

# The communist manifesto



The Communist Manifesto Introduction: From our history lessons we know that after the break-up of the Roman Empire, feudalism came into existence practically in the whole of Europe. With the emergence of nationalism, feudalism was gradually replaced by Mercantilist system to acquire gold through international trade. With market expansion, mercantilism paved the way for capitalism. However, with all its virtues, capitalism gave rise to inequality of income and wealth, resulting in inequality of economic and political power. The conflict between the bourgeoisies and proletariat worried many thinkers. Marx and Engels influenced by the philosophy of Hegel, set out to change the face of the earth by calling the workers to unite to overthrow the capitalists. The Communist Manifesto was meant to provide the proletariat with required impetus for a social change.

## 2. " Proletarians and Communism"

The Communists have no other interests but the proletariat. Since capitalism exploits the laborers but offers them only their subsistence wages, Communism is opposed to capitalism. The bourgeoisies' notions of freedom, culture, law, etc., are determined by their economical conditions.

Communism, hence, abolishes eternal truths, religions and morality, for they are products of historical development. The core agenda is to acquire political supremacy by abolishing the private property and thereby uprooting the bourgeoisies. The proletariat, then, will centralize all instruments of production, and increase the productive forces. As class distinctions disappear, the proletarians will have an association, in which the free development of each will be the condition for the free development of all (Marx and Engels, Proletarians).

### 3. Expanding Market and Nestling Capitalism: Evidence in the Contemporary Society of Marx and Engels:

Capitalism is characterized by private property, freedom of enterprise, profit motive, consumers' sovereignty, freedom of saving and investment decisions, and existence of competition, among others. Capitalist system necessarily envelops the private ownership of the means of production. It is "only through the principle of competition has political economy any pretension to the character of a science" (Mill 235). Moreover, the law of inheritance and succession, in capitalism, are powerful motivating factors to accumulate saving, capital formation, production, profit and market expansion. Evidence indicates that capitalism thrived in the contemporary society of Marx and Engels.

Under capitalism man is the best judge of his own interests, and therefore he is left free to follow what he wants to do. Freedom of enterprise motivates an entrepreneur to find new product, invent a new technology, to opt for new structure of business organization, to take risk and make profit. The contemporary bourgeoisies enjoyed their right to save, invest and create productive assets. Thus, industrial diversity and market expansion, in capitalism, offered opportunities for bourgeoisies and facilitated development (Jewkes 263). In search of profits, their entrepreneurial efforts resulted in the production of those goods which society appeared to desire the most. Therefore, with the expansion of market, capitalism nestled in the contemporary society of Marx and Engels.

Marx was by far the most powerful of all critics of capitalism. He argued that at a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, which will

ultimately turn into their fetters. The result is the impending social revolution. Marx, hence predicts that with the change of economic foundation, the entire superstructure will be rapidly transformed. (Marx, Contribution Preface)

#### 4. Depiction of Working Class by Marx and Engels:

In the working of capitalism, Marx observes that a significant number of workers are divorced from the ownership of the means of production. The proletarians, therefore, have no means of production of their own and are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live (Marx, Manifesto 321). Their subsistence, security and personal freedom depend on the mercy of a small number of bourgeoisies (Marx, Critique 187-8). Exposed to all the fluctuations of the market, their wages are restricted almost entirely to the means of subsistence that they require for the propagation of their race (Marx, Manifesto 328). Hence, Marx complains that capitalism provides scope for exploitation of one class by another. Consequently, society is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps (Marx, Manifesto 322). Ironically, the weapons with which the bourgeoisies displaced feudalism have now turned against themselves. The bourgeoisies have called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons, the proletarians (Marx, Manifesto 328). The expanding market and the advance of industry, promoted by the bourgeoisies, end the isolation of the laborers due to competition by helping them to form an association. In the process, bourgeoisies produce their own gravediggers. Hence, Marx predicts that the victory of the working class is inevitable (Marx, Manifesto 334).

Joan Robinson points out that while orthodox economists argued in terms of harmony of interests, Marx, "conceives of economic life in terms of a conflict

of interests between owners of property who do not work and workers who own no property" (Robinson 1). Robinson is of the view that Marx needed the concept of surplus value to prove the existence of exploitation, and to keep "insistently before the mind of the reader a picture of the capitalist process as a system of piracy, preying upon the very life of the workers" (Robinson 22). Thus, with passage of time, millions of workers embraced Marxism as their religion, "which promises paradise on this side of the grave" (Schumpeter 5).

#### 5. Conclusion:

The evolution of history of economic thought, from feudalism to capitalism through mercantilism provided the Communists with some hope for social revolution. With the spread of communism in a number of countries, Marx's prediction of victory of the proletariat seemed an "already-but-not-yet" possibility. But the disintegration of Russian federation seems to have reduced this prospect. Besides, evidence from the communist regimes indicates that with the expansion of bureaucracy, their Central Planning process proved ineffective, resulting in red-tape, rigidity, delays in fixing responsibility, etc. Today, in this era of globalization and labor reforms, with communist countries such as China opting for market economy, one wonders if the Communist Manifesto will continue to attract the workers of the world under one banner, and more importantly, if Communism ever has a future.

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