

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL THEORY

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Unit 2 What is Politics: Study of State and Power	Dr. Manoj Sinha, University of Delhi
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COURSE INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL THEORY

August Comte had opined that theories are the conceptual lenses through which we can sort out the plethora of facts that we confront daily. In fact, without theories we might not be able to identify something as a fact at all. There are some features of a good theory. The first virtue is parsimony which implies frugality. A theory should be parsimonious to forgo unnecessary speculation and confusing details. Second feature of a sound theory is accuracy. Theories must be sufficiently detailed to allow for accurate assessments and explanations of the world. An elegant theory simply yet precisely interprets, describes, explains or predicts some aspect of the world. However, these virtues are mostly identified as features of scientific theories. The explanatory and predictive behaviour of natural sciences is not found in social sciences as too many uncontrolled and unforeseen forces affect political and social life and that is why, social and political practices are seldom replicable. In the light of these problems, some experts have argued that social scientists should not try to mimic the natural sciences; instead, they should develop their own standards and procedures. For theorists of social and political life, therefore, the ability to feel and think in ways similar to the object of study is a crucial component of their task.

In the West, political theory emerged out of political philosophy on one hand, and political thought, on the other. But, it should be remembered that political theory is different from both. It differs from political philosophy in the sense that it is less formal and atomistic and less concerned to establish logical relationships between individual political concepts. Political theory is different from political thought by being less historical in focus. Thus, political theory is an essentially mixed mode of thought. It not only embraces deductive argument and empirical theory, but combines them with normative concern, so acquiring a practical, action-guiding character. It is an attempt to arrive at a comprehensive, coherent and general account of the sorts of things that we talk about when we discuss about politics. A good political theorist is able to move between social conditions and political concepts. Political theory must involve a good deal of knowledge of political practice. Another aspect of political theory is that it is always defined by the specific situations and problems political thinkers have witnessed. To understand political theory, we need to understand both the history of ideas on which the thinkers draw and the problems they considered themselves to be facing and to which their work was addressed. Studying the context in which political theory originally arose allows us to critically assess whose particular interests it reflected.

In the light of above discussion, this course on **Understanding Political Theory** is divided in three blocks.

Block 1 is **Introducing Political Theory** and has two units namely **What is Political Theory: Two Approaches – Normative and Empirical** and **What is Politics: Study of State and Power**. This section introduces the students to the idea of political theory, its historical evolution and main approaches to study it. This section also provides an insight into concepts of politics, state and power.

Block 2 is **Approaches to Political Theory** and has five units namely, **Liberal, Marxist, Conservative, Feminist** and **Post-modern**. Apart from discussing these theories in detail, this section also critically analyses them so as to develop critical thinking.

Block 3 is **The Grammar of Democracy** having five units namely, **The Idea of Democracy, Democracy, Representation and Accountability, Representative Democracy and its Limits, Participation and Dissent** and **Democracy and Citizenship**. This section deals with the concept of democracy in detail including various types of democracies, main theories and relationship between democracy and issues like dissent and citizenship. Each unit has inbuilt Check Your Progress Exercises which would help students in examining their conceptual understanding of the subject. At the end of the course, Suggested Readings cover a list of useful books for further analysis.



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Block 2
Approaches To Political Theory

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BLOCK 2 APPROACHES TO POLITICAL THEORY

Block 2 has five units and covers main approaches to study political theory. Unit 3 highlights the liberal approach. Liberalism is a political ideology based on a commitment to individualism, freedom, toleration and consent. Unit 4 deals with main principles of Marxism, Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism, Theory of Surplus Value, Class Struggle, Revolution, Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Communism. Unit 5 highlights conservative political theory, its various meanings and features and also the ideas of Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott. Unit 6 discusses feminist political theory, its three waves and feminist view about international politics. Unit 7 is the last unit which highlights post-modern approach to political theory.



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UNIT 3 LIBERAL*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Liberal Theory: Definition and Characteristics
- 3.3 Different Phases of Liberalism
 - 3.3.1 Classical Liberalism
 - 3.3.2 Modern Liberalism/Welfarism
 - 3.3.3 Neo-Liberalism
- 3.4 Limitations
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 References
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

3.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Define Liberal theory;
- Describe its characteristics ;
- Discuss its different phases and finally; and
- Critically evaluate it.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

What is a political ideology? In the realm of political theory, the term ‘ideology’ is applied in two contexts: first, as a set of ideas which are accepted by a particular group, party or nation without examination; and second it is considered the science of ideas which examines as to how different ideas are formed, how truth is distorted and how we can overcome distortions to discover true knowledge. Moreover, it explains our social reality, interprets it in a certain way, evolves a set of interrelated principles, contests the nature of the political, and prescribes appropriate action. Liberalism is a political ideology like socialism, fascism, or nationalism, based on a commitment to individualism, freedom, toleration and consent. It was the creation of the climate of opinion that emerged at the time of Renaissance and Reformation in Europe. As an ideology and also a way of life, ‘it reflected the economic, social and political aspirations of the rising middle class which later on became the capitalist class.’ In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, when the feudal system was emerging; a new political system was evolving. The establishment of the absolute nation-states in England and Europe gave birth to a kind of political system in which the authority of the king was absolute. The beginning of liberalism was a protest against the hierarchical and privileged authority, and monarchy – a protest which involved every aspect of life, and the main slogan of the protest was freedom. To achieve

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the liberty of the individual and to challenge the authority of the state, liberalism demanded liberty in every field of life: intellectual, social, religious, cultural, political and economic etc. However, liberty has two different perspectives: Negative and Positive. The central problem with which these liberties were concerned is the relationship between the individual and the state. The negative or the classical aspect of (liberty) liberalism remained dominant for a very long time, especially during the classical liberalism era when the state interference was minimal. Negative and positive liberalism differ from each other in that while the former advocate's liberty as the absence of interference or constraints or 'freedom from' outside authority, the latter supports the idea of liberty as 'freedom to' moral and self-development, self-realisation and self-mastery.

In terms of historical background, liberal theory has a longer history than most political ideologies. In many ways, liberalism captures the ideological map of various political struggles that human beings have witnessed roughly in the last 3000 years. However, some claim that its roots go back further in history. Ancient Greece kindled the first spark of self-rule and had inspired generations of liberals. However, philosophical and political roots of liberalism can be traced in the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Subsequently, it was developed, revised and amplified by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill in their Utilitarian perspective as well as by Herbert Spencer through his doctrine of 'Survival of the fittest' and Thomas Paine viewing the state as a 'necessary evil'. On the economic front, the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Thomas Robert, Malthus and others provided ground and arguments for economic liberty. Adam Smith and his masterpiece Wealth of Nations introduced a new perspective of Political Economy.

3.2 LIBERAL THEORY: DEFINITION AND THINKERS

There are many versions of liberal theory, but the central point of all versions is freedom. However, the context of freedom has been defined differently by liberal thinkers. What is liberal theory or liberalism? As a writer has said, liberalism is a principle of politics which insists on liberty of individuals as the first and foremost goal of public policy. Liberty, in this sense, implies 'liberation' from restraints- particularly, from the restraints imposed by an authoritarian state. In fact, it is not a fixed mode of thought, but an intellectual movement which seeks to accommodate new ideas in order to face new situations and new challenges. According to Barry (1995), liberalism embraces both explanation and evaluation. Its explanatory concern is with accounting for that order of events which we call a social order, and this includes economic, legal and political phenomena. In the liberal view, the state is a necessary evil. Liberalism treats the state as the means and the individual as the end. It rules out the absolute authority of the state. According to *John Locke*, liberalism is mainly based on these beliefs/tenets:

- i) Man/ Woman is a rational creature.
- ii) There is no basic contradiction between an individual's self-interest and the common interest.
- iii) Man/Woman is endowed with certain natural rights which cannot be transgressed by any authority.

- iv) Civil society and the state are artificial institutions created by individuals to serve the common interest.
- v) Liberalism believes in the primacy of procedure over the end product. The liberal view of freedom, equality, justice and democracy is a search for the right procedure in different spheres of social life.
- vi) Liberalism promotes civil liberties of individual, including freedom of thought and expression, freedom of association and movement, personal freedom and strict compliance with legal and judicial procedure.

The liberal theory developed in two main directions; a) individualism and b) utilitarianism. Individualism focused on the individual as a rational creature. It required that individual's dignity, independent existence and judgment should be given full recognition while making public policy and decisions. *John Locke* and *Adam Smith* are the early exponents of individualism. On the other hand, utilitarianism stands for 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' where the interest of the few may be sacrificed in the interest of majority. *Bentham* and *Mill* are the supporters of utilitarianism.

Thinkers of Liberal Theory

Early exponents of liberalism include *John Locke* (1632-1704), *Adam Smith* (1723-90) and *Jeremy Bentham* (1748-1832). Locke is known as the father of liberalism, Smith is known as the father of economics and political economy and Bentham as the founder of utilitarianism. All of them defended the principle of laissez-faire which implies the least interference of the state in the economic activities of individuals. They are the founders of Classical Liberalism which is also called negative liberalism because it envisions a negative role of the state in the sphere of mutual interaction of individuals. Locke emphasized toleration and freedom of individual conscience. Bentham emphasized the expansion of the market economy and restriction of the sphere of state activity. Mill sought to revise this view of utilitarians to plead for the expansion of state activity for the promotion of general welfare. He recommended positive role of the state for the promotion of individual liberty.

John Stuart Mill (1806-73) sought to modify utilitarianism and the principle of laissez-faire on philosophical grounds which paved the way for the theory of welfare state. Then T. H. Green (1836-82), sought to add a moral dimension to liberalism and thus, advanced a full-fledged theory of welfare state. On the political side, liberalism promotes democracy; on the economic side, it promotes capitalism. Liberalism, generally, believes in the ability of individuals to make meaningful choices and to be responsible for them. The importance that liberalism attributes to individuals received the most robust intellectual defense from Immanuel Kant who, influenced by Rousseau, formulated the clearest case for individual autonomy. Kantian autonomy may be understood as the condition in which individuals are free from external determination such as coercion, threat or manipulation in taking actions to implement one's choices. His/her choice should be free from internal influences (passions and prejudices) and must be guided by reason.

Locke, Kant and Mill have been the three most important thinkers who shaped the liberal tradition. Contemporary liberalism owes much to them. In the 20th century, the most profound liberal thinker was *John Rawls*, whose influence has

been the most profound in liberal thinking. Two monumental treaties written by Rawls – *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993) – have set the contemporary terms of debate and discussion on liberalism and its values. A central trait of Rawl’s liberalism is its political view that citizens are entitled to live in accordance with their own freely chosen values or ends.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the main tenets of liberalism?

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3.3 DIFFERENT PHASES OF LIBERALISM

Liberalism can be divided into three types/phases: the Classical, the Modern and Neo-liberalism. However, neo-liberalism is contemporary and influenced by Classical liberalism.

3.3.1 Classical Liberalism

The early exponents of liberal theory strived for liberty in all spheres and insisted that law must enforce all contracts (excluding slavery) since each individual was the best judge of his own interest. The state was not allowed to impose its own conception of ‘good’ on individuals in their mutual dealings. This idea of negative liberty led to the doctrine of laissez faire; that is, freedom from government interference in economic affairs. Hence, most of the advocates of negative liberty, such as, *Adam Smith* (1723-90), *Jeremy Bentham* (1748-1832), *James Mill* (1773-1836), *Herbert Spencer* (1820-1903) and *Henry Sidgwick* favoured a minimal state. Such a combination of political and economic arguments for liberty is known as classical liberalism or laissez-faire individualism. Liberal ideas resulted from the breakdown of feudalism in Europe and growth, in its place, of a market capitalist society. It became the centrepiece of classical, or nineteenth-century, liberalism. It is usually associated with the work of John Locke, besides Adam Smith and Thomas Paine, and other 20th century thinkers such as *Friedrich Von Hayek*, *Robert Nozick* and *Milton Friedman*. Its chief distinguishing ideas are those of limited government, the rule of law, the inviolability of private property, the freedom to enter into, and maintain contracts and finally, the acceptance by the individual of their own fates.

In the 1770s, most people believed that rights came from the government. People thought they had only such rights as government decided to give them. But following the British philosopher John Locke, Jefferson argued that it is the other way around. People have rights apart from those given by a government,

as part of their nature. Further, people can both form governments and dissolve them. The only legitimate purpose of government is to protect these rights. It was John Locke who provided classical liberalism one of its most influential ideas that the aim and justification of government are to protect the *life, liberty* and property of its citizens. These are natural rights constituted in, and protected by, natural law, which is antecedent to political society. Locke believed that the appropriate means by which the government can provide this protection is a system of justice defined and made possible by law. All citizens are equally subject to the authority of the government and citizens find it reasonable to accept the authority because each is guaranteed the rights to life, liberty, and property. According to *Heywood* (2004), classical liberals emphasize that human beings are essentially self-interested and largely self-sufficient; as far as possible, people should be responsible for their own lives and circumstances. One of the clearest statements of this philosophy is found in the *Declaration of Independence*.

By the end of the 19th century, some serious consequences of the Industrial revolution and laissez-faire market occurred in the form of rising of capitalism. The main problem was that the profit had concentrated in the hand of a small number of industrialists. Consequently, masses of people failed to benefit from the wealth flowing from factories that resulted in the poverty of the populace. On the other side, because of the industrial revolution, the production of goods and services were at a massive level, but masses could not afford to buy. Markets became glutted, and the system periodically came to a near halt in periods of stagnation that finally resulted in the Great Depression. Moreover, the industrialist class used its power not only in economic decision making but also influenced and controlled government to limit competition and obstruct social reforms. It became the main drawbacks of classical liberalism vis-a-vis the laissez-faire market economy.

3.3.2 Modern Liberalism/ Welfarism

The aforementioned problem brought a new change in society, the uprising of the working class. In the 20th century the rising working-class questioned classical liberalism and its core argument to support negative liberty, i.e. laissez-faire market. Laissez-faire individualism encouraged capitalist economy, and consequently, the working class was deprived of its due share. A new form of liberalism came up – *Modern Liberalism*, also known as welfarism. Thinkers of this strand of liberalism believed that government has to remove obstacles that stand in the way of individual freedom. The main exponent of this statement was T.H. Green. According to him, excessive power of government might have constituted the greatest obstacle to freedom in an earlier era, but by the middle of the 19th century these powers had been greatly reduced or mitigated. Now, there were different kinds of hindrances, such as poverty, disease, discrimination and ignorance that could be overcome only with positive (positive liberty) assistance of government.

It was John Stuart Mill (1806-73) who introduced the concept of positive liberty and consequently the transition from negative to positive liberalism. However, Mill started with a defense of laissez-faire individualism, but realizing its weaknesses in the light of the new socio-economic realities, he proceeded to modify it. He, therefore, sought to discover an area where state intervention

could be justified. At the outset, he drew a distinction between two types of actions of men: 'self-regarding actions' whose effect was confined to the individual himself; and 'other-regarding actions' which affected others. The real significance of making such a distinction lay in Mill's efforts to define a sphere where an individual's behaviour could be regulated in the interests of the community. Thus, he was contemplating a positive role for the *state* in securing social welfare even if it implied curbing liberty of the individual to some extent. It was Mill who gave a sound theory of taxation, pleaded for the limitation of the right of inheritance, and insisted on state provision of education. After *J. S. Mill*, *T.H. Green* (1836-82), *L.T. Hobhouse* (1864-1929) and *H.J. Laski* (1893-1950) further developed the positive concept of liberty. Green postulated a theory of rights and insisted on the positive role of the state in creating conditions under which men could effectively exercise their moral freedom. Hobhouse and Laski advocated that private property was not an absolute right and that the state must secure the welfare of the people- no matter if it is constrained to curtail the economic liberty of the privileged few.

It is important to note that the political thought of the early exponents of positive liberty was associated with the theory of the welfare state, which first appeared in England and then spread to other parts of the world. Positive liberty was considered an essential complement to negative liberty in all modern states. However, some contemporary liberal thinkers, known as *Libertarians*, have sought to lay renewed emphasis on negative liberty. Of these, *Isaiah Berlin* (1909-97), *F. A. Hayek* (1899-1992), *Milton Friedman* (1912-2006) and *Robert Nozick* (1938- 2002) are the most prominent.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, however, a form of social liberalism emerged which looked more favourably on welfare reform and economic management. It became the characteristic theme of modern or twentieth-century liberalism. It is best illustrated in the views of John Stuart Mill, besides those of Kant, Green, and Hobhouse. In very distinct ways modern liberalism establishes an affirmative relationship between liberty (especially, the positive variant) and human progress. The modern liberal believes the man to be a 'progressive being' with unlimited potential for self-development; one which does *not* jeopardize a similar potential in others. This approach lays down and justifies the value of distributive justice and experiments such as the welfare state. Modern liberalism exhibits a more sympathetic attitude towards the state. It is also known as welfarism.

The process of modern liberalism or welfarism was interrupted by First World War. The devastation of WWI was massive, but the positive outcome was the overturning of four of Europe's great imperial dynasties- Germany, Austria, Hungary, Russia and Ottoman Turkey-into liberal democracies. Europe was reshaped by the *Treaty of Versailles* on the basis of the principle of self-determination, which in practice meant the breakup of imperialists in *nationally homogeneous* states. Subsequently, the League of Nations was created in the hope of preventing wars and settling international disputes in a peaceful manner. However, these steps could not prevent future wars. Many events such as *harsh* peace terms imposed by victorious Allies, *Great Depression*, *Nazi uprising* and *Soviet Communism* threatened liberalism. This was because during the postwar period, the old rhetoric *Sharing the Wealth* gave way to a concentration on growth rates as liberals inspired by the British economist J M Keynes' policy – wanted

the government to borrow, tax, and spend not only merely to counter contractions of the business cycle, but to encourage the expansion of economy. Thus, a further expansion of social welfare programme occurred in liberal democracies during the postwar decades. Modern welfare state practices were introduced in Britain and America, which provided not only usual forms of social insurance but also pensions, unemployment benefits, subsidized medical care, family allowances and government-funded higher education. The liberal democratic model was also adopted by Asia and Africa by most of the new nations that emerged from the dissolution of the British and French colonial empires in the 1950s and early 60s. The new nations adopted the western model believing that these model and institutions would lead to the same freedom and prosperity that had been achieved in Europe. However, the results were mixed.

3.3.3 Neo-Liberalism

The three decades of unprecedented growth that the Western countries experienced after the Second World War proved the success of modern liberalism. However, in the mid-1970s, slowing of economic growth in the Western countries presented a serious challenge to modern liberalism. By the end of that decade economic stagnation, maintenance of social benefits of the welfare state pushed governments towards excessive taxation and massive debt that showed up the failure of Keynesian economics. As modern liberals struggled to meet the challenge of stagnating living standards in industrial economies, others saw an opportunity for a revival of classical liberalism with some modification, and that came as neo-liberalism.

It is a contemporary version of classical liberalism (also known as libertarianism) which seeks to restore laissez-faire individualism. It criticizes the welfare state, therefore opposes state intervention and control of economic activities. The chief exponents of this perspective include *Milton Friedman* (1912-2006) and *Robert Nozick* (1938-2002). In the second half of the twentieth century, these thinkers realized that the idea of welfare state was inimical to individual liberty, as it involved the forced transfer of resources from the more competent to the less competent. In order to restore individual liberty, they sought to revive the principle of laissez-faire not only in the economic sphere but also in the social and political sphere. Neo-liberalism advocates full autonomy and freedom of the individual. In the political sphere, neo-liberalism particularly insists that man's economic activity must be actively liberated from all restrictions to enable him to achieve true progress and prosperity. The ideology emphasizes the value of free market competition; hence it also promotes laissez-faire economy. Furthermore, it promotes minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs and its commitment to the freedom of trade and capital.

Although the terms sound similar, neo-liberalism is distinct from modern liberalism. Both have their ideological roots in classical liberalism of the 19th century, which advocated economic laissez-faire and the freedom (or liberty) of individuals against the excessive power of government. This variant of liberalism is often associated with the economist Adam Smith, who argued in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that markets are governed by an "invisible hand" and thus, should be subject to minimal government interference.

However, liberalism evolved over time into a number of different (and often competing) traditions. Modern liberalism developed from the social-liberal

tradition, which focused on impediments to individual freedom — including poverty, inequality, disease, discrimination, and ignorance — that had been created or exacerbated by unfettered capitalism and could be ameliorated only through direct state intervention. Such measures began in the late 19th century with workers’ compensation schemes, the public funding of schools and hospitals, and regulations on working hours and conditions and eventually, by the mid-20th century, encompassed broad range of social services and benefits characteristic of the so-called welfare state. By the 1970s, however, economic stagnation and increasing public debt prompted some economists to advocate a return to classical liberalism, which in its revived form came to be known as neo-liberalism. The intellectual foundations of that revival were primarily the work of the Austrian-born British economist *Friedrich von Hayek*, who argued that interventionist measures aimed at the redistribution of wealth lead inevitably to totalitarianism, and of the American economist *Milton Friedman*, who rejected government fiscal policy as a means of influencing the business cycle. Their views were enthusiastically embraced by the major conservative political parties in Britain and the United States, which achieved power with the lengthy administrations of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–90) and the U.S. President Ronald Reagan (1981–89). Thatcherism and Reaganism dominated the socio-political economic discourse for a long time.

Neo-liberal ideology and policies became increasingly influential, as illustrated by the British Labour Party’s official abandonment of its commitment to the “common ownership of the means of production” in 1995 and by the cautiously pragmatic policies of the Labour Party and the U.S. Democratic Party from the 1990s. As national economies became more interdependent in the new era of economic globalization, neo-liberals also promoted free-trade policies and the free movement of international capital. The clearest sign of the new importance of neo-liberalism, however, was the emergence of libertarianism as a political force, as evidenced by the increasing prominence of the Libertarian Party in the United States and by the creation of assorted think tanks in various countries, which sought to promote the libertarian ideal of markets and sharply limited governments. During the 1990s, India also adopted the liberalization policy. The 1990s was the era of liberalization; different regional organizations and interconnected trade relations promoted the new liberal economic policy. However, the Lehman Bank crisis in 2007 and later the Euro crisis in 2009 led some economists and political leaders to reject the neo-liberal dominance of the market (Maximally free market) and to resume the greater government regulation of financial and banking industries.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the main differences between Classical and Modern Liberalism?

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3.4 LIMITATIONS

It is worth noting that Locke’s philosophical and political beliefs represent the basic tenets of early liberalism which paved the way for the rise of capitalism. Locke particularly promoted a line of thinking which was designed to protect the economic interests of the then newly emerging merchant- industrialist class and pleaded for vesting political power in this class. And it also encouraged capitalism. Liberalism has been a dynamic philosophy which has responded to the changing needs of time but also has failed. There are a few problems with this theory which can be pointed out as its failure: It retains its bourgeois character- liberalism arose for the protection of the interests of the bourgeoisie when political power was wielded by feudal interests. Actual imbalance of group interests- contemporary liberalism upholds representative democracy on the assumption that the state represents the interests of all groups within society and that it ensures reconciliation of conflicting interests. However, bringing change in its core arguments such as laissez-faire individualism to welfare and promotion of democracy and free trade, liberalism is criticized for its complexity. Marxists have criticized the liberal commitment to civic rights and potential equality because it ignores the reality of unequal class power. Feminists argue that individualism is invariably construed on the basis of male norms which legitimize gender inequality. The early period of liberalism encouraged capitalism. In the 20th-century welfare policy and intervention of the state were to some extent incorporated in modern liberal theory. It also promoted the democratization of the state. However, the 20th century was the century of dictatorship, depression and war. Neo-liberalism promoted trade and economic interdependencies. The 21st century is facing an economic crisis that is testing liberalism. Especially, after the Euro crisis of 2009 preceded by the global financial crisis of 2007. Many scholars stated that in this neo-liberal market economy, the world is not facing a war of tanks, but a war of banks.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the shortcomings of liberalism?

.....

3.5 LET US SUM UP

Liberal theory is considered as the oldest ideology, and it was considered as a life style as it promotes the freedom of the individual. The theory has evolved and changed its basic concept from laissez-faire to the welfare state to laissez-faire with minimal state interference and focusing on the individual’s rights and freedom. However, the failure of the welfare state policy and the contemporary global economic crisis has raised questions about the shortcomings of liberal

theory; the future of liberal theory and its practice will depend largely on how precisely it meets challenges before it.

3.6 REFERENCES

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3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight that liberalism sees individual as an end and the state as the means, also include views of John Locke, Immanuel Kant and J S Mill.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) In classical liberalism, due to least role of state, capitalism creates inequalities that hinder an individual's development. Modern liberalism argues for direct state intervention to tackle issues like poverty, inequality etc.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Highlight that liberalism retains its bourgeois character and leads to class divisions, legitimizes gender inequality.

UNIT 4 MARXIST*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 What is Marxism?
 - 4.2.1 Utopian and Scientific Socialism
 - 4.2.2 Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism
- 4.3 Basic Principles of Marxism
 - 4.3.1 Dialectical Materialism
 - 4.3.2 Historical Materialism
 - 4.3.3 Theory of Surplus Value
 - 4.3.4 Class Struggle
 - 4.3.5 Revolution
 - 4.3.6 Dictatorship of the Proletariat
 - 4.3.7 Communism
- 4.4 Theory of Alienation
- 4.5 Theory of Freedom
- 4.6 Critical Appraisal
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 References
- 4.9 Answers to Check your Progress Exercises

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will read about the theory and practice of Marxism, propounded by Karl Marx and others. The basic tenets of the philosophy comprising of dialectical and historical materialism, the theory of surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and communism are discussed at length. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the pre-Marxian strands of socialism such as utopian socialism;
- Enumerate, describe and discuss the basic postulates of Marxism;
- Comment on other important components of the Marxist theory such as the theories of alienation and freedom and finally; and
- Critique Marxism as well as comment on its contemporary relevance.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The present unit aims at examining and explaining the principles of Marxism, which is the most revolutionary ideology of our age. Along with liberalism, Marxism ranks as the most important philosophy of our time. Liberalism, Idealism and Marxism are the three important theories of Political Science. C.L Wayper has divided various views regarding the state into three parts, viz., state as a

* Prof. Tejpratap Singh, Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, adapted from Unit 26, EPS-11

machine (organic view), as an organism (mechanistic view) and as a class (class view). The organic view is idealism, the mechanistic view is Liberalism and the class view is Marxism. The present unit is subdivided into the definition of Marxism, Utopian and Scientific Socialism, Revolutionary and Evolutionary Socialism, the main principles of Marxism, a critique and a conclusion.

4.2 WHAT IS MARXISM ?

Marxism generally refers to the ideas of the German philosopher, Karl Marx. But Marxism does not mean exclusively the ideas of Marx. It includes the ideas of Marx, Friedrich Engels and their supporters, who call themselves Marxists. Thus, Marxism refers to the body of ideas, which predominantly contains the ideas of Karl Marx. Marxism is a living philosophy. Marxist thinkers are continuously contributing to the philosophy of Marxism. Thus, it is said that Marx is dead, but Marxism is still alive. The Marxist philosophy existed even before the birth of Karl Marx. This is the reason David McLellan has written three volumes on Marxism, viz., *Marxism before Marx; Thought of Karl Marx* and *Marxism after Marx*. Similarly, the Polish thinker Leszek Kolakowski has authored three volumes on Marxism. The point once again is that Marxism does not mean only the ideas of Karl Marx.

4.2.1 Utopian and Scientific Socialism

As said earlier, Marxism existed before Marx. These are known as the early socialist thinkers. Karl Marx calls them Utopian Socialists. They were utopian, because their diagnosis of the social ills was correct, but their remedy was wrong. It was impracticable, and therefore, they were called utopian. The world 'utopia' was derived from a novel of Thomas Moore titled, 'Utopia.' It refers to an imaginary island, called Utopia, where a perfect socio-economic-political system existed. There was no exploitation and people were happy. Some important utopian socialist thinkers are *Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc, Saint Simon, Sismondi* and *Proudhon*. Marx calls his socialism as 'Scientific Socialism'. It is scientific, because it offers the economic interpretation of history by using the scientific methodology of dialectical materialism. It explains not only the true causes of exploitation, but also offers the scientific remedy of revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat to cure the social ills of exploitation. It not only offers scientific reasons for class division and also struggle in society, but also provides for a scientific mechanism to establish a classless and exploitation less society.

4.2.2 Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism

Socialism is further divided into evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. Evolutionary socialism does not believe in revolution and wants to attain socialism through peaceful means. Evolutionary Socialists have faith in parliamentary democracy and want to bring social change through the ballot. They eschew violence and so, are opposed to a violent revolution. They also do *not* subscribe to the dictatorship of the proletariat and advocate a peaceful democratic transition from a class divided to a classless society. Fabian Socialism, Guild Socialism, Democratic Socialism are all various types of evolutionary socialism. Revolutionary socialism, on the other hand, believes in class struggle, revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to them, social change

cannot be peaceful. It has to be violent. A peaceful revolution is a contradiction in terms. Revolution is the midwife of social change, and this revolution must be violent. Revolutionary Marxism is generally identified with the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. Syndicalism is also a type of revolutionary socialism.

Evolutionary socialism also traces its roots from the ideas of Karl Marx and Engels. They have talked about the withering away of the state. Exponents of evolutionary socialism have picked up the theory of withering away of the state, and argued that gradually through peaceful means, social change can be effected and an exploitation free and classless society can be established. However, the critics of evolutionary socialism do not accept this thesis, and argue that the idea of withering away of the state applies only to the socialist state or the dictatorship of the proletariat and not to the capitalist state. It will never wither away. It has to be smashed through a violent revolution. Therefore, the logic of evolutionary socialism is flawed.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Distinguish between Utopian and Scientific Socialism.

or

between Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism.

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4.3 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM

The basic tenets of Marxism are the following: dialectical materialism, historical materialism, the theory of surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. Now, these principles will be discussed in detail.

4.3.1 Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical materialism is the scientific methodology developed by Marx and Engels for the interpretation of history. Here, Marx has borrowed heavily from his predecessors, particularly, the German philosopher *Hegel*. Dialectics is a very old methodology, employed to discover truth by exposing contradictions, through a clash of opposite ideas. Hegel refined it by developing the trilogy of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It is popularly known as the *Dialectical Triad*. Progress or growth takes place through the dialectical process. At every stage of

growth, it is characterised by contradictions. These contradictions induce further changes, progress, and development. The thesis is challenged by its anti-thesis. Both contain elements of truth and falsehood. Truth is permanent, but falsehood is transitory. In the ensuing conflict of the thesis and the anti-thesis, the truth remains, but the false elements are destroyed. These false elements constitute contradictions. The true elements of both the thesis and the anti-thesis are fused together in a synthesis. This evolved synthesis during the course of time becomes a thesis and so, it is again challenged by its opposite anti-thesis, which again results in a synthesis. This process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis continues until the stage of perfection is reached. In this evolutionary process, a stage will come, when there will be no false elements. These will be destroyed at different stages of evolution. Ultimately, only the truth remains, because it is never destroyed. It will constitute the perfect stage and there will be no contradictions and so, there will be no further growth. The dialectical process will come to an end after arriving at the perfect truth. It is the contradictions, which move the dialectical process and a complete elimination of contradictions marks the end of the dialectical process itself.

For materialism, Marx is highly indebted to the *French* school of materialism, mainly the French materialist thinker *Ludwig Feuerbach*. It is the *matter*, which is the ultimate reality and not the idea. The latter is a reflection of the former. How we earn our bread determines our ideas. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness. Marx has observed that “Hegel’s dialectics was standing on its head and I have put it on its feet”. Hegel has developed dialectical idealism. For him, it is the idea, which ultimately matters. Idea lies in the base or the sub-structure, which determines everything in the superstructure. Society, polity, economy are in this superstructure which is shaped by the prevalent dominant ideas of the age. Ultimately it is the idea, which matters, and the other things are only its reflection. Marx replaced idea with matter. According to Marx, the material or the economic forces are in the substructure and the idea is a part of the superstructure. Idea is the reflection of material forces. The economic forces determine the idea and not vice-versa.

Thus, Marx has reversed the position of idea and matter. This is the reason that he claims that “in Hegel it was upside down and I have corrected it”. The *base* or the substructure consists of the forces of production and the relations of production. These two together constitute the mode of production. When there is a change in the forces of production because of development in technology, it brings changes in the relations of production. Thus, a change in the mode of production brings a corresponding change in the superstructure. Society, polity, religion, morals, values, norms, etc. are a part of the superstructure and shaped by the mode of production.

4.3.2 Historical Materialism

Historical materialism is the application of dialectical materialism to the interpretation of history. It is the economic interpretation of world history by applying the Marxian methodology of dialectical materialism. The world history has been divided into four stages: primitive communism, the slavery system, feudalism and capitalism. Primitive communism refers to the earliest part of human history. It was a propertyless, exploitationless, classless and stateless

society. Means of production were backward, because technology was undeveloped. The community owned the means of production. They were not under private ownership and so there was no exploitation. Stone made hunting weapons, the fishing net and hooks were the means of production. The entire community owned these. Production was limited and meant for self-consumption. There was no surplus production and so there was no private property. Since there was no private property, there was no exploitation. Since there was no exploitation, there was no class division. Since there was no class division, there was no class struggle. Since there was no class struggle, there was no state. It was, thus, a communist society, but of a primitive type. Though life was difficult, it was characterized by the absence of exploitation, conflict and struggle.

Technology is not static; it evolves continuously. Technological development results in the improvement of production. This leads to surplus production, which results in the emergence of private property. Means of production are now not under the community, but private ownership. Society is, thus, divided into property owning and propertyless classes. By virtue of the ownership of the means of production, the property owning class exploits the propertyless class. Class division in society and exploitation cause class struggle. Since there is class struggle, the dominant class, the property owning class creates an institution called the state to suppress the dissent of the dependent class which is the propertyless class. Thus, the state is a class instrument and a coercive institution. It protects the interests of its creator, the property owning class. In the beginning, this society is divided into masters and slaves. Masters are the haves and the slaves are the have nots. The slaves carry out all the production work. The masters live on the labour of slaves. They exploit the slaves and whenever the slaves resent, the state comes to the rescue of the masters. Thus, the state serves the interests of the master class. It uses its coercive powers to suppress the voice of the slaves.

The slave system is succeeded by feudalism. Technological development leads to changes in the means of production and this brings about corresponding changes in the relations of production and the superstructure. The slave system is replaced by the feudal mode of production and it is reflected in the society, polity, morality and the value system. The division of society into feudal lords and peasants characterizes feudalism. The feudal lords own the means of production, that is land, but the peasants carry out the production work. By virtue of ownership of the land, the feudal lords get a huge share of the produce without doing anything. Thus, the feudal lords are like parasites, who thrive on the labour of peasants. Feudal lords exploit the peasants and if the peasants ever resist their exploitation, their resistance is ruthlessly crushed by the state, which protects and serves the interests of the feudal lords. The peasants are a dependent and exploited class, whereas the lords are a dominant and exploiting class.

Capitalism succeeds feudalism. Technological development continues and so there is change in the forces of production, which leads to a mismatch between the forces of production and the relations of production, which is resolved through a revolution. Thus the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production is resolved. The feudal mode of production is replaced by the capitalist mode of production. Division of society into the bourgeois and the proletariat class characterises capitalism. The bourgeois class owns the means of production, but the proletariat class carries out the production. Proletariats

are the industrial workers. They sell their labour in lieu of meager wages. It is usually a subsistence wage, which is sufficient only to support them and their families, so that an uninterrupted supply of labour force can be maintained. Production is not for consumption by the self, but for profit. The desire to maximise profit leads to a reduction in wages and a rise in working hours. This further deteriorates the lot of the working class, which is eventually pushed into a situation, where it has nothing to lose except its chains. This paves the way for the proletariat revolution.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain in your own words the meaning of Dialectical Materialism.

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2) Enumerate and describe the salient features of either primitive communism or feudalism.

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4.3.3 Theory of Surplus Value

Marx has developed the theory of surplus value to explain the exploitation in the capitalist society. Here, Marx was influenced by the theories of classical economists. He subscribed to the labour theory of value. The value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labour consumed in its production. Labour is also a commodity. It can be bought and sold like other commodities. Out of the four factors of production, labour is the most vital. In its absence, the other factors of production are useless. Land, capital and organisation are the other factors of production. It is the application of labour to these factors of production, which makes them productive. In the absence of labour, they are sterile. If a wage is paid in proportion to the amount of value created by a labourer, then there is no exploitation, But this is not the case in capitalism. Labour is unique in the sense that it creates more value than is required for its maintenance. The difference between the value created by the worker and the value paid to the worker, as wages, constitute the surplus value and the profit of the capitalist. For instance, if a worker has created a value of say Rs. 25,000 in a month and has been paid Rs. 15,000 as wages, then the remaining Rs. 10,000 will constitute

the profit of the capitalist. Thus, the worker always creates more value than he is actually paid. This surplus value created by the worker is the profit of the bourgeois, which has been defended by the classical economists, because it leads to capital accumulation, which is invested further in new industries and enterprises and leads to growth and prosperity. For the Marxists, it is the exploitation of the workers, which has to be abolished.

With the growth of capitalism and the rise in competition, the wages of the workers continue to fall and reach the stage of subsistence level. Subsistence wage is the minimum possible wage; beyond this the wage cannot be reduced. It is the minimum possible wage for the survival and perpetuation of the labour force. Thus, cut throat competition in capitalism leads to deterioration of the lot of the proletariat. This *intensifies* class struggle and eventually leads to revolution.

4.3.4 Class Struggle

According to Marx, the history of all hitherto existing society has been the history of class struggle. Except the primitive communist stage, all historical ages have been characterised by the antagonism between the dominant and dependent classes or the haves and the have nots. This antagonism is caused by class contradictions; it is the result of exploitation by the property owning class of the property less class. Throughout history, there have been two contending classes in every epoch. In the slavery system, they were the masters and the slaves, in feudalism, the feudal lords and the peasants and in capitalism, the bourgeois and the proletariat. The masters, the feudal lords and the bourgeois are the owners of the means of production. However, it is the slaves, the peasants and the proletariat, who carry out production, but their produce is taken away by their exploiters and in return, they are given just enough for their survival. By virtue of the ownership of the means of production, the property owning class exploits the propertyless class. This is the main source and cause of class struggle. The interests of the contending classes are irreconcilable. No compromise or rapprochement is possible between the contending classes. The inherent contradictions of contending classes of every epoch can be resolved only through the annihilation of the exploiting classes.

4.3.5 Revolution

Class struggle paves the way for revolution. Class struggle is imperceptible, but revolution is perceptible. Intensification of class struggle prepares the ground for revolution. Class struggle is a long drawn affair, but revolution is short, swift and violent. In the words of Marx, 'revolution is the indispensable mid-wife of social change'. Transition from one historical stage to another occurs through revolution. Feudal revolution brought an end to the slavery system; the bourgeois revolution ended feudalism and the proletariat revolution will bring an end to capitalism. Thus, any epoch making social change is always brought about by a revolution. Revolution occurs when there is incompatibility between the means or forces of production and the relations of production. To resolve this incompatibility, revolution occurs, which brings corresponding changes in the relations of production and the superstructure to make it compatible with the forces or means of production. Technological development brings changes in the means of production. The hand-mill gives you a society with the feudal lord, and the steam-mill, a society with the industrial capitalist.

Proletarian revolution will be the last revolution in the annals of history. Revolution occurs to resolve contradictions. So revolution will not take place, if there is no contradiction in society. After the proletarian revolution, there will not be any further revolution, because there will be no contradiction. However, revolution will take place only when the forces of production have fully matured. Revolution cannot be advanced or postponed. It will occur when the forces of production have matured and do not match the relations of production. Revolution brings an end to this mismatch. The sequence and direction of social evolution cannot be changed. No stage can overleap another stage. No stage can be short-circuited. Primitive communism will lead to the slavery system, the slavery system to feudalism and feudalism to capitalism. Dictatorship of the proletariat or socialism will succeed capitalism, which is the penultimate stage of social evolution. Dictatorship of the proletariat will eventually lead to the establishment of communism. With the proletarian revolution, revolution itself will come to an end.

4.3.6 Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The proletarian revolution will lead to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is also known as the socialist state. The state apparatus created by the bourgeois to oppress the proletariat will be taken over by the proletariat themselves. Now, the table will be turned and the proletariat will use the state apparatus against the bourgeois. The bourgeois will try to stage a counter-revolution to restore the old system and so, the coercive institutions of the state are needed to restrain the bourgeois. The state has always been the instrument of oppression. The dominant class to oppress the dependent class has created the state. It is a class instrument. The state protects and serves the interests of its creator, which is the property owning class. This class has always been in a minority, whether it is the masters or the feudal lords or the capitalists. Thus, a minority has been oppressing a majority viz., the slaves or the peasants or the proletariat through the coercive organs of the state. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the *first* time the state comes under the control of the majority. Now, for the first time, the state's coercive apparatus is used by the majority against the minority.

According to Marx, all states have been dictatorships and so the socialist state is *no* exception. It is also a dictatorship. The state has always been used by one class to suppress the other class. In the socialist state, the proletariat class will use the coercive organs of the state such as the army, the police, prison, judicial system etc., against the bourgeois class. Marx argues that if democracy means the rule of the majority, then the proletariat state is the most democratic state, because for the first time in the annals of history, power comes into the hands of the majority. Before the proletariat state, power has always been in the hands of the minority. So if majority rule is the criterion, then only the proletariat state can be called a democratic state.

4.3.7 Communism

Under the living care of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist state will blossom forth into communism. Socialism is a transitory stage. It will pave the way for the eventual emergence of communism which is stable and permanent. This will be the phase of social evolution. After the establishment of communism,

there will be no further social change. The dialectical process will come to an end. A perfect, rational social system will be established, free from antagonisms and contradictions. There will be no class contradictions and so, no class struggle. In fact, communism will be a classless, stateless, private propertyless and exploitationless society. In a communist society, there will be no private property in the form of private ownership of the means of production. The means of production will be under the ownership of the community. Cooperation and *not* cutthroat competition will be the basis of communist society. Production will be for consumption and not to earn profit. Profit motive will be replaced by social needs. Since there will be no private property, there will be no exploitation. Since there will be no exploitation, there will be no class division, no property owning and propertyless class, no haves and have nots or no dominant and dependent class. Since there is no class division, there is no class struggle and so no need of the state. This is the reason why a communist society will be a classless and stateless society. State is the instrument of exploitation. It is a class instrument and a result of class division in society. Since there is only one class of workers in communism and no other class to suppress or oppress, there will not be any need of the state. It will become redundant in a communist society. It will be relegated to the museum. The state, however, will not be smashed; it will gradually wither away. Communist society will be governed by the *Louise Blanc* principle of ‘from each according to his capacity to each according to his need’. There will be no place for parasites. He who will not work will not eat also. There will be only one class of workers. The entire society will be converted into the working class. There will be no place for exploitation. It will be an egalitarian society. There will be harmonious relationship among the people.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the theory of surplus value?

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2) Explain the concept of class struggle.

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3) Enumerate and describe the salient features of a communist society.

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4.4 THEORY OF ALIENATION

There have been two distinct phases in the Marxist philosophy. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, present the human face of Marxism. In the Manuscripts, Capitalism has been analysed without reference to class antagonism, class struggle and violent revolution. Here, the evil influences of capitalism have been explained through alienation and loss of identity and freedom. These views of Marx have been identified with a younger Marx. There occurs an epistemological break in Marx's philosophy with the writing of Communist Manifesto in 1848. The later Marx is known as mature Marx, who developed the theory of scientific socialism. Marx's earlier ideas were discovered only in 1932, with the publication of the Manuscripts. The theory of alienation is an important Marxian concept. The Hungarian Marxist George Lukacs had developed the theory of alienation entirely on his own even before the publication of Manuscripts in 1932. However, the concept of alienation became popular only after the publication of the Manuscripts. Marx has identified four levels of alienation. Firstly, man is alienated from his own product and from his work process, because the worker plays no part in deciding what to produce and how to produce it. Secondly, man is alienated from nature. His work does not give him a sense of satisfaction as a creative worker. Under mechanisation, work tends to become increasingly routinised and monotonous. Thirdly, man is alienated from other men. The competitive character of the capitalist system forces everyone to live at someone else's expense and divides society into antagonistic classes. Lastly, man is alienated from himself. The realm of necessity dominates his life and reduces him to the level of an animal existence, leaving no time for a taste of literature, art, and cultural heritage. The capitalist system subordinates all human faculties and qualities to the conditions created by the private ownership of capital and property. The capitalist himself, no less than the worker, becomes a slave of the tyrannical rule of money.

4.5 THEORY OF FREEDOM

As a humanist philosophy, Marxism is primarily a philosophy of human freedom. Freedom consists not only in securing material satisfaction of human needs, but also in removing the conditions of dehumanisation, estrangement and alienation. The capitalist system is characterised by necessity as opposed to freedom. Necessity refers to the conditions under which the inevitable laws of nature govern the life of man. These laws of nature exist independent of man's will. Man can acquire scientific knowledge of these laws, but cannot change them at his will. Freedom does not consist in an escape from necessity. Freedom lies in the knowledge of these laws of nature and the capacity to make these laws work

towards the definite end of the emancipation of human society. Thus, a sound knowledge of the productive forces operating behind the capitalist system and a programme to make these forces work toward human ends were essential instruments of human freedom. Only a programme of socialist revolution would accomplish humanity’s leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. The emancipation of human society and the realisation of true freedom is possible only with the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of communism.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss either the theory of alienation or the theory of freedom.

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4.6 CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Marxism has been subjected to severe criticism. It has simplified the class division of society into two classes, the haves and the have nots. This is far from the reality. Society is very complex and is divided into numerous groups. There is no clear cut division of classes as envisaged by Marxism. Moreover, there exists a huge middle class. Marxian thinkers predicted that with the advancement of capitalism, the middle class would disappear and merge with the proletariat class. But this has not happened so far and there is no possibility of it ever happening. In fact, the reverse has happened; the middle class has strengthened its position and increased its size. Marxists also predicted the narrowing of the capitalist class. Here again, just the opposite has happened. Instead of shrinking, the base of the capitalist class has been enlarged. Marx predicted the accumulation of capital, but there has been the dispersal of capital. The condition of the proletariat class has not deteriorated as predicted by Marx. Thus, the actual working of the capitalist system has proved the Marxist theory of classes to be wrong.

Marxists had predicted that the inherent contradictions of capitalism would lead to its collapse. But this has not happened so far. No advanced capitalist system has collapsed. Capitalism has proved its resilience. It is the socialist system, which has collapsed in various parts of the world. Capitalism has the tremendous capacity of adaptation. This is the main reason for its survival. Marx failed to assess capitalism correctly. According to Marx, the proletarian revolution will occur only when capitalism has matured. There is no chance of the proletarian revolution occurring and succeeding in a backward feudal society. But this is exactly, what has happened in reality. Revolution has taken place only in feudal

societies such as Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba etc. This was the main issue of debate between two factions of Russian Marxists, the *Mensheviks* led by Plekhanov and the *Bolsheviks* led by Lenin. Ultimately, the *Bolsheviks* prevailed over the *Mensheviks*, but the latter were closer to classical Marxist teachings. According to Marx, his teachings can lessen the birth pangs, but cannot short circuit the various stages of social evolution. However, *Lenin* and *Trotsky* in Russia and *Mao* in China established communism in a feudal society without going through the process of first establishing capitalism. To resolve this obvious contradiction, *Trotsky* developed the theory of Permanent Revolution. He fused the bourgeois revolution with the proletarian revolution in his theory. These two revolutions can occur simultaneously in the view of *Trotsky*. Though this seems to be a more practical view, it does not confirm to the basic Marxian principles. The Marxian theory of economic determinism has been severely criticised. It is not only the economic factor, but other factors also that are equally important in bringing about social change. If economy determines polity, society, morality, value system etc., then economy itself is shaped by these. It is a two way process. Economic forces are not immune to the influences of polity, society, culture, religion, values, norms etc. If the base or the substructure shapes the superstructure, then the superstructure also shapes the substructure. Thus, the theory of economic determinism cannot be accepted. Later Marxist thinkers like *Gramsci* accepted the important role of the superstructure.

The Marxian concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism suffer from several flaws. After the proletarian revolution, the proletariat will seize the state apparatus from the bourgeois. With the establishment of communism, the state will become redundant and will gradually wither away. This has not happened. In socialist society, the state in fact became all-powerful. This is evident from examples of *Stalin* and *Mao* in Soviet Union and China respectively. Instead of weakening, the state has consolidated its position and there is no possibility of its fading away. The Marxian dream of a stateless society will never be realised. The state will continue to play a leading role in a socialist and communist society and there is no possibility of it ever being relegated to the museum. The socialist state, wherever it has been established, has either been overthrown or discredited. Wherever, it is still surviving, it has been compelled to introduce wide ranging changes, which do not confirm to the teachings of classical Marxism. Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, disintegration of Soviet Union and economic reforms in China have prompted thinkers like *Francis Fukuyama* to write obituary of Marxism. *Fukuyama* in his famous book *End of History* proclaims the triumph of capitalism over communism in the post-cold war world. According to him, with the victory of capitalism over communism, history has come to an end. Here, *Fukuyama* talks of history in the Hegelean sense. After capitalism, there will be no further economic and political evolution. Capitalism is the most rational and perfect system.

It is the most perfect ideology and philosophy. So, ideological and philosophical evolution comes to an end with the emergence of capitalism. Its main challenger Communism has been defeated and this further proves its claim that it is the best possible social, economic and political system ever evolved by humanity. It is very difficult to accept the thesis propounded by *Fukuyama*. The importance of Marxism lies in two fields. *Firstly*, it has been used as a tool for social analysis. *Secondly*, it gives a voice to the voiceless. It is the philosophy of the poor, the

oppressed and the suppressed people. If the contribution of Marxism is analysed in these two fields, we will reach the conclusion that it is still relevant and has not become redundant as claimed by the liberal critics. Marxism as an approach of social analysis is still relevant as it was in the past. Its importance as a method of social analysis will never diminish, irrespective of whether the socialist state survives or not.

Marxism as an ideology has definitely *lost* its edge, but it has *not* become totally redundant. As long as exploitation will continue, people will be oppressed and suppressed, Marxism will remain relevant. Marxism as a philosophy of the exploited and the oppressed will continue to inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. So there is no question of its defeat and irrelevance. In fact the systems, which have collapsed, were not organised on classical Marxian principles. They were a variant of Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism. So it is the Leninist-Stalinist systems, which have collapsed in Europe and elsewhere and not classical Marxism. Marxism as an approach will continue to be used by scholars for social analysis and the exploited-oppressed people will continue to espouse Marxist philosophy for their emancipation. Here, Marxism will never become irrelevant. It will always provide an alternative philosophy to liberalism. Marxism will also act as an effective check on the excesses of liberalism. It will mitigate the rigors of the capitalist system.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the major grounds of attack on the Marxist theory.

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2) Examine the contemporary relevance of Marxism.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed various kinds of socialism such as utopian and scientific socialism, evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. The basic principles of Marxism such as dialectical materialism, historical materialism, surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat,

communism have been discussed in detail. These principles constitute the foundation of scientific and revolutionary socialism. Marxism is not only the philosophy of class antagonism, class conflict, class struggle and violent revolution. It is basically a philosophy of humanism and freedom. Capitalist society has led to the estrangement, alienation and loss of identity and freedom. We find the human face of Marx in his early writings, particularly in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In the theory of alienation and freedom, we find a humanist Marx. In *the Communist Manifesto* and *Das Capital*, which are his later writings, we find a mature and revolutionary Marx. Thus, there are two Marx's, a younger and humanist Marx and a mature and revolutionary Marx. However, there is no dichotomy between the two. There is a continuity of thought between the two and so any distinction is superficial. Marxism is a living philosophy. After Marx it has been enriched by *Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Rosa Luxembour, Gramsci, Lukacs, Althusser, Mao* etc. Exponents of the end of ideology and the end of history have written off Marxism. But Marxism as an approach for social analysis and the philosophy of the oppressed class will continue to be relevant. It will inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. Marxism is a revolutionary philosophy. It is a philosophy of social change. In the words of Marx, philosophers have sought to interpret the world; what matters, however, is to change it. It aims to establish an egalitarian society, free from exploitation of one class by another. Only through Marxism, arguably, humanity will take a leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.

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4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should mention the word 'Utopia' and the names of Utopian Socialists, how Marx's socialism is scientific and not that of Utopian Socialists and also mention use of violence for social change in evolutionary versus revolutionary socialism.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should explain the meaning of Dialectics and highlight how matter is privileged over idea.

- 2) Your answer should highlight that under primitive communism ownership of the means of production was vested in the community and that production was for self-consumption and not for profit. Regarding feudalism mention the division of society into feudal lords and peasants and how the former exploited the latter.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Your answer should:
- Highlight how a capitalist generates profit by always under pricing the labour put into the production of a commodity.
- 2) Your answer should:
- Highlight how in every stage of history, there has been a conflict between the property owning and propertyless classes.
- 3) Your answer should:
- Highlight how it is a classless, exploitation less and stateless society.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Your answer should:
- Mention Marx's Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844 and younger Marx.
 - Highlight four forms of alienation mentioned by Marx.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Your answer should:
- Highlight How Marx's class division is simplistic.
 - How capitalism survived and socialism collapsed.
 - How state has not withered away.
 - Critique of economic determinism.
- 2) Your answer should:
- Highlights its utility in social analysis.
 - Elaborate its contribution as a philosophy of the oppressed.

UNIT 5 CONSERVATIVE*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Meaning and Concept of Conservatism
- 5.2 Numerous Uses of the Term Conservatism
 - 5.2.1 Temperamental Conservatism
 - 5.2.2 Situational Conservatism
 - 5.2.3 Political Conservatism
- 5.3 Conservatism: Its Characteristic Features
 - 5.3.1 History and Tradition
 - 5.3.2 Human Imperfection, Prejudice and Reason
 - 5.3.3 Organic Society, Liberty and Equality
 - 5.3.4 Authority and Power
 - 5.3.5 Property and Life
 - 5.3.6 Religion and Morality
- 5.4 Some Representative Conservatives: Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott
- 5.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.6 References
- 5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to provide a basic understanding of conservative political theory, its features and some important proponents of this strand of political thinking. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Comprehend the meaning of conservatism;
- Describe the features of conservatism; and
- Critique conservatism.

5.1 MEANING AND CONCEPT OF CONSERVATISM

The doctrine of conservatism is based on traditional institutions and practices. French thinker *Chateaubriand* is believed to have coined this word in 1818 as he named his journal *Le Conservateur*. The conservative ideas and doctrines, however, started to appear in the late 18th and early 19th century in reaction *against* increasing pace of economic and political change, mainly unleashed by the *French Revolution*. As a concept, conservatism gives more importance to what is historically inherited instead of what is abstract and ideal. Conservatives believe in an organic view of society, meaning that society is not a loose collection of individuals but a living organism comprising of closely connected,

interdependent members. Conservatives also argue that the government is a servant in the sense that it should serve the *existing* ways of life and the political class should not attempt to change them. There is a vital difference between Conservatism and a reactionary outlook as a reactionary favors restoration of a previous political and social order which has become outmoded. Conservatism seeks to preserve tradition and in a way wants to preserve what one has rather than to seek something which one does not have. Edmund Burke said that we should see ourselves in ‘a partnership not only between those who are living but between those who are living, those are dead and those who are to be born’. Another prominent conservative thinker, Michael Oakeshott said that to be a conservative means ‘to prefer familiar to unknown, actual to possible, limited to unbounded, near to distant, convenient to perfect’.

Conservatives believe that human beings are imperfect and combined with unforeseen consequences of an action, it becomes difficult to assess whether any change will be for the better or otherwise. That is why; they try to resist change in the existing order. Change is resisted until it becomes inevitable. Burke believed that one should change in order to conserve but the pace of this change has to be gradual, not revolutionary. In his seminal work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke gave the *Counterrevolutionary* narrative saying the violent, untraditional uprooting methods of the revolution outweighed its liberating ideals. That is why he defended the traditional aristocracy of the pre-revolution days for stability and prosperity instead of uncertainty after the revolution. For him, there is complexity in working of the modern nation states and efforts to reform them on the basis of metaphysical doctrines could lead to *despotism*. Conservatism is opposed to Liberalism and Socialism as these ideologies try to liberate an individual from traditions, but a conservative does not want any such liberation. In its attempts to resist pressures created by the rise of liberalism, socialism and nationalism, conservatism stands to guard the beleaguered traditional social order. Proponents of conservatism also believe that inequalities of wealth and position are inevitable and there is no point in discussing their elimination. Some of the features attributed to conservatism are:

- Necessity of power, authority and social hierarchy
- Respect for tradition
- Emphasis on religion and natural law
- Insistence on organic nature of society
- Free market and limited government.

According to *Russell Kirk*, there are six canons of conservatism.

- A divine intent rules society as well as conscience – “political problems, at bottom, are religious and moral problems.”
- Traditional life is filled with variety and mystery, while most radical systems are characterized by a narrow uniformity.
- Civilized society requires orders and classes – “the only true equality is moral equality.”
- Property and freedom are inseparably connected.

- Man must control his will and his appetite, knowing that he is governed more by emotion than reason.
- “Change and reform are not identical” – society must alter slowly.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain the meaning and features of conservatism.

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5.2 NUMEROUS USAGES OF THE TERM CONSERVATISM

It is much easier to locate the historical context, i.e., the period between 1750 and 1850 as a response to the rapid series of changes in which conservatism evolved than to specify what is or what the conservatives believe. Sometimes, conservatism means outright opposition to all and every change; at others, it means an attempt to reconstruct a form of society which existed in an earlier period. Still, at other times, it appears to be primarily a political reaction and secondarily, a body of ideas. Conservatism, as *Clinton Rossiter* says, “is a word whose usefulness is matched only by its capacity to confuse, distort and irritate.” He adds: “Since the patterns of thought and action it denotes are real and enduring, and since no substitute seems likely to be generally accepted, conservatism will doubtless have a long life...” Since World War II, the word ‘conservatism’ is being used in numerous ways.

5.2.1 Temperamental Conservatism

Conservatism, by one definition, denotes a ‘natural’ and culture-determined disposition to resist dislocating changes in a customary pattern of living and working. According to Rossiter, “It effectively is, a temperament or psychological stance, a cluster of traits that are on daily display by most men in all societies; He lists the important elements of conservative temperament as (a) habit (the enormous flywheel of society and its most precious conservative agent), (b) inertia (a force that often seems to be as powerful in the social world as in the physical), (c) fear (especially fear of the unexpected, the irregular and the uncomfortable), and (d) emulation (a product of both fear of alienation from the group and a craving for its approval).

5.2.2 Situational Conservatism

Conservatism, by a second definition, related to the first, is an attitude of opposition to disruptive changes in the social, economic, legal, religious, political

or cultural order. “It describes”, Rossiter clarifies, “somewhat less crudely and somewhat more effectively, a pattern of social behavior, a cluster of principles and prejudices that are on daily display by many men in all developed societies.” The distinguishing feature of this conservatism is the fear of *change*, which becomes transformed in the political arena, as Rossiter tells, “into the fear of radicalism...” In this instance, “the radicalism of men who propose to make the world order... at the expense of old values, institutions and patterns of living”. Situational conservatism is not confined only to the well-to-do; it extends to all levels of people who lament the change in the status quo.

5.2.3 Political Conservatism

Conservatism, by yet another definition refers to aspirations and activities, most of them defensive rather than creative, of parties and movements that celebrate inherited patterns of morality and tested institutions that oppose the reforming plans of the moderate left and the schemes of the extreme *left*. Political conservatism is a phenomenon which is universal of organized society, and essentially, the defense of a going society. The reaction is not conservatism. It is the position of men who sigh for past more intensively than they celebrate the present and who feel that a retreat back into it is worth trying. A conservative is a man essentially at rest: generally, well adjusted psychologically as well as programmatically to “a world he never made.” a reactionary is a man always in motion, “refuses to”, as Rossiter points out, “acknowledge that whatever has been settled must henceforth be considered good or at least tolerable, and he seems willing to erase some paws, scrap some institutions, even amend his nation’s constitution, so that he can roll back the social process to the time which his countrymen first went foolishly astray”. Rossiter writes: “He (conservative), like the liberal, must reason and discriminate; he, like the radical, may have to plan and gamble. The conservative as are former, the right-wrong politician who tries to outpromise liberals in the area of welfare legislation, is an uncomfortable man. The conservative as revolutionary, the traditionalist who acts ‘radically’ to preserve the crumbling values and institutions of his community, is no conservative at all”.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain the numerous usages of conservatism.

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5.3 CONSERVATISM: ITS CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

As Burke proclaimed, ‘the desire to conserve’, is the underlying theme of conservative ideology, although it is not the sole objective which conservatives of all shades seek to attain. Authoritarian conservatism has often been reactionary; it either refuses to yield to change or attempts to turn the clock back. Revolutionary conservatism may use the term radical conservatism and tends to regain or re-establish or argue for a conservative fabric of revolutionary character. The characteristic features of conservatism are listed below.

5.3.1 History and Tradition

The role of history and tradition is basic to any type of conservatism. History, reduced to its essentials, is nothing but experience. It is deductive thought in matters of human relationships; Legitimacy is the work of history. “To see things authentically as a conservative”, Mannheim writes, “is to experience events in the past’. True, history is expressed *not* in linear and chronological fashion: but in the persistence of structures, communities, habits and prejudices generation after generation. The correctness of history or experience for that matter is a persisting conservative emphasis. This has been shown by Burke, Rourke, Oakeshott and Voegelin to mention a few. Social reality can be understood through a historical approach: “We cannot know where we are, much less where we are going, until we know where we have been. That is the bedrock position of the conservative philosophy of history”. (*Conservatism: Dream and Reality*)

History is represented in traditions, and traditions constitute an important component of history. As such a central theme of conservatism is about history, its defence of traditions, its desire to maintain established customs and institutions. Burke was talking about tradition when he conceived of society as a partnership between “those who are living, those who are dead and those who are to be born”. Tradition is, Chesterton says, “a democracy of the dead.” In this sense, tradition reflects the accumulated wisdom of the past. The institutions and practices of the past have been tested by time, and should the conservatives demand, be preserved for the benefit of the living and for generations to come.

5.3.2 Human Imperfection, Prejudice and Reason

Conservatism is a philosophy of human imperfection; the roots of man’s basis lay more in prejudice than in reason. As against the *liberals*, who think of human beings as moral, rational and social, the conservatives regard men, both imperfect and perfectible. Human beings, the conservatives believe, are dependent creatures, always fearing isolation and instability, and therefore, always seek safety, security and what is familiar, always ready to sacrifice liberty for social order. By their very nature, the people, the conservatives would say, are suspicious of abstract ideas and prefer to ground their ideas in experience and reality: they usually have an already framed view evolved from the past. “Prejudice”, *Nisbet* argues for the conservative, “has its own intrinsic wisdom, one that is anterior to the intellect. Prejudice is of ready application in the emergency; it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, skeptical, puzzled, and unresolved”. The reason stems from the knowledge that is learnt than imparted. The

conservatives are of the opinion that imparted knowledge leads to abstractions, abstract knowledge, and for human beings, it is too complicated to be fully grasped. Learnt knowledge is rooted in experience and is limited to the doing of something, to the learning of something through committing mistakes. Such knowledge is not the knowledge of rules and generalizations, but is one that comes from one man's experience and goes down in the blood of the other.

5.3.3 Organic Society, Liberty and Equality

The conservative view of society is an organic view of society: the individuals do not and cannot exist outside society, but they are rooted in society, and 'belong' to it; they are parts of social groups and these groups provide the individuals' lives with security and meaning. The conservative's view of liberty is not 'leaving the individual alone', but is one where there is willing acceptance of social obligations and ties. For the conservatives, liberty is primarily 'doing one's duty'. When the parents, for example, advise their children to behave in a particular way, they do not constrain their liberty, but they are providing a basis for the liberty the children would enjoy when they grow up. The conservative view of liberty is neither atomistic nor rootless: it is the enjoyment of rights together with the performance of duties, either before or after or both.

The conservative view of society is one that is a living thing, an organism whose parts are neither equal nor the same, work together and make the human body function properly; each part of the organic society (i.e., family, government, a factory) plays a particular role in sustaining and maintaining the health of society. Heywood explains, "If society is organic, its structure and institutions have been shaped by natural forces, and its fabric should, therefore, be preserved and respected by the individuals who live within it."

The conservative view of organic society is a unity composed of diversities: such a society is always in a hierarchical form where liberty works effectively and with meaning. In such a socially differentiated society, organic as it is, equality has no place. "... Most forms of equality ... seem to the conservative to threaten the liberties of both individual and group. Burke's dictum, in this context, is: "Those who attempt to level never equalize."

5.3.4 Authority and Power

Authority and power have much in common with a conservative. Power is used by one who is authorized to exercise it, and it is the legitimate act to get what one will. In an organic society, the order has to be maintained: so power is an essential component of an organic society; in a hierarchical system, there are different levels; so authority becomes necessary. Power and authority are the important concepts in conservative philosophy. These, in no sense, constitute an obstacle to what the conservatives think about liberty. "The only liberty", *Burke* said, "is a liberty connected with order; that exists not only along with order and virtue but which cannot exist at all without them". The conservatives believe that authority; like society develops naturally; power emerges from functions. Authority and power, the conservatives strongly feel, develop from natural society. These are natural because they are rooted in the nature of society and all social institutions. In a school, authority or power should be exercised by the teacher; in the workplace, by the employer; and in the society, by the

government. The conservatives say that authority is necessary because it is beneficial, as everyone needs the guidance, support and security of knowing where the people stand and what is expected of them. That is why all the conservatives emphasize leadership and discipline. “Leadership”, Heywood says, “is a vital ingredient in any society because it has the capacity to give direction and provide inspiration for others. Discipline is ... a willing and healthy respect for authority.”

No conservative believes in equality, in social equality at that. They think that people are born unequally in the sense that: talents and skills are distributed unequally: unequal should not be treated equally. The conservatives believe that inequality is more deep-rooted. Genuine social equality, for the conservatives, is, therefore, a myth. Conservatism adores power in so far as it helps establish order in society. It admires authority because it is authority through which order is established in society. Conservatives favor an authoritarian and all-powerful state. Public order and the moral fabric of society can be maintained through the power and authority of the state. Heywood writes: “Furthermore, within conservatism, there is a strong paternalistic tradition which portrays government as a father-figure within society.”

5.3.5 Property and Life

The property, for conservatives, possesses a deep and mystical significance. The conservatives hold the view that property has a range of psychological and social advantages: it provides security; gives people a sense of confidence and promotes social values. As such, the conservatives want that property must be safeguarded from disorder and lawlessness. They say that the property owners have a stance in society. They have an interest in maintaining law and order. Property ownership promotes the conservative values of respecting the law, authority and social order. “A deeper and more personal reason”, *Heywood* writes, “Why Conservatives may support property is that it can be thought of almost an extension of an individual’s personality. People ‘realize’ themselves; even see themselves, in what they own”. Conservatism advocates the sanctity of property. At the heart of every true conservative, there is, as *Russell Kirk* writes, “persuasion that property and freedom are inseparably connected and that economic leveling is not economic progress. Separate property from private possession and liberty is erased”. *Irving Babbitt* added: “Every form of social justice.... tends toward confiscation, and confiscation, when practiced on a large scale, undermines moral standards, and in so far, substitutes for real justice the law of cunning and the law of force.”

5.3.6 Religion and Morality

Conservatism is, indeed, unique among major ideologies in its emphasis on religion and morality. Irrespective of denomination, all the conservatives including *Hegel*, *Haller* and *Coleridge* made religion, and therefore morality, a keynote of state and society. The conservative support for religion and morality rests on the well-founded belief that human beings, *once* they get adrift from major orthodoxy, are likely to suffer some measure of derangement, of loss of equilibrium. “Religion”, *Burke* wrote to his son, “is man’s fastness in an otherwise incomprehensible and thereby hostile world”. *Tocqueville*, before his deathbed confession, described the value of religion and morality to government and society, and to freedom: “When there is no longer any principle of authority in

religion anymore than in politics, men are speedily frightened at the prospect of unbounded independence.... for my part, I doubt whether a man can ever support at the same time complete religious independence and entire political freedom. And I am inclined to think that if faith is wanting in him, he must be subject; and if he is free, he must believe". Religion is a spiritual phenomenon. But at the same time, it is essential social cement as well. For the conservatives, there exists a close relationship between religion and conservatism, for religion provides society with a moral fabric.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the characteristic features of conservatism?

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5.4 SOME REPRESENTATIVE CONSERVATIVES: EDMUND BURKE AND MICHAEL OAKESHOTT

It is only by way of completing an argument for conservatism that an attempt is being made to mention a few, and among them, two major representative conservatives; Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* has been taken as definitive and fortunate of modern conservatism, with its opposition to radical reform based on abstract principles and its plea for the virtues of established and evolved institutions. Burke's faith in the past, his admiration of the present, his opposition to innovations, his small view of human nature lies belief in the traditional outlook of society and his sympathies with men of property all these go on to make him a conservative thinker. Cobban remarks: "Disciple of Locke and Whig politicians, though Burke was, the real man stands quite apart from the eighteenth century and the philosopher. A believer in antiquity in an age when the Modern had conquered in their struggle with the Ancients, an adherent of the past in an age that was beginning to look to the future, he was also a philosopher of unreason in the great age of Reason." Burke's conservatism is the basis of all his writings. Conservatism, as a theory, usually has three varieties:

- a) *Status Quo*: It is one in which things are kept as they are in every society, one finds people who are interested to keep things as they stand and who would not like to bring changes, for, in a status quo, they have nothing to lose.
- b) *Organizational Conservatism*: Such interests of men as favor status quo would find ways and means to protect them, promote them and defend/

them. Thus, the organization serves those who want to keep the status quo. What is organizational is conservative in nature. Yesterday's idea becomes today's movement and today's movement becomes tomorrow's organization.

- c) *Philosophical Conservatism*: Once there is interest in the status quo and an organization to protect it, there is built an ideology, a philosophy around the interest to be protected. Conservatism, as a philosophy, is the building of a case for the protection and promotion of such interests. Burke, in his writings, has passed through the above varieties of conservatism. Having stood for the admiration of the status quo, he builds the organization (parliamentary system, the political parties with national interests etc.) to support the status quo. But within the framework of conservatism, Burke demonstrates reformism.

Oakeshott's plea for traditionalism, as an aspect of his conservatism in politics, morals and life, in general, proceeds logically from his *critique of rationalism*. According to Oakeshott, the ideological style of politics (i.e., the rationalist style) is a confused style, for ideology in the rationalist scheme, as he thinks, is merely an abridgement, an index. So, Oakeshott's answer is that the only style, one should adopt and pursue, is the traditional one. Political activity, Oakeshott affirms, cannot spring but from the existing traditions of behavior and the form that it takes is the amendment of existing arrangements by exploring and pursuing what is implied in them. All activity, for him, therefore, is traditional in nature. Every idea, every ideal, every ideology, even the most revolutionary, as described by Oakeshott, is traditional, always an index, an abridgement of the traditional manner of attending to the arrangements of society.

Oakeshott regards the traditional style of politics as the only legitimate style. In this essay on "Being Conservative", he emphasises that being conservative is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, near to the distant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to the utopian bliss. To be conservative is to be equal to one's own fortune, to live at the level of one's means. Stability, Oakeshott says, is any day more profitable than improvement. Oakeshott is suspicious of both change and innovation and, therefore, would like people to think twice at the claims promised by the change. If the change is unavoidable, Oakeshott would then favor only small and slow changes. Only that reform, he insists, be accepted that *remedies a defect* or that helps disequilibrium to be redressed.

Tradition, according to Oakeshott, is described as anything under the sun. It is, he says, continuity; it is steady; though it moves, it never is wholly in motion; though it is never wholly at rest. To know, Oakeshott says, only the gist of traditionalism is to know nothing; knowledge of it is unavoidably knowledge of its detail. Oakeshott's definition is too broad to mean anything or mean nothing.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

- 1) Discuss Burke's and Oakeshott's views on conservatism.

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5.5 LET US SUM UP

Conservatism is an ideology of conservation. It developed essentially as a reaction against the growing pace of political and economic changes, especially in the West. This is the one reason that any use of the word ‘conservatism’ resists change. As a philosophy, it defends the values of hierarchy, tradition and order against pressures generated by industrialization and represented by the political challenges of liberalism and socialism. That is why; there is a basic distinction between the leftists and socialists, libertarians and conservatives. The leftists and the socialists are the parties of bureaucracy (i.e., hardcore communists); libertarians, of markets; and conservatives, of tradition. Conservative ideology has its peculiar features: tradition and history, human imperfections with a love for prejudice and against reason, organic society with liberty and inequality, admiration of authority and power, a strong plea for property and life rights, and belief in ethical, moral and religious values. The future of conservatism is marred by its own limitations. Its opposition to equality and more than this, its defense of inequality make it unpopular in societies which have a strong democratic tendency. In making a plea to resist change, conservatism is often seen as legitimizing the status quo and defending the interests of the elites. Concepts like gender justice would never find a favor with conservatives. Conservatism has not succeeded in developing into an ideology of worldwide importance. In itself, conservatism is too broad and has become, to that extent, too vague an ideology: what is radical today may not be so tomorrow.

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5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight how Conservatism arose as a reaction against changes ushered in by the French Revolution.

Regarding features, mention:

- Necessity of power, authority and social hierarchy
- Respect for tradition
- Emphasis on religion and natural law
- Organic nature of society
- Free market and limited government.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight Temperamental, Situational and Political Conservatism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight:
 - History and Tradition
 - Human imperfection, Prejudice and Reason
 - Organic society, Liberty and Equality
 - Authority and Power
 - Property and Life
 - Religion and Morality.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Regarding Burke, your answer should highlight his views in his work 'Reflections on the Revolution in France'. Regarding Oakeshott, highlight his views from his essay 'Being Conservative'.

UNIT 6 FEMINIST*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction: Meaning of Feminist Political Theory
- 6.2 First Wave of Feminist Political Theory
- 6.3 Second Wave of Feminist Political Theory
 - 6.3.1 Liberal Feminism
 - 6.3.2 Marxist Feminism
 - 6.3.3 Socialist Feminism
 - 6.3.4 Radical Feminism
 - 6.3.5 Ecological Feminism
- 6.4 Third Wave of Feminist Political Theory
 - 6.4.1 Cultural Feminism
 - 6.4.2 Black Feminism
 - 6.4.3 Postmodern Feminism
- 6.5 Feminist Political Theory in International Politics
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.7 References
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will learn about the meaning of feminist political theory and important developments in the evolution of feminist political theory, i.e. first, second and third waves of feminism and political thought. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

- Trace the evolution of Feminist Political Theory;
- Discuss the differences between the political ideas of three different waves of feminism;
- Critique certain ideological standpoints within feminist thought that led to innovation in feminist political theory; and
- Elucidate different political debates within feminist political theory.

6.1 INTRODUCTION: MEANING OF FEMINIST POLITICAL THEORY

The present unit aims to explore the meaning, origin and trajectory leading to the development of feminist political theory. The first wave of feminism focused on achieving political and legal rights for women as a tool for their liberation from the clutches of patriarchy. The second wave of feminism extended the domain of feminine politics against sexist ways of men to the private lives of women, giving rise to political ideologies like liberal feminism, Marxist

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feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, and ecological feminism. The third wave of feminism presented a dynamic critique to the previous feminist political trends, which acquired a global recognition with inclusive ideologies like cultural feminism, black feminism and postmodern feminism.

Feminist political theory is a sub-set of the larger discourse of political theory. It adds the feminist dimension to political theory which is often seen as its neglected part. It also tries to expand the boundaries of 'what is political' by including concerns of women. The term 'Feminist Political Theory' emerged in the late twentieth century during the Women's Liberation Movement of the West (largely, in the United States and United Kingdom). It was envisaged that western political theory, for most of its history had ignored women. Feminist Political Theory, in contrast, saw women and their experiences as cardinal to political analysis of a given time and society. It raised a crucial question – why only men are powerful and privileged over women in any given society? It is also a constant engagement with feminist political thought on how to achieve an equal status for women. As a political movement, Feminism stands against political, cultural, economic and social subjugation of women. Feminist political theory tries to end domination of women by criticizing and transforming theories and institutions which stand for women's inferior status. However, the development of feminist political thought has been an uneven exercise with additions and disagreements emerging in the form of different waves of feminist ideology.

6.2 FIRST WAVE OF FEMINIST POLITICAL THEORY

The first wave of feminism referred to feminist activities, which largely took place in the United States and United Kingdom from 1820s to 1940s. The formal initiation of the wave is attributed to the *Seneca Falls Declaration*, drafted by *Elizabeth Cady Stanton* in 1848 in New York. The declaration highlighted new political strategies and ideologies for the feminist movement. It began with the idea of equal property rights and a dignified position within the household for women. Thus, it focused on women's economic, sexual and reproductive rights. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the feminist activists shifted their attention towards political rights of women, especially to women's right to vote or women's suffrage. Some activists within the movement believed that women are morally superior to men, and therefore their presence in the political sphere would prove beneficial for the political process. Consequently, in Britain, Representation of the People's Act was passed in 1918, which granted women the right to vote. But, it was limited in its scope as the right was restricted to women above 30 years of age and that also to the ones who owned houses. Thus, the efforts of the feminists continued and the eligible age for women to vote was further reduced to 21 years, without any bar on the ownership of property. However, in the United States the wave followed a different political trajectory. Here, the feminist leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone and Lucretia Mott believed that before achieving the right to vote for women, it was more important to champion the abolition of slavery. Gradually, the first wave in the U.S. is believed to have ended with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which granted the right to vote to women in all the U.S. states. In the non-Western context, the first phase of the women's movement is understood almost analogous with its Western time frame.

However, here it is interpreted in terms of women's participation and contribution in the anti-colonial nationalist movements from the late 19th century to the early twentieth century. Women in these countries looked up to their western counterparts as an ideal and structured their demands on the economic, educational, and electoral rights demanded by them. For instance, In India, women's movement is traced back to the formation of Indian Women's Association in Madras in 1917. According to Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, the arenas for women liberation identified by this body were the same as could be identified with the first wave of feminism in the Western world, like equitable inheritance laws, right to divorce and widening of women franchise, etc.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain the first wave of feminist political theory.

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6.3 SECOND WAVE OF FEMINIST POLITICAL THEORY

The First wave of feminism proved both a boon and a bane for the women's movement. On the positive side, it united activists for a common goal and provided the movement its methodical structure. However, certain activists became complacent after achieving suffrage rights for women, seeing it as a complete liberation for women. It was only with the emergence of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s that the movement got rejuvenated, especially with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* in 1963. In this book, Friedan has pointed out that women still felt frustrated, owing to their confinement to the domestic chores in roles of a mother and a housewife. Consequently, the second wave feminism posited that the women question had remained unresolved despite accomplishment of legal and political rights. With the works of Germaine Greer and Kate Millet, what was earlier concerned with political rights of women, was now radicalized to include sexual, psychological and personal aspects of women's oppression. It was during the second wave that the slogan 'the personal is political' was coined by Carol Hanisch. Based on this, feminist activists saw political and cultural inequalities as closely interlinked. It was a period when personal lives of women were seen as a reflection of deeply political power structures of patriarchal society. Thus, unlike the conventional feminists, radical feminists of this period kept politics of the personal at the centre of their movement. Consequently, this wave saw protests against the Miss America beauty pageant in New Jersey in the late 1960s, as it was seen akin to a 'cattle parade' by the feminists, who saw such events as objectification of women's beauty.

While the first wave of feminism was identified with heterosexual white women, mostly belonging to the Western middle-class, the second wave toiled to bring together women of developing nations, and of colour based on the ideology of solidarity and sisterhood. Simone De Beauvoir in her 1949 work *The Second Sex* argued that the problem with feminist politics was that women do not say “we”, unlike labourers or blacks, foregrounding this argument in the observation that the women’s movement lacked solidarity. To tackle this problem, it was prophesied that women’s struggle is a class struggle, in which women form a social class in whose case race, gender and class come together to lead to their oppression at the hands of the patriarchal class. The emergent feminist political theory was a manifestation of intersection of three sets of ideologies - Liberal Feminism, Marxist Feminism (and its extension known as Socialist Feminism) and Radical Feminism. Besides this, during this wave, the feminists saw women having a better approach towards achieving solutions to social problems owing either to their long history of oppression or to their biological construction as more sensitive than men. In this context, the term Ecological feminism was coined to indicate that women are natural environmentalists, by virtue of being born as women.

6.3.1 Liberal Feminism

The feminist scholarship developed their political theory with Mary Wollstonecraft’s pathbreaking work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, first published in 1792. This classic book marked the beginning of the liberal feminist movement. Wollstonecraft argues for equal access to education for women and men, so that the former become as independent and morally strong as the latter, in the face of oppressive patriarchal traditions and institutions. Thus, it will ensure gender equality in the public sphere. By the 19th century, the discourse of liberal feminism was shifted, through the works of John Stuart Mill, who argued for equal economic opportunities, political rights and civil liberties for men and women. By emphasizing that the state should be an ally to the women’s liberation movement, the liberal feminists secured the right to vote for women in 1920 in the United States with the 19th amendment to the constitution. However, liberal feminists like Drucilla Cornell, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Catriona MacKenzie, Jane Mansbridge, Martha C. Nassbaum, Susan Okin and Gregory Bassham, etc. are often critiqued for over-emphasizing the need for women to become like men, subsuming the traditional roles of women.

6.3.2 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminists do not comply with the reformist tendencies of their liberal counterparts; instead they associate oppression of women with economic, social and political structures related to capitalism. For Marx, capitalism is the defining feature of the West. Marxist feminists launched themselves in the late 1960s and drew their inspiration largely from the philosophies of Marx and Engels. While these philosophers did not particularly examine women’s oppression, their works provided powerful insights to decode the deeper structures implying women’s oppression. Thus, for Marxist feminists like Iris Marion Young and Alison Jaggar, gendered oppression is grounded on class exploitation and how labor is socially reproduced at domestic and work sites. For instance, Frederick Engels elaborates in his work *The Origin of Family, Property and the State* (1884) on how sexual and physical labour of women is assumed for child

reproducing and rearing within the institution of the family. By this principle, according to Marxist feminists the oppression of women is made to appear natural at the behest of patriarchal forces. Engels refers to this as the ‘final defeat of (the) female sex’ and to liberate women, he calls for a revolution against the capitalistic order of society. However, this stand within feminism can be critiqued on two grounds. Firstly, for its lack of recognition of other factors of oppression which work against women like ethnicity, race, etc. Secondly, it makes invisible the category of women who work as wage laborer, and subsumes it within the larger category of ‘wage labor’ which presumably involved *both* men and women. Thus, it does not discuss about the ways of oppression as faced by this very category.

6.3.3 Socialist Feminism

Adding to the contentions of the Marxist feminists that capitalism acts as the primary reason of oppression against women, socialist feminists acknowledge patriarchal arrangement of power distribution as the secondary reason for the same. At the heart of the socialist feminist movement lies an understanding that women’s oppression is not a product of any one system of repression, rather it is a common outcome of multiple forces of discrimination like sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and of course gender. Thus, in order to achieve liberation of women, the movement aimed at dealing with these issues collectively. However, since for socialist feminists, economic oppression and patriarchy constitute the basis of all other forms of subjugation, they argue that even though women are oppressed in almost all societies, the degree and character of oppression depends upon the economic realities of a given society. Socialist feminists like Barbara Ehrenreich, Sylvia Walby, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Donna Haraway, Emma Goldman and Selma James, etc. stress the significance of women’s role as birth-giver, child-rearer and socialiser, care-taker of the sick, and one who transforms the household in a place worth living for men who invest their labor outside. They argue that this emotional labor of women is often ignored owing to the patriarchal character of society. And even when women engage in what Marxists would call as productive labor in the job-market, they are subjected to biases like lower wages compared to their male counterparts and sexual harassment. Thus, socialist feminists organized themselves into women’s unions like the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union to demand justified rights for a dignified living.

6.3.4 Radical Feminism

The objective of the early radical feminists like Betty Friedan was to reclaim their disparaged identity which was methodically oppressed by the cultural construction of society. The radicals of the late 60s and early 70s were seen as raging materialists, stressing the material basis of patriarchy. For instance: New York City based radical feminist group the *Redstockings* preached that a woman’s decision to marry should be a rational strategy rather than surrendering to a false sentiment. In the wake of achieving this, they sought to do away with ‘gender’ itself as a meaningful social category. They viewed ‘gender’ as a socially contrived absolute category, where masculinity was construed in a complete opposition to the ‘other’ – i.e. the feminine. But, the modern radical feminists also acknowledged that gender differences are reflections of interactions between these two variables. For instance; many like Mary Daly, Susan Griffin, Julia

Penelope and Adrienne Rich have argued that women are closer to ecology, while men are to their sexuality. Although they are critiqued for being erroneously general in their observations, lacking any attempt to trace the origin of such a differentiation (whether biological or cultural); these feminists see this virtue as not a representation of oppression, rather of advantage over their male counterparts. Radical feminists made a departure from earlier socialist feminism by holding that oppression does occur at an individual level and it may not necessarily always be an institutional outcome. However, at this individual level, they believed that it is not by the virtue of being a male that a man can be called an oppressor, but only when he rationalizes his supremacy over women by virtue of being born a male that he is seen as an oppressor by radicals. Thus, they posit liberation of women as their primary political agenda, along with other objectives like inclusion of sexual politics into public discourse, legalizing abortion, demanding equal sharing of child care and household work, among others.

6.3.5 Ecological Feminism

Oppression of women and domination of nature are connected and mutually reinforcing, thus, they should be addressed collectively– this philosophical stand unites ecofeminists across the spectrum. Most of the ecofeminist scholarship like Alice Walker, Vandana Shiva, Ivone Gebara, Rosemary Ruether, Sallie McFague, Paula Gunn Allen, Andy Smith and Karen Warren amongst others, deals with the moral basis of human’s connection to nature. In the late 20th century, ecological feminism emerged with the intersection of environmental and feminist theories. The term was introduced in the book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort*, meaning Feminism or Death, written by Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1974. Ecofeminists argue that patriarchy manifests itself in society through the dualistic structures of hierarchy: culture vs. nature, male vs. female, matter vs. spirit, white vs. non-white, etc. The established system of patriarchal oppression not just reinforces itself through the imposition of these binaries, according to ecofeminists, it even makes them sacred using science as well as religion as its tools. Thus, as long as these dualities continue to exist as an indispensable constituent of any societal structure, they would help patriarchy to flourish. On these grounds, ecofeminists defy the division of culture into any hierarchical binaries. Their historical methodology is therefore, suggestive of replacing hierarchical dualities with observing a relationship within the diversity. This methodology, by the virtue of its emphasis upon the strength of such diversities is a feminist approach, linking ideas of environment with that of feminism. The torchbearers of this ideology were Ruether in her 1975 work *New Woman/New Earth* and Mary Daly in her *GynEcology* (1978).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe the salient features of the second wave of feminism.

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6.4 THIRD WAVE OF FEMINIST POLITICAL THEORY

According to Nancy Fraser's *Justice Interruptus* (1997) in the 1980s, owing to a greater emphasis on identity politics around gender differences, other frontiers of discrimination like class, sexuality, ethnicity and race did not fetch much attention from feminist activists. This led feminists towards self-introspection paving way for their reorientation. This led them to articulate feminist political theory in sync with other political struggles. The emergence of such an awareness amongst feminist intelligentsia led to the rise of third the wave of feminism in the mid-90s, influenced by the conditions of postmodernism and post-colonialism. In this wave, many ideas of gender, sexuality and heteronormativity as practiced by the activists of the previous two phases of feminism were inverted. For instance, the contemporary activists resumed the fashionable display of lipsticks, deep cleavage dresses and high heel footwear, which were earlier shunned away as the markers of patriarchal oppression. It was so because the young activists believed that it was possible for women to have push-up bra and brain at the same time. They saw ideals of feminine beauty as empowering with their chosen subjectivities, instead of seeing them as repressive objectification by sexist men. This was observed as a result of professional status and achievements of women made possible by the efforts of the second wave feminists. The third phase redefined femininity, which was strong, in control of their sexuality and assertive. Besides this, what contributed in the articulation of the micro-politics of the third wave was the *internet* revolution of the late 20th century. The internet also provided for women-only spaces in the form of e-magazines, which became an important platform for the dissemination of feminist ideas. Internet helped women overcome the geographical boundaries in expressing solidarity with women in the developing world and the women of color. Thus, the political approach of the third wave was more inclusive, multi-cultural and global compared to its predecessors. Its transversal political feminist theory was based on the premise that differences like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, etc. should be celebrated as dynamism of one's subjective location. This echoed in the form of multiple political ideologies that developed during this phase — Cultural Feminism, Black Feminism and Postmodern Feminism.

6.4.1 Cultural Feminism

By 1975 radical feminism had given way to cultural feminism. Cultural feminists both derive and depart from their radical peers. They do agree with the latter that the freedom of women begins in their rejection of masochism, but they relegate material reality to the periphery of their experience. While radicals viewed the female body as an encumbrance, the cultural feminists, like Jane Alpert, Adrienne Rich, etc. in fact saw women's biology as a potent resource. Cultural feminists like Robin Morgan, Andrea Dworkin and Florence Rush make a distinction between femininity as identified by patriarchal order with virtues like submissiveness and passiveness vis-a-vis the natural characteristics of female nature, which they see as loving, caring and egalitarian. On the other hand, with the construing of masculinity as indelible, cultural feminists put the entire blame of female oppression on the assumed maleness of men, and not so much on the power dynamics within the patriarchal system. Thus, for Susan Brownmiller,

rape is a function of male biology. Finally, the cultural feminists argue for the preservation of gender distinctions, for according to them radical shift in society would be achieved only with restoration of culture into its female values of affection, nurturance and equality. By explaining feminism through the lens of female values, cultural feminists therefore, substituted political theory with their vision of united sisterhood.

6.4.2 Black Feminism

In the U.S., while on one hand the Women Liberation and Black Liberation Movements were growing at a rapid pace, black women did not feel politically represented by either of these. The former movement focused primarily on middle-class, white women; while in the second, black only meant black men. Thus, black women were becoming an invisible category and even within the Black Liberation movements they were being constantly subjected to sexism. Thus, Black Feminist Movement developed as a separate movement in response to this. The objective of the movement was to address how class, race and gender intersected to lead these women to their experience of oppression; and also suggest an action plan against the same. *Alice Walker* coined the term 'Womanist' to describe the Black Feminist Movement. She argues that womanist is to feminist as lavender is to purple. The tenets which were promoted through the movement included acknowledgement and praise for all aspects of womanhood, emphasizing self-determination, and raising commitment for the flourishing of both women and men. Thus, the movement called for stretching the individual capacity of women as well as cared for the flourishing of humanity. The movement also encouraged its women participants to stay connected with the community at large. Thus, Black feminism was a political struggle to combat oppression faced by any women of colour.

6.4.3 Postmodern Feminism

Postmodern Feminists make the *largest* departure from earlier debates within feminism with their argument that language is what constructs gender. Influenced with the arguments of Judith Butler's 1990 work *Gender Trouble*, in which she critiques the existing distinction between the biological sex and gender, which the earlier feminists argued is socially constructed. She argues that 'woman' is not a 'stand alone' category, it comes into existence with a bearing of multiple factors like class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Such factors come together to construe the identity that we call a 'woman'. On the basis of this argument, she posits that neither any one of these factors is singularly responsible for women's oppression, nor would handling any one of these lead to a solution to the problem of subjugation of women. For her, gender is performative and cannot be construed in any binary. That is to say, she points out towards inseparability of the body from social norms and language. For instance, Medical professionals have the potential to surgically transform an infant with ambiguous genitalia into a girl who is culturally accepted as a 'proper' girl. Also, modern technological interventions in the field of medicine have also made sexual reassignment surgery a reality, which has made the whole category of gender malleable by blurring the boundaries between man and woman. Postmodern feminists like Donna Haraway, Mary Joe Frug, etc. argue that all women do not share common experiences of oppression. Thus, they attach extreme importance to the categories of queer, homosexual, and transgender, etc. in order to understand the identity politics concerning modern-day women.

Check Your Progress 3

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Describe the third wave of feminism.

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6.5 FEMINIST POLITICAL THEORY IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Academics have pointed out that international politics has been ‘gender blind’ and feminist writing started to make an impact in international politics in the 1980s. Some of the classic works include — *Women and War* (1987) by Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (1989) by Cynthia Enloe and *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global security* (1992) by J. Ann Tickner. Feminist scholars have argued that international politics is not only about security, power, war and states and there is a way in which gender shapes global politics. They have argued that the role of masculinity and power is overemphasized in global politics. Barbara Ehrenreich has pointed out, “Men make wars ... because war makes them men”. Unlike the Realist conception of security centering on state, feminists give importance to human security centered on freedom from want and fear. War itself is seen as a gendered phenomenon as most of the senior positions in the military and political positions are dominated by men. It is also the impact of some myths like the need for masculine male ‘warriors’ to protect helpless women and children. Jean Elshtain has dealt in detail with the myths of Man as a “Just Warrior” and Woman as a “Beautiful Soul”. She has argued that this division serves to recreate and secure women’s social position as noncombatants and men’s identity as warriors. Cynthia Enloe has argued that work of women as plantation workers, wives of diplomats and sex workers on military bases should form a part of global politics. J Ann Tickner criticized Hans Morgenthau’s six principles of Realism and argued that national interest is a broad topic which cannot be defined in terms of power only. Instead of competition, cooperation is required to deal with issues like the nuclear war and environmental degradation.

Check Your Progress 4

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss J Ann Tickner’s criticism of Realism.

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed basically three important things — the genesis of feminist political theory, the major waves or phases in its development and the important ideological currents that developed within these phases and influenced the trajectory of the consolidation of feminist political theory. The first wave of feminist thought emerged in New York in 1848 with a major impetus on achieving right to women's suffrage in order to free women from the oppressive ways of patriarchal society. However, the advocates of the second wave critiqued the existing political thoughts as limiting, and expanded the politics of rights of women to the private sphere of their domestic lives. It was argued that women need liberation from their constraining roles as child bearer, child rearer and a home-maker. The solution was seen in fetching economic opportunities for women in the job market. While the first wave feminist activists were not so dynamic in their demands, those in the second wave radicalised the front of feminist political theory. They on the one hand, projected women as domineering and on the other, saw the feminine body as the major instrument of oppression at the hands of sexist patriarchal forces. This confused the advocates who brought about the third wave of feminism. They argued that it was possible for women to have both - the brain and the push-up bra. With this the radical feminism gave way to cultural feminism, which engulfed women of colour and of developing world in their movement, thus, expanding the political dialogue between various movements of the time. Whereas the second wave of feminism was introduced by the political thoughts of liberal, marxist, socialist, radical and ecological feminism, the third wave was marked by cultural, black and postmodern feminism. Liberal feminism brought the idea of gender equality to the public sphere for the first time in the nineteenth century. They sought the role of state as an ally in the women's movement in order to seek their liberation. The radical feminists took the politics of women's liberation to the individual level and the dynamics of feminist political theory was narrowed from macro to micro discourse. Cultural feminists called for universal sisterhood and endeavoured to unite women of different colour, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and classes for a common goal of liberation. In this, black feminism was a political struggle to combat oppression faced by any woman of colour. Postmodern feminists look at the categories of queer, homosexual, and transgender, etc. as extremely important in order to understand the identity politics concerning modern-day women.

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6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight following points:
 - Seneca Falls Declaration (1848).
 - Focus on women's suffrage (including the struggle for it).
 - Situation in the non-Western world.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should highlight the salient features of Liberal, Marxist, Socialist, Radical and Ecological feminism.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Your answer should highlight the main features of Cultural, Black and Post-Modern feminism.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Your answer should highlight that J. Ann Tickner criticized Morgenthau's six principles of Realism and argued that national interest cannot be defined in terms of power only.

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UNIT 7 POST-MODERN*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Main Postmodern Thinkers
 - 7.2.1 Jean Francois Lyotard
 - 7.2.2 Jacques Derrida
 - 7.2.3 Michel Foucault
 - 7.2.4 Ernesto Laclou and Chantal Mouffe
- 7.3 Post Modernism and Post Structuralism
- 7.4 Post Modernism and Globalization
- 7.5 Criticism
- 7.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.7 References
- 7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will read what is meant by postmodernism and about the main thinkers associated with it. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of postmodernism;
- Discuss different views on it;
- Describe the relationship between postmodernism and post structuralism; and
- Analyze the link between postmodernism and globalization.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism is considered as a sharp reaction against the predominance of modernism. Modernism was the product of the industrial era when the traditional method of explanation and expression got replaced by ‘reason’ and ‘science’. The fundamental attributes of reason and science are to formulate grand narratives and theories. Postmodernism emerged as a radical alternative to modernity. It argues that modernism is too centralized and monolithic in nature and so it suppresses the minor identities and voices. It rejects the notion of a single meaning of truth. It challenges the various established and settled assumptions pertaining to society, culture and the nature of knowledge. It corroded the fundamental foundations of epistemology in general and the practices of social sciences in particular. It advocates multiplicity of narratives and refutes the possibility of meta-narratives. Although postmodernism is a major trend in theory of knowledge, there is little consensus on its origin. The term was *first* used in an article published in 1914 in “The Hibbert Journal” by *J. M. Thompson*. The article described the transformation in attitude and beliefs within the Christian

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society of that time. Later, the concept of postmodernism gained currency in architecture and literary criticism as a tool to describe and explain the dissatisfaction with modern architecture and deconstruct the literary texts to demystify the hidden power-knowledge relationship. Since the 19th century, it has been embraced by all disciplines such as architecture, literature, art, philosophy, ethics, political science, sociology, anthropology, economics, penology etc. with different emphases within each of these disciplines. Postmodernism is arguably considered a bucket of ambiguity with its *distrust* towards everything and lacking of any clear cut directions. This fundamental nature of postmodernism makes it difficult to provide one all-embracing definition as it often seeks to grasp what escapes the processes of simple definitions and celebrates what resists or disrupts them. Even there is disagreement among postmodernists on whether postmodernity is continuous with modernity or represents a radical break with it; or are they engaged in a long-running relationship with one another with postmodernity continually pointing out the limitation of modernity. Although, the reactions of postmodernist thinkers like Lyotard, Derrida, and Foucault are against the project of enlightenment, within which they constructed their theories, this has brought some uniformity in their works. The glimpse of such uniformities has resulted in to categorization and characterisation of the concept by critical thinkers such as Terry Eagleton.

Postmodernism is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the ideas of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunited cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of skepticism about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, the ‘givenness’ of natures and the coherence of identities. In order to understand the essence of postmodernism, it is necessary to have a look at the original writings of some key postmodern thinkers like Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault, Laclou and Mouffe.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:** i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do you understand by postmodernism?

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7.2 MAIN POST-MODERN THINKERS

7.2.1 Jean Francois Lyotard

Jean Francois Lyotard, the French political philosopher and cultural critic, is one of the most influential figures of postmodern philosophy. His book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* is considered a Bible of

Postmodernism and supplies a coherent conceptualization of it. It surveys the status of science and technology, examines the condition and the changing nature of knowledge and emphasizes replacement of grand narratives by little narratives in the postmodern era. He subscribes to *Daniell Bell* and *Allen Touraine's* analysis of the fundamental change of industrial society in a post-industrial society in which knowledge is the principle force of production and applies the same to explain postmodernity. He writes:

“Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age.”

Lyotard argues that in the postmodern era, knowledge has become a *commodity* (knowledge driven economy) that is a key mean of surviving, flourishing and making profits (power). Consequently, knowledge for knowledge's *sake* and for achieving universal and emancipatory objectives upheld by western modernity are becoming less important to social survival because of science's rapid technological innovation within the aspects of language, linguistic theories, communications, cybernetics, computers and computed languages, informatics, information storage and data banks. He writes:

“Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold; it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange.”

For him, whoever controls such knowledge now exerts political control. He presumes that knowledge will become a source of conflict between nations in future and therefore, future *wars* will be fought over access to information, *not* over territory or ideology. He holds that the dominance of such power oriented knowledge in postmodern era signifies the collapse of universal emancipatory project of modernity (enlightenment). He further insists that knowledge is *neither* scientific nor totally value-free in that it is dependent on narratives — the ways in which the world is understood through the stories we tell about it. For gaining legitimacy. He rejects the totalizing tendencies of history and society; what he calls “grand narratives” like Marxism. Grand/metanarratives are those theories and structures that claim to be able to explain everything and Lyotard emphasizes resisting their position. Like Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God, Lyotard declared the death of three metanarratives — Christianity, liberal humanism and Marxism.

“Whether metanarratives are invoked to support the sciences (revelation of truth), political movements (emancipation of humanity) or artistic movements (achieving deeper visions), they no longer provide the legitimacy they did in the modern era.”

He highlights that there are countless little narratives that jockey for position and begging for our attention and allegiance with *no* single truth (metanarrative) and metanarratives as totalizing structures that underpinned modernity no longer provide a base for critique or action in the contemporary postmodern world. Instead interventions must be local and provisional, and can *no* longer justify themselves on the basis of universal theories. This led Lyotard to call postmodern as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’. In a nutshell, Lyotard emphasized the refutation of scientific rationality paradigm and advocated multiple wisdoms, cultures and relativism of knowledge. As he says — “Let us wage a war on totality, let us celebrate Differences.”

7.2.2 Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida is a French philosopher best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as *Deconstruction*, which he discussed in numerous texts, and developed in the context of phenomenology. He is one of the major figures associated with post-structuralism and postmodern philosophy. The term deconstruction was first used by him in his book *Of Grammatology* and it unprecedentedly questioned assumptions of the Western *philosophical* tradition and also more broadly, Western culture. Derrida called his challenge to the assumptions of Western culture as deconstruction. He *refused* to provide a clear and concrete definition of what deconstruction actually means, and described his own writings as a series of ongoing attempts to figure that out. As he writes:

“All my essays are an attempt to have it out with this formidable question”.

The term deconstruction has been used by his followers and others *beyond* the specific context in which Derrida employs it and has *consistently* been *misconstrued* as an assault against all forms of reasoning. A deep examination of Derrida’s texts reveals that deconstruction (as Derrida uses it) is an active movement (rather than a method) which, by chasing meaning to its *aporias*, seeks to demonstrate its dependence on that irreducible alterity which refuses to further passage. However, essentially, it is a particular mode of philosophical and literary analysis of reading *texts* to reveal conflicts, silences, contradictions and fissures. By doing close readings of the texts of Plato, Heidegger, Husserl, Nietzsche, Austin, Marx, Rousseau, Saussure and Freud, Derrida often picks out an apparently marginal comment or motif and makes it central to his account, showing a text’s internal tensions and contradictions, the moments when it undermines its own central messages and meanings. It is not that *he* (reader) deconstructs texts, rather they deconstruct themselves, hence his claim that deconstruction defies definition and is not, strictly speaking, a method at all. For example, in a reading of Plato’s *Phaedrus in Dissemination*, Derrida explores the double and contradictory meanings of Pharmakon as both a remedy and a poison.

Derrida’s theory of deconstruction is a reaction against the old assumption of the presence of a stable centre, objectivity and absolute truth held commonly by what he calls logocentrism — western philosophy’s search for a foundation to all knowledge. In a logic or reason or truth which is self-evident, self-confirming-Phonocentrism (privileging of *speech* over writing) and linguistic structuralism in favor of a hermeneutics type of suspicion about these categories. For Derrida, deconstructive strategy starts from the idea that the metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and logical systems of the past (logocentrism) were constructed on the basis of conceptual oppositions (*binary* oppositions) such as transcendental / empirical, internal / external, original / derivative, good / evil, universal / particular and God / devil. One of the terms in each binary set of hierarchy is privileged, the other suppressed or excluded. By analyzing the *marginalized* terms and the nature of their exclusion, deconstruction seeks to demonstrate that the preference for one term over its opposite is ultimately unjustifiable. The privileged term has meaning only so far as it is contrasted with its ostensibly excluded opposite. In other words, the privileged term is *constituted* by what it suppresses, which will inevitably return to haunt it. Thus, the privileged term never achieves perfect identity or conceptual purity; it is

always parasitic on or contaminated by the marginalized term. In this way, Derrida by virtue of deconstruction demonstrates that there is *no* such thing as pure presence or an absolute origin or foundation or stable nature of meaning claimed by the western philosophy (logocentrism or metaphysics of presence). Further, against the tradition of phonocentrism, Derrida *prioritizes* writing. In the very first chapter entitled *The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing* in his work *Of Grammatology*, Derrida argues:

“The death of the book undoubtedly announced..... nothing but a death of speech and a new mutation in the history of writing.”

What is the issue for him is the so-called fixity of meaning privileged by speech, and the polysemy associated with writing. The core of his argument here is that phonocentrism is a duplicitous way of making the self-presence of consciousness a primary reality that can be signified. However, for Derrida speech is not aware of the gap between the word as sound and the infinity of possible meaning. Speech in effect is a poor form of writing. Writing however makes us aware that meaning incorporates and generates endless difference. Further, for Derrida the written text- because of difference (neologism created by him particularly to express the indeterminacy of meaning) - necessarily becomes disengaged from the intentions of the writer. Intentionality and authorship in general are dismissed. Derrida rather celebrates readers who construct their *own* meaning. As he puts it:

“The idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing.”

Against the linguistic structuralism of Saussure and Levi-Strauss, Derrida emphasizes what he calls the inter-textuality method and argues that we can never master language. Representation can *never* indicate a presence, since it must always involve the recognition of permanent difference implicit in the signs we use, which implies in turn endless deferral or infinite signification. In a nutshell, for Derrida all foundations are dead. The central aim of deconstruction is to expose logocentrism (metaphysics) and phonocentrism prevalent in the history of western thought from Plato onwards. It shows us the unfamiliar at the heart of the familiar by destabilizing the myth of fixed meaning, by exposing the unrationalized paradoxes, and by highlighting the endless deferred play of meaning in language. Rather than attempting to find a true meaning, a consistent point of view or unified message in a given work, a deconstructive reading carefully teases out, to use Barbara Johnson’s words, ‘the warring forces of signification’ at play and waiting to be read in what might be called the textual unconscious.

7.2.3 Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault, French philosopher and historian is one of the preeminent postmodern theorists. His works cut across the disciplinary boundaries of political science, sociology, philosophy, history and deal with almost *all* major thematic fields like psychiatry, medicine, linguistics, penal practice, prisons, and sexual conduct to articulate systems of thought about human beings. He employed two complementary methods in his works: (a) Archaeology of Knowledge in early works; and (b) Genealogy of Power in later ones. Archaeology focuses on a given historical *moment*, while genealogy is concerned with a historical process.

The constant and driving force in both these Foucaultian methods is what Foucault calls discourse to bring to light the surface-level principles that mark out ways of subject's thinking and acting. As an ensemble of speech practices that carry values, classifications and meanings, discourse simultaneously constructs a truth about subjects, and constitutes subjects in terms of this truth regime. While employing the archaeological method in his early works, such as *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things*, Foucault brought two postmodernist themes to light: (a) Foucault rejected the enlightenment project of humanism (human self as an independent entity) as his focus was on discourse as practice rather than on human subject as abstract being, as the structuralists do; and (b) against structuralism and liberal humanism. He rejected the themes of the history of ideas, such as the genesis of ideas, their continuity and the process of totalizations by arguing that discourses were not fixed and closed within one place, but rather dispersed across a range of sites, times and activities. For example, in examining the changing conceptualization of madness in his *Madness and Civilization* (1965), Foucault noted the shift from a discourse that constructed madness as a form of moral corruption — resolved at one point by the expulsion of the mad from society — to a scientific practice in which madness was the *obverse* of reason, an internal dysfunction of the mind whose sufferers were best confined and, later, treated as victims of mental illness by experts (those possessing reason) within medical institutions. In these shifts from one discourse to another, new forms of authority, power, social subjectivity and institutional organization were fashioned, as for Foucault discourses are *not* simply isolated patterns of speech but organizing principles embedded in wider patterns of social organization and practice. Therefore, there is *no* single universal truth and domination is never complete and never total.

In his later works, Foucault modified his idea of discourse through genealogical analyses of, for example, punishment and sexuality, wherein he examined the complex and contingent emergence of contemporary systems of social discipline and knowledge. Here, discourse was not conceived as autonomous formation of statements within a specific setting, but as a dynamic meeting point between power and knowledge. Having been heavily influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Foucault remarks that genealogical analyses reveal the *hidden* structures that support *not* just the knowledge base of societies, but also its ideology and power relations; and also reveal that discourse, ideas and universal truths are riddled with human intervention and implicated within the maintenance of society's conformity. Consequently, there is *no* objective knowledge as claimed by modernity. Within critical theory, the work of Foucault provides a comprehensive analysis of power. Against traditional models (that is Marxist and liberal approaches) of power, Foucault argues that power is neither located in a class nor in an individual, but is rather diffused throughout the social structure and is exercised within and through it. As he puts it:

“Power is never localised here or there, but rather employed and exercised through a net-like organisation”.

His theorization of power is:

- Power is only ever exercised through relationships (Foucault analyzed power relations and not power itself); that is, power relations in their distinct modalities, strategies, tactics, practices and techniques.

- All social relations are relations of power, enabling to uncover the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.
- Power is fundamentally a bottom-up feature of social interaction (micro-power).
- Power is positive, productive and constitutive rather than negative, prohibitive and repressive, even though it may occasionally take the form of domination; that is, it brings into being meanings, subjects, and social orders- these are its effects rather than its material or it's a priori;
- There are no relations of power without resistance as resistance always means empowering oneself; one is simply reconstituting a relationship of power.
- Knowledge and power are mutually constitutive and therefore cannot be separated; Foucault, in fact, preferred the terminology power / knowledge.
- Power is impersonal and flows through or insinuates language, knowledge and institutional practices; and (i) power and freedom are not opposites insofar as there is no subject, and hence no freedom, outside of power. Thus, he regards the notion of sovereign power as inadequate for understanding the diverse modalities of power at work in modern societies. As he puts it:

“Political theory in general has never ceased to be obsessed with the person of sovereign. What we need, however, is a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty. We need to cut off the king's head: in political theory that has still to be done.”

Foucault holds that liberal democracies function not through the threat of death and orders, but rather by what he calls governmentality or disciplinary power or bio-power, meaning regulation and disciplining of mass population and their behaviours by virtue of creating in them a sense of freedom which acts as a mechanism for disciplining disparate populace into governing themselves. A popular example he gave in his *Discipline and Punish* of this process in action was that of the increasing use of surveillance within society, which is being justified in the name of enhancing freedom of movement and security; in reality, though, it makes us all censor our own behavior in case we are caught on camera. For Foucault, government of our society is not confined to the sphere of state only, but rather norms (performing the role of surveillance) pertaining to our social institutions — family, educational institutions, prisons, hospitals, religious places — govern over our bodies (docile bodies) by disciplining and normalizing our activities contributing to the rise of what he calls a carceral society, silence of human liberation and above all enhancement of economic and political needs of the state.

Governmentality, therefore, draws upon without unifying, centralizing, or rendering systematic or even consistent, a range of powers and knowledge dispersed across modern societies. However, Foucault is not arguing that governmentality chronologically supersedes sovereignty and rule. He remarks:

“We need to see things not in terms of the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society

by a society of government, in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and its essential mechanism the apparatuses of security.”

He also identified three instruments of disciplinary power, derived in large part from the military model: (a) hierarchical observation, or the ability of officials (metaphorically norms of society) to oversee all they control with a single gaze; (b) the ability to make normalizing judgements and to punish those who violate the norms; and (c) use of examination to observe subjects and to make normalizing judgements about them. An examination is a beautiful example of the power-knowledge relationship; those who have the power to give examinations gain additional knowledge and thereby, more power through the imposition of examinations on subjects. Thus, against the enlightenment project of human liberation, progress, objective knowledge and universal truth, Foucault argues that new disciplinary regimes of the 19th century which, for example, sought to reform prisoners rather than punish acts were as repressive as earlier systems and knowledge is a significant field of power with truth inherently being political. As he says:

“Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power.”

7.2.4 Laclou and Mouffe

The works of Ernesto Laclou and Chantal Mouffe constitute the most important part of post-Marxist thought in particular, and postmodernism in general. They argue that there is no such thing as material interests, but only discursively constructed ideas about them. They analyzed and deconstructed the classical Marxian term “class” in an analytical and discursive way. They argued that a unified discourse is almost impossible. Therefore, Marxists should shift their focus from single proletariat discourse to multiple discourses such as women, blacks, immigrants, consumers, ecologists etc. Laclou affirms that the field of cultural struggle has a fundamental role in construction of political identities. They propose a system called “Radical Democracy” in which a new hegemony called the “hegemony of democratic values” will be required. Furthermore, it will require multiplication of democratic practices and their institutionalization through bringing in a variety of democratic struggles like antiracists, anti-capitalists, environmentalists, human rights and civil rights movements under a single roof. Radical democracy retains the objective of abolition of capitalism, but simultaneously asserts that merely abolition of capitalism will not necessarily end the other form of inequalities and exploitations, therefore a broader framework and perspective will be required.

Like the postmodernists, the post Marxism of Laclou and Mouffe asserts that the orthodox/classical Marxism is no longer viable in the modern world. In the light of writings and ideas of Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault, Laclou and Mouffe’s postmodernism exhibits the following characteristics:

- It challenges the enlightenment philosophy advocating essentialism and foundationalism as the basis for human progress and liberation by: (a) regarding an individual not as an absolute, but rather a historically and socially situated being because of which it criticizes the essentialist

conceptions of, for example, femininity and masculinity, insaneness and sanity etc.; and (b) celebrating the anti-foundationalist position, signifying the absence of neutral criteria to establish neutral knowledge and universal truth as the emphasis of enlightenment on reason, science and technology as foundations for human progress and liberation being the product of social engineering (power orientation) are not bringing about human liberation, but rather snatching our freedoms in the name of abnormal, irrational, etc. Moreover, by recognizing the major changes that have occurred in the West, particularly pertaining to the status and role of knowledge, postmodernism questions the applicability of enlightenment principles in the West.

- It regards truth, knowledge, and sciences (in fact, everything whatever in society is) as the products of social construction and therefore associated with power. The critical theorists like Jurgen Habermas and Terry Eagleton question such postmodernist position on the ground that it makes us skeptic about the emancipatory role of social science to be played. Postmodernists like Foucault rebut such charges with the counter-critique that the so-called emancipatory projects generally tend to be less about liberation than the rise of various power-knowledge regimes. Moreover, they insist that postmodernism is not incompatible with the idea of a critical social science so long as it does not entail providing unequivocal epistemological or normative guidelines.
- It rejects what Lyotard calls meta-narratives; that is totalizing theories and structures in favor of what he calls little narratives.
- It rejects given and single meanings and rather gives a space to multiple meanings and interpretations by celebrating differences, relativism, indeterminism and multiple realities, identities, truths and discourses.
- It is not anti-theorization, but does theorization beyond the given and fixed scheme of theorization in a reflexive way.
- It is not anti-reason, but questions the reason by reason in order to deconstruct the binary categorization of rational / irrational for recognizing and celebrating the identity of latter.
- It is not anti-knowledge, but explains the power and market orientation of contemporary knowledge.
- It emphasizes conditionality and historicity of phenomenon and theories.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Why did Lyotard argue that knowledge has become a commodity?

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2) What is meant by deconstruction?

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7.3 POST MODERNISM AND POST STRUCTURALISM

Postmodernism and post structuralism have a number of similarities.

- Postmodernism (Foucault and Lyotard) is a theory of society, culture and history whereas post structuralism (Derrida) is theory of knowledge and language.
- Postmodernism prefers decentered knowledge whereas poststructuralism includes anti-foundationalism i.e. refutation of the modern search for rational grounds for knowledge and morality; emphasis on construction of meaning and rhetoric in texts; and relation between knowledge and power.
- Post modernism and post structuralism, both are mistrustful about monolithic traditions in social sciences.
- Both reject the project of universal social science.

Therefore, it can be stated that Post-structuralism is a movement in social and political theory within the realm of postmodernism with a wider coverage of cultural and social aspects.

7.4 POST MODERNISM AND GLOBALIZATION

The classical, social and political theory lays a greater emphasis on nation states. Under the umbrella of globalization, the states and societies have undergone fundamental changes. Postmodernism argues that nation states are losing importance under globalization as world is becoming interdependent. The technological and electronic revolution has created heterogeneity, pluralization, individualization, differentiation and fragmentation over homogenization of earlier times. The postmodern world is one where technology within the confines of consumerist capitalism is creating diversity and pluralization. Immanuel Wallerstein argues that the history of the world capitalist system has been trending towards cultural heterogeneity rather than cultural homogenization. Therefore, the processes of fragmentation of the state in the world system along with cultural differentiation are taking place simultaneously.

7.5 CRITICISM

Critics have pointed out that postmodernism has become a grand-narrative in itself and it intensifies problems of personal and social disintegration and despair. Naom Chomsky has even argued that postmodernism is meaningless as it has nothing to add to empirical and analytical knowledge. Pauline Rosenau has highlighted the fact that while postmodernism stresses the irrational, instruments of reason are freely employed to advance its perspective. He further argues that postmodernism criticizes the inconsistency of modernism, but refuses to be held to norms of consistency itself. Some other critiques have pointed out that postmodernism still leaves deeper questions about the roots of oppression and marginalization unanswered.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do postmodernists say about globalization?

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2) Discuss some points of criticism of postmodernism.

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7.6 LET US SUM UP

In a nutshell, the main features of postmodernism can be summarized as follows:

- It privileges interminancy over finality
- It recognizes that reality is fragmented and disconnected
- Opposes canonical authority
- Emphasizes the free mixture of styles, genres and traditions
- Stresses on conditionality and historicity of theories
- Highlights the process of creation and interpretation instead of staticism
- Its anti-foundational, anti-essentialist and anti-meta-narratives
- Argues that the search of ultimate truth is lost and universal knowledge is only a myth.

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7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight following points:
 - Reaction to modernity.
 - First use of the term and used where.
 - Rejection of totalising theories.
 - Names of some post-modernists.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include quote cited in the text, highlight how knowledge has become a commodity and is different from knowledge for knowledge's sake.
- 2) Your answer should mention Derrida's book 'Of Grammatology', his quote on destruction cited in the text and highlight how it is a method of reading and reading texts.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Your answer should include decline of the idea of nation-state in an increasingly interdependent world, cultural heterogeneity vs homogeneity and views of Immanuel Wallerstein.
- 2) Your answer should highlight that post-modernism itself is a grand narrative and include views of Naom Chomsky and Pauline Rosenau.

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