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From this law, we move on the other very significant law of dialectical materialism known as the law of negation of the negation.

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) Name the laws of the dialectical materialism.

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.....  
.....

ii) Define quantitative change, in two lines.

.....  
.....

iii) Define qualitative change, in three lines.

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## 9.4 APPLICATION OF THE LAWS OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

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The principles or laws of dialectical materialism hold good for nature, world and society alike. When these laws are applied to the history of society they take the shape of historical materialism. (We have already studied in the previous units that human society according to Marx has gone through four major modes of production viz., Asiatic, Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist. Finally these successive forms of society would reach the stage of communism, as per the predictions of Marxian theory.)

Here we shall see how the laws of dialectical materialism are applied to understand the successive forms and modes of production and hence social change.

### 9.4.1 Primitive-Communal Form of Society

This was the first, the simplest and the lowest form of mode of production. During the period of this form of mode of production, appearance of improved and also new implements, such as bows and arrows and learning to make a fire were examples of quantitative changes in terms of the laws of dialectical materialism. Even beginning of cultivation and herding were examples of similar type of changes. The extremely low level relations of production were based on cooperation and mutual help due to common,

communal ownership of means of production. These relations were conditioned by the fact that people with their primitive tools could only collectively withstand the mighty forces of nature.

Even in primitive society the productive forces developed steadily. The tools were improved and skills were gradually accumulated. The most significant development was the transition to metal tools. With the growth of productivity the communal structure of society started breaking into families. Private property arose and the family started becoming the owner of the means of production. Here the contradiction between the communal relations of production and the potential forms of exploiting classes led to the qualitative change i.e. transition into ancient mode of production. There was conflict of opposites within the system which led to the negation of primitive-communal system. Consequently, a new stage of slavery appeared. The slavery system can be described as the negation of primitive communal system.

#### **9.4.2 Slave-Owning Society**

In this form of society the primitive equality gave way to social inequality and emergence of slave-owning classes and slaves. The forces of production underwent further quantitative changes. In the slave-owning society, the relations of production were based on the slave-owner's absolute ownership of both the means of production and the slaves themselves and their produce.

In this society, there existed the contradictions between slave-owners and slaves. When the mature conditions were reached the struggle of these contradictions led to the qualitative change i.e. the negation of slave-owning society by way of its transition into feudal society. The conflict of the opposites i.e. the slave-owners and slave culminated into violent slave revolts ultimately effecting the negation. We can say that the feudal system stands as an example of negation of negation. It means that feudal society can be seen as an example of negation of slave-owning society which itself is a negation of primitive-communal society.

#### **9.4.3 Feudal Society**

Slavery system was the first stage where relations of production were based on domination and exploitation by the slave-owner class of the slave class. This was the stage, where the relations of production saw qualitatively fundamental differences compared to previous stage. In feudal stage, the forces of production saw rapid quantitative change where for the first time inanimate sources of energy such as water and wind were tapped. The development of these productive forces was facilitated by the feudal relations of production. The feudal lords oppressed and exploited their serfs. However, towns began to emerge at this time. Trade, commerce and manufacture began to flourish. Many serfs ran away from the feudal estates to pursue a trade in the growing towns. The conflict of opposites within the feudal system namely, that of landless serfs against feudal lords, reached its maturity. The feudal system declined and its negation was the capitalist system.

### 9.4.4 Capitalist Society

Based on private capitalist ownership the capitalist relations of production facilitated tremendous growth of the productive forces. With this growth of productive forces, capitalist relations of production ceased to correspond to forces of production in feudal system. The most significant contradiction of the capitalist mode of production is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private capitalist form of appropriation. Production in capitalist society bears a strikingly pronounced social character. Many millions of workers are concentrated at large plants and take part in social production, while the fruits of their labour are appropriated by a small group of owners of the means of production. This is the basic economic contradiction of capitalism. This contradiction or conflict of opposites gives rise to economic crisis and unemployment, causes fierce class battles between the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class), in other words, quantitative changes. The working class would help bring about a socialist revolution. This revolution would, according to Marx abolish the capitalist production relations and usher in the new qualitative change i.e. the communist socio-economic formation.

The new communist socio-economic formation, as we have seen earlier, passes in its development through two phases, socialism and communism. Socialism does away with private ownership of the means of production. It establishes public ownership of means of production. In such a society the proletariat will jointly own means of production and distribute the produce according to the needs of people. This is the stage of dictatorship of proletariat, which will later on also, do away with the state apparatus leading to a stateless society. This stage of the stateless society will be possible in communism, where the dialectic finally unfolds itself, ushering in a social system which would be free of any contradictions within classes. According to the laws of dialectics contradictions will remain as this is the basis of development. Under communism there will be contradiction between Human Being and Nature, as in Primitive-Communism. The basic difference now is that the level of technology will be higher and Nature will be exploited more efficiently. Thus we see how the three laws of dialectics operate in Marx's interpretation of the history of society.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- i) Name the four modes of production.
  - (i) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) \_\_\_\_\_
- ii) Class antagonism reaches its climax and it leads to which of the following formations?
  - (a) Revolution
  - (b) Slavery
  - (c) Bourgeoisie
  - (d) Proletariat
- iii) Name the stage marked by classless society and mention its main characteristics.

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iv) Which stage follows socialism and what is its characteristic feature?  
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## 9.5 SOCIAL CHANGE AND REVOLUTION

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Let us now discuss the ideas of Marx on social change and revolution. In the *German Ideology* (1845-6), both Marx and Engels outlined their scheme of history. Here, the main idea was that based on a mode of production there was a succession of historical phases. Change from one phase to the next was viewed by them as a state of revolution brought about by conflicts between old institutions and new productive forces. It was only later on that both Marx and Engels devoted more time and studied English, French and American revolutions. They named them as bourgeois revolutions. Marx's hypothesis of bourgeois revolution has given us a perspective to look at social changes in Europe and America. But more than this, it has stimulated further research by scholars on this subject. Secondly, Marx spoke of another kind of revolution. It pertained to communism. Marx viewed communism as a sequel to capitalism. Communism, according to Marx, would wipe out all class divisions and therefore would allow for a fresh start with moral and social transformation. This was the vision both Marx and Engels carried in their minds for future society. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find that their vision has not come true and communism has not had its sway around the world. All the same Marx's ideas have influenced the nature of growth of capitalism. Tempered with socialist ideas it is now beginning to acquire a human face.

Marx's concept of socialist revolution presupposes an era of shift from capitalism to socialism. He explained bourgeois revolution as a defeat of the aristocracy. This defeat came at the end of a long period of growth of capitalism. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie is, on the other hand, only the first phase of the revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism. According to Marx the socialistic phase of revolution would not be without classes, occupational division of labour and market economy etc. It is only in the higher phase of revolution there would be distribution of goods to each according to his needs. This would be the phase of communism. Thus, change to communism was perceived by Marx as a series of steps to completely revolutionise the entire mode of production.

In fact, Marx conceived intensification of class antagonism in capitalism, because the new forces of production do not correspond to the relations of production. There will be increasing gap between the levels of distribution of gains between the two classes. This shall leave the have-nots extremely alienated and conscious of their class interests. The new forces of production in capitalism are capable of mass production and will dump heaps of prosperity at the feet of bourgeoisie without helping the lot of proletariat, who would continue to suffer from misery and poverty. This shall accentuate the class consciousness and hasten the maturation of the

conditions for socialist revolution. The socialist revolution according to Marx would be qualitatively different from all the revolutions of the past as it would for the first time, after the beginning of history of inequality and exploitation, usher in a stage of classless society with a hope for all members of society.

### Activity 2

It is well known that Marxist thought has influenced many Indian scholars, politicians, litterateurs and other thinkers, try to identify them by answering the following questions.

- i) Who am I? I wrote a novel which gave a critical description of the evolution of Hinduism. One of my novels was also serialised on Doordarshan in 1990.
- ii) Who am I? I was inspired by Marx's theory of historical materialism while writing in 1966 '*Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*'.
- iii) Who am I? I am known as 'the Indian theoretician of the British Communist Party.
- iv) Who am I? I am a communist party leader and a historian of Kerala.
- v) Who am I? I wrote a book on materialism and criticised Marxist historical theory. In 1920 I was sent to Tashkent to organise a training centre for Indian revolutionaries. I attended the second congress of the Communist International and drafted the colonial thesis adopted by the congress. My draft was modified by Lenin.

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## 9.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this concluding unit of the block, we studied Marx's most philosophically profound contribution of dialectics and social change. There was an introduction to the concept of dialectics followed by the fundamental laws of dialectics and change. This was followed by a discussion of the application of the laws of dialectical materialism in the successive modes of production and consequent social change in society. In this unit, we have therefore studied these successive forms of mode of production in the context of dialectical principles of Karl Marx. Finally, we discussed Marx's views on revolution and social change.

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## 9.7 KEY WORDS

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<b>Dialectics</b>	The conflict between two mutually opposite forces or tendencies.
<b>Dialectical Materialism</b>	It is the Marxian theory that seeks to explain everything in terms of change which is caused due to constant contradiction of mutually opposite forces found in matter.

<b>Quantitative Change</b>	All the changes, whereby different parts or aspects of an object become rearranged, increase or decrease while the object undergoing change retains its identity.
<b>Qualitative</b>	Appearance of new or disappearance of old is a qualitative change.
<b>Negation</b>	A new stage which is a product of a qualitative change and it is a progressive change to replace the old.
<b>Negation of Negation</b>	When something that came into existence as negation of the old, is in turn replaced by the new. It is a qualitative change.

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## 9.8 FURTHER READING

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Marx, Karl and Engels, F., ..... *Collected Works*. Vol. 6, Progress Publishers: Moscow

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## 9.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) It is the Marxian theory that seeks to explain everything in terms of change, which is caused due to constant contradiction of mutually opposite forces found in matter.
- ii) Law of transition of quantity to quality; law of negation of negation; law of unity and conflict of opposites.
- iii) Minor or major changes in any object whereby the object does not lose its identity.
- iv) Appearance of new or disappearance of old is a qualitative change.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) (i) Asiatic mode of production (ii) Ancient mode of production (iii) Feudal mode of production (iv) Capitalist mode of production.
- ii) (a)
- iii) Socialism. Two of its characteristics are (i) public ownership of means of production, (ii) the proletariat jointly own the means of production
- iv) Communism. It is characterised by a stateless society.



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