

Degree - III

English (Hons.)

Paper (V)

Topic - Criticism

Marxist Criticism

(Lecture - 1)

"The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it"

Karl Marx from The German Ideology

The above statement from Karl Marx, a German political thinker and scientist, believed to be the key figure in putting forth the theory of Marxism, strikingly sums up the crux of his philosophy. Marxism attempts to offer a historical analysis of the socio-economic means of production, thereby offering and understanding of the class relations and social conflicts. According to Marx and his friend and collaborator, Friedrich Engels, an investigation into the structure and the role of economic and productive process within it is the key to comprehending the contemporary society. Marxist theorists argue that in capitalist society, there is a definitive relation between its two major classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and this relationship comprises mostly of contradictions in the material interests of both. The proletariat or the working class consisting wage

labourers, employed to produce goods and services is exploited by the oppressive bourgeoisie or the ruling class that owns the means of production. The bourgeoisie would amass and appropriate the surplus produced by the proletariat leading to a more than unequal distribution of the profit, leading to deprivation and dissatisfaction among the labour class.

The increasing exploitation of wage labourers and the growing dissatisfaction among them leads to social crisis which often shoot ~~out~~ a revolution. For Marx this in itself is a process that could finally culminate in the ~~statement of~~ establishment of socialism, a society that is classless and maintains equity among its citizens thereby catering to the needs of all by erasing the boundaries between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the ruling and the working class.

Marxist Literary theory, drawing its base from economics, moves on to focus on class relations and the market scenario within which the text, the writers and its readers operate. The Marxist critic is able to comprehend not only what the text says but also why it says and ~~not~~ what it ~~not~~ does not say, owing to the invisible power relations operative in the society. A Marxist critic, therefore, goes ~~by~~ beyond the obvious and tries to understand the underlying ideology of the text and that of its author.