



**Lesson: Marx and Bakunin on State**  
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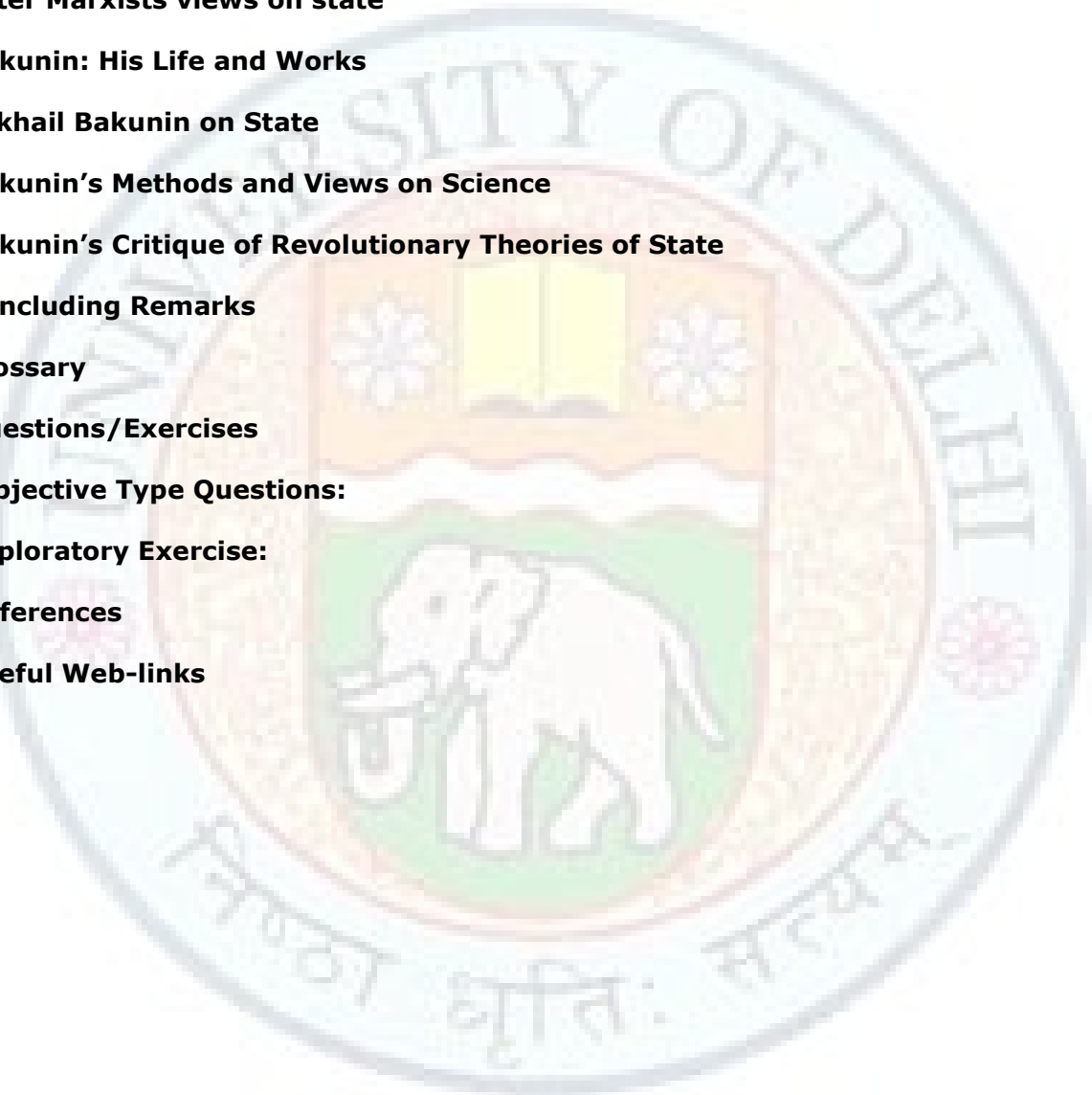
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### Introduction:

Marx was one of the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth Century. He influenced many generations of thinkers, activists, writers and political leaders across the globe. His ideas and theories have also influenced a great many number of social and political events in the world including the Russian and Chinese revolutions. He is often misunderstood only as the philosopher of the oppressed. And so it has led to a wide gulf between those who follow his doctrines and those who see his doctrines as threat to their existing status and influence. This then also lead to adoration of Marx on the one hand and contempt on the other.

Generally, it is understood that Politics and State has its own domain. And it is a sphere which is separate and hence independent of the other spheres of life, like economic, social and cultural. It is also believed that in Marxism the centre of analysis is economics and not politics. Here, the economics is understood as the 'base' which determines the politics and state, which is considered to be part of the 'superstructure'. But such understanding of politics has been further improved by the later Marxists like Antonio Gramsci. These later Marxists, began to give due importance to the sphere which is considered as part of the 'superstructure'.

Therefore, we can say that, although it is true that Marx and in Marxist analysis, economics gets primacy over politics and the state, nevertheless it is equally important to note that in Marxism the understanding of politics, state, society and culture is understood not as a separate and autonomous unit. But, these spheres of life are interdependent and particularly economy determines or at times also control these other spheres.

#### Value addition-Did you know?

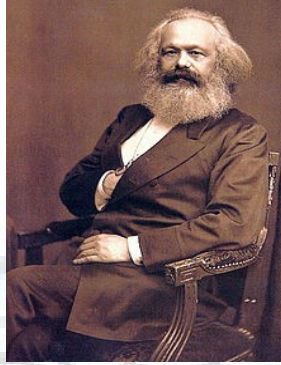
##### Basic premise of Marxism

In Marxism a distinction is made between the *Base* and the *Superstructure*, where Economy or more exactly, the mode of production is considered as *base* and on this base rests politics, society, laws and culture which is considered as part of *superstructure*. For more details see Tom Bottmore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*.

### Marx: His Life and Works

Karl Heinrich Marx was born on May 5, 1818 at Trier in Germany. His father was a conservative but successful Jewish lawyer who later converted to Christianity in 1824. In 1835 Marx entered University of Bonn to study Law. A year he was transferred to University of Berlin where he joined Young Hegelian Group – Doktor Klub and chose philosophy over law as his subject of study. Marx completed his doctoral thesis in 1841 from the University of Jena. Due to systematic attack on the young Hegelians during the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm IV of the Prussia Marx lost any hope of academic career. He became the editor of Rheinische Zeitung in 1842 but due to increasing censorship he resigned from the editorship and moved to Paris. He married to Jenny Von Westphalen in 1843 after six year of engagement.

### Karl Heinrich Marx-A glimpse of his life



Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl\\_Marx](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx), Accessed on 8/11/2014, at 16:20

Philosopher, Economist, Sociologist, Historian, Journalist, and a Revolutionary Thinker

Birth: May 5, 1818, at Trier, Germany

Death: March 14, 1883, London, United Kingdom

Education: University of Jena, University of Bonn, Humboldt University of Berlin

It is in Paris that Marx renewed his friendship with Friedrich Engels which turned out to be a lifelong companionship between the two men. Marx was greatly influenced by German Metaphysics, French Radical Political Philosophy and British Political Economy. Due to his radical writings and activities Marx was expelled from the Paris and he spent some years in Brussels. Finally Marx made London as his lifelong residence. In his first year in London he suffered from acute poverty. By 1856 three of his six children died due to hunger and related disease.

### Jenny von Westphalen: A Brief Life Sketch



Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenny\\_von\\_Westphalen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jenny_von_Westphalen)

Accessed on Dec 20, 2014 at 4pm

**Name: Johanna Bertha Julie Jenny von Westphalen**

**Born: February 12, 1814**

Death: December 02, 1881

Works: *Short Sketch of an Eventful life* (1865-1866)

Brief Like Sketch: She was from a noble family of the Prussian Aristocracy and a childhood friend of Karl Marx. She was a great influence on Marx's early writings and politics. It is believed that she was keenly involved in his politics throughout her turbulent life. Together they had seven children. Four out of seven children died at the very early age. Their daughters Jenny Caroline (1844-1883), Jenny Laura (1845 - 1911) and Jenny Julia Eleanor (1855-1898) were deeply involved in the radical politics and in spreading the ideas of Marxism and Socialism.

However, throughout 1850 and 60s Marx academic pursuit remained uninterrupted and he used to visit British Museum every day for long hours. Besides his academic pursuits he was actively engaged in the emancipation of working class. With Engels in 1848 he played a key role in founding Communist League in Paris. In 1848 he wrote famous *Communist Manifesto* along with Engels. He was also instrumental in founding of the *International Working Men's Association* in 1864. After 1870s his health deteriorated and never recovered. After the death of Jenny Marx in 1881 Marx died in March 4, 1883. In the later years of life Marx completely focused on the analysis of capitalism. The first volume of the *Capital* was published in his life time in 1867, the other two volumes which was edited and published by Engels after his death; he could not complete. Marx writings are combination of a passionate critical enquiry with a keen interest in the empirical details. He was perhaps the greatest revolutionary thinker of nineteenth century whose theory for human emancipation continues to guide the revolutionaries in the different part of the world. Thus he also remains one of the most controversial political thinkers as well.

## Marx on State

There are a lot of confusions when it comes to figure out what do we mean by Marxist theory of State. Marx's own views on state are not very clear or precise, primarily because he was more concerned with analysing the exploitative structures of society and ways and means of overthrowing it. However, Marx did analyse the nature and role of the state in a capitalist society and economy. Further, this concept of state was developed by and modified by Lenin, Gramsci and many other later Marxists. Therefore, first we try to understand the conceptualisation of State by Marx and Engels, and then we will see how this concept of State was developed by later Marxists including Lenin, Gramsci and others.

Marx was writing in a context when western society was deeply divided into two contradictory classes – *Bourgeoisie* and *Proletariat*. This division of society was the inevitable outcome of the industrial growth in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Such growth made a small section of society all powerful while a vast majority became industrial workers. These industrial workers had nothing except their labour power. Now their only possession – labour, they were compelled to sell for mere survival. Thus, they had no ownership over the product of their labour. It was the capitalists who paid them wages and exploited the fruits of their labour. They used to live in a sub-human condition. However, the small section in the society – *bourgeoisie* had control not only over the property but also over the other spheres of life including politics and the state. For Marx, state and politics in a capitalist society can never work in the interest of majority i.e. workers. So, the only way to emancipate the workers was by overthrowing the bourgeoisie capitalist state.

Bob Jessop<sup>1</sup> in his review of Marxist theories of State in 1977 concluded that Marx and Engels did not develop single, consistent and comprehensive theory of state. Since then it has become a kind of established niche that Marx and Marxism lack a proper theory of State. But as Colin Hay<sup>2</sup> argues we shall see that a clear evolution of theory of State can be traced in Marx's own writings. As early as in 1842 Marx studied the basic contradiction of Modern State. He used the expression 'the modern state' in *On the Jewish Question* and thought of it as 'political emancipation' that was 'separation of politics from religious and theological considerations and relegation of institutional religion to a separate and limited sphere'.<sup>3</sup> Thus Marx considered it a major achievement of the modern state. Nonetheless, Marx was of the opinion that this achievement of modern state is its great limitations as 'political emancipation' had merely rescued state from the influence of religion and not the individuals. Religion continued to guide the human behaviour. Further in *The Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* (1843) Marx was quite clear that Hegel idealisation of state as representative of universal will was mere mystification. For, Hegel had created a distinction between State and Civil Society. He considered Civil Society as a realm of egoistic selfish individuals where they

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<sup>1</sup> Jessop, Bob. 1977. 'Review of Marxist Theory of State' cited in Colin Hay, 'Marxism and the State' in Andrew Gamble, David Marsh and Tony Tan eds. *Marxism and Social Science*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, p. 158

<sup>2</sup> Hay, Colin. 1999. 'Marxism and the State' in Andrew Gamble, David Marsh and Tony Tan eds. *Marxism and Social Science*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press

<sup>3</sup> Avineri, Shlomo. 1968/1999. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*, Cambridge University Press, p. 43



**George Wilhem Friedrich Hegel-Know him more**



Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg\_Wilhelm\_Friedrich\_Hegel,  
Accessed on 8/11/2014 at 16:23

19<sup>th</sup> Century German Philosopher, Historicist, Idealist Thinker

Birth: August 27, 1770 Stuttgart, Germany

Death: November 14, 1831, Berlin, Prussia

Major Works: *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807); *Philosophy of Right* (1821); *Philosophy of History* (1837); *History of Philosophy*; *Philosophy of Religion* (1832)

are engaged in the trade and business to fulfil their particular interests. But Hegel considered the realm of State where individuals will represent and ensure the general or universal interest. Marx was very critical of this mystical conclusion of Hegel with regard to the realm of State. Although, Marx accepted Hegel's distinction of Civil Society and State and agreed that civil society was the realm of economic life in which individual relations with others are governed by individual's selfish and particular interests. He rejects Hegel's proposition that State functions in the interest of all. Marx believed that implicated in the protection of private property of individuals, State actually perpetuate the realm of civil society. Here, Marx was of the opinion that real emancipation can be attained by 'true democracy' by which he meant a unity of particular and universal interests. Although, this notion of true democracy was contentious, Shlomo Avineri sees in it traces of Marx's later conception of communism.<sup>4</sup> Marx was of the opinion that real human emancipation is possible only through the transformation of bourgeois society. And proletariat for Marx was the agent of such social and economic transformations.

**Value addition-Did you know?**

**Class perspective**

**Bourgeoisie and Proletariat**

In the Marxist analysis society is divided into two classes. One which is propertied and the owner of the means of production is called **bourgeoisie**. And other class which has no property and who has only labour power to sell for their survival is called **proletariat**. For details see Tom Bottmore *A dictionary of Marxist Thought*.

<sup>4</sup> Avineri, p. 34. The concept of communism is discussed in the later part of this chapter.

However, it seems that a systematic theory of **state as class state** was developed by Marx and Engels in *German Ideology* and particularly in the *Communist Manifesto*. In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels prominently asserted that the state is 'nothing more than the form of organisation which the bourgeoisie necessarily adopt both for internal and external purposes, for the mutual guarantee of their property and interest'.<sup>5</sup> This instrumentalist view of the state also echoed in the *Communist manifesto* where 'the executive of the modern state is' considered as nothing 'but a committee for managing the common affairs of whole bourgeoisies'.<sup>6</sup> Many scholars have considered this as Marx's 'primary view' of the state.<sup>7</sup>

**Value addition-Know it better**

**Liberal View on State**

In Liberal theory contrary to Marxists, state is conceptualised as a neutral agent in the society. It works for the benefit of one and all. They aim at creating a free society where state is seen as a necessary evil. Here, individual is the central unit of analysis and any obstruction on his/her activities or enterprise is undesirable. However, they believe in a minimalist role for the state to maintain peace and order in the society. Thus, state in Liberal thought is seen as a common arbitrator.

However, this does not remain the only explanation of state by Marx and Engels they modified their stand on the analysis of state in *The Class Struggle in France* (1850) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852). In these works Marx developed a more complex and nuance view on the state. Here, Marx conceded that the apparatus of the state is not controlled by the ruling class but its fractions and the apparatus of the state is often drawn from a class which comes from an altogether different class.

Thus state is granted some autonomy; nonetheless, it remains in the control of the ruling class. This relative autonomy of the state view in the Marx is considered as 'secondary view' of the state.<sup>8</sup>

**Value addition-Know it more**

**State autonomy perspective in Marxism**

In Marxist analysis it is often understood that there is two views on the state. One is the determinist understanding that state is nothing but the executive to manage the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. It is also known as the primary view of the state. Second is the understanding that state in a capitalist society is relatively autonomous from the social classes but nonetheless the state serves the interests of the bourgeoisie in the long term. This is also known as the secondary view of the state. This debate over the relative autonomy of state was further developed by Marxists scholars like Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas in 1970s.

This conception of relative autonomy of state led Marx to totally reject the notion of State. He began to consider it as the biggest obstruction in realising genuine human emancipation. In his opinion 'the apparatus of the capitalist state cannot be appropriated

<sup>5</sup> Marx & Engels, 1845-46/1964. *The German Ideology*, p. 59 cited in Hay, Colin, p. 160

<sup>6</sup> Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1848/1998. *The Communist Manifesto*, London: Verso, p. 37

<sup>7</sup> Miliband, R. 1965. 'Marxism and the State' in *Socialist Register 1965*, pp. 278-96; Sanderson, J. 1963. 'Marx and Engels on the State', in *Western Political Quarterly*, December

<sup>8</sup> Miliband, R. 1977. *Marxism and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 284-85



**Value addition-know it more**

Historical Stages of Human Civilisation according to Marx

1. Primitive Communism
2. Feudalism
3. Capitalism
4. Socialism
5. Communism

for progressive ends and that the revolutionary project of the proletariat must be to smash this repressive bourgeois institution'.<sup>9</sup> Marx was quite clear in his opinion that the bourgeoisie or the dominant class allow the state to function as an autonomous institution because in doing so it best serve their interests. The capitalist in the long run reproduce the capitalist relation. Therefore, Marx called for the total overthrowing of this institution. In his analysis of stages of history, Marx believed that first capitalist state must be captured by the proletariat and the dictatorship of the proletariat should be established. This dictatorship of proletariat Marx believed will behave like the institution of repression; but such repression will be in the interest of the majority of society. Marx considered this as transitory phase of history which must give way to a fully developed stage of history – *communism*. In *communism* which Marx believed to be the ideal and final stage of history, life will be without contradictions and in complete harmony. In such a society each will work according to his merit and reap according to his needs. According to Marx, in such a society there will be not need of politics and *state will wither away*.

**Value Addition-Did you know?**

**The thin line of Socialism and Marxism**

**Marxism:** It is a world view based on class relations and social conflicts. It believed in the materialist interpretation of historical development. Such interpretation of history and society was first developed by Marx and Engels and later it was developed by other Marxists.

**Socialism:** It is a school of thought which aims at establishing a society where ownership over the means of production is in the hands of collective or the state. Socialist ideas influenced a great many political events in twentieth century. It has a number of variants and labour parties using socialists ideas were formed in almost all the countries. One of the major differences between Marxism and socialism is that whereas under Marxism, in a capitalist society, radical transformation is not possible without a revolution. But under socialism it is believed that such transformation is possible by actively and strategically using the capitalist structure of society for the benefits of the workers and the marginalised.

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<sup>9</sup> Hay, Colin, p. 161

### Later Marxists views on state

V. I. Lenin after Marx was perhaps one of the greatest Marxists to seriously engage with the notion of state. His conceptualisation of the state is perhaps his greatest contribution in Marxist thinking. Lenin in his Magnum Opus *State and Revolution The Marxist Theory of the State and the tasks of the Proletariat in Revolution* considered the state as 'a product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms'. Lenin considered state as an instrument of class exploitation in the hands of bourgeoisie. So, for Lenin state is merely 'an organ of class rule, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another' [Emphasis original].<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Lenin also considered that 'the liberation of the oppressed is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power'.<sup>11</sup> Thus, like Marx Lenin also championed the cause of *withering away of the state*.

#### Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin-A Brief Life Sketch



Source: <http://www.marxist.com/marxism-and-the-state-part-one.htm>, Accessed on 16/9/2014 at 15:35

Marxist Revolutionary, Leader of the Russian Revolution, Political Theorist

Birth: April 22, 1870, Simbirsk, Russia

Death: January 21, 1924, Gorki, Soviet Union

Major Work: *State and Revolution, What is to be done?*

Antonio Gramsci's contribution in theorisation of state through his concept of *hegemony* is significant break from the crude and reductionist understanding of Marxism that characterises it after the death of Marx. His search for an answer to the problem – how capitalist state despite its fundamental contradictions continues to reproduce its dominance and legitimises its repression overtime?

<sup>10</sup> Lenin, V. I. 1917/1968. *State and Revolution*, p. 266 cited in Hay, Colin, p. 162

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

### Antonio-Gramsci-know him better



Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio\\_Gramsci](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Gramsci) Accessed on 8/11/2014 at 16:25

**Antonio Gramsci** (1891-1937) was an Italian Marxist. He was the founding member of the Italian Communist Party and was imprisoned by the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. He clearly expanded the narrow base of Marxist understanding of politics which was merely confined to state and its repressive apparatuses to include those cultural spheres of life through which bourgeoisie impose its own values, norms on the masses as *common sense* and win the consent of those over whom it rules. He described it as *hegemony*. He also popularised the notion of *passive revolution*. His most important work is *The Prison Notebook*. For details see Tom Bottomore, *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*; Steve Jones, *Antonio Gramsci*.

Gramsci sought to answer this problem with his central idea of *hegemony* by which he meant that the state through its apparatuses win the consent of those over whom it rules. In other words through *hegemony* state tries to create a *common sense* which represents the norms and values of the ruling class. 'Gramsci's central contribution is to insist that the power of the capitalist class resides not so much in the repressive apparatus of the state as an instrument of bourgeoisie – however ruthless and efficient that might be – but in its ability to influence and shape the perceptions of the subordinate classes, convincing them either of the legitimacy of the system itself or of the futility of the resistance itself'.<sup>12</sup> Thus among the Marxists, Gramsci extended the definition of state beyond the coercive or repressive apparatus of the state like Police, Army, Court etcetera to include those cultural and ideological apparatuses which enables the state to maintain its *hegemony* over whom its rules.

### Value addition-Did you know?

**Hegemony:** It is a Gramsci's terminology which refers to a condition where exercise of power by the ruling class in a society is made possible without taking recourse to coercive apparatuses like police or army. Here, the ruling class manage to win the consent of those over whom it rules without using force.

<sup>12</sup> Hay, Colin, pp. 163-64

In summary we can broadly divide at least five conceptualisations of state in Marx and Marxism which is not isolated from each other:

1. State as an apparatus to manage the common affairs of whole bourgeoisie
2. State as an instrument of class domination and exploitation
3. State as a repressive arm in the hand of bourgeoisie
4. State as an obstruction in genuine human emancipation
5. State perpetuate its rule not only through its repressive apparatus but because it maintain hegemony over whom it rules

### Bakunin: His Life and Works

#### Bakunin: A Brief Life Sketch



**Source:**

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/godstate/ch01.htm>,  
Accessed on 16/09/2014 at 15:26

**Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin**

19<sup>th</sup> Century Revolutionary Philosopher, Anarchist

Birth: May 30, 1814, Pryamukhino, Tver Governorate (present day Kuvshinovskiy District), Russia

Death: July 1, 1876, Bern, Switzerland

Major Works: *God and the State*; *Statism and Anarchy*

Mikhail Bakunin was one of the most influential revolutionary of nineteenth Century. He was a *revolutionary anarchists* and the founder of collective anarchism. He was one of the most respected in Russia and Europe among the traditions of socialist anarchists. Bakunin in the beginning of his life was deeply influenced by the thought of Hegel and he embraced Hegelianism. Later in his life he befriended French Socialist Philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) and Karl Marx. His increased radicalism and opposition to imperialism of all kinds including the opposition to Russia's oppression in east Europe, put an end to his chance of a professional career in the University.

Bakunin, later, in 1868, joined the *International Working Men's Association* of which Marx was also a founding member. Soon the influence of Bakunin's anarchist strands and his followers began to dominate the forum. In the Hague Congress (1872) of the

*Association* there was a deep divide over the issue of the role of State in bringing about revolutions. Marx and his followers believed that the role of State are necessary for the revolutionary transformation and bringing about socialism, whereas Bakunin and his followers were opposed to the any role given to the State, not to say its primary role as was being conceived by the many Marxists. Instead of State, Bakunin's followers were in favour of federations of self governing workplaces and communes. Although, Bakunin himself could not attend this congress but the activities of his followers led to a belief among many Marxists that he was running a parallel organisation within the *Association* secretly and was expelled from the *International Working Men's Association*. However, the Bakunin's followers hold a rival conference in Saint-Imier in Switzerland in 1872 and declared the Hague congress as unrepresentative. Soon Bakunin led *International Working Men's Association* outlasted the Marxist rival and it became a great source for the expansion of anarchist-socialist ideas in the different parts of the world. Bakunin was also active in the peasants and worker struggles in different parts of Europe.

### Value addition-Did you know?

**Anarchist-socialist** as a school of thought is different from Individualist anarchists school which focuses on the individuals and their rights. Anarchist-socialist by combining the values of anarchism and socialism believes in social cooperation and mutual aid. This is an umbrella term which is often associated with other terms like anarcho-collectivism, anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, and social-ecology.

### Mikhail Bakunin on State

Mikhail Bakunin was a collective anarchist who was very antithetical to the any form of state or state power. He was firm in his opinion that people's genuine freedom and emancipation cannot be achieved through the machinery of the state and government. He believed in the people's self organisation from the bottom up to achieve real social transformations. His writings and activities have greatly influenced the revolutionary thinking of nineteenth and twentieth century. Some tenets of his thought on genuine freedom of the people can also be echoed in the Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj*.

### Value addition-Know it better

Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi, also known as India's father of the nation wrote a seminal work *Hind Swaraj* in 1909. In this book he provides an elaborate critique of modern civilisation which he also called western civilisation. In this book Gandhiji also conceptualised the notion of *Swaraj* by which he meant not only the political freedom of India from the British rule but also the capacity of the individuals to rule over themselves. Gandhiji gave utmost importance to individual freedom. He asserted that real *Swaraj* can be attained only when individuals learn to govern themselves.

Bakunin's thinking has not only influenced the different traditions of anarchists but continues to be significant for our contemporary times. And certainly his thoughts on the corrupting effects of state and its power are extremely relevant for those engaged in the radical social transformations and achieving genuine human freedom.



Bakunin in his *Statism and Anarchism*, written in 1873, strongly criticised what he saw 'statism' in Marx. Bakunin considered the state as more than 'a committee to manage the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie'. According to him, State has the inherent capacity to perpetuate its rule and exploit the masses in the name of 'order', 'will', 'justice', 'interest of the people' and the 'workers emancipation'. No matter what the ideology of the state, Bakunin firmly believed that the institution of state perpetuates the exploitation of majority by the minority and is biggest obstacle in human emancipation.

### **Bakunin's Methods and Views on Science**

The *Statism and Anarchism* was also a critical response to the positivist mode of thinking inspired by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who believed that social life must be governed in accordance with the immutable laws of physical science. Bakunin was of the opinion that the immutable physical laws can't be applicable to human life. For him human beings are capable of choosing and also modifying their conduct if the situation demands so. According to Bakunin the positivists and all the worshippers of science 'in one way or the another, have created an ideal of social organisation, a narrow mould into which they would force future generations, all those who, instead of seeing science as only one of the essential manifestations of natural and social life, insist that all of life is encompassed in their necessarily tentative scientific theories. Metaphysicians and Positivists, all these gentlemen who consider it their mission to prescribe the laws of life in the name of science, are consciously or unconsciously reactionaries'.<sup>13</sup> Bakunin believed that if science were allowed to govern human social life then a few hundred with scientific knowledge will be ruling over millions without scientific knowledge. And such division between the 'expert' few and ordinary millions cannot be bridged even after the revolution. Therefore, to realise the emancipation of whole humanity not just the few, Bakunin asserted that scientists 'should be granted no special privileges and no rights other than those possessed by everyone – for example, the liberty to express their convictions, thoughts and knowledge. Neither they nor any other group should be given power over others. He who is given power will inevitably become an oppressor and exploiter of society'.<sup>14</sup> Bakunin further writes that 'it would be sad for mankind if at any time theoretical speculation became the only source of guidance for society, if science alone were in charge of all social administration. Life would wither, and human society would turn into a voiceless and servile herd. The domination of life by science can have no other result than the brutalisation of mankind'.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Bakunin asserts that 'we the revolutionary anarchists, are the advocates of education for all the people, of the emancipation and the widest possible expansion of social life. Therefore, we are the enemies of the State and all forms of the statist principles'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Bakunin negates all the importance attached to pre designed theory. For him its importance are like sign posts along the path which guide the direction. He believed that natural and social life has its own logic and it develops through a series of events and not merely by thought alone. So he believed that theory can never replace the importance of social and natural

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<sup>13</sup> Bakunin, Mikhail. 1873. *Statism and Anarchism*, in *Bakunin and Anarchy* trn. & ed. by Sam Dalgoff (1971), pp. 2-3, Accessed at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1873/statism-anarchy.htm#s1> on 16/09/2014

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*



life as the later creates theory and not the other way round. Bakunin declares the intentions of the revolutionary anarchists in the following manner –

***'we neither intend nor desire to thrust upon our own or any other people any scheme of social organisation taken from books or concocted by ourselves. We are convinced that the masses of the people carry in themselves, in their instincts (more or less developed by history), in their daily necessities and in their conscious or unconscious aspirations all the elements of future social organisations. We seek this ideal in people themselves. Every state power, every government by its very nature places itself outside and over the people and inevitably subordinates them to an organisation and to aims which are foreign to and opposed to the real needs and aspirations of the people. We declare ourselves the enemies of every government and every state power, and of governmental organisations in general. We think that people can be free and happy only when organised from the bottom up in completely free and independent associations, without governmental paternalism though not without the influence of a variety of free individuals and parties'.<sup>17</sup>***

Thus, in Bakunin we find the complete rejection of any form of state power nonetheless he recognised the influence of free individuals and parties in the construction of futuristic society by the people independent of state structure.

According to Bakunin, the positivists, revolutionaries, and those who support the rule of science over life are all equal in their admiration of state and state power. In it alone they see the only possible salvation of society. Since they all agree that thought precedes life, theory precedes social experience hence social science has to be the guiding force for all social transformation and reconstructions. And since they all share these assumptions they also agree that only few in the society are capable of these theories, thought and science they ought to lead not just society and initiate social transformations but also to lead popular movements of every kind. After the revolutions it is not accepted that social order should be organised by the free associations of people's organisations from the bottom up according to the demand and dictates of the people's instincts but it must be organised by the dictatorial power of the learned minority who presumes to express the will of the people. Bakunin was also critical of this abstract expression of will of the people to which the common people have no idea and on the basis of which these learned self proclaimed representative of the people create both 'the theory of statism and as well as the theory of so-called revolutionary dictatorship'.<sup>18</sup>

### **Bakunin's Critique of Revolutionary Theories of State**

In his analysis of state he was equally critical of revolutionary theorists who wanted to replace the existing structure of state with their own dictatorship which in their opinion would be more in the interest of the people. Bakunin writes that 'the difference between revolutionary dictatorship and statism are superficial. Fundamentally they both represent the same principle of minority rule over the majority in the name of alleged "stupidity" of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pp. 4-5

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 5

the latter and the alleged "intelligence" of the former. Therefore they are both equally reactionary since both directly and inevitably must preserve and perpetuate the political and economic privileges of the ruling minority and the political and economic subordination of the masses of the people'.<sup>19</sup> Bakunin believed that these pseudo-revolutionaries are critical of existing structure of government because it does not allow the possibility of their dictatorship. However, they are the strong devotees of the governmental power. They were more anxious of revolution which will free the masses from the oppression of this power, because if it happens then these pseudo-revolutionaries will not get the chance to harness the masses for the benefit of their own governing policy. So, for the Bakunin, if the proletariat of today replace the existing state and create a new state and power, it requires another proletariat over whom it can exercise its rule. Hence, another class of proletariat will be created for the new regime.

**Value addition-Know it better**

For Bakunin – ***If there is a State, there must be domination of one class by another and, as a result, slavery; the State without slavery is unthinkable – and this is why we are the enemies of the State.***<sup>20</sup>

He was also critical of the Marxist theory which believed in the People's state and ruling minority with immense power as the people's representatives. This assertion in Marxist terminology Bakunin considered more dangerous than it is used by the democrats because in the Marxist doctrine the despotic rule of the few is justified in the name of the so called 'will of the people'. He also rejects the Marxist position that this rule of the minority will be ruled by the proletariat. For Bakunin, these former proletariats as soon as they get the status of ruling position will look down upon the plain working masses from the arrogant position of the state. Bakunin believed that only those with little knowledge of human nature will doubt that leaders of proletariats will cease to represent the people and soon will begin to represent themselves and their claim to rule over the subordinated proletariats. Bakunin also criticised the fallacy of Marxist understanding that this dictatorship of the proletariat will be for a limited period – only a transitory but necessary phase of history, after which true freedom, ideal of anarchism can be realised in the phase of communism. So, Bakunin ridiculed the paradox of the theory which tries to enslave the men in order to free them. Contrary to this Bakunin maintains that 'all dictatorship has no objective other than self-perpetuation, and that slavery is all that it can generate and instill in the people who suffer it. Freedom can be created only by freedom, by a total rebellion of the people, and by a voluntary organisation of the people from the bottom up'.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, we can well surmise that Bakunin was not just a revolutionary anarchist but also a great champion of human emancipation. But unlike many others, he believed that state by its very nature and logic incapable of giving true freedom to the people. He was also a great believer in the capacity of the masses and social life and their ability to transform the society without giving undue recognition to 'theory', 'thought' and 'experts'. Ultimately for Bakunin free organisations of the people according to their need will 'mean

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 8

the rejection of the State's form of control from the top in favour of organisation from the bottom up, created by the people themselves, without governments and parliaments. This would be organisation achieved by the free participation of associations, of the agricultural and industrial workers, of the communes and the provinces'.<sup>22</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Regarding Marxist tradition it is generally construed that as a school of thought it gives primacy to economy and has to say very little about politics, state or culture. But we have seen how Marxists are very deeply engaged with the issue of state and politics. And also in Gramsci's notion of *hegemony* we have seen how politics is expanded to include those cultural spheres of life which allow the maintenance of capitalist state despite its fundamental contradiction and how this *hegemony* is maintained.

Then we have also seen that the central premise of Marx and Bakunin was to achieve complete and maximum human emancipation. In order to achieve this emancipation for both radical social transformations was required. But for Marx there are different stages of such radical transformations. He considered the dictatorship of the proletariat as temporary but necessary phase for the realisation of true freedom in communism. However, Bakunin does not believe in such formulations. Being a revolutionary anarchist he was of the opinion that dictatorship cannot achieve true human emancipation on the contrary it can only perpetuate its rule over the masses. He believed in the total dismantling of the institution of the state by the free associations of individuals organised from the bottom up according to the needs and instincts of the people themselves. Bakunin was also critical of giving any fundamental role to theory for social transformations. As he believed that natural and social life has its own logic and it evolved through a series of events based on the instinct and the needs of the inhabitants.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 11

## **Glossary:**

*Anarchist:* The one who completely believes in the human capacity and refutes the legitimacy of all kinds of authority including that of the state.

*Capitalism:* It refers to a state of economy where private property and enterprise is not just justified and protected but also encouraged. It is also based on free competition and profit motive of the individuals.

*Class:* A group of people in the society which is considered to be at the same social and economic level.

*Communism:* A stage of human progress where according to Marx there will be no division between the classes. There will be no need of politics and the state. In such society Marx envisaged that each will work according his deserts and reap benefits according to his needs.

*Dictatorship:* The term refers to a system of rule by a dictator who often has a complete control over a country. He wields his power using military and other coercive apparatus of the state and restricts citizen's freedom of expression and free movement.

*Marxist:* Those who followed Marx's Philosophy and logic. They believe in the radical transformation of the society by organising the proletariat and through revolution.

*Materialism:* The school of thought which believes in the matter as it exist in real physical world as the fundamental substance and everything including the mental capacities and consciousness is the outcome of material interactions. It is suspicious of the otherworldly explanations and theories.

*Revolution:* The term is usually associated with radical and far reaching changes in any sphere of life. It is often associated with such event when change is a complete rupture from the existing structure and its total transformation.

*Socialist:* It refers to those people who believe in the common ownership of the property. They reject the private ownership and champion the state's ownership of Industries and natural resources.

*Statism:* It refers to a political system where central government controls every sphere of life social, political and economic.

## Questions/Exercises

### Essay Type Questions:

1. According to the Marxists what is politics? Why in their analysis it was considered secondary to economics? Discuss.
2. Discuss in details Marx primary and secondary view of the state? Which view of state do you think are more appropriate explanation of bourgeoisie state? Give reasons.
3. Why Marx considered state as a bourgeois institution?
4. Discuss in details why Bakunin considered himself as the enemy of the State?
5. Examine Bakunin critique of Marxist theory of state?
6. Compare and critically examine Marx's and Bakunin conceptions of State?

### Objective Type Questions:

1. In Marxist analysis politics is part of –
  - a. Base
  - b. Autonomous sphere
  - c. Superstructure
  - d. None of the above
2. Who among the following Marxists began to give due importance to sphere of life considered as part of superstructure?
  - a. Rosa Luxemburg
  - b. Antonio Gramsci
  - c. Mikhail Bakunin
  - d. Mikhail Bakhtin
3. Who among the following categorised the Marx's views on state as 'primary' and 'secondary' view of the state?
  - a. Lenin
  - b. Engels
  - c. Miliband
  - d. Gramsci
4. The concept of hegemony in Marxist thinking is developed by
  - a. Lenin
  - b. Miliband
  - c. Gramsci
  - d. Bakunin
5. Who was the writer of the seminal work Hind Swaraj?
  - a. Antonio Gramsci
  - b. Mikhail Bakunin
  - c. Mahatma Gandhi
  - d. Karl Marx
6. In Marx's understanding state and politics will wither away in which stage of human history?
  - a. Socialism
  - b. Capitalism
  - c. Feudalism



d. Communism

Answers for Multiple Choice Questions:

1. c. 2. b 3. c 4. c 5. c 6. d

**Exploratory Exercise:**

1. Compare and contrast the notion of freedom in Bakunin thought and Gandhi's notion of Swaraj in Hind Swaraj.

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### Useful Web-links:

<http://www.marxist.com/>

[http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/bakunin/Bakuninarchive.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/bakunin/Bakuninarchive.html)

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/>

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/bio/marx/eng-1869.htm>

[http://www.socialistappeal.org/faq/the\\_state.html](http://www.socialistappeal.org/faq/the_state.html)

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/godstate/#intro>

