
UNIT 11 SOCIALISM*

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- explain the notions of socialism and its basic ideas;
- discuss the growth of socialism in India;
- describe the four important pre-requisites of socialism;
- define the different varieties of socialism; and
- discuss the scientific analysis of socialism from the Marxian perspective.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit on Capitalism, you learnt about the basic notions of capitalism. In this unit, we have discussed the general notions of socialism from the socio-

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economic point of view as well as the growth of socialism in India. The unit provides an insight into various prerequisites of socialism the underlying idea of which is the abolition of capitalism through constructing a society which is based on the ideals of equality, justice, cooperation and so on. The unit offers the varieties of socialism thus providing the different facets of the term and how the term has been understood in different paths of social life. The unit also offers an insight into the scientific analysis of socialism from the Marxian perspective. It discusses four important factors such as dialectical materialism, historical materialism, surplus value and the shifting of power from the bourgeoisie to the proletariats.

11.2 BASIC NOTIONS OF SOCIALISM

Socialism is a concept that has its roots in the socio-economic doctrine. The term was coined by Saint Simon in early 19th century in the West. Although the attributes attached to socialism such as social cooperation, upliftment of the weaker sections in a society, struggle for social justice and so on, existed prior to 19th century but scholars argue that the current understanding of the term socialism evolved in the 19th century only. Generally, the term socialism is used in two different yet interdependent ways. One is that socialism denotes values, ethics and other principles of this sort of imagination. Socialism in this sense is characterised by the ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity, social justice, classlessness, cooperation, abundance, peace and so on (See: Narayan, 1936). Second is that it signifies the practical aspects of socio-political institutions that also symbolize the socialist principles. Socialism at the level of institutions contrasts the capitalist mode of economy by marking a shift from the capitalist modes of ownership and control of the production to the public or collective ownership of the production system. This shift which is based on the notions of social justice and equality has grabbed the attention of socialists as well as others involved in the welfarist activities but these two notions do not alone represent socialism. There are a variety of meanings attached to the term socialism however, in this unit, we will focus on socialism in terms of its economic aspects and the welfare of human beings.

Before we move ahead to discuss the allied issues of socialism, the need is to understand socialism through the definitions offered by various social science scholars from time to time. Narayan (1934) defined socialism as the 'system of social reconstruction'. For him, socialism means reorganizing economic and social life through the process of socialization. This involves reorganization of the means of production and promoting collective means of ownership thus abolishing the private ownership. Russel (1938) defined socialism as 'the advocacy of communal ownership of land and capital'. By communal ownership is meant the democratic mode of ownership by the state which is for the common interest of all. M.K. Gandhi (1951), socialism as a society in which 'members of society are equal none low, non high'. All the definitions offered thus focuses on who benefits, the nature of control and the ideas of equality. Socialism generally means the production of goods to fulfil the needs of people and not for trade to obtain profit which is an attribute of capitalism. Thus there is also a transition from competition to cooperation. Through this transition, the disparities that existed among various people in a given society are eliminated and people are provided with equal opportunities.

11.3 THE GROWTH OF INDIA'S SOCIALISM

The socialist approach developed in India during the freedom movement like other countries in the Asia. Indian socialism grew during the first and second world wars within the social and political context that prevailed during those times. However socialism did not have a smooth beginning during the initial phases of its growth in India due to resentment of the British and also due to the vicious transitions in the approaches of International Communist Party towards India's freedom movement. The radical views of Karl Marx grabbed the attention of Indian nationalists who desired to expose the economic difficulties of its country brought about by the British through drawing off the wealth. In doing this, they attempted to make public the shortcomings of the British.

Socialism became most influential during the Gandhian era of Satyagraha movement. During this period, various other influential leaders in India, such as Swami Dayanand, campaigned for promoting equality in India. Socialists generally dealt economically with the notions of equality but there are others who focussed more on promoting social equality such as Bankim Chandra. Gandhian model of socialism has its base on the ethical and reformatory factors. Gandhi advocated non-violence and argued that western democracy and communism were objectionable to the Indians for their lacking of the true freedom (Gandhi, 1951). The contributions of the nationalist thinkers highlighted the economic difficulties that existed in India without inhibiting the notions of socialism. The economic turmoil however helped in the growth of an ideology which is based on the ideals of socialism in India.

11.4 PREREQUISITES OF SOCIALISM

The underlying idea of socialism is to abolish the practices of capitalism and constructing a society which is based on equality, justice, cooperation, good for all, welfarist in nature and so on. Socialism also tries to bring an end to the exploitation of labourers by the capitalists. Socialist society as the name suggests can be constructed by people collectively and according to their needs and desires. In doing this, there are certain prerequisites which I will discuss here:

11.4.1 Emphasis on Society

Under the socialist economy, the emphasis is more on society than the individual alone. Socialism does not favour the interests of an individual but it promotes the interests of the society as a whole. This means that socialism lays much emphasis on the cooperation among the members of a society and works for their collective interests. Socialists argue that goods must be produced in accordance with the needs of the society. Under the socialist form of economy, individuals are free to produce goods as per their needs. It ensures that people engage in producing those products which they think will be of their interest. In establishing this socio-economic order, there is an equal opportunity provided to all the members.

11.4.2 Socialism Eliminates Capitalism

Because of the subordination, suppression, class conflict, unequal distribution and other blockades that existed in a capitalist society, capitalism is considered

by many as the enemy of socialism. These factors all stand as a hindrance to the idea of social justice. In trying to wipe out such odds from the society, socialists rejected the notions of capitalism. They instead promoted the factors such as social justice, equality, freedom, collective interests, individual freedom, cooperation, and so on (Russell, 1938). It abolished the patterns of ownership that existed in the capitalist society such as the rich aiming at making profits and owning the means of production in order to dominate the labour class.

Activity 1

Read the Preamble of Constitution of India and write a short note on the basic ideas mentioned in it. What kind of society does it enshrine? Discuss with other students at your Study Center.

11.4.3 Socialism Brings in Equality

Since there has been inequalities of different sorts, such as income, wealth, rights, profit, and so on, prevalent in the capitalist society, socialism aims at eliminating these inequalities which are the construction of capitalism. In socialism, there is no competition or subordination and therefore the idea of rich versus poor does not exist. The relationship between the means of production and the labour power is determined through the collective and common economic interests of all and so there is a mutual dependence. The system of production is controlled and regulated by the people jointly and is oriented towards the interests of all. Therefore, it will be precise to claim that socialism rests in the idea of equality unlike capitalism.

11.4.4 Socialism Abolishes Private Property Ownership

Property ownership has always been one of the crucial issues in a capitalist society. Only a few have been privileged to own the property depending upon who belong to which class. However, the evolution of socialist society has abolished the private property ownership. It has transferred the ownership of the means of production and distribution from capitalist ownership to social ownership. This has brought about a significant change in the type of ownership that exists in the socialist society. All members, regardless of the class, have become the owners of the property and this has paved way for their prosperous life and created an egalitarian mode of production system.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Define in your own words what socialism is?
.....
.....
- 2) Gandhian idea of socialism is based on
- 3) What re the pre-conditions for a socialist society to exist?
 1. 2.
 3. 4.

4) A socialist society is characterised by competition and subordination. True/False

.....

5) What are the factors that stand as a basis for the rejection of capitalism?

.....

.....

11.5 VARIETIES OF SOCIALISM

As we have understood from the above discussion that the fundamental feature of socialism is the control over means of production by the organised society. However, there are other features of socialism which are considered by many as significant to the idea of socialism. This indicates that socialism can exist in its various forms. In this section, an attempt will be made to discuss the various forms of socialism. As such, there can different varieties of socialism, but we will discuss here four important forms of socialism, that is state socialism, military socialism, Christian socialism and the planned socialism.

11.5.1 State Socialism

The concept of state socialist means involvement of the state in abolishing the discriminatory practices that existed in capitalism such as low wages and inequalities. State socialism promotes the idea of welfare state. It denotes a specific model of economic and political organization in a society and is based on the idea of collectivism. State socialism is not just an economic doctrine but some scholars argue that it is more of a moral and welfarist movement which is based on the ideas of justice and equality. State socialists argue that in order to abolish the exploitation from the production system and endorse social welfare, the state needs to interfere in the production state of affairs through legislative means which will serve the interests of the downtrodden. This demands the nationalization of the means of production in order to have an equal distribution of production among the workers. The state acts as an organ for the promotion of equality and equal distribution of resources and towards moral responsibilities, the state functions towards the upliftment of weaker sections in a society.

Activity 2

Interview at least two Government Servants on the issue of Protective Discrimination. Write their response and relate it to the notion of socialism in society in India. Discuss with your peers at Study Center.

11.5.2 Military Socialism

Military socialism is a term used in to denote the collective aim of the armed personnel during the war. In military socialism, income value and value of social status of the citizens is determined by the status held in the armed group. There is no claim of private ownership of the means of production. No individual in war can have individual aims, which would otherwise downgrade the essence of war. Military personnel usually stay in camps which are the communal arrangements.

They collectively partake in activities which give direction to their lives, including their familial matters.

11.5.3 Christian Socialism

Christian socialism is a kind of system that promotes the welfare of the people through combining the divine and what constitutes socialism. It is a kind of state socialism and therefore scholars argue that it is difficult to demarcate state socialism from Christian socialism. They further argue that it is also difficult to conclude whether an individual socialist belongs to the state or Christian socialism. Christian socialism operates on the idea that under the economic system, the profit making process which serves the material interests of the people does not disturb the smooth functioning of the system. The distribution of prices and wages as demanded by the people is equal and reasonably just in order to satisfy the needs of people.

11.5.4 Planned Socialism

While in capitalism, the capitalists engage in the production process to satisfy their own interests. Competition was also predominant in capitalism and it lacked coordination. But in planned socialism, there is a collective or what is also called as mixed ownership of the means of production by the public. Planning in socialism denotes planning to produce. In planned socialist economy, the coordination and distribution of production is carried out by the state through proper planning. Production in the socialist system is done to satisfy the needs and demands of people (See: Sahai, 1986). The distribution of production is based on the amount of contribution that people make in the production process. Under planned socialism, there are certain objectives fixed by the government. To achieve them, the state comes up with a planning. All the issues concerning the economy are covered under the plans of the government. The planning agency is generally called as Central Planning Authority and in India we read planning commission earlier and now we have the Niti Aayog who serves at this front.

11.6 THE SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF SOCIALISM

As mentioned earlier, socialism marks its evolution through the abolition of bourgeoisie order of the society. The scientific study of socialism is still undeveloped. Socialist scientists have so far not succeeded to take the science of socialism to a next stage. They have overlooked the functioning of economic system and also failed to comprehend the functioning of various economic institutions characterised by division of labour and private property ownership. Marx's concept of socialism is referred to as scientific socialism because Marxism is based on the study of past. Marx's socialism, which is also called as scientific socialism comprises three fundamental categories such as economics, politics and philosophy. Within economics, Marx propounded the theory of surplus value through value of labour theory. In political arena, Marx and Engels understood and analysed the principles of class struggle that existed in capitalism to create a new form of society called socialist society through one-party rule of proletariats. Within the field of philosophy, Marx borrowed Hegel's theory of dialectics to develop dialectical materialism, a theory which is now known as the theory of dialectical materialism.

Now considering Marxian concept of socialism, four foundational factors can be derived from three categories discussed above. These are dialectical materialism, historical materialism, theory of surplus value and dictatorship of proletariat. These are discussed as under:

11.6.1 Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical materialism is an approach derived from the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Materialism for them refers to the material world, which has an objective reality. This objective reality does not depend on spiritual or mental processes. Marx and Engels asserted that ideas could appear but only in materialist form. Both of them understood materialism in contrast to the notions of idealism. This creates a disparity in the way a theory can consider material as detached from mind and spirit or the existence of mind and spirit without the material. Consequently, they argued that integrating material with ideal may cause confusion and uncertainty if looked upon through the materialist approach. Marxian approach of dialectic materialism has shaped the Hegel's notion of dialectic. These two forms of dialectic differ from the other in terms of elements of ultimate reality. For Hegel, it is spirit or reason while as for Marx, the ultimate reality is matter in motion. Dialectical materialism thus is heading towards an organized society which is classless and there will be no exploitation on the basis of class.

11.6.2 Historical Materialism

Historical materialism is a theory according to which the organization and development of the modes of production are determined through its material conditions. This means society is influenced by the ways goods are produced which further changes the society during the course of time. It is actually a method of interpreting the history of a society economically. Historical materialism starts with the idea that the bases of economic activities are various institutions such as cultural, legal, political and so on. The theory is based on a simple idea that in order for a man to survive, he must produce. Production here is the most important aspect among all activities. Production system is the causal factor of all the socio-political changes that takes place in a socialist society. The underlying notion of historical materialism is primarily the fulfilment of basic needs of Mankind rather than pursuing science, art, religion, politics and so on. The basic needs include food, drink, clothing, shelter, etc. This idea will apparently mark the transition of capitalist society into a socialist society just as slavery was replaced by feudalism, feudalism by capitalism. In transiting from capitalism to socialism, the private ownership rights of capitalists on the means of production will be taken over by the social ownership which is a kind of common ownership. This will also bring an end to the powers, privileges, and exploitation of the ruling class.

11.6.3 Theory of Surplus Value

The theory of surplus value is given by Karl Marx in his book Das Capital. This theory breaks social classes into two classes, that is, capitalist class of those who own the property and the proletariats who are the labourers. Marx argued that these two classes differ in their interests which give rise to class struggle between the two classes which ultimately destroys the capitalist class. The surplus value is the outcome of the unpaid work of the labourers which becomes the profit of

the capitalists. This denotes that the profit of one class puts the other class at loss. Capitalists pay low wages to the labourers for all their labour and this keeps labourers attached to their work for capitalists. Surplus value in this sense can be defined as the difference in the value of goods and wages received by the labourers in producing these goods. The way surplus value is appropriated makes the capitalist system exploitative. It is in the backdrop of this theory that Marx used to prove that capitalism is exploitative in nature.

11.6.4 Dictatorship of Proletariats

The underlying idea of the dictatorship of proletariats denotes the shifting of power from bourgeoisie to proletariats to construct a socialist society. The transformation of capitalist society into a socialist society occurs through the class struggle between the two classes and power goes into the hands of working class. The working class exercises its power till the time it succeeds in taking over all other classes. Following this accomplishment, the dictatorship of the proletariats loses its vigour after the class system ceases to exist. Dictatorship of the proletariats has its basis on certain significant aspects. The first is that it is considered as an instrument of revolution. The use of revolution is to build a society which is classless. This is possible through the dictatorship of proletariats. Through the revolution, the proletariats can defeat the power of bourgeoisie. This can pave way for socialism but it can only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariats. The second is the democracy of the bourgeoisie. Understanding bourgeoisie democracy ensures the understanding of the democracy of proletariats. The former has its basis on the idea of inequality while as the latter emphasizes on the idea of equality and abolition of oppression and this latter is the third aspect of dictatorship of proletariats.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is meant by state socialism?
.....
.....
- 2) Christian socialism is the blend of and
- 3) What is 'planned' in planned socialism?
.....
.....
- 4) Name three fundamental categories of scientific socialism which existed in Marx's socialism.
 1.
 2.
 3.
- 5) Discuss the underlying idea behind the dictatorship of proletariats in a socialist society?
.....
.....

11.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed the general notions of socialism and briefly traced the growth of socialism in India. For a socialist society to come into being, there are certain pre-conditions. The unit offers an insight into four fundamental pre-conditions of socialism. Scholars across the disciplines of sociology and economics have been engaging with multiple varieties of socialism. However, this unit deals with four significant forms of socialism which offer an understanding of different contours of socialism. Given the Marxian notion of scientific socialism, the unit discusses four fundamental factors as pointed out by Karl Marx that lead to the growth of socialism. These include dialectical materialism, historical materialism, theory of surplus value and dictatorship of proletariats. The unit briefly discusses all the four factors for an understanding of the Marx's scientific socialism.

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11.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Socialism means reformation of the society which is based on the ideas of equality, justice, cooperation and public ownership and free from any exploitation.
- 2) Satyagraha
- 3) 1. Emphasis on society 2. Elimination of capitalism
3. Promotion of equality 4. Abolition of private ownership of property

- 4) False
- 5) The main factors behind the rejection of capitalism are subordination, suppression, class conflict, unequal distribution and private ownership of property, and so on.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) State socialism means involvement of state in the abolition of all discriminatory practices that existed in a capitalist society.
- 2) Divine and socialism
- 3) 'Planned' in planned socialism denotes planning to produce in order to satisfy the needs and demands of people.
- 4) Economics, politics and philosophy
- 5) Dictatorship of proletariats refers to the shifting of power from bourgeoisie to proletariats to construct a socialist society.



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