❖ According to Marx history of all hitherto existing societies has been the history of class struggle . Marx envisaged history as a succession of struggles between opposed classes for economic and political power,

- ❖ Except the primitive communist stage, all historical ages have been characterised by the antagonism between the dominant (haves or owners of means of production) and the dependent (have nots) classes.
- ❖ In the feudal system class conflict has been seen between lords and serfs, and in the capitalist system, the class conflict is between the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

- ❖ By virtue of ownership of means of production , the dominant class exploits the dependent class, which ultimately results into the class antagonism.
- ❖ Marx asserted that the inherent contradiction of conflicting classes of every epoch can be resolved only through the annihilation of exploiting classes.
- ❖ Class struggle between contending classes is the mechanism in which society progress from one stage to another in the course of its historical development.

- ❖ Marxian programme of action or social revolution is based on idea to put an end to the class struggle by establishing a classless communist society.
- ❖ It is in this context , the doctrine of class struggle represents the sociological foundation of Marxism.

# CRITICISM

- ⊠ Critics argued that Marx never emphasised on the “middle class” which is the most important class in contemporary society.
- ⊠ Critics are of the view that the idea of class conflict is harmful in so far it encourages hatred and violence.

# CONCEPT OF SURPLUS VALUE



- The concept of surplus value embodies the Marxist critique of capitalism.
- It is the concept used by Marx to demonstrate and explain the entire phenomenon of exploitation of the working class in the capitalist society.

# ❑ MEANING OF SURPLUS VALUE

- ❑ The Theory of Surplus Value is rooted in the Labour Theory of Value which means that value of a commodity depends on the amount of labour spent in producing it.
- ❑ According to Marx working class produce social commodity which are sold by the capitalists for more than what the workers receive as 'wages'. Thus the working class is not paid for the social commodities.

- ⊠ The difference between the value created by the working class and the actual value paid to them as wages constitute the surplus value..
- ⊠ Surplus value arises because some part of workers labour is not paid to them and is stolen by the capitalists as their profit, resulting in exploitation of proletariat.

# Concept of surplus value provides economic base of Marxism

- According to Marx it is only in class based societies that surplus value exists because the capitalist class exploits the proletariat for its own profit.
- As the surplus value increases, the workers get paid less and as such provide more power to capitalists to exploit.

⊠ With increase in surplus value, the purchasing power of the consumers decrease to such an extent that market for the factory produced goods shrinks affecting the final profits of the bourgeoisie , which Marx explained as “Capitalism digging its own grave”.

- ⊠ As the market shrinks only a few capitalists are able to survive the competition. The small capitalists now join the ranks of proletariats, widening the gulf between proletariats and capitalists which finally triggers the revolt in which proletariats emerge victorious.
- ⊠ Thus, Marx concept of surplus value provides economic base of Marxism.

# CRITICISM

- ❑ Various economists and political scholars argued that labour cannot be the sole factor of production. Other factors such as land, capital and organisations are also important.
- ❑ Popper says that Marx treated his doctrine of surplus value in a highly abstract way. So Marxian theory stands rejected.