



# **Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar**

School of Humanities & Languages

## **Department of English**

Topic – ‘MARXIST THEORY’

Class- Ph.D (English)

By

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**HOD, English.**

# 1. MARXIST THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION:

- Attributed to KARL MARX (1818-1883)
- a German philosopher. ‘
- considered society as 'STRUCTURE '
- economy of society as 'SUPERSTRUCTURE '.
- Applied 'Rational Approach
- Explained life as a material reality
- totally independent of spiritual/metaphysical mysticism.
- committed to political practice as the end of all thought.
- Means: CLASS-STRUGGLE through
- MASS revolution.
- End: Establishment of classless/egalitarian society.




## 2) KEY IDEAS:

- THE MINORITY ( ELITE/BOURGEOIS)
- have access to power and capital.
- Circumstantially, the select few become 'PRIVILEGED ' / HAVES ' /CENTRE of society.
- On the other hand, THE MAJORITY/MASS/ 'PROLETARIAT ' /HAVE-NOTS turn destitutes and deprived.
- As a result, The Bourgeois makes the optimum exploitation of the masses/labours for the maximization of profit at the lowest possible cost of production.
- Consequently, the rich grow richer and the poor poorer thereby constantly widening social gulfs.



### 3) KEY TERMS:

- a) PROLETARIAT:
    - The lowest class/ the working class in
    - Ancient Rome. These people are landless without any material properties.
  - b) BOURGEOIS:
    - Middle class people in Ancient France. They occupy positions in society between the highest and the lowest.
  - c) REIFICATION:
    - Coined by Lukacs, Hungarian MARXIST.
    - It shows people's alienation from work
    - as they are treated by the Owners more as objects of manipulation than as human beings.
  - d) COMMODITY FETISHISM:
    - KARL MARX used to term to describe
    - decontextualization and mystification of social relations of production in the
    - process of commodification. Marx categorically pinpointed the term to highlight the social relationships among things ( Money and commodity exchanged in market trade).
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## E) DIALECTIC MATERIALISM

- It comprises two words----'Dialectic' &
- 'Materialism'. The term 'DIALECTIC'
- demonstrates an approach which connotes Multiple perspectives accompanied by contradictions and
- conflicts. The term 'MATERIALISM'
- discusses Reality of the world in terms of senses/matter/society Independent of spirit. Hence the term 'DIALECTIC MATERIALISM' refers to the reconciliation of the oppositions/contradictions/conflicts in terms of
- 'SYNTHETIC UNITY'. Having taken from HEGEL, KARL MARX individualized it. HEGEL used 'THESIS' for forces and
- 'ANTITHESIS' for Counter -forces.



## 4) MARXIST THINKERS

- KARL MARX.
- FRIEDRICH ENGELS
- LENIN
- STALIN
- WALTER BENJAMIN
- JEAN PAUL SARTRE
- TERRY EAGLETON
- KAUTSKY
- STEPHEN GREENBLATT
- LEFEBVRE
- CLAUDWELL
- GEORG LUKACS
- ANTONIO GRAMSCI
- ALTHUSSER
- RAYMOND WILLIAMS
- ADORNO
- BOURDIEU
- HABERMAS
- ANAND PRAKASH
- MULK RAJ ANAND
- GIRIS KARNARD etc.



## 5) TERRY EAGLETON ( 1943- 2020)

### INTRODUCTION OF THE AUTHOR:

- A British literary theorist.
- Best-known for his masterpiece,
- 'LITERARY THEORY: AN INTRODUCTION '
- .A Cultural Theorist.
- According to EAGLETON, " Literature is an unstable category as it varies
- due to varying social, political and cultural circumstances.“
- That's why, TERRY EAGLETON is called
- a Postmodern critic discussing Marxism differently and profoundly.
- He is also known for his books-----
- ' THE ILLUSIONS OF POSTMODERNISM '
- and 'AFTER THEORY '.



6) TERRY EAGLETON'S "IDEOLOGY AND ITS VICISSITUDES IN WESTERN MARXISM FROM LUKACS TO GRAMSCI" (9<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF 'MAPPING IDEOLOGY'):

- LUKACS, the Hungarian Marxist discusses social Reality as a dynamic process.
- 'Consciousness' may be cognitive
- as well as performative.
- In his book ' HISTORY AND CLASS
- CONSCIOUSNESS ', Lukacs describes
- 'REALITY ' as the criterion for the
- correctness of thought.
- He holds that consciousness (thought
- and existence) can't be identical.
- However , they are aspects of the historical and dialectical process.





- So, LUKACS 's notion of 'PROLETARIAT' is that as a universal class, it stands for the emancipation of humanity.
- That's why, ' PROLETARIAT ' represents the society as a whole,
- but 'BOURGEOIS ' only its part.
- It's true that HEGEL'S ' THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT ' has been criticized for its ABSOLUTIST
- IDEA OF ' SUBJECT ' and 'OBJECT '
- Of History being identical.
- Criticizing LUKACS's concepts, EAGLETON says that history should be
- viewed in its totality in order to understand its dynamic, contradictory,
- development. 'SOCIAL CLASSES' are not just set of ' collectivized individuals'
- but 'historical agents'. They are structural and material formations
- getting on 'INTERSUBJECTIVE ENTITIES'.



- Eagleton finds that LUKACS's way of interpreting 'Bourgeois' and 'Proletariat' isn't objective always. He argues that both of these 'Signifiers' are conditioned by circumstances, so none of them can be absolute.
- Eagleton opines that every ideology derives from some historical point of interactions among different types of ideas, people and events. The Russian Critic Mikhail Bakhtin dwells on these multiple, interactive, complex, subversive and parodic nature of language and culture and literature in his well-known coinages 'DIALOGIC IMAGINATION', 'CARNIVALESQUE' AND 'POLYPHONY'.
- In fact, Eagleton emerges as a POSTMODERN MARXIST who appreciates the unstable, fluid and indeterminate nature of thought and consciousness which forms an 'IDEOLOGY'.



- EAGLETON contends that no Ideology is absolute, be it 'CAPITALISM 'or ' COMMUNISM ' . It's because of their basic mutability and dynamism that every ideology is threatened from within and challenges any kind of authoritarianism or totalitarianism which the very ideology purports.
- As Ideology has undergone historical emergence , it is bound to be inseparable from the past and surrounding circumstances. Thus it testifies to what may be called 'CORROSIVE ANXIETY '.
- So any ideology is far from being ABSOLUTIST/ ULTIMATE/ UNQUESTIONABLE/IMPECCABLE/STABLE/CONCLUSIVE. It's also ever-progressive and changeable. So it's impracticable to impose any kind of traditional or Metaphysical fixities on it.
- Every ideology, Eagleton believes, is overtaken by scepticism/cynicism/critical Enquiry which enables it towards subverting the legitimacy of its power
- This accounts for Eagleton's Deconstructionist/ Postmodern/Poststructuralist critical stance.

- Next, it's in the ideological stance of the famous Marxist critic Antonio Gramsci in whose standpoints, Eagleton pinpoints contradictions and vicissitudes. He discusses his concept of 'HEGEMONY'.
- He says that the Government wins the consent from the subjects also by 'Coercion'.
- Sometimes, political hegemony works more effectively than economic hegemony. For example, 'Racist Ideology' in S Africa.
- Gramsci associates 'Hegemony' with the 'Arena' of 'Civil Society'.



- Eagleton asserts that 'Hegemony ' is never "once-and-for-all' achievement, but it" has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified". So it's dynamic and mobile.
- Eagleton asserts that the dominant groups always experiment with newer and newer strategies/ devices for perpetuating their power and domination.
- In the "PRISON NOTEBOOK", Eagleton dismisses any negative use of the term 'Ideology'



- Eagleton holds that the material forces form the 'Content' of the ideology and thought forms the 'Form'.
- Eagleton asserts that there are great expectations from the ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS .It's they who will develop linkage between THEORY and Ideology thereby creating a two way passage connecting politics and popular aspirations.
- Eagleton asserts that such a Worldview cements together a social and political bloc , as a unifying, organising and inspirational principle rather than a system of Abstract ideas.

THANK YOU!

