

Unit 5

Modernisation

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the concept of modernisation;
- critically discuss the contemporary theories of modernity; and
- explain how modernity is cross-linked with development.

5.1 Introduction

Through the four units of Block 1 we have already acquired a basic understanding of the concept and process of development and other related concepts. We also understood that there are varied perceptions about the concepts and process of development and that these perceptions are not static but keep on changing. Although we did refer to some of these perceptions in Block 1, in the present Block (Block II), we will be dealing with them in greater detail. Let us start with modernisation.

The concept of modernisation emerged as the response of the western social science to the many challenges faced by the Third World. With the process of political decolonisation following the Second World War, the new nations were in a hurry to launch massive programmes of economic development and technical change. The need for developing new paradigms to shape and order their development programme was strongly felt. Modernisation was one such formulation which held out considerable promise.

In this unit, we explore the concept of development in the context of modernisation. At the outset we discuss the notion of modernisation as a paradigm in sociological literature, particularly in the writings of Giddens. The purpose here is to develop an understanding of modernisation theory and then go on to its criticism and emergence of postmodernism as a paradigm. In the course of tracing this trajectory we explore the many dimensions of development that acquire importance at different stages.

5.2 Understanding Modernisation

Modernity may be understood as the common behavioral system that is historically associated with the urban, industrial, and literate and participant societies of Western Europe and North America. It is characterised by a rational and scientific world-view, growth and the ever increasing application of science and technology, which is coupled with the continuous adaptation of the institutions of society to the imperatives of the world-view and the emerging technological ethos.

Box 5.1: Concept of Modernity

Modernity involves the rise of modern society (secularised societies with an institutional separation of the state from civil society, a much greater degree of social and technical division of labour, and the formation of nation-states uniting cultural and political borders), a rationalistic epistemology, and an individualistic and objectivistic ontology" (Torfing 1999: 303).

A series of societal changes are implicit in the process of modernisation. Agrarian societies are characterised by the predominance of ascriptive, particularistic and diffused patterns; they have stable local groups and limited spatial mobility. Occupational differentiation is relatively simple and stable; and the stratification system is deferential and has a diffused impact. The modern industrial society is characterised by the predominance of universalistic, specific and achievement norms; a high degree of mobility; a developed occupational system relatively insulated from other social structures; a class system often based on achievement; and the presence of functionally specific, non-ascriptive structures and associations. Historically evolved institutions continuously adapt themselves to the changes dictated by the phenomenal increase in the human knowledge that has resulted from the control humanity has over its environment. Modernisation theory does not clearly spell out its distributive objectives. The emergence of an implicit egalitarian and participative ethos does, however, indicate the narrowing of social gaps and promotion of greater equality as desirable ends.

Modernisation, as a form of cultural response, involves attributes which are basically universalistic and evolutionary; they are pan-humanistic, trans-ethnic and non-ideological (Singh 1961). The essential attribute of modernisation is rationality. Rationality transforms thought processes at the level of the individual and in the process permeates the entire institutional framework of society. Events and situations are understood in terms of cause and effects. Strategies of action are determined by careful means-ends calculations. Rationality begins to characterise all forms of human interaction and enters into people's vision of a new future as well as into their strivings for the attainment of the objectives they set for themselves. The concomitant structural changes and value shifts bring about fundamental changes in the entire cultural ethos.

Box 5.2: Meaning of Rationality

The term rationality denotes thought and action which are conscious in accord with the rules of logic and empirical knowledge, where objectives are coherent, mutually consistent and achieved by the most appropriate means.

The conviction that rationality, or reason, is the distinctive characteristic of human beings has made it a central theme in western philosophy for over two thousand years. In so far as this has led to an over-estimation of the place and power of reason in human society, it has been criticised as the doctrine of rationalism.

Max Weber, especially in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1921, has been responsible for the most extensive use of the term in sociology. He classifies all action into four types : purposively rational, ('Zweckrational') action, where means are correctly chosen to obtain ends; value rational ('Wertrational') where action is in accord with conscious value standards; affectual; and traditional; the last two types being regarded as deviations from rational action" (Albrow 1968: 154).

In his essay *The Change to Change: Modernisation, Development, and Politics* Huntington (1976: 30-31), has identified the following characteristics of the modernisation process.

- i) Modernisation, and by implication development, is a revolutionary process. Efforts are made to transform rural agrarian cultures into urban industrial

cultures. This is what Alvin Toffler (1980) would describe as the move from the first wave to the second wave.

- ii) The process of both modernisation and development are complex and multidimensional with a series of cognitive, behavioral and institutional modifications and restructuring.
- iii) Both are systemic processes since variation in one dimension produces important co-variations in other dimensions.
- iv) They are global processes.
- v) They are lengthy processes.
- vi) Movement towards the goals of modernisation and development takes place through identifiable phases and sub-phases.
- vii) They are homogenising processes.
- viii) Except temporary breakdowns, both are irreversible processes.
- ix) They are progressive processes. In the long run they contribute to human well-being, both culturally and materially.

Reflection and Action 5.1

What do you understand by modernisation?

Modernisation theory evolved from two ideas about social change: the conception of traditional vs. modern societies, and positivism that viewed development as societal evolution in progressive stages of growth (Deutsch 1961; Rostow 1960). Concern with development emerged in the 1940s as a fallout of the process of decolonisation and reconstruction after the Second World War against the backdrop of the Cold War. Developing countries could evolve the traditional society by rationalising them through a linear process in the course of which they could “evolve” into becoming a country in a modern and developed society. The evolutionary theory of development identified the different stages, variables and processes through which a society develops. Positivist evolution implied that all societies would pass through the same set of stages from traditional to modern society that the western society had passed. These stages were: (i) the traditional society; (ii) preconditions for take-off; (iii) take-off; (iv) the drive to maturity; and (v) the age of high mass consumption. The progression of society through these stages of modernisation is better known as Rostow’s stage theory (for more details refer unit 2 of this course).

Modernisation theory took development into a more inter-disciplinary realm. It advocated social and institutional change to facilitate economic transformation. It was through theorisation on modernity that sociologists made their first foray into development studies.

Discussion on modernity in the present day centers on “multiple modernities.” The notion of multiple modernity expounded by Eisenstadt explains that modernity in the West has brought up consequences that have a wide bearing across the world. These consequences, however, have not resulted from the global transplanting of the western mode of modernity, but are modern situations of various types and characteristics in various non – western countries. Eisenstadt, (1996: 1-2) one of the major advocates of this idea, said, “The actual developments in modernising societies have refuted the homogenising and hegemonic assumptions of this western programme of modernity. While a general trend towards structural differentiation developed across a wide range of institutions in most of these societies in family life, economic and political structures, urbanisation, modern education, mass communication and individualistic orientation – the ways in which these arenas were defined and organised varied greatly, in different periods of their

development, giving rise to multiple institutional and ideological patterns". He thought that the best way of explaining modern society and the history of modernity is to regard it as "a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs".

Through the notion of multiple modernities Eisenstadt, however, does not mean only to propose a new description or narrative of the history of modernity. He argues that modernity and westernisation are not identical. His notion of multiple modernity is not only descriptive but also normative, though in a negative sense. Diffused benefits which leave a large section of humankind untouched, homogenisation in the face of rising ethnicity and pluralities of culture consciousness, the social cost and cultural erosion implicit in the process pose serious concerns.

Following Parsons's well-known "pattern variables", modernisation assumes that status is determined by achievement rather than ascriptive criteria; patterns of interaction are governed by universalistic rather than particularistic norms; expectations and obligations in the system of role relationship acquire greater specificity and replace the diffuse system that characterised the traditional order. Units of society tend to be more specialised and self-sufficient. There is increasing evidence of role differentiation, solidarity and integration. Eisenstadt (1996) suggested that modern society emerges as a consensual mass society and crystallises as a nation-state. Modernised societies operate through institutional structures that are capable of continuously absorbing the changes that are inherent in the process of modernisation. A series of organisations that are complex and differentiated, relatively self-sufficient and functionally specific seek to discharge functions in diverse and disparate fields. Simultaneously, the roles of family and kinship based organisations get more narrowly defined. Government and associated units - the bureaucracy, economic and financial institutions, armed forces and organisations dealing with specific functional areas such as education, health, housing, public transport and recreation assume increasingly important roles.

Box 5.3: Role of the Government in Modernisation

By and large, the government is vested with an important role in modernising the country and planning the economy. In the words of Wilber and Jameson (1988: 9),

"The government must intervene in the economy to offset the anti-development impact of the two types of obstacles to development. On the side of non-rational behaviour, the government can attempt to convince its citizens of the need for 'modernisation' while, at the same time, substituting its own entrepreneurial ability and knowledge to fill that vacuum. On the side of markets, the government can again offset the difficulties through economic planning. By developing a coherent overview of the economy through the various means at its disposal, the orthodox result of growth in income can be attained".

5.3 Giddens's Theory of Modernity

Recent social changes have led to debates over the very nature of the contemporary social world. There is a debate between those who continue to see contemporary society as a modern world and those who argue that a substantial change has taken place in recent years and that we have moved into a new, postmodern world. Most of the classical sociologists were engaged in an analysis and critique of modern society which is clear in the works of Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel. As we move into the 21st century, it is obvious that today's world is a very different place. The issue is whether the changes in the world are modest and continuous with those associated with modernity or are so dramatic and discontinuous that the contemporary world is better described by a new term, "postmodern."

A host of social changes are fundamentally altering our world, and traditional “class politics” and faith in progress are being replaced by “identity politics” and “new” social movements such as feminism, gay liberation, ecologism, ethnic revivalism, religious neofundamentalism” (Tucker Jr 1998: 126). These changes have brought with them a challenge to the “philosophical discourse of modernity”. The conceptual framework of social science and the historical legacy of Enlightenment rationality have been challenged by new postmodern knowledge, of which contends that reason is a form of illegitimate power that marginalises and excludes cultural vocabularies that do not conform to its categories.

Giddens said that in order to understand and conceptualise contemporary society, we need a new sociological theory capable of grasping its complexity. He describes the modern world as a “juggernaut”. Modernity in the form of a juggernaut is extremely dynamic, it is a “runaway world” with great leaps in the pace, scope and profoundness of change over prior systems (Ritzer 2000 : 424). Giddens defines modernity in terms of four basic institutions. The first is capitalism, characterised by commodity production, private ownership of capital, propertyless wage labor and a class system derived from these characteristics. The second is industrialism, which involves the use of inanimate power sources and machinery to produce goods. Industrialism is not restricted to the workplace, and it affects an array of other settings, such as “transportation, communication and domestic life” (Giddens 1990: 56). The third, is surveillance capacities which is defined as “the supervision of the activities of subject populations (mainly, but not exclusively) in the political sphere” (Ibid 1990: 8). The fourth is military power, or the control of the means of violence, including the industrialisation of war. It should be noted that at the macro level, Giddens focuses on the nation-state (rather than the more conventional sociological focus on society), which he sees as radically different from the type of community characteristic of pre-modern society.

According to Giddens, modernity is given dynamism by three essential aspects:

- i) **Time-space separation:** With modernisation, time was standardised. In large part, social interaction does not take place at the same time and in the same place. Relationships with those who are physically absent and increasingly distant become more and more likely. New technological measures also call for expansion of our space which means that we can be in the same space though not necessarily in the same locale. The modern rational organisation, for example, has been able to connect the local and the global in new ways. A modern company can function because it has been possible to break the time-space connection.
- ii) **Disembedding of social systems:** Earlier the institutions and actions of society were embedded in the local community. The condition has changed because social relations are lifted out of the local interaction context by disembedding mechanisms. Giddens distinguishes between two types of disembedding mechanisms which contribute to the development of modern institutions: i) symbolic tokens; and (ii) expert systems. Together these are called abstract systems. Money is an example of a symbolic token. It places time in a bracket as it functions as a means of credit. It represents a value that can be later used to purchase new goods. The standardised value allows transactions to be carried out without actually meeting, thus fracturing the notion of space. New patterns of interaction are created across time and space.

Expert systems are defined as, “systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organise large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today” (Ibid: 27). The most obvious expert systems involve professionals like lawyers and physicians. Consider the following example. In travel by bus one enters a large network of expert

systems including the construction of the bus, roads and the traffic control system. The bus can be taken without possessing knowledge of how these systems are constructed. One only needs the money for the ticket (another expert system). The expert systems also help to move social relations from one given context to another. Such a disembedding mechanism requires a time-space separation.

- iii) **Reflexivity of Modern society:** According to Giddens, reflexivity, the third contributing factor in society's profound process of transformation, is of two forms. The first is a general feature of all human action. The second type of reflexivity is unique to modernity. Modern society is experiencing a reflexivity at both the institutional and personal levels, and this is decisive for the production and change of modern systems and modern forms of social organisation. Giddens defines reflexivity as institutions' and individuals' regular and constant use of knowledge as the conditions for society's organisation and change. The firm undertakes market surveys in order to establish sales strategies; the state conducts censuses in order to establish the tax base. This increased reflexivity is made possible by the development of the network of mass communication. With an expansion of the time-space dimension, the social practices are constantly investigated and changed on the basis of newly acquired information. Today we reflect on tradition and act in accordance with it only if it can be legitimised via reflexivity.

To sum up, Giddens states that modernity's culture of incessant reflexivity creates a post-traditional social world. As modernity spreads throughout the globe, it encourages the rise of expert, abstract systems of knowledge, represented by the social and natural sciences. These expert systems encourage constant change and reflexivity, which separates time and space from their particular context, re-embedding them in new ones. He also views new social movements, centered on a new life politics, as integral to the texture of modern life. He rejects the claim of surpassed modernity and rejects most, if not all, tenets associated with postmodernism.

Reflection and Action 5.2

What are the main features of Giddens's theory of Modernity?

5.4 Decline of the Paradigm

The modernisation approach dominated the social science domain in the West and in several parts of the Third World for a decade and developed most between the late 1950s and the mid-1960s. Towards the end of the 1960s, however, it began to lose appeal. The gap between promise and performance of modernisation was too wide to escape attention. The absence of results generated mass apathy and anger and left the modernising elite confused. In the process, the concept of modernisation got demystified.

It was observed that the paradigm of modernisation sought to transfer technology without effecting necessary institutional changes. Imaginative and systematic efforts were to be directed towards institution building for accomplishing the highly specialised and differentiated tasks implicit in the process of modernisation. The notion of rationality, which was the cornerstone of modernisation paradigm, was itself ambiguous. It is now recognised that rationality can be of different kinds operating at different levels and in different contexts. The explanatory power of the paradigm was limited and the guidelines for action embodied in it were somewhat obscure. It was evasive on the vital issue of the poverty of the masses, especially in the less developed countries. The formulation did not take into account the qualitative changes in the problems that humanity faces. The prospects of modernisation and development against the backdrop of the realities of the contemporary world order were

not clear. Thus the global context of modernity remained unexamined. The notion of ceaseless and limitless modernisation has been challenged powerfully from other quarters, especially by environmentalists and conservationists. Non-renewable natural resources, on which the edifice of modernisation is built, are being rapidly depleted; and adequate, efficient and economic substitutes are not yet in sight. The consequences of environmental pollution and ecological imbalance are dangerous. Many vital questions regarding the desirability and possibility of modernisation remain unanswered. This arrests the search for meaningful alternatives and inhibits reflection and action aimed at appropriate solutions.

5.5 Postmodernism

A major challenge to sociological theories of modernity came from the theoretical position of postmodernism. Postmodernism denies any meaningful continuity in history. It is a new historical epoch that is supposed to have succeeded the modern era or modernity. As Habermas states, postmodernism is akin to "the anarchist wish to explode the continuum of history", demolishing theories of modernity in doing so (Tucker Jr. 1998: 131).

Giddens distinguishes between postmodernism and post-modernity. Postmodernism refers to the recent changes in architecture, literature, art, poetry while post-modernity refers to recent institutional changes in the social world. He finds the latter more important but does not believe that post-modernity theoretically captures the meaning of these social changes. In his view, the contemporary pervasiveness of reflexivity makes useless the distinction between modern and postmodern eras.

For some theorists postmodernism means that we have entered a new, postindustrial world, which problematises old assumptions, including ideals of social progress, the importance of class as a source of social identity and the very idea of a unified self. A new social world requires new knowledge. Postmodernism destabilises contemporary social theory. It values difference, as there are no absolute values that command our allegiance. Postmodernism critiques all limiting assumptions in social and political life, especially those based on rationality that seek to exclude multiple perspectives on the world. It is suspicious of any evolutionary theory and all centralising tendencies and celebrates a diversity of approaches to social life and decentralised social movements.

5.6 The Debate

Giddens shares many of these themes with contemporary sociological theorists such as Habermas, Touraine and Melucci. These authors attempt to grasp the distinctive culture of late modernity that is fragile, ever-changing and different from that which preceded it. Due to the worldwide spread of capitalism, the mass media and industrialism, contemporary society is a global society. More and more people realise that their identities and moral systems can no longer rely on taken-for-granted traditions. With the decline in tradition hence, there has been a rise in reflexivity (Giddens 1990).

These theorists view modernity as an unfinished project and construct a narrative of modernity which culminates in a reformed vision of rationality, universality and evolutionary development. For Giddens, as for these theorists, in the late modern era of highly differentiated and specialised Western societies, conflicts arise in the areas of information and communication. The line between public and private issues becomes blurred. Reflexivity relates self with society in ever changing ways.

Critiquing postmodernism, Giddens and other contemporary sociological theorists reconstruct modernity viewing it as internally complex. Like Weber, they are especially aware of the problems created by a rationality which destroys meaning. Like the postmodernists, they recognise that a major problem of modern culture has been the destructive potential of a rationality that is not sensitive to social and natural contexts. Such a concept of rationality also undermines the conditions of self-government, largely by translating social questions into issues of technical, undemocratic policy.

Habermas is the strongest defender of the legacy of modernity against the postmodern criticisms of it. He sees in modernity tendencies towards rampant instrumental rationality that destroys alternative, more democratic visions of social life. Like Parsons, he states that a universalistic rationality is a major achievement of modernity, which must integrate an increasingly differentiated and complex modern society. Rise of different types of reasoning constitute the key feature of the modern world. Modernity cannot rely on traditional justifications of rule and action and must ground its criteria for evaluation within its own history. In the absence of tradition, communicative rationality takes on the ethical role of coordinating diverse social actions. He sees the culture of modernity embodied in communicative rationality as concerned with establishing autonomy and justice. For Habermas, this communicative context informs the acquisition of knowledge, the transmission of culture, the formation of personal identity and more general processes of social integration.

He further contends that new social movements provide avenues for the development of new values and identities. Arising in a post-traditional and post-industrial society, new social movements represent the main vehicle by which a non-instrumental, communicative rationality can be brought into public life. New social movements associated with late modernity, such as feminism and environmentalism, have fundamentally changed the nature of politics. In sum, Habermas contends that modernity establishes inseparable links between rationality and freedom as demonstrated in the great modernist accomplishments such as democracy and human rights. New social movements are expressing and attempting to implement these achievements in new ways. His championing of the legacy of modernity distances him from the postmodernists.

Like Touraine and Melucci, Giddens theorises a reformed view of modernity that is much more critical than that of Habermas. They argue that new social movements raise novel issues of cultural identity in a global context marked by rapid increases in communication technologies and recognition of the importance of cultural differences. Melucci and Touraine contend that modern societies exist in a post-industrial context, and cultural strife between diverse groups has replaced class struggles over the distribution of resources as central social conflicts. Modern societies are in chronic combat over the possession and very definition of cultural codes and information. New social movements are the primary agents and carriers of innovative discourses and practices in the struggles of the late modern era.

These theorists critically engage the postmodern persuasion, arguing that modernity has not been superseded but remains an unfinished project, as modernist beliefs and practices are still central to contemporary societies. They believe that rational reflexivity has replaced tradition as the main form of social solidarity in the modern world.

Giddens differs from these theorists in that he takes tradition more seriously. In the new distinctively modern-risk society, people draw on expertise, re-evaluate it in terms of their own particular cultural context and then utilise this knowledge to evaluate their everyday actions. He argues that modernity excludes and marginalises particular groups of people who do not fit into

these categories. He agrees with the postmodern claims that the foundations of knowledge are fragile and there is no inherent progress in history, and the new social movements are raising qualitatively new issues about social life. He believes that personal identity has also become less firm and more fragmented in the modern world. However Giddens disagrees with many postmodern tenets. He prefers the idea of late modernity to that of post-modernity. "People do not live in fragmented, unconnected lives; they still construct narratives about their selves, but they do so in 'post-traditional' conditions" (Tucker Jr. 1998: 143).

5.7 Modernisation and Globalisation

The intellectual portrayal of modernisation was, as a political and economic proposition, coming to the fore following World War II. It equated the intellectual, cultural and technological advance of victorious nations as something that needed to be emulated by the "poorer less civilised" people of the world. This is connected to the process of "modernity" which was a project of global conquest - originating in Europe. By Globalisation, we mean the profound reorganisation of manufacturing, trade and services within a globally encompassing system. It points to a phenomena identified interchangeably as a process, a historical event or the end result of shifting "ethno - techno, media - finance and ideo - scapes" (Appadurai 1996: 32). Accordingly, it replaces the unavailing verb, modernisation, because modernists and their opponents depended on model dualistic analysis such as "centre periphery", "north - south", "First World - Third World", "developed - developing", etc.

The concept of modernisation was very much tied to the idea of recreating the world in the image of America and Western European principles and culture. More recently, discussions on Globalisation describe a process by which the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and unified, subject to homogenous and uniform processes of cultural unification. Characters such as Michael Jackson or the corporate logos of McDonald and Nike are examples of global awareness.

5.8 Conclusion

The similarities between classical modernisation studies and new modernisation studies can be observed in the constancy of the research focus on Third world Development.

There are important distinctions between the classical studies and the new studies of the modernisation school. For example, in the classical approach, tradition is seen as an obstacle to development whereas in the new approach tradition is an additive factor of development. With regard to methodology, the classical approach applies a theoretical construction with a high level of abstraction; the new approach applies concrete case studies given in a historical context. Regarding the direction of development, the classical perspective uses a unidirectional path which tends towards the United States and European model, the new perspective prefers a multidirectional path of development. Finally, the classical perspective demonstrates a relative neglect of the external factors and conflict. This stands out in sharp contrast to the greater attention to the external factors and conflicts bestowed by the new approach. Development, in the changed context, poses a challenge and, at the same time, presents an opportunity.

This unit begins with an attempt to understand the process of modernisation and the evolution of modernisation theories. The unit goes on discussing how the theoretical position of post-modernism pose challenge to the sociological theories of modernity. We also saw how Giddens and other advocates of

modernisation theories defend their theories and why they preferred the idea of late-modernity to that of post-modernity. The unit sums up with an analysis of interrelationship between modernisation and globalisation.

5.9 Further Reading

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Unit 6

Liberal Perspective on Development

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the concept of liberalisation;
- explain the pre-conditions for the rise of the liberal state; and
- critically discuss the liberal perspective and the emergence of neo-liberalism.

6.1 Introduction

With roots in European Enlightenment, liberalism developed in the 19th century in the West. In the present day, liberalism is widely regarded as one of the most influential modern political ideologies. The term was first used by Spanish, French and English writers with a negative connotation. It was aggressively used to refer to the people with radical or progressive opinion. It soon lost its negative meaning and became a respectable political label. Most people would now like to be called “liberal”, which implies, “to be open-minded”, “to be generous, and tolerant”, “prepared to sacrifice self-interest for the public good”, “concerned to approach every issue from an impartial and rational standpoint”, and “not the least influenced by prejudice and superstition”. Such people oppose authoritarian laws and practices that would put particular social groups in a situation of disadvantage. People with a liberal outlook support the right to free speech, the right to picket and protest, and the rights of women, homosexuals, prisoners, refugees, and the rights of all marginal communities.

In this unit we seek to understand the concept of development from the liberal perspective. Beginning with the basic ideology of liberalism and the extent of power intervention of the state in terms of economic and political control over business and the role of the state in a liberal economy, we go on to developing a critique of the liberal perspective and the emergence of neo-liberalism. We conclude with evolving a framework for comprehending development from the liberal perspective.

6.2 Liberalism as an Ideology

Liberalism has provided a unique perspective on social, economic and political development. It set out an ideology that has shaped history, and in recent times has made a major come back in the form of neo-liberalism to influence the future course of human development. Human history, over the past two

hundred years or so, has been, in a sense, one of struggle between supporters of economic liberalism (committed to the principle of the 'self regulating market') and the defenders of 'society' (who have sought to regulate the way in which labour is engaged with capital, the exploitation of nature, and the money market). The struggle has proliferated in the political and ideological domains. Each of the two conflicting perspectives has come out with definite concepts, theories and ideologies, and techniques to realise the respective visions of society. The struggle over the virtues of a 'flexible' labour market and the threats which they pose to livelihoods continues. The leading perspectives on development, namely the Marxist and the Liberal, differ on the interpretation of social inequality and the methods to secure justice for the victims of unequal economic, social and political arrangements. The argument has built on the issue of the scope of market prices. More specifically, the question of relevance here is whether the market forces should be allowed a free reign or there should be a regulation on them. The difference is whether development should be reduced to growth in productivity and per capita income or should it be perceived in a broader perspective in terms of empowering the common people and securing distributive justice for them.

Ideologically, liberalism has stood out in opposition to the socialist ideals over the past two centuries. It offers us a distinctive vision of society, about freedom and free competition in the field of economic entrepreneurship, and of the role of the state in the control of production and in the promotion of free citizenship.

As a political ideology, liberalism is opposed to any form of political absolutism, be it monarchy, feudalism, militarism or communitarian. It stands for a social and political atmosphere in which authoritarian demands are resisted and the fundamental rights of the individuals and groups, such as the right to private property, free exercise of religion, speech and association, are promoted.

The philosophical foundation of classical liberalism was shaped in the writings of David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, and John Stuart Mill. These thinkers constructed the social contract theory based on the idea that human beings are guided by enlightened self-interest, rationality, and free choice, and the idea of free development of the individual self in a free atmosphere with minimum of state control. Liberalism was the guiding principle enshrined in the economic doctrine of *laissez-faire*, which means free promotion of entrepreneurship in production and trade, and in the social and political doctrines of liberty and democracy.

6.3 Streams of Liberal Thought

The liberal school of thought in the economic, social, and political fields is not monolithic; rather there are divergent streams of liberal thoughts, particularly on the question of individual freedom vis-à-vis the state.

Box 6.1: Major Doctrines Influencing Liberalism

"Liberalism never constituted a unified and consistent doctrine. It has, rather, been an amalgam of different doctrines, including the *Recht Staat*, the defense of individual freedom and basic rights, the recognition of pluralism, representative government, the separation of powers, the limitation of the role of the state, rationalistic individualism, and capitalist market economy" (Torfing 1999: 249).

Some liberals put more emphasis on economic freedom and allow greater government intervention in moral life (the political philosophy embedded in Thatcherism and Reaganism is taken as an example in this line) while others uphold the idea of minimum state intervention in all walks of life. The latter theoretical position is often known as libertarianism.

Libertarianism has its roots in the writings of the seventeenth-century English political philosopher John Locke, who emphasised the priority of individual rights to life, liberty and property, and the elimination of coercive intervention by the state, which is taken as the prime violator of liberty. Above all, individual liberty is an identifiable marker of conservative thought (the guiding ideology of the British Conservative and American Liberal parties). American philosopher Robert Nozick (1974) and the economist Friedrich Hayek are among the modern protagonists of libertarianism in their respective fields. Nozick argues in favour of reducing the role of the state to a mere “protection agency” for the citizens. Hayek (1944, 1982), holds that the ideal economic and political arrangement and interpersonal relationships are modeled on market exchanges, the role of the government is reduced to maintaining order and providing public services that involve formidable initial capital services. The libertarian ideals have found strongest support in the United States wherein conservatism and neo-liberalism are easily blended. In essence, libertarianism calls for human action not guided by any form of determinism.

Liberal beliefs often contradict those of socialism and conservatism. Tom Paine’s radical liberalism, based on the idea of a minimum government involvement in the economy, is close to socialism; whereas the overriding concern of other liberals to uphold the rights of private property draws them close to conservatism. The early liberalism of Paine and others was progressive because it aimed to liberate individuals from traditional political constraints. They wanted government to be confined, in John Locke’s words, to the role of an ‘umpire’, which would impartially safeguard individual freedom and rights. It was thus believed that citizens would be offered maximum opportunity to shape their own future.

Liberalism continued to be associated with progressive social trends even after the erosion of the power of the aristocracy. However, from the end of the nineteenth century, liberals began to encourage the growth of government initiatives. Liberals now argued that individual freedom was diminished by poverty and unemployment which stemmed from uncontrolled *laissez faire* capitalism. Hence the need for the government to assume a larger role in social affairs, and in the elimination of economic constraints upon personal liberty.

Liberals always believed that doing away with political and economic constraints on individual behaviour would lead to moral improvement throughout society. Individual liberation, according to this viewpoint, is the key to social progress. Individuals who lead a free and independent existence are likely to acquire virtues such as self-reliance, prudence, tolerance and respect for the rights of others. These virtues are often described as ‘bourgeois’ since they are typically displayed by economically successful groups in capitalist society.

Liberalism has been allied with the progress of the capitalist world. Its subscribers seek to remove restraints upon the capacity of individuals to participate economic competition. They have argued that the economic independence associated with capitalist regimes also breeds a sense of moral independence. Liberals, in this sense, can be said to favour a process of “embourgeoisment” in which everyone will eventually adopt attitudes compatible with a competitive economy.

The history of liberalism reveals a succession of strategies to extend rights which, it is judged, will secure the economic and moral independence of individuals. The different versions of liberalism foresee a one-class society consisting of self-governing citizens. The liberal ideal of a community is where despite inequalities of wealth, self-discipline and mutual respect are upheld.

6.4 Evolution of Liberal State

In the nineteenth century, commercial interests in England were specifically geared to limit the powers of the state and to establish parameters within which business activity could remain more or less untrammelled. The state proposed 'cooperation' and started controlling the movement of capital for the 'public interest'. The liberal state at this stage was not a *laissez-faire* state but one in which interventionism was required to create or maintain the conditions for private accumulation of wealth. It also demanded the involvement of the bourgeoisie in the public sphere.

The extension of capitalism tended to reduce earlier mercantilist notions of state economic activity and the political control of trade. Instead, public action on economic matters consisted largely of the construction and management of legal, fiscal, monetary and financial frameworks for the autonomous self-regulating operations of the allocative mechanisms constituted by the markets of land, capital and labour (Poggi 1978: 115). The liberal state thus played an important role both in the economy and in social life. Wolfe (1997) suggests, "the accumulative state's role during this period of expansion was to: define the broadest parameters of economic activity, preserve discipline in order to increase production, adjust macro-economic conditions, provide direct subsidies to private industrialists, and to fight wars". Moreover, the new bourgeoisie in Britain were quick to turn to Parliament to reform and unify the existing localised forms of social control which did not fit well with the requirements of an emerging capitalist society.

Notions of equality and civic rights, despite the thrust on individualism ingrained in liberalism, paved the way for increased demands and participation of the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised. Social and political demands from an increasingly large group of the population inevitably confronted business with a potential threat in a political system where government power was gained by voting strength. In the final analysis, however, democratisation did not come in the way of the advancement of the capitalist economy but it helped integration of the forces (the working class in particular) which, according to Marx, should have forced the disintegration of the capitalist order.

Throughout the nineteenth century the extension of formal liberal rights in conjunction with deepening social disparities broadened the debate on the question of equality. In several European countries the rights to association and trade unionism were extended to the working class in order to broaden the base of social justice, although amidst opposition from the proponents of *laissez-faire*. The extension of citizenship to the lower classes was given the special meaning that as citizens the members of these classes were entitled to a certain standard of well-being in return for which they were only obliged to discharge the ordinary duties of citizenship (Bendix 1964). Such developments marked a move away from the radical individualism of the liberal state. The development of the modern, increasingly powerful state during the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, had induced conflicting responses from businessmen over the extent to which the state should actively secure the basis of successful capital accumulation through increased economic interventionism in the market. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the economy did not seem to be fully operating on the model enshrined in the paradigm of liberalism. Firms were larger, production was concentrated, liability was more limited, and the functions of corporate ownership and management became more distinctive, particularly as demands for protection of home and markets that were stimulated by foreign competition increased. The First World War shaped capitalism in a way that differed considerably from the liberal design. In England, for example, by the end of the war the state combined and controlled the railways, guaranteed profit margins and had assumed a major role for insurance. It was also the largest employer and

produced the major part of national output. In the period between the two World Wars cooperation between the state and the business interests was the dominant guiding principle of social management. After the Second World War there was a clear shift, both in Europe and America, towards the welfare state.

6.5 Addressing Social Inequality

Liberal thinkers do not accept that inequality is inherent in society, rather it is treated as socially constructed. Inequality is, therefore, liable to be addressed and removed. Since individuals are born free and equal, ideally the state ought to be run with the consent of those on whom its authority rests. The liberals, along with the conservatives, nurse a strong distaste for socialist egalitarianism. Both favour a system of free economic competition in which individual talent and enterprise are appropriately rewarded. Rewards, according to them, should be equal because people strive with the same degree of skill and effort to provide for their material comforts. They dismiss the socialist ideal that individuals should be rewarded on the basis of need rather than merit as unjust. Neither the conservatives nor the liberals are prepared to sacrifice liberty for the sake of social equality. The liberal position on the question of inequality may be presented in the following words:

The liberal society cannot be an egalitarian society, since freedom includes the freedom to make headway or to fall back, and Liberals cannot agree to resist the energetic in the interest of the leisurely. On the contrary we should try to ensure equality of opportunity, accepting the implication that some who seize opportunities will go further and further than those who do not (Watson 1957: 192).

However, modern liberals share the necessity of maintaining some redistributive justice with the socialists. They concede that gross inequalities could impair the freedom of the people who are condemned to life of hardship and poverty. For this reason they endorse a programme of social welfare. They acknowledge that the welfare of the people is actually a form of liberty in as much as it liberates men from social conditions which narrow their choices and thwart their self-development. Thus, according to them, some attempt by the government to create a more equal society may safeguard rather than undermine individual freedom. While addressing the question of inequality, the liberals seem to be in a dilemma since they want both individual freedom and some element of state control to ensure distributive justice, which in turn is taken as a precondition to liberty.

6.6 The Welfare State

The role of the state in a liberal economy assumed a new dimension after the wide circulation of the influential writings of the English economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946). Keynes critiqued the liberal idea on the ground that an unregulated economy would tend to move towards full employment and thus would ensure social equilibrium or stability. Shifting from the *laissez-faire* argument of "zero role for state", Keynes (1936) argued that equilibrium could be established before reaching that point, i.e., a society can achieve full employment by stimulating aggregate demand with active state intervention. In case full employment results in inflation, the state should act to reduce aggregate demand. Government intervention, in both cases, should be in terms of controlling tax (fiscal) policy, government expenditure, and monetary policy (changes in interest rates and the supply of credit). The great depression of the 1930s ravaged the capitalist world and in a desperate attempt to come out of depression it searched for new ways of how state powers could be conceived and deployed (Harvey 1989: 128). Keynesian economics assigned an important role to the state of managing demand and securing the conditions

of mass consumption. The “new conception” was put into practice by new welfare states. The establishment of these welfare states depended upon the achievement, that followed years of struggle, for balance of power between the large-scale corporate sector, organised labour and the state. Keynesianism dominated liberal economic thought and economic policies at least for three decades after the Second World War. The economic policies of most western states were guided by an urge to generate employment and to meet the basic needs of education, health, housing, civic amenities and others by adhering to a disciplined tax regime. Development policies stemming from Keynesianism helped in the consolidation of western capitalism both internally and externally. Internally, the economically weaker sections of society were integrated to the liberal social, economic and political arrangement while externally, the western capitalist world succeeded in consolidating its position vis-a-vis the socialist block. In the second half of the twentieth century, thus, the role of the state in meeting the welfare needs of the common people in advanced industrial societies was increased as a well-worked out policy of social stability.

Reflection and Action 6.1

In your opinion, to what extent should the state intervene in the social and economic affairs of an individual?

6.7 Emergence of Neo-Liberalism

In the post-War period, even as the western states were realising the importance of welfare as an element in public policy, there was recognition of the need for slackening the role of the state in order to facilitate free movement of technology and capital. The most prominent neo-liberals are libertarians, enthusiastic advocates of the rights of the individual that are sometimes against those of the coercive state. The chief protagonists are Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Robert Nozick. Friedrich A Hayek, for example, is known for his anti-Keynesian monetarism. A strong advocate of *laissez-faire* economics, Hayek (1944) argues that centralised economic planning threatens liberty and therefore creates conditions for serfdom. He later explains that collectivism is a threat to individual freedom (see Hayek 1982).

The ideals of classical liberalism, based on the idea of *laissez-faire*, reappeared in the 1980s in the form of liberalisation or globalisation of production, distribution and consumption arrangements. Over the past couple of decades there has been some retrenchment in state welfare in a range of western societies, particularly after Reaganism in the USA and Thatcherism in the UK in the 1980s, with increasing privatisation of welfare services and support for private provision dependent on the ability to pay, rather than upon need.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, much as in the nineteenth century, one of the major battle lines of politics has been between the apostles of economic liberalism and those who favour intervention to “protect society”. Lately the proponents of protectionism have become more influential again. This is the substance of the so-called “third way” which came to be much talked about at the end of the 1990s. It stands in the position that was once occupied by socialists and it has brought together newly elected left-of-centre leaders in Europe — Tony Blair in Britain, Lionel Jospin in France, Gerhard Schroeder in Germany, and Clinton in the United States. The “third way” could be interpreted as a balancing act to take care of the backwash effects of a great leap forward of capitalism. Industrialisation is a precondition of development, which is understood in terms of economic progress, end of traditional values, rise of rationality, removal of mass poverty, spread of liberty and citizenship.

The social scientists are worried about the negative impacts of the neo-liberal phase of development. Castells (1996) argues that in the new era of capitalist growth the focus would shift from industrialisation to the network of information and knowledge. The 1998-99 World Bank report mentions that the “differences in some important measures of knowledge creation are far greater between rich and poor countries than the difference in income.” Certainly, the decline of the manufacturing sector and the rise of service and knowledge-based sectors in industrialized countries will pose new questions for development analysts and policy makers in future.

Extending the critique of neo-liberal development, Kitching (1989) comments that “development is an awful process”; for Cowen and Shenton (1996) development means “ameliorating the disordered faults of progress”. Much of development efforts go into ameliorating the problems of poverty, environmental degradation and social disorder. “Development” is often equated with programmes for the relief and welfare of poor communities or displaced populations.

The international agencies monitoring globalisation (the World Bank, in particular) are now increasingly laying stress on the integration of poor communities into the global system. Social scientists are engaged in suggesting means to achieve global integration. Chambers (1989), for example, suggests a participative approach to facilitate the involvement of people in the developmental plans made for them and to empower them in the process. Chambers has been largely responsible for promoting what is now a large global network or movement concerned with “Participative Rural Appraisal” (PRA) or “Participative Learning and Action” (PLA), including idealistic precepts such as “handing over the stick” to poor communities to allow them to design and run their own development projects. In the Indian context, we see that processes like economic liberalisation, democratic decentralisation and participatory development are being experimented at the same time.

6.8 Criticism of the Liberal Perspective

C B MacPherson, (1966) has criticised liberalism on the ground that it promotes “possessive individualism”, meaning individuals with little social or collective concerns. The socialist critique of the liberal perspective is based on the interpretation of inequality and social justice. It has been argued that the economic order, characterised by inequality would promote further inequality and social injustice in an atmosphere of free market competition. The criticism of classical liberalism also came from within the liberal circle; Keynes, for example, came out with a critique of the classical liberalism of Ricardo, Mill and Bentham, and proposed state-welfarism for the protection of the working class’s interests. Sociologists have critiqued the idea of the individual autonomous self as absurd; they have also rejected the possibility of neutral rule which would guarantee the promotion of equal opportunities for all, a precondition of individual liberty. Historically, there has never been a free-market economy, absolutely free of the control of the state. Even now when in the 1980s and 1990s neo-liberalism has made a strong comeback, pushing the idea of state-welfarism to the back seat, there have been renewed talks on the protection of the rights of victims of neo-liberal economics.

The liberal approach has devised an elaborate arrangement of labour control which entails “some mix of repression, habituation, co-option and co-operation, all of which have to be organised not only within the workplace but throughout society at large” (Harvey 1989: 123), and is supported by the formation of dominant ideologies. The liberal approach that consolidated capitalism worldwide has passed through “regimes of accumulation”, to borrow Boyer’s (1990) phrase. According to Boyer, the “regimes of accumulation” designates “the set of regularities that ensure the general and relatively coherent progress

of capital accumulation, that is, which allow for the resolution or postponement of the distortions and disequilibria to which the process continually gives rise" (Boyer 1990: 35). A "regime of accumulation", Lipietz writes, "describes the stabilisation over a long period of the allocation of the net product between the transformation of the conditions of both the conditions of reproduction of wage-earners. A regime of accumulation thus implies the co-ordination of the activities of all sorts of social agents, or in other words institutionalisation, in the form of 'norms, habits, laws, regulating networks and so on that ensure unity of the process ... [and] ... This body of interiorised rules and social processes is [what is] called the mode of regulation" (Lipietz, cf Harvey 1989: 122). The liberal approach has thus been accompanied by an elaborate arrangement for legitimizing and reproduction of the economy, embedded in a legal and social arrangement that facilitated reproduction of the self-regulated economy or the liberal economy.

The triumph of the free market economy was possible not by cutting the state down to size but with an elaborate social, cultural and political arrangement under the patronage of state and an elaborate arrangement of management of the labour force. Hollingsworth and Boyer (1997: 2) have aptly referred to this mechanism as "social system of production".

Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony and Foucault's idea of bio-power can be used to construct a critique of liberalism.

Box 6.2: Hegemony

Hegemony means leadership, authority or dominance established by one state or social group over others. It involves exercise of power or force by the dominating state or social group to establish itself or its ideology which is met with resistance and repression by those on whom these are being established.

In the past two centuries liberalism turned out to be the hegemonic ideology of western capitalism. Without sacrificing corporate interest the western states have gone for more and more democratisation and political participation of the downtrodden and marginalised in order to integrate them into the capitalist social order. Gramsci and Althusser would suggest that the western state worked in the social and cultural fields for the ideological integration of the class forces.

In a critique of the functioning of the modern liberal state, Michel Foucault (see Dean 2001) has argued that to govern would now mean to cultivate, facilitate and work through the diverse processes that were to be found in this domain exterior to the institutions of government. One key domain in which these processes are constituted is "bio-politics". Bio-politics refers to politics concerning the administration of life, particularly as it appears at the level of populations. Bio-politics must then also concern the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions, under which humans live, procreate, become ill, maintain health or become healthy, and die.

Foucault has charted out the history of the transition of the mechanism of governance from governance through absolute power to govern through economic management and by granting more and more autonomy to people. Bio-politics then first meets quite distinct forms of political rationality and knowledge concerned with the role of commerce in civil society. In Foucault's assessment, the classical English political economy in the first quarter of the nineteenth century aimed at optimisation of the life of the population. Thomas Malthus, for example, discovered the relation between the processes that impel the growth of population and those natural ones that provide subsistence for the increasing quantity of human life; the linkages between scarcity and necessity. The bio-economic reality discovered and enshrined in the work of

English political economists of the early eighteenth century helped generate new norms of government in order to optimise the life of the population. The new norms entailed government through the economic realities, commercial society and the market; they also entailed a concern to govern efficiently, to limit waste and restrict cost, a concern with what Benjamin Franklin called “frugal government”.

According to Foucault, liberalism may be understood as a critique of excessive government. It should be approached, however, not only as a critique of earlier forms of government such as police and reason of state, but of existing and potential forms of bio-political government. Liberalism thus criticises other possible forms that the government of the processes of life might take.

According to Foucault, liberalism retains a concern with security and advances a novel conception of the objective of government as “setting in place mechanisms of security whose function is to assure the security of those natural phenomena, economic processes, and the intrinsic processes of population”. Foucault suggests that liberty has been used as a condition of the economic and biological security of the citizens by the liberal state. While liberalism would adopt a legal and parliamentary framework, this is less due to an affinity with juridical thought than because of law’s generality and exclusion of the particular and exceptional, and because through the parliamentary system, liberalism permits the participation of the governed in liberal government. Indeed, Foucault seems to suggest that liberalism has more affinity with the norm than with the law. This is because, first, it constantly seeks a norm of good government in the changing balance between governing too much and governing too little and second, it employs mechanisms that strive to stabilise and normalise subjects in such a way that they exercise freedom in a responsible and disciplined manner.

Liberalism thus participates in and fosters the “society of normalisation”. In its emphasis on the formation of the responsible exercise of freedom as necessary to the security of autonomous processes of economy, society and population, liberalism multiplies and ramifies what Foucault calls “dividing practices”, that is practices in which “the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others”. Moreover, the history of liberalism shows how a range of liberal techniques can be applied to those individuals and populations who are deemed capable of improvement and of attaining self-government (from women and children to certain classes of criminals and paupers).

Foucault’s account of liberal governmental formations suggests a complex articulation of the issues of bio-politics and sovereignty. It is an articulation of elements of the shepherd-folk game concerned in its modern form to optimise the identities of the life of the population and normalise the identities of individuals within it, and of the city-citizen game in which the individual appears as an active and responsible citizen within a self-governing political community and within commercial society. In this balancing act that modern liberalism has thrived by mastering the mechanisms of disciplining and subjugation of the citizens, although the main objective of ideology was to promote liberty. Nevertheless, while liberalism may try to make safe the bio-political imperative of the optimisation of life by deploying the notion of rights and framework of law it has inherited from forms of sovereign rule, it has shown itself permanently incapable of arresting the emergence of forms of knowledge that make the optimisation of the life of others.

Reflection and Action 6.2

What are the major limitations of the liberal perspective of development?

6.9 Conclusion

Liberalism, as a perspective of development, has to be understood in a broader framework, in terms of its economic, political and social meanings. The modern day political ideologies and economic and social policies primarily flow from liberal perspective. Historically, liberalism has been put to use for the unhindered growth of capitalist economy and the capitalist social order. A close look at the genealogy of the liberal perspective of development would disentangle how the power relations, the legal system and the social and cultural elements have been put to use for the expansion of the principles of the free market economy worldwide. Although there has been more and more democratisation and empowerment of the common people in all countries with the recognition of the principles of equality, fundamental rights and justice, the liberal state has, in the ultimate analysis, bailed out capitalism from periodic crises and restored it to a strong foundation. The Marxist paradigm of a base-superstructure relationship is thus reinstated. The idea of pure *laissez faire* has never been practicable because capital has always needed some kind of support from the state. The state has historically worked out strategies to facilitate the uninterrupted growth of capital and has successfully accommodated the labour force into the capitalist social order by working in the ideological, social and cultural spheres. In the past couple of decades liberalism has made a strong comeback in the shape of neo-liberalism and it is now out to operate on a wider global scale. The hegemonic neo-liberalism is provoking new ideas and new movements for the protection of the working class and the other victims. The phenomenon of globalisation and its social, cultural and political implications thus have to be examined at global scale.

Although classical liberalism was shaped in the writings of economic theorists, it slowly dispersed into of social, political, etc. streams of thinking as well. The present unit depicts liberalism as it exists in different streams of thinking. It examines the evolution of liberal state as well as the different issues such as inequality, role of state, etc. as addressed by liberalists. Also we made an attempt to examine the neo-liberal ideas and how is it different from liberal views. Finally, a critical appraisal of liberal theories is conducted.

6.10 Further Reading

Cowen, M. P. and R. W. Shenton. 1996. *Doctrines of Development*. Routledge: London

Dean, Mitchell 2001. "Michel Foucault: 'A Man in Danger'", in George Ritzer and Barry Smart (eds.) *Handbook of Social Theory*. Sage Publications: London

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Unit 7

Marxian Perspective on Development

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- 7.1 Introduction
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Learning Objectives

This unit aims to introduce you to:

- Marx's idea of development;
- Marx's idea of capitalism, class relations and development and his plan of action;
- neo-Marxian approach to development; and
- criticisms of Marxian approach to development.

7.1 Introduction

This unit deals with the central Marxian idea on development. Marx has tried to explain development in terms of the progression of society through various stages – tribal, asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist. He has visualised conflict inbuilt in the material condition of existence to be the core factor in development. To carry forward this conflict he has identified the agency of social class as the main vehicle of class conflict.

In the earlier units of this block we have discussed modernisation and the liberal approaches to development.

By now you must be acquainted with the significance of market forces in development.

In this unit we shall be dealing with Marxian approach to development. In MSO-001 Sociological Concepts and Theories, you have read Marxian concepts of class and class conflict, and capitalist mode of production and change. In this unit we touch upon all these issues again from the perspective of development. Here we shall briefly discuss Marx's idea of development, capitalism and his plan of action. The social conditions of the working class in the capitalist mode of production has been especially examined. We have also discussed neo-Marxian approaches to development, i.e., the world system analysis and critical theory. This unit ends with discussion on critical theory.

7.2 Marxian Idea of Development

Karl Marx (1818-1883) was the most influential socialist thinker on development in the 19th and 20th centuries. Of late, against the backdrop of the collapse of the socialist economy, Marxian thought has been a subject of critical review. Around half of the world population followed his suggested path of restructuring

the social and political organisation and economic development. His contribution to the theory of development is simply unparalleled and path-breaking. After his death on 14th March 1883, his life time collaborator and close friend, Friedrich Engels, wrote in his obituary:

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development or organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that, therefore the production of the immediate material means, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.

The development of human society through various stages, development and change in the material condition, existence, development of capitalism, and the corresponding change in the class relationship and transformation in the mode of production were the major concerns of Karl Marx. Let us examine some of these concerns.

a) Production Relation and Development

Marx had a profound philosophical vision of the development of human society which may be understood in terms of the material condition of existence and the dialectic, i.e., contradiction inbuilt in the material condition of existence. Though he has not denied the significance of non-material forces in the process of development of human society through various stages, he emphasised that material forces and their contradiction provided the very basic and fundamental condition of development and change in human society. Marx's idea of development is best understood in terms of his analysis and interpretation of the capitalist society, its evolution, structure and functioning. As a prolific writer, Karl Marx has touched upon all these issues in several of his writings, especially in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), in the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859, 1976) and *The Capital* (1887).

According to Karl Marx all the legal relations, politics, forms of the states, etc. are to be understood, not in terms of development of human mind but in terms of the material condition of life. To him, in the process of development of human society human being has emerged to be a producing animal and thereby tied with several production relations. To quote him:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general (Marx 1859).

He was very categorical to mention that with the change in the economic foundation the inter superstructure, that is the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical, get transferred. In the process of such transformation individual consciousness is determined not by what he thinks but by the contradiction of material life that is the conflict between the social productive forces and relation of production. Consciousness is a part of development in human society. To him, it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but on the contrary their material condition of

existence that determines this consciousness. As pointed out earlier antagonistic production relation is the key factor for change and development to Marx.

He points out that at a certain stage of development "the material productive forces come in conflict with the existing relation of production,..... with the property relation within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of productive forces this relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of revolution" (Marx 1976: 504).

To him the asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist are the progressive epochs in the economic formation of society. The capitalist relation of production to him is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production.

b) Class Relation and Change

In all the stages of economic transformation of society, there have been specific forms of class struggles. Social classes according to Karl Marx are the main agents of social change. The change is however based on class conflict. Thus to him.

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes (Ibid).

Classes, to Marx, are formed based on objective material conditions. These are groups of people with a common economic position vis-a-vis those of other class. In essence, this economic interest is conflicting and contradictory to each other's class position. These class relations get transformed to hostile action against each other with the intermediation of class consciousness. The objective material conditions form the basis for the formation of "class-in-itself" which get transformed into "class-for-itself" in the process of transversing of subjective class consciousness.

To Karl Marx, though the class relation was very complicated in the earlier epochs of history, in the modern stage of capitalism this has been simplified. In the modern capitalist society new classes however have emerged with new condition of operation and new form of struggle between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the of production i.e., the 'haves') and the proletariat (i.e. the 'have-nots').

According to Marx, under capitalism wage labourers are paupers who grow more rapidly than the population and wealth. The essential conditions both for the existence and sway of the bourgeoisie class is the formation and augmentation of capital. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourer, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, is its grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable (Ibid: 119).

7.3 Capitalism, Class Relations and Development

Modern industry has established the world market that has given immense scope of development to commerce, navigation and communication by land. These developments again have paved the way for the extension of industries and free trade.

The bourgeoisie class constantly maximises its profit through the expansion of new markets, introduction of new technology, extraction of surplus value and exploitation of the proletariat. However, along with these developments there emerge new forces of contradiction within the capitalist system. Notwithstanding the emergence of new forces of contradiction, the bourgeoisie was very revolutionary in their outlook and action. According to Marx, "The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.... the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society."

Through the exploitation of the world market the bourgeoisie has given a cosmopolitan character to the production and consumption process. The old industries got destroyed. The old national industries got dislodged. Industry in the capitalist system no longer worked only on indigenous raw materials but raw materials drawn from the remotest zones, whose products are consumed in every quarter of the globe.

In place of old wants satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National oneness and narrow mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature"(Ibid: 112).

The capitalists according to Marx also subjected the nature to the force of man and machinery through the application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, and modern technologies such as steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraph, canalisation of rivers, etc. All these facilitated the scope of free commodification of the economy at world scales. There also emerged free competition accompanied by social and political institutions to adopt to it.

The modern capitalist however, according to Marx, has inherited and nurtured the seeds of its destruction in its own womb. In proportion to the growth of the bourgeoisie there has emerged the modern working class – the proletariat, "These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market." (Ibid: 114)

For Marx the essence of the captor is to maximise profit through commoditisation of the production process. As long as capitalism is based on private ownership of the means of production, it maximises profits of the private producers. This profit is again maximised by exchange proceeding from money to money by way of commodity. Gradually the proceed from money to money by way of commodity ends up with more money than one had at the outset (Aron 1965: 128). To explain the sources of profit, Marx talked about the theory of value, wage and surplus value. To him, the value of any commodity is roughly proportional to the quality of human labour contained in it. The wage capitalists pay to the workers, as the compensation for the labour power the worker rent to the capitalist, is equal to the amount necessary for the existence of the workers and their family to produce the merchandise for the capitalist. Under the capitalist system, workers receive the wage which is less than the actual duration of the work; that is less than the value of the commodity he or she produces. Here comes the notion of "surplus value" which refers to "the quality of value produced by the workers beyond the necessary labour time". Under the capitalist system the workers do not get the wage for the quality of the value produced beyond the necessary labour time.

In return the wage received by a workman is restricted only to the means of his subsistence and survival. Marx calculated that the price of a commodity and therefore "also of labour is equal to its cost of production". In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of work increases the wage decreases. With the increase in the proportion of the use of machinery and division of labour the burden of toil of the labour also increases in terms of increase in the working hours, and increase in the quantum of work.

The proletariat is without property. His relation to his children and wife has no longer anything in common with the bourgeoisie family relations; modern industrial labour, modern subjugation to capital, the same in England, as in France, in America and Germany, has tripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interest" (Ibid: 118).

Gradually the number the proletariat also increases to gain more strength and awareness. The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, artisans, peasants also join the army of the proletariat in their fight against the bourgeoisie. To Marx "All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority." And again Marx writes; in depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.

7.4 Marx's Plan of Action

After the revolution by the working class, the proletariat would be raised to the position of ruling class to win the battle of democracy, to centralise all instruments of production in the hand of the state, to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible, to entirely revolutionise the mode of production. He suggested the following measures:

- i) Abolition of private property in land and application of all rents of land to public purpose.
- ii) A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
- iii) Abolition of all rights of inheritance.
- iv) Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
- v) Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.
- vi) Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state.
- vii) Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste-land, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
- viii) Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
- ix) Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country.
- x) Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production.

Reflection and Action 7.1

What are the major features of capitalism according to Marx?

7.5 Marx and Historical-Sociological Perspective

Historical analysis can develop a critical approach to the study of the past, present, and future. It can illuminate the varieties of cultural and social diversity that have existed, and show how changes in these have occurred. Many historical approaches in sociology have assumed that history is associated with human progress and reaching higher stages of development of society – Marxian theories and liberal theories of modernisation generally adopt this approach. But historical approaches to sociology need not make this assumption and can consider human experience to have many forms of diversity, society to have made great progress in some areas and little in others, and to consider the possibility of regression rather than progression.

It would be best to adopt a historical approach that does not consider human history to have a particular direction or to necessarily evolve to more progressive forms of social organisation. Further, there may be no inevitability or purpose to historical change – change certainly occurs but is a product of myriad influences, some intended and others unintended, with coincidence and chance along with intersection of various unforeseen social circumstances and forces. There are certainly social forces leading in specific directions (markets, exchange) and powerful individuals and groups attempting to further their influence and power, but people in the social world can also change these social forces. For example, some contemporary analysis assumes that globalisation, standardisation, and the decline of the nation-state are dominant forces that have a certain inevitability. While there is no doubt that these forces are strong, there are other aspects such as traditional cultures, resistance to change, local grounding, and communication and discussion (as highlighted by Habermas and others) that must be considered as well.

Writers in the nineteenth century often adopted a view that human history passed through various identifiable stages. The sociology of Comte with focus on the theological, metaphysical, scientific stage of society and the analysis of Enlightenment writers tended to assume that human history has gone through various stages of development, with each of the stages at a higher level than earlier stages. The Enlightenment thinkers assumed that the stage that had been reached at the time they were writing was an advance over earlier stages, in that humans had developed a better understanding of the world and could now improve the social world. The view that the stages of history represented progress is reflected in concepts such as primitive and backward to refer to traditional forms, and civilisation and modern to refer to the European societies of the nineteenth century.

Marx and Engels, and later writers in the Marxian stream have generally adopted a similar view and developed a historical analysis as a major part of their analysis. For Marx, the modes of production were historical in nature, with each representing a particular stage of historical evolution, and containing forces for change, but also being limited in form. Thus markets and cities emerged in feudal society, but the power of these emergent social forces required change in the mode of production. As a result, the forces of the bourgeoisie and capitalism broke the power of feudal forms of social and economic organisation, creating a new society in the nineteenth century. For Marx, each mode of production is historical in nature, having emerged at a particular time, but also having an historical dynamic built into it. Marxian analysis is thus essentially historical in content and form. While it is theoretical, the concepts and models of Marxian analysis are simultaneously historical and theoretical.

There had been several criticisms against this Marxian model of development. Let us look into some of them here.

Marx has forecasted the disappearance of the State after the successful implementation of the programme of action by the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, historical experiences show that, the state System has not only got reinforced, it has at times taken an oppressive form.

Again it is a fact that centralised planning can't be implemented without well-organised State mechanism. Thus Marx's idea of the State withering away remains in essence contradictory both in terms of historical experiences and execution of centralised planning.

It is assumed that the dictatorship of the proletariat would usher in an era of classless society. However after the seizure of state power, not the proletariat, but the political elites occupy the power. Ownership of power is an important dimension of defining social class. Indeed here new political classes emerge with a few occupying the power position, while the vast majority being the powerless.

Marx has generalised the idea related to class formation, class transformation and the role of the economic structure in determining the course of history. Marx has defined social collectivities or group in terms of the economy. Here "class" has been seen as the sole agent to bring change in society through revolution. However, the significance of nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, caste, estate, etc. within these collectives are grossly ignored. Indeed Marx has defined all social relations and conflicts in terms of class relations and conflicts by ignoring the social and historical roles played by these collectives in various societies.

The Marxian idea of capitalism has not taken into cognisance the advancement of new technological inputs and new employer-employee relationship in the changing world. Many of the aspects are covered in the theory of modernisation and the critical theory. The process of advancement of capitalism may also follow the path of rationalisation of religious thoughts as depicted in Protestant ethics, highlighted by Max Weber.

Reflection and Acton 7.2

Write a critique of the Marx's perspective on development.

Karl Marx's core idea on development was furthered by several school's of Marxian approach. In the following section we shall be presenting a glimpse of Neo-Marxian approach.

7.6 Neo-Marxian Approach: World-Systems Analysis

One of the primary historical-sociological perspectives is that of the world-systems analysis, a neo-Marxian approach built around analyses of modes of production. This approach developed from an analysis of the economic and material world, specifically capitalism as it emerged and developed in Europe beginning in the 1500s. The world-systems analysis generally argues that this new economic and social system broke the power of earlier political and economic empires and systems, and developed towards a dominant world system. While originating in Europe, the world system that has emerged over the last five hundred years is without limits and extends for its reach throughout the globe. In contrast to some Marxian approaches, this world system is not always progressive in its effects, it encompasses a variety of modes of production, and could ultimately be replaced by a socialist world system.

The world-systems analysis was developed by Immanuel Wallerstein (1930-) who has been a professor at Columbia University, McGill University, and currently the State University of New York at Binghamton. Wallerstein is best known for his *The Modern World-System*, published in 1974. In this work he analyses the origins of the modern system, beginning around 1500, where there began a shift from political and military forms of dominance to economic influences and power. In later volumes, Wallerstein traces the development of this new system, showing how it is creating core, periphery, and semi-periphery regions of the world. While political structures are connected to economic ones, Wallerstein argues that a variety of political structures are compatible with the capitalist world system.

The world-systems theory abandons national economies and the nation state as the unit of analysis. Marxian theory generally works within the framework of national social structures, with a capitalist and a working class being rooted in the organisation of production and distribution on a national scale. The world-systems theory considers the division of labour, exploitation, and inequality on a world rather than a national level. That is, capitalism is not just organised on a national level, it develops and uses resources, labour, production, and markets on a world scale.

The development of Canada could easily be interpreted within a world-systems approach. European expansion led to the development of Atlantic fisheries to supply food for Europe. Later the development of the fur trade made Canada supply furs for European consumption. These were connected to the development of industry and consumer markets in Europe - with an emerging bourgeoisie and working class. The development of trade and European expansion across North America destroyed many of the aboriginal economies that existed earlier. Agricultural and industrial changes in Europe led to export of dispossessed and poor Europeans to settle in North America. Forest, mining, and agricultural products were exported to Europe, thereby assisting in the growth of European and North American capitalism. While some areas benefited, others became disadvantaged as a result of these developments. Social and class structures have a connection to this international division of labour and the forms of development of production and markets on a world scale.

In world-systems analysis there are three types of regions. The **core areas** of the world system are the wealthy countries of Europe and North America that dominate and exploit much of the rest of the world. These countries tend to have relatively free labour markets with relatively well paid skilled workers. In contrast, the **periphery** is poor and exploited, exporting raw materials to the core economies. Conditions for workers in the periphery tend to be very poor, and workers in these countries are often coerced through slavery or threat of starvation. The core countries benefit by maintaining the peripheral countries in a backward state.

Semi-peripheral countries combine aspects of the core and periphery, being exploited and exploiting. Examples might include some of the poorer parts of Europe (Portugal or Greece) or some of the better off South American countries such as Argentina. The key to the division, however, is not so much the countries but the position any area occupies within the international division of labour. For example, there may be peripheral areas of core countries (some parts of northern Saskatchewan or the Maritimes) and core areas in primarily peripheral countries.

7.7 Implications of World-System Analysis

In terms of sociological analysis, there appear to be at least three implications of the world-systems analysis.

- a) **Expansion:** Unlike earlier empires, which had limits to expansion prescribed by the ability to politically govern a wide area, there appears to be little limit to the capitalist world system, especially today. It has expanded over the last five hundred years and shows no signs of ending the domination of the world economy. Wallerstein argues that this is one difference of the current world system from earlier ones - there was a decisive break around the period 1500, whereby capitalism, technology, and science combined to create an expansive and global system.
- b) **International scope:** Social structure has an international basis. Any analysis of the social structure must consider the international aspect of this. That is, the particular place any group occupies in an international division of labour may be more important than the seeming place within the national economy and society.
- c) **Difference and Inequality:** In contrast to theories of modernisation or globalisation that argue that there may be a single, more uniform world in the future, the thrust of world-systems analysis is that continued inequalities and backwardness are furthered at the same time that wealth and progress occur in the core. This world system does not require similar culture, politics, or even modes of production in different regions. Rather, the capitalist world system can accommodate many different political forms (democracy, totalitarianism, monarchies, military rule) and different forms of production (slavery, semi-feudal forms of large estates and impoverished peasants, market-oriented agriculture). While the economic power of capitalism makes its effects felt on a world wide scale, this system creates wealth in some places and takes wealth away from others. As a result, poverty and inequality are essential aspects of such a system. This creates strains and can lead to redistribution of power and wealth on a world wide scale.
- d) **Study of Change:** The world-systems analysis provides a useful way of examining changes that have occurred and continue to occur across the globe. For example, the migration of large numbers of people from poor to richer countries is a result of the developments on the world system – destroying traditional ways of life and livelihood in the sending countries and filling labour supply needs in receiving countries. At the same time, this approach may be overly economic in much the same manner as much Marxian analysis. That is, the world-systems analysis does not pay much attention to culture and does not appear to consider it as an independent aspect. Further, the assumption of dominance of European and North American capitalist forces may be somewhat ethnocentric.

Reflection and Action 7.3

What is the essence of the World-system theory? How is it significant in exploring development in contemporary society?

7.8 Critical Theory: Frankfurt School

Critical theory has different meanings for different writers. As critique it is usually considered to be a critique of modernity and the developments and institutions associated with modern society. It can also be a critique of particular schools of thought within sociology, or of sociology and social science as a whole. A large part of critical theory has been to critique art and culture, in particular the consumer culture, advertising, the media, and other forms of popular culture. Some of the arguments in Giddens *Dilemmas of the Self*, such as the evaporated self and commodified experience, are very similar to critical theory. In fact, it is in the sphere of culture that critical theory continues to be relevant and innovative.

Marxism is one form of critical theory, since Marxism provides a critique of capitalism and modernism. The Marxism of many communist parties and established socialist societies is generally not regarded as critical theory - it is rather Marxist theories that attempt to show the shortcomings of existing society and institutions that are considered critical theories. Kellner (1989: 3) notes:

Critical Theory has been deeply concerned with the fate of modernity, and has offered systematic and comprehensive theories of the trajectory of modernity, combined with critical diagnoses of some of the latter's limitations, pathologies and destructive effects - while providing defences of some of its progressive elements.

In Kellner's view, critical theory has generally been committed to the idea of modernity and progress, while at the same time noting the ways that features of modernity can create problems for individuals and society.

Critical theory is usually more closely associated with a group of theorists called the Frankfurt school. It were German Marxist theorists such as Benjamin, Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Marcuse and, more recently, Habermas and Offe, who usually identified as establishing and developing a critical theory of modern society. Others, such as the Hungarian Marxist Lukacs, and some contemporary North Americans, most notably Calhoun and Kellner, are also considered to be critical theorists. It will be primarily this tradition that will be examined in this section.

Box 7.1: Post Modern vs Critical Theory

Note that critical theory differs from post-modern approaches to social theory. Theorists in the latter perspective tend to argue that modernity has ended, or that modernity must be rejected in its totality. Post-modernists may even reject social theory and political practice whereas critical theorists tend to theorise extensively and some argue that politics can be used to pursue progress. Critical theorists generally tend to have a comprehensive and overall social theory and an idea of progress and a better world, even if they are unable to find ways of getting there. In contrast, a post-modern approach is more likely to be associated with rejection of comprehensive, universal theory.

a) Historical Background

When critical theory is mentioned in connection with social theory, it is usually associated with what is called the "Frankfurt School." The Institute had begun in 1923, with a financial endowment from a wealthy German grain merchant, and was attached to Frankfurt University in Germany. German universities had been quite conservative, but with the political turmoil following World War I, new ideas developed and were influential within the universities. For a time, many Marxists thought that Germany would become socialist, following the Russian revolution. When this proved unlikely to occur, some of the intellectuals attracted to Marxism argued that Marxist-oriented research was necessary to re-examine Marxist theory in the light of the changes that had occurred in Europe. In particular, some of these Marxists considered that while the objective conditions for socialism existed, the subjective consciousness of workers was not conducive to overthrow capitalism and creating socialism. In particular, "revolutionary consciousness, culture and organisation and a clear notion of socialism seemed to be lacking." As a result, it was necessary to reconsider various aspects of Marxism and focus on "consciousness, subjectivity, culture, ideology and the concept of socialism ... in order to make possible radical political change" (Kellner 1989: 12).

The Institute began its work in Germany and continued through 1933, when the Nazis came to power. Most of those who were members of the Institute went to the United States at that time, with some like Marcuse staying there,

while others returned to Germany after World War II. The Institute was established in New York City and became affiliated with Columbia University and it was there that the term “critical theory” became associated with the Institute. After World War II, the Institute was re-established in Germany and continues to operate there. Following the death of Horkheimer and Adorno, Jurgen Habermas became the leading critical theorist, a position he continues to hold.

The periods of a few major critical theorists:

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)

Max Horkheimer (1895-1973)

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969)

Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)

Jurgen Habermas (1929-)

Let us now look at the features of Frankfurt school and how it can put as an extension of Marxist thought.

b) Materialism and Idealism

Critical theory is thus primarily a European social theory, influenced by the German tradition of Marx and Weber and by the experience of fascism, but also by the changing aspects of modern capitalism. Critical theory began by putting Marxian political economy at the centre of analysis, and thus the early critical theory was materialist and committed to socialism. One of the major features of this perspective was that all of social life is a reflection of the economic system and the role of social theory was to investigate the ways in which this changed and affected people. “Rather, critical theory describes the complex set of ‘mediations’ that interconnect consciousness and society, culture and economy, state and citizens” (Kellner 1990: 3, 4).

Critical theory thus developed an approach which incorporated both the economic and material, and an analysis of individuals and their social psychology, attempting to deal with aspects of what we might refer to as the agency-structure issues today. But neither the material nor consciousness was primary in determining the other. Rather, these theorists paid much attention to culture, law, ethics, fashion, public opinion, sport, life style, and leisure (Kellner 1989: 18), topics which had not previously been incorporated into Marxian analysis. Calhoun notes how “Marx shared with the young Hegel an attempt to conceptualise the absolute creativity of the human being through the example of art, but unlike Hegel he extended this into a more general analysis of labour” (Ibid 441). The Frankfurt school theorists took up this challenge once again and made art and aesthetics a central feature of their analysis.

c) Supradisciplinary

Critical theorists are critical of Marxism when it is mechanically materialist or too determinist. They were especially critical of branches of philosophy, especially positivism and scientific methods associated with it. They are also critical of sociology and other social sciences for being insufficiently critical and having only partial analyses. They thus set very high standards for social science, ones that they themselves were ultimately unable to meet.

Given that the initial concern of these theorists was to understand the reason why class consciousness had not developed among the working class, their first project was to conduct an empirical study of the white-collar working class in Germany, to obtain information concerning their psychological, social, and political attitudes and combine this with theoretical ideas from the various

social sciences (Kellner 1989: 19). The findings of this study were that “the actual revolutionary potential of the German working class was less than what usually assumed, and that, while the workers might resist a fascist attempt to take over the government, it was unlikely that they would undertake the sacrifices necessary for a socialist revolution” (Ibid: 20). While this approach provided interesting results, it is not clear that in studies of this type, the approach of these critical theorists differed all that much from some of the conventional social science approaches.

d) Commodity Exchange

Beginning with commodity and commodity production as the key feature of capitalist society, they argued that capitalist market relations and values were penetrating ever more areas of life. Exchange was becoming the primary way in which people related to and interacted with each other in a capitalist market society. Consequently reification – the turning of humans, culture, nature and everything else into commodities whose fundamental substance was exchange value – came to dominate relationships and activity within the capitalist society (Ibid: 53).

That is, rather than human relationships between individuals, exchange relationships come to dominate inter-personal relationships. Marx had noted this; but this line of thought was much further developed by the critical theorists. They looked on capitalism in the twentieth century as extending this to many aspects of society previously untouched or relatively unaffected by exchange relations. They saw aspects of personal life such as love, friendship, and the family being reduced to such form of exchange. Consumption became organised by such forces as well, so that there were increasingly “oppressive uniformities and identities”. The concern was with rising sameness and conformity in society that did not let underlying tensions and contradictions to surface and be amenable to public attention and action (Calhoun 2002). They viewed such forces as stifling individuality and particularity and producing a certain sameness among all members of society. This aspect of capitalism has developed much more than in the 1920s and 30s, so that this part of their critique certainly has an important resonance in today’s economy, media and society. Consumer and media capitalism have vastly extended their reach into all aspects of the consumer society and life in general, and a critical approach to contemporary society can benefit from and use the ideas developed by these critical theorists.

e) Administered Society

A major feature of the political sociology of critical theory is the notion of an administered society. Weber had argued that forces of rationality and rationalisation were becoming increasingly dominant in western society. Rather than traditional or charismatic forces being dominant in social organisation, Weber argued that calculation, accounting, considered decision-making, and guided social action by careful examination of how means could be used to accomplish particular ends were forms that had become more forceful in western society. These forces are clearest in economics, business, and formal organisations, but Weber argued that these same forces made their effects felt in politics, education, and even the arts.

Critical theorists added these ideas of Weber on bureaucracy, rationalisation, and administration to the Marxian ideas of exchange and commodification. While Marx was primarily concerned with the economic sphere, the critical theorists extended their analysis to the political and social sphere, combining the ideas of exchange and administered society. The result was a view that capitalism and the society associated with it “was a totalising system which attempted to penetrate every area of life from self-constitution to interpersonal relations to education.” These totalising processes were leading to the destruction of “individuality and particularity” (Kellner 1989: 54).

One form this took was an economic analysis which argued that capitalism had been transformed from uncontrolled and relatively free markets to a form of state capitalism. While Marx and some earlier economists may have foreseen some aspects of this, they did not foresee the manner in which the state would intervene in the economic sphere. Friedrich Pollock, one of the economists associated with the Frankfurt School, developed a model of state capitalism, whereby “the state acquires power over money and credit, and regulates production and prices. Furthermore, management becomes separate from ownership” (Ibid: 60-61). While these critical theorists may have overestimated the role of the state in economics, and underestimated the vibrancy of capitalism as an economic system, theories of this sort have contributed to our understanding of capitalism and how it evolves. There is a strong political aspect to the economic sphere and many aspects of the economy are administered.

f) Totalising Societies

An important part of critical theory is related to their critique of totality and totalising forces. They were always opposed to any form of totalitarianism, whether it was the totalitarian society of fascism in Germany or the totalising form of administered socialism in the Soviet Union. Their arguments here make sense given the system that emerged in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union, where the structures to “control more and more aspects of life” (Kellner 1989: 54) were established and acquired great power. Totalitarian here could mean any system which attempts to govern many or all aspects of social life.

Since the critical theorists came from, were living in, and were affected by the fascist form of political and social organisation, it is no surprise that they developed a model of this totalitarian system. Their intimate knowledge of this system and their later observation of it from exile in the United States each provided them with useful insights concerning the nature of totality. Critical theorists looked on fascism as a new form of monopoly or state capitalism, whereby “the state assumed functions previously carried out by a market economy and thus became the primary arbitrator of socio-economic development” (Ibid 1989: 67). They looked on this system as a result of political and economic disorder, a system that capitalism developed to survive in the face of challenges from the working class and its own inability to govern itself. This was then a new phase of capitalism, “a new synthesis of monopoly capitalism and the totalitarian state which threatens to dominate the world and to eliminate its opponents and all vestiges of the earlier forms of liberal economy and politics” (Ibid 1989: 67).

Attractive as this analysis was, this prediction turned out to be incorrect and capitalism has taken a different form, perhaps totalising, but in a different manner. However, the experience of the critical theorists with fascism and totalitarianism helped shape their later analysis. In particular, they focus on the ways such a political-economic system achieves a rational, efficient form of production, but eliminates alternatives and debate over them. The reading from Marcuse will show how he interpreted and developed these ideas of totality and administered society as applying to societies that are normally considered more democratic and liberal.

An additional aspect of the discussion is the relative autonomy of the political and the economic spheres. Marxists tended to argue that the state and political forces operate in the interest of the owners of capital. Some of the arguments of the critical theorists questioned this, pointing out that the political sphere sometimes was dominant, and the interests of the administered, totalitarian society might dominate the economic in some aspects.

Another aspect of the analysis of such a system was the “socio-psychological analysis of the cultural roots of fascism in attitudes towards the family and

authority" (Ibid: 66). For Marxists, this was a new direction for social analysis to take and Erich Fromm, one of the key critical theorists, incorporated Freudian and other psychoanalytic theories into the social theory of the Frankfurt School.

g) Individual and Human Nature

For the Frankfurt theorists, human nature was related to the historical conditions in which it emerged. Humans beings are creative, but their creativity gets dominated by certain conditions under capitalism that appear to be natural and immutable. The critical theorists argued with the model of the absolute individual consciousness and identity that characterised the era of enlightenment, and liberal thought gave legitimate place to individuals' subjectivity and their relationships with others. In addition to identity, non-identity and multiple involvements of the individual meant that self-identity took many different forms. It was in this that the individual can develop creativity and reach beyond an unchanging individual identity. If society allowed the individual to explore and critique different ideas and situations, this would allow the individual to be free. But more and more the increased sameness and uniformity of society is forced on individuals and prevents this freedom from occurring.

Calhoun notes that critical theorists looked on essential human characteristics as crucial for the pursuit of happiness, the need for solidarity with others, and natural sympathies. These, of course, were developed in particular ways in each specific form of social organisation, since people are products of the historical conditions in which they live. But they connect a critical form of reason to this, with Horkheimer arguing that "a form of reason implicitly critical of civilisation" is part of human nature. The problem is that administered and totalising societies attempt to stifle and constrain this and channel it in particular directions. Erich Fromm argued that there is an essential human nature that is "repressed and distorted by capitalist patterns of domination".

Erich Fromm's contribution to critical theory involved an analysis of the individual, the family, sexual repression, the economy, and the social context of the individual. His writings outline one way in which the work of Freud and Marx can be integrated. Fromm argues that there are basic instincts of motive forces for human behaviour, but that these are adapted, both actively and passively, to social reality. For Fromm, "psychoanalysis ... seeks to discover the hidden sources of the obviously irrational behaviour patterns in societal life - in religion, custom, politics, and education" (Kellner 1989: 37). In this way, he combined social psychological approaches with the materialism of Marx, that is, synthesising the instinctual, psychological forces in humans with the effects of economic and material forces on human life.

For Fromm, the nuclear family as it exists in capitalist society is key to understanding the connections between these. That is, the individual is raised in a family, and the family stamps a specific part of the social structure on the child. This is the manner in which "society reproduces its class structure and imposes its ideologies and practices on individuals" (Ibid). While individuals growing up in a different society would develop differently, the particular effects of modernity create forms of domination and inner struggles in each individual. Forms of social behaviour such as submissiveness and powerlessness become part of the self in these circumstances.

In contrast to Marxian theories, critical theorists made analysis of art and culture a central focus of their studies, and noted developments in culture that were not purely economic in origin. Rather, the dialectic of enlightenment was used as critique of culture. Kellner (1989: 121) notes that they argued:

Culture, once a refuge of beauty and truth, was falling prey, they believed, to tendencies towards rationalization, standardization and conformity, which they saw as a consequence of the triumph of instrumental rationality that was coming to pervade and structure ever more aspects of life. Thus while culture once cultivated individuality, it was now promoting conformity and was a crucial part of the “totally administered society” that was producing “the end of the individual.

For the most part, critical theorists developed critiques of mass or popular culture. For example, Adorno “criticized popular music production for its commodification, rationalization, fetishism and reification of musical materials” (Ibid: 124). In particular, Adorno attacked jazz as being standardised and commercialised, arguing that “seeming spontaneity and improvisation are themselves calculated in advance, and the range of what is permissible is as circumscribed as in clothes or other realms of fashion” (Ibid 1989: 126). While Adorno’s critique has some truth to it, he is unable to explain innovation and new developments using this one-sided approach. Adorno tended to look on traditional forms of “high culture” such as the art of art galleries or the music of German composers as more authentic and creative than were forms of popular culture. In my view, Adorno adopted a very elitist approach to culture, one that would lead to limiting accessibility to and understanding of culture by large parts of the population.

Walter Benjamin, one of the individuals associated with the Institute, disagreed with Adorno and argued that there were not such dramatic differences between high culture and popular culture. Benjamin was interested in the copy, the mechanical reproduction of artistic images, a relatively new development in the early part of the twentieth century. While Benjamin regarded the copy as questioning the authenticity of the original work of art and the aura and aesthetic quality of the work of art, he also argued that: “For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an even greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility” (Ibid: 124).

Benjamin considered these to be progressive features of this new development, with the new forms becoming more accessible to more people, becoming more politicised, and possibly leading the situation where many images could be brought to the masses could raise political consciousness. This was particularly the case with film where Benjamin is somewhat reminiscent of Simmel.

Reflection and Action 7.3

Explain the major contribution of critical theory in evaluating Marxian perspective on development.

7.9 Conclusion

This unit has dealt with the central Marxian idea on development. Marx has tried to explain development in terms of progression of society from various stages that is tribal, asiatic, ancient, feudal and capitalist. He has visualised conflict inbuilt in the material condition of existence to be the core factor in development. To carry forward this conflict he has identified the agency of social class as the main vehicle of class conflict. In this unit we have explained all these facets of development as formulated by Karl Marx. The Marxian plans of action and thought, the limitations of his scheme of thought are discussed in this unit. We have also discussed neo-Marxian approaches to development with special reference to dependency theory and critical theory on Marxism after Marx.

7.10 Further Reading

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Unit 8

Gandhian Perspective on Development

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- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Khadi and Village Industries
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- 8.4 Economic Progress and 'Real Progress'
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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to explain:

- Gandhian concept of development;
- the importance of indigenous technology in the process of development; and
- the difference between material progress and meaningful development from Gandhian perspective.

8.1 Introduction

Gandhian perspective on development is distinct on two counts. It prioritises (i) self-development over material prosperity; and (ii) development of villages, rural industries and working at the grass roots over modern machinery, technology and mills. Gandhi toured the entire country extensively using different modes of transport ranging from bullock carts to trucks. He is also known for traveling long distances on foot. Thousands of people would collect to hear him or even to get a glimpse of him. Most of his endeavours were geared towards social and economic uplift of the downtrodden, the poor and the helpless.

In this unit, we will begin with Gandhi's ideas about machinery in a general sense and khadi and village industries in a specific sense. We then move on to the concept of education and what meaningful education should consist of. This leads us to the concept of material progress and development. Gandhi makes a distinction between material progress and "real progress". For him "real progress" is rooted in *swadeshi*. It may be understood that machinery, education, and economic uplift are the core issues of development. We end with an alternative viewpoint, which questions Gandhian perspective of development.

8.2 Khadi and Village Industries

Gandhi firmly believed that the essence of *swadeshi* consisted in producing enough cloth to wrap each Indian, which would be possible through spinning and weaving by the masses. The people needed to pledge themselves to the use of *swadeshi* cloth only. He added that the use of Khadi cloth for covering the body has greater implications. In his own words, "Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale *Swadeshi* mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great

Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 7,00,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both the parties" (Gandhi 1968: 289).

The potential to produce khadi lying at the fingertips of an individual makes him/ her empowered and proud of the identity. For Gandhi, khadi was a means of uniting the Indians, of acquiring economic freedom and equality. More importantly, khadi marked the decentralisation of production and distribution of the "necessaries of life".

Box 8.1: The Spinning Wheel

"If we feel for the starving masses of India, we must introduce the spinning wheel into their homes. We must, therefore, become experts and in order to make them realise the necessity of it, we must spin daily as a sacrament. If you have understood the secret of the spinning wheel, if you realise that it is a symbol of love of mankind, you will engage in no other outward activity. If many people do not follow you, you have more leisure for spinning, carding or weaving" (Gandhi 1968: 336).

The spinning wheel was a means of the economic upliftment of the poor and the despised on the one hand, while on the other it afforded considerable appeal on moral and spiritual grounds. The towns in the country that had flourished at the expense of the villages now had the opportunity to compensate the villages by buying cloth, which was spun and woven in the villages. This initiative went a long way in knitting economic and sentimental ties between people in the villages and in the towns. The spinning wheel became the centre of rural development. Anti-malaria campaigns, improvement in sanitation, settlement of disputes in villages and several other endeavours for enhancement of the quality of life in villages revolved around, in one way or the other, the spinning wheel. It provided an alternative means of livelihood to the underemployed and the unemployed people. For Gandhi, its adoption by the common people marked the protest against industrialism and materialism (Nanda 1958).

More importantly, the use of khadi reflected the faith and commitment of the masses to the practice of obtaining the necessities of life through the labour and intellect of the villagers. This marked the empowerment of the people in villages by making them self-sufficient and generating the confidence and the potential in them to overthrow their exploitation by the city dwellers. The use of khadi also ushered in the process of decentralisation of production and distribution of the basic necessities of life. Gandhi urged congressmen to promote khadi rigorously.

Gandhi said that other village industries stand apart from khadi primarily because they do not involve voluntary labour in large numbers. These industries may continue as a "handmaid of khadi" but they cannot exist without khadi. It may, however, be added that Gandhi did agree that the village economy could not be complete without the operation of village industries — those of hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, tanning, oil-pressing and others of this kind. What lay at the core of this thought was the urge to make the villages self-sufficient.

He maintained that impoverisation of India was inseparably linked with the increasing use of machinery. He noted that hand weaving as an occupation continued to thrive well in Bengal and other places where cloth mills were not established. On the contrary, the condition of workers, particularly that of women workers, was deplorable in Bombay (present-day Mumbai) and other cities where mills were set up. As a corollary, a boycott of machine-made

goods in favour of hand-made goods would infuse new life in the social and economic condition of the country. He added that since it was not easy to close down the established, functioning mills, it was appropriate to register resistance and protest at the time they were being set up. He was deeply convinced about the ability of the village people when he argued that no machinery in the world was a match for the willing hands and feet of the village people and of course the few simple wooden instruments that they make themselves. Gandhi was convinced that agriculture did not need revolutionary changes. The Indian peasant required the introduction of the spinning wheel, not the hand loom. This was because the handloom could be introduced in every home unlike the handloom. The restoration of the spinning-wheel would solve the economic problems of India at a stroke.

The All-India Village Industries Association (with headquarters at Maganwadi) supported those industries in villages that did not require help from outside the village and could be run with little capital. It was hoped that such industries in the villages would generate employment and purchasing power in the villages. Interestingly, the Association took upon itself the responsibility of training village workers. It published its own periodical, the *Gram Udyog Patrika* (Nanda 1958).

Reflection and Action 8.1

What is the importance of the spinning wheel in Gandhi's scheme of development?

8.3 Education

Gandhi firmly believed that basic education was an important means to develop the body and the mind. This stood out in sharp contrast to the common understanding of the concept and function of education as knowledge of letters, and of reading, writing and arithmetic as the basic constituents of primary education. He said that there was a need to improve all our languages. India should adopt Hindi as the universal language for the country with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters. Further, the English books that are indeed valuable need to be translated into different Indian languages.

Box 8.2: Gandhi on Religious Education

"My head begins to turn as I think of religious education. Our religious teachers are hypocritical and selfish; they will have to be approached. The *Mullas*, the *Dasturs* and the Brahmins hold the key in their hands, but if they will not have good sense, the energy that we have derived from English education will have to be devoted to religious education. This is not very difficult" (Gandhi 1968: 155).

Gandhi was convinced that excessive emphasis on English education would enslave the nation. He was sure that those who have received education through a foreign tongue could not represent the masses because the people do not identify themselves with such persons. In fact, they are identified more with the British than with the masses. It is commonly believed that people educated in the foreign tongue are not able to understand the aspirations of the masses, and therefore cannot speak on their behalf. On the contrary, instruction imparted in vernaculars leads to enrichment. Gandhi went to the extent of saying that the problems of village sanitation and others would have been resolved long ago and the village panchayats would have been a living fore suited to the requirements of self-governance. He did accept, however, that it was not indeed possible to do without English education altogether, at the same time adding that all those who have studied English needed to teach morality to their children through the mother tongue. Those who confine themselves to education in foreign languages undergo

strain and often commit themselves to imitating the west. This has far-reaching results on both, the body and the mind. Ideally, the school should be an extension of the home, which means that there should be no gulf between the impressions which the children gather at home, and those in the school. What he was asking for was continuity in terms of the social environment and value system at home and in the school.

For Gandhi, education did not imply spiritual knowledge or spiritual liberation after death. In essence, knowledge consists of all that is imperative for the service of the humankind; and for liberation, which means freedom from enslavement to domination and from the ambit of one's own created needs. Education, therefore, has to be geared in this direction. According to Gandhi, our ancient system of schooling and the education imparted in those schools was enough because character building was accorded the importance it deserves. For Gandhi, character building was basic in any educational system.

The basic objective of meaningful education was to generate the potential in children to create a new world order. This, Gandhi felt, was possible by way of engaging in socially useful labour, i.e., labour in the service of welfare of humankind. The idea formed the basis of his *nai-talim*, which was conceptualised in a way that would involve a harmonious development of the body, mind and soul. The process incorporated involvement in craft and industry as a medium of education. The hub of his ideas on education rested on the mission to place learning of a craft at the centre of the teaching programme whereby, spinning, weaving, leather-work, pottery, metal-work, basket-making, book-binding and other such activities that were often associated with the lower caste people or 'untouchables' were performed by upper caste pupils and literacy and acquisition of knowledge which were the prerogative of the upper caste people were available to the 'untouchables'. He wanted the schools to be self-supporting or else providing education to all the children would never become a reality. Further, financial independence would bring with it freedom from intervention by politicians and political parties.

The issue of adult education was crucial to Gandhi. Through adult education he envisaged to open the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and the vastness of the country and to generate awareness about the ills of foreign rule by word of mouth. It was widely realised that several villages were ignorant of the evils of foreign rule and of the means to overthrow it. He sought to combine education through word of mouth with literary education.

8.4 Economic Progress and 'Real Progress'

In a speech delivered on December 22, 1918, at the Muir College Economics Society, Allahabad, Gandhi candidly addressed the question, "Does economic progress clash with real progress?" Economic progress largely refers to material growth and advancement, often without a ceiling.

What is commonly argued in favour of material growth is the necessity of providing for the daily wants of people much before thinking or talking about their moral welfare. Moral progress is wrongly believed to come along with material progress. There is no denying that the requisites for survival are food, clothing and shelter but for this, there was no need to look up to economics or its laws.

Box 8.3: Gandhi on Material Progress

I should not have laboured my point as I have done, if I did not believe that in so far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, in so far as we are going downhill in the path of progress. Hence the ancient ideal has been limitation of activities promoting wealth. This does not put an end to all material ambition. We should still have, as we have had, in our midst people who make

the pursuit of wealth their aim in life. But we have always recognised that it is a fall from the ideal. It is a beautiful thing to know that the wealthiest among us often own that to have remained voluntarily poor would have been a higher state for them. “You cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice. Western nations are groaning under the heels of the monster—God of materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They today measure their progress in pounds, shillings, and pence. American wealth has become the standard. She is the envy of other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be wise, temperate and furious in a moment. I would have our leaders to teach us to be morally supreme in the world” (Tendulkar 1982: 196).

He firmly believed that working for economic equality called for abolishing the conflict between capital and labour. In operational terms, this means bridging the wide gulf between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. Gandhi adhered to the doctrine of trusteeship.

Unemployment and underemployment in villages were because of acute pressure on land and absence of supplementary industries. He realised that the decay of the village industries tightened the noose of poverty around the neck of *Harijans*. Removal of untouchability and economic amelioration, therefore, were inextricably entwined with each other. Against this backdrop, *swadeshi* acquired new urgency. He asserted that it was not enough that an article of use was being made in the country, it was important that the article was made in the village. He explained that some articles produced in villages might cost more than those produced in towns and cities, but one should still purchase them because purchase of these articles distributed wages and profits to the poor and to those in dire need (Nanda 1958).

Reflection and Action 8.2

From Gandhian perspective, what is the difference between material progress and real progress?

The Gandhian approach to development in the real sense was directed at the poorest of the poor for whom acquiring two square meals a day was uncertain. In one village, he said, “Empty your pockets for the poor”. This was his one line speech. Money spent on all that exceeded the bare requirements for survival was treated as wasteful. Alternatively, it could be used for providing meals to the poor.

Box 8.4: Gandhi on Non-Possession

“The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are therefore neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession of only what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich” (Gandhi 1968: 191)

8.5 *Swadeshi*

Gandhian perspective on development hinges on the concept of *swadeshi* or home economy. In operational terms, *swadeshi* called for self-governance, self-reliance, and self-employment of people, particularly those in villages. Economic and political power in the hands of the village assemblies would significantly reduce their vulnerability to the outside market forces and enable the villagers

to develop a strong economic base and give priority to local goods and services. The village community, then, would emerge as an extension of the family with cooperating individuals who share a common bond rather than competing individuals each of whom seeks to establish himself/herself over others.

Box 8.5: Gandhi's Village of Dreams

In one of the letters to Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, "The village of my dreams is still in my mind... my ideal village will contain intelligent human beings, they will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor smallpox; no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour" (Nehru cf Gandhi 1968: 99).

The principle of *swadeshi* implies the use of indigenous products and services. Gandhi explains the articulation of *swadeshi* in different spheres of life. One who follows *swadeshi* restricts himself/herself to the ancestral religion, that is, use of the immediate religious environment. Similarly, in the domain of politics, *swadeshi* implies making use of indigenous institutions; in the domain of economics, *swadeshi* implies the use of only those things that are produced indigenously. Now, in stressing on the use of home-grown and home-crafted products, Gandhi in no way implied that defects and deficiencies in these should be overlooked or allowed to be perpetuated. Instead, he stressed that the defects and deficiencies should be rooted out.

He felt that much of the poverty of the people could be removed if the spirit of *swadeshi* was followed with rigour in "economic and industrial life". It was his conviction that "if not one article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey". He clarified that it was a delusion to suppose that the duty of *swadeshi* begins and ends with spinning the wheel. In fact, *swadeshi* is a whole philosophy of life which involves dedication to the service of others. Communities practising *swadeshi* would not hanker after unlimited economic growth that becomes a limiting factor to self-development. Gandhi said that creation of unnecessary wants hampers self-growth. Moreover, the race for unprecedented economic growth leads to competition and strife, which are destructive. *Swadeshi*, on the other hand, is the way to peace with oneself, with neighbours, and with nature. It then is a kind of religious discipline to be undergone with total disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals. A person who is committed to *swadeshi* is not excessively concerned if a particular article that he/she needs is not available because it is not produced indigenously. The person learns to do without it and without several others which he/she may consider unnecessary.

Box 8.6: Who is a *Swadeshi*?

"A votary of *swadeshi* will carefully study his environment, and try to help his neighbours wherever possible by giving preference to local manufactures, even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects, but will not because of their defects, give them up in favour of foreign manufactures" (Gandhi 1968: 215).

8.6 Alternative Viewpoint

Development and progress as goals are based upon an ideal world of buttons as solutions wherein increasingly impressive and complex tasks are accomplished by the push of a button or the switch of a lever. Gandhi argues, however, that the technologies of creation of comfort are also able to generate discomfort and destruction. He points out that what is good for saving lives may lead very quickly to a spin-off production that ends lives. The mechanical principles that

allow the construction of ambulances and trains are also the basis for construction of guns capable of killing thousands in the most minor of border skirmishes. In the case of lawyers, for instance, conflict resolution is so painless and so sanitised that motivated lawyers “advance quarrels instead of repress them” (Gandhi 1938: 59). Similarly, doctors become so good at cleaning up the damage, one can sustain, that people stop being careful or coping with their pain. As Gandhi put it, “I am cured, I over-eat again, and I take his pills again” (Gandhi 1938: 63). In both examples, modern civilisation first presumes a competitive, unkind, and disconnected subject, then designs a system to treat that subject. It is here that the myopia of modern civilisation becomes apparent. While particular acts may seem justifiable, for example “one man ploughs a vast tract by means of steam engines, and can thus amass great wealth” (Ibid: 35), in a broader context it may be less so. Mass mechanised farming may produce “more”, but it may also destroy crop diversity, flood the local market, displace workers, cause pollution, and be unsustainable; only within a very limited short-term context would it seem scientific and even optimal.

Gandhi opposed what he considered a colonial attempt at reducing the world to its component parts. As he prophetically complained, “they wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods”(Ibid: 41). For him, this would be to rob the world of its important spiritual and personal content, to enslave it into being a commodity. Against this perception, Gandhi offers the model of ‘real’ civilisation as rooted in spiritual and intellectual tradition (Ibid: 69-71). Gandhi does not advocate simple destruction of the edifices of modern civilisation, but contests and opposes its ideological tenets calling for change in our mentality, the way we think.

Of course, Gandhi’s critique was not without ample, though often meaningless, responses from defenders of development. The retorts usually focused on both the comparative failures of Gandhi’s paradigm to produce “more” and on the ignorance and anarchy associated with the traditional. These arguments are classically symptomatic of the kind of myopia and paranoia of modern civilisation’s assessment of others. For Gandhi, one of the dangers of this discourse was its ability to convince people to think within the framework of development, progress, and ‘civilisation’ (Gandhi 1938: 35). This encouraged a kind of orientalism in them wherein no one is superior to the promethean defenders of development and all others are judged by the internal standards of technology. Many claimed the village was a bastion of ignorance and violence. Gandhi’s rejoinder is simple: just to criticise modern civilisation is not to endorse all things that are not modern civilisation — an enemy’s enemies are not necessarily our friends. Rather, Gandhi supported the idea to prevent ignorance, poverty, and viciousness in the village, but not going about doing this by the means of modern civilisation (Ibid: 71). While critics could understand that Gandhi’s vision of *Hind Swaraj* was not interchangeable with savagery, they did think that it both encouraged primitivism and that modern civilisation was a better solution to these problems than what they considered ‘realistic’ alternatives. To an extent others did agree with Gandhi, it was often because they thought they had found a useful tactic, a strategic tool they could salvage from Gandhi’s thoughts. This fundamentally misses the point of the critique because it tries to incorporate its conclusions back into the system it critiques.

Instead, the real source of the impasse between Gandhi’s critique and modern civilisation’s defenders was the incommensurability of their discourses. Gandhi considers Nehru as a political ally, as the best of the options and a personal friend (Chandra 1975). However, they never saw eye- to- eye on issues of development and technology - Gandhi described this as a “big difference of opinion” between them (Ibid). Instead, Nehru took Gandhi’s criticism as “an

obscurantist text" (Ibid) and restated the tenets of modern civilisation. He felt it might not be perfect, but if we can provide better homes for more people, then we 'must' do that. Nehru deployed the typical demand of almost orgiastic immediacy as a requirement for practice of the theory, "Congress should not lose itself in arguments over such matters which can probably produce great confusion in people's minds resulting in an inability to act in the present" (Ibid).

8.7 Conclusion

It may be understood that the Gandhian perspective on development is holistic in the sense that it encompasses social, economic and spiritual growth in synchrony. The two major themes that were undercurrents in some of his most influential writings and speeches in the context of development were, (i) the use of the spinning wheel and the importance of khadi; and (ii) local self-governance and self-reliance for social and economic development.

What is more important to note is the fact that it does not emphasise material progress and growth. Instead, it argues in favour of 'self-development', and self-reliance through decentralisation of control. He was sure that empowering of the village people and strengthening the village economy were critical factors in the process of development. In fact, meaningful development was one in which the principles of *swadeshi*, among others, were adhered to.

8.8 Further Reading

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