

## ANTONIO GRAMSCI (1891-1937)

Gramsci is famous Italian Marxist philosopher. He was born in Allies Sardinia in Italy. He founded Communist Party of Italy. In 1928 he was imprisoned by fascist administration for 20 years. In prison, he wrote 'The Prison Notebook' which was smuggled and published. He died in 1937.

### **BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION:**

According to Gramsci, **Ideological Dominance** of capitalism is the basic reason for strong influence of capitalism in Europe. Gramsci said that ideological control of capitalist society lies in **Civil Society**, which is comprised of family, religious institution, Church, College, press etc. After Russian Revolution 1917, there was fear that Communism will spread to all parts of the world but in Italy fascism captured the power instead of communism. Gramsci believed that fascism is other form of capitalism because when capitalist fail to control state through consent, capitalist exercises brute force to suppress the people.

Lenin believed that the reason why capitalism succeeded in capitalist countries was existence of imperialism. He said that after end of imperialism, there will be communist revolution in western European countries, bourgeoisie in capitalists nations are exploiting natural resources of African countries. After the end of imperialism, Bourgeois class will exploit their own proletariat. Thus, revolution in European nations is inevitable. Gramsci admired Russian Revolution of October, 1917 but he believes that such revolution is unsuitable for capitalist countries, because there is clear distinction between **Civil Society** and state in the European Nation. In countries like Russia this distinction is not clear.

### **STATE**

Marx said that state is an **instrument of exploitation**. State represent Army, police, thus it is **repressive agency**. Gramsci argued that state is not only a repressive institution. Moreover state is an **ideological organization**. State control media, press, school and university state shapes ideas and norms of the society. State also adopted welfare measures to get consent of the people. State is no longer recognized as an agency of exploitation. Democracy is also a tool to get support of the people.

Gramsci theory of 'hegemony' is tied to his conception of capitalist state. Gramsci does not understand 'state' in narrow sense of government. Gramsci claims that 'capitalist state' rule through **force plus consent**; political society (state) is the **realm of force** and **civil society** is the **realm consent**. Gramsci believes that in capitalist society. State does not represent everyone. It is an institution of Bourgeoisie class.

States apply the force, when it fails to get support of the people. **Facist state** is an example of **capitalist state**. Facist state exercises the **naked force** for controlling the people. State keeps **ideological apparatus** and **coercive instrument** to control the people.

### **HEGEMONY**

For Gramsci, hegemony implies leadership which has tendency to create **manufactured consent in citizen**. He believes that there are two means of **domination** coercive and ideological. For Gramsci **domination** refers to control over state and government. **Lenin supported the** violent action against state and government. Gramsci hegemony is **not violent or forceful**. Hegemony stands for control **over civil society**, with consent of the people. Hegemony stands for **cultural and ideological control** over the Civil Society. Which is comprised of family, school religious institutions, college, universities and press. Gramsci also believe that welfare state, democracy, rule of law, is a means to acquire ideological control over people.

### **REJECTION OF POSITIVISM AND MATERIALISM:**

He rejected the **positivist and materialistic** analysis of society. Marx and Lenin said that capitalism maintains its hegemony because it controls over the means of production. Whosoever controls means of production controls the state and government. Gramsci rejected the principle of **economic determinism of Marx**. He said that culture, ideology and religion is better tool for analyzing society. Capitalist has already established their hegemony in civil society. Capitalist expended their values in family, Church and university. There is need of **counter hegemony** to promote communist values in civil society. He believe that centre of dominance is civil society rather than forces of production. The ultimate purpose of acquiring dominance is to establish communism and ending hegemony of capitalists.

Dominance or hegemony shall be acquired by **organic intellectuals**. He distinguished between organic and traditional intellectuals. Organic intellectuals shall bring about revolution in society. Unlike organic intellectuals, traditional intellectual believe in status quoism and exploitation.

### **Base and superstructure-**

Gramsci presented new analysis of base and super structure:- Both Marx and Gramsci accepted base and superstructure model but their opinions are different. According to Marx, economic structure is the 'basic structure (base)'. Other structures (superstructure) are just reflection of base. They are not **autonomous**. Hence, if basic structure will be changed other structures will change automatically. Hence, Marx believed that by capturing economic structure by revolution, other structures will automatically change. According to Marx, the nature of state is determined by nature of economic system. Marx called state as an instrument of exploitation and medium of acquiring domination by capitalist class. It is known as 'economic determinism.'

Gramsci made '**superstructure**' rather than 'base' centre of his analysis. As a Marxist, he also believes that economic structure is the basic structure. He also believes that Marx has ignored the important role played by the superstructure.

According Gramsci, structure is comprised of **two components** state, government, police, which exercises **coercive powers**. The **second is civil society** which are governed by consent or 'manufactured consent'. This proves that civil society is central theme of Gramsci's analysis. Gramsci does not believe in the economic determinism and positivistic thought of Marx, Gramsci is considered propounded of New-Marxism.

### **Relative autonomy of state:-**

Gramsci was influenced by **idealist thinker of Italy**, Croce who said that economic factors are not sufficient to understand history or society. For Croce, **culture, religion, consciousness** is the most important factor for understanding the society and state.

For Machiavelli, state is fully autonomous from economic factors. On the contrary, Marx said that state is fully dependent on economy (economic determinism). However, Gramsci said that state is, **partially autonomous** from **economic factors**. It means economy impacts over state but other non-economic factors, like culture, ideology, etc. play important role in determining state, government.

Economic interpretation of Marx was modified by Gramsci, who said that family, religion, ideology are more important component, **which legitimize power of state**. The capitalist control the states because of their **hegemony in civil society**. The contemporary and Marxist thinkers like Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas supported the theory of relative autonomy of state. Marx said that whosoever control means of production, control state. Gramsci said that control over civil society is crucial for capturing state.

### Civil Society

Civil Society is the central concept in the ideas of Gramsci. As per Marx's thinking, civil society is seen in economic terms i.e. mode of production and relation of production. According to Gramsci the institution of civil society is **family, school, Church, Press** etc. which familiarize citizens with rule of behaviours and teach them to show natural respect to the authority of the **ruling class**. He believes that civil society was not developed in feudal country like Russia in 1917. It is very much developed in European capitalist and democratic countries. This has led capitalist class to acquire **hegemony over** civil society to obtain legitimacy. He believes that communism can be established by **ideological and cultural revolution**. It is also known as **passive revolution**.

### Strategy of Revolution

Gramsci said that Bolshevik revolution of 1917 is unique and historical event. But it cannot be applied in European countries. He tried to convince Marxist to wage **ideological warfare** in the field of **culture, art, literature and philosophical debates**. The revolutionaries must acquire dominance in autonomous institutions of civil society and create new **mass consciousness**. Gramsci believes that European countries need **series of revolution** because changing ideas and mind of people takes long time. He utilized military analogy, and pointed out two types of revolution.

- a) **War of position**: - Ideological Revolution. It is needed in industrialised nations.
- b) **War of Manoeuvre**: - War of manoeuvre means direct action to capture state and control-over economic system.

According to **Lenin**, the working class will be not able to develop revolutionary consciousness on their own. He believes that **communist party** will play important role in creating 'revolutionary consciousness.' Like Lenin, Gramsci believes that working class need their **own intellectuals** to develop **counter hegemony**. Gramsci was first Marxist who said that Russian or Bolshevik revolutionary technique is not applicable for European nations. Russian society was feudal and agrarian during communist revolutions October, 1917. European nations were industrialized and developed. Moreover democratic government existed in Europe. Civil

society was strong in Europe. Communist revolution control over civil society is based on **consent and ideological warfare**. Whereas war of movement is direct action or violent action to acquire control state. Russian revolution is an example of war of manoeuvre.

Same time state was powerful in industrialised nations of Europe. Thus different strategy needed for Italy. It is war of position or ideological hegemony in civil society.

## Intellectuals

For Gramsci ideological hegemony is needed in civil society. Intellectuals are an agent for establishing the ideological hegemony in civil society continuous movement is required for counter hegemony. Capitalist have established their own hegemony in the family, school, church and media. This need to be replaced by intellectuals. Since civil society is stronger in developed world therefore violent revolution is not relevant in developed industrialise European nation.

Each and everyone are intellectuals Gramsci since everyone is rational and thinking person. Same time he also categorised intellectuals in two types:-

1. **Traditional intellectuals** is created and maintained by every ruling class. Intellectuals belong to capitalism are traditional intellectuals. They project themselves neutral. In fact they believe in status-quo.
2. **Organic intellectual** is communist party of Italy. It is also branded as ‘New Prince’ by Gramsci. It shows impact of Machiavelli over Gramsci. It established hegemony in civil society. Society is not divided in two strict classes as, it is told of Marx. Gramsci said that there section exist in society-
  1. Capitalism Class
  2. Opposing capitalism is organic intellectual.
  3. Natural means they are not part of exploitation but do not oppose the capitalist. Intellectuals bring them into their own fold.

## Conclusion

Gramsci thought is scattered and incomprehensibly compiled in his work ‘The Prison notebook’, yet his thought has led to emergence Neo-Marxist thinking. According to Latin American revolutionary, Ernesto, ‘Che’ Guevara, Soviet Union model of revolution is not applicable to rest of the world. Thus, there should be different revolutionary models for different countries.