

MARXISM HAS A HUMAN SHAPE AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Mr. Amol S. Ramdasi

Research Scholar,
Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University,
Aurangabad, Maharashtra 431001

Marxism has unquestionably been the most influential Intellectual Movement in the history of ideas. Its influence has been visible in the history of ideas. Its influence has been visible in the fields such as history, economics, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, geography, sociology, politics and literature. It studies the human problems threadbare and suggests the solutions as well. During the analysis of this theory, we can't aloof from the human angle and culture aspects. The questions of Marxism are the answers to be found in the cultural and human aspects of society in general.

As we know, Marx and Engels elucidated their ideas in 'Communist Manifesto' in 1848. Basically, they put forward a theory in Economics which explains the best about the mode of production, economic sub-structure, co-relations of forces of production and socio-cultural aspects as well. However, the analysis of society by Marx and Engels and the conditional production generally spilled over into analysis of culture. Their oeuvre is too large to be summarized even. And this is the significance of Marxism to later Marxists like Antonio Gramsci, Christopher Caudwell, Lucien Goldman, Terry Eagleton, Raymond Williams and many more. These critics made significant contribution in unfolding the theory of Marxism and in simplifying the process of Marxism. If we want to understand the Socio-Cultural aspects of Marxism, there is no option but to read the work done by these critics. Before commenting directly anything, it would be interesting to see what Marx has said. Here is Marx in his 'German Ideology [1845-46].

“The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material existence of man, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking and the real intercourse of man appear here as the direct efflux of men's material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of policies, laws, morality, religion and metaphysics of a people. Men are the products of their conceptions, ideas- real active men as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence and the existence of men is their actual life-progress. ----- Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life.”

Marx and Engels explained the most basic thing and the important one i.e. the Capitalist mode of production. This mode is different in different ages and the problems are also different.

However, the human behaviour and cultural affinity is an outcome of the nature of forces of production, role of domination, exploitation and the philosophy of the classes and masses as well. We can illustrate this by taking one example of forces of production. This type of production includes the factory method and intensive machine technology. This mode requires the large investments of capital to be made in plant, mines etc. It involves the extensive use of science and technology in developing more sophisticated process. The most important of social relations of production in a Capitalistic Society are as under:

A) Ownership/control of productive resources [bourgeoisie] and

B) The majority of the people who work for this production process selling their labour i.e. working class [proletariat]

The owner class and the controller class gets benefitted by this process and the and the exploitation of the working class is done in this process [this condition is flexible and assumes the shape according to the circumstances]. Marxists emphasize that there can be and typically a huge gulf between production for profit and production to meet ends. Profits are maximised by producing what richer people wanted and can paid for it. As a result, usually the urgent needs of the poorer people and the concerns of the environment are seriously neglected. From these basic relationships, Marx demonstrated the reality of the history in terms of Capitalism; the way in which a private ownership came to a revolutionary clash with the further development of society. Working class consciousness is then, for Marxists, the comprehending in struggle of the process through which the proletariat develops from its identity.

It will be very appropriate to discuss the key concepts of some Marxists thinkers for the better understanding of our assumption. Antonio Gramsci, the leading Marxist critic is well-known for his analysis of culture and society; hegemony and the ideology and division between state and civil society. According to him, Hegemony is the nexus of material and ideological instruments through which the dominant classes maintain their power. The Hegemony of the ruling/dominant class is maintained through coercion and consent. The material sphere is a 'structure' that is allied with a superstructure of ideas. These ideas are institutionalised in the civil society, the courts, laws, the bureaucracy and the religious and educational systems. Louis Althusser's 'Structural Marxism' has been a major influence on the twentieth century. He cites a term called 'Over-determination' and is able to modify the simplistic base- superstructure equation in Classical Marxism. He also contributed by his theory of Ideological State Apparatuses [ISA] and Repressive State Apparatuses [RSA].

Raymond Williams is the pioneer in modifying the principles of Marxism and creating his own identity as well. The culture which is said to be relied on the economic base may falsify. For instance, there are cultural practices which have no visible material base. In order to explain this, Williams developed the notion of 'Lags'. There are sometimes the lags in time which causes the distancing of the some aspects of culture [say, Philosophy] from economic activities.

Inferentially, we can take the help of what Williams had said about the function of Marxist theory. Here Williams is:

"I believe that the system of meanings and values which a Capitalist society has generated must be defeated in general and in detail by the most sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work. This is a cultural process which I have called a Long Revolution..... a genuine struggle which was a part of the necessary battles of democracy and of economic victory for the organized working class. Anything as deep as dominant structure of feeling is only changed by active new experience----

--- the task of a socialist movement will be one of feeling quite as much as one of fact and organization.”

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