demands were concerned. The last wave of great demonstrations of the chartists in April 1848 were met with failure, the continental revolutions of the same years were also defeated and this marked the end of chartism.

But despite the implosion it suffered, the chartist movement succeeded in radicalising the entire working class of England. It also immeasurably influenced the course of world working class movement as well. Within a generation, however, the English working class witnessed the statutory application of virtually all the six points of the charter. Even the ten-hour working day, which had been the economic aim of the trade unions and chartist for years, came to partial fruition at least through a law limiting the working day to ten hours for women and child labour. In practical effect, the ten-hour working day was enforced for men also in certain cases. Marx, writing about the historical significance of the ten-hour working day, said, “The creation of a normal working is therefore, the product of a protracted civil war, more or less dispersed, between the capitalist class and the working class. Further, the English factory workers were the champions, not only of the English, but of the modern working class generally, as their theorists were the first throw down the gauntlet to the theory of Capital.”

The chartist movement was also the maiden attempt of the working class to build a broad national party of their own class with unambiguous demands for full political rights. Thinkers following the Marxist philosophy consider it as one of the significant movements in the history of world labour. Analysing the movement V I Lenin said, “England was giving the world the first broad, truly mass and politically clear-cut proletarian revolutionary movement.”

While the conceptualisation and the unearthing of the inherent class conflict present in a capitalist society is credited to Karl Marx and later to V I Lenin, celebrated chartist leader James Bronterre O’ Brien developed a pretty clear understanding of the class struggle and the nature of the capitalist State. The astounding fact is that he did this fifteen years before Karl Marx drew up his Communist Manifesto. Though O’ Brien’s writings had
considerable amount of utopianism, he came remarkably close to Marx’s analysis of class struggle.

The inhuman exploitation of the workers also drew criticism from the rapidly growing middle class and the intelligentsia, which manifested itself in various types of utopian socialism that arose during that period. Along with Robert Owen (1771-1858), Claude H Saint Simon (1760-1825), Charles H Fourier (1772-1837) and Etienne Cabet (1788-1856) in France were among the most eminent of the utopian socialists.

The first attempt at evolving scientific laws of social development as expounded by modern-day communism was made by Wilhelm Weitling, a journeyman tailor of Germany, who attacked the capitalist system. German immigrant workers in London formed Exiles League (1834-1836) and Federation of the Just (1836-1839) and Weitling was a leader of the latter outfit.

Likewise in the United States, Thomas Skidmore, a machinist, assailed capitalism and called upon the workers to challenge the system. Meanwhile, the utopian socialist philosophy culminated in the setting up of many cooperative colonies and estates in the pattern defined by Owen. Followers of Fourier and eminent people like Horace Greely, Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Russell Lowell devoted themselves to the setting up of cooperatives.

The philosophy of utopian socialism went out of fashion with the development of scientific socialism by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and the consequent setting up of the First International.

The evolution from utopian socialism to scientific socialism provided the theoretical base for the working class movement. But the practical development of trade unions in the 19th century took place in the context of a running battle between the working class and the new governing classes, which dominated the executive, legislature and the judiciary. During this period industries were organised into factories and trade unions had
developed patterns of collective bargaining with the employers. In England industrial workers obtained the right to vote through the Representation of People Acts of 1867 and 1884. And in 1868 the Trade Union Congress, a central organisation of the English working class, was formed. The Trade Union Act, called the ‘Charter of Trade Unions’, was passed in 1871 on the basis of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions appointed in 1867. Together with a number of concomitant acts, the activities of the trade unions were no longer considered to be criminal. The trade unions were granted legal recognition and given the right to collectively bargain with the employers. The political context of these reforms was provided by returning to Parliament for the first time two candidates representing workers and the defeat of the Gladstone government and the assumption of the power by the Disraeli government.

In mainland Europe, the defeat of the Continental revolution in 1848 saw France being ruled by the army, bureaucracy and the police of Napolean III, various states of the German confederation being ruled by a collection of princes, feudal aristocrats and bureaucrats. The defeat of the revolution saw the ascendancy of the conservative forces making it difficult for the continental working class to take independent and decisive action. Only in England were the trade unions able to maintain a modicum of organisational continuity, which acquired speed and strength in the 1860s.

Quite naturally, England possessing the largest and best developed working class and being the first to give birth to trade unionism, became the scene for the first attempts to network the working class in different parts of Europe. With the advent of Marxian philosophy, the capitalist-industrial system came to be perceived as an international phenomenon, and consequently an attempt was also made to imbibe an international tone to working class solidarity.

In France and Germany, meanwhile, a severe economic crisis gave rise to a working class movement politically and socially stronger than before. Despite anti-combination acts and repressive measures, a wave of strikes broke out. The international character of the
working class movement became evident when the English working class actively supported the actions of the French and German working class.

The efforts to network working class movements across national boundaries came to a fruitful conclusion in 1864 when the first meeting of the representatives of the working class of different countries was held in Saint Martin’s Hall in London. Besides the English and the French, many émigré groups were represented, the Italians by one of Garibaldi’s aides, the Germans by the members of the Communist Workers’ Educational Society. Karl Marx was in attendance and he was elected as one of the German members on the Central Committee.

In drafting the statutes and formulating the political programme of the new organisation, Marx was able to establish his views over those of the Owenites and followers of Mazzini. The *Communist Manifesto*, which came out as early as 1848, already concretised the essence of the political and social theories of Karl Marx. Marx’s draft for the statutes and *Address* of the *International* was accepted unanimously with only minor amendments. The *Address* ended with the slogan, which has come to define working class movements all over the world – ‘Proletarians of the world, unite’.

The preamble to the constitution of the Association is considered to be one of the historic documents of the European working class movement. It said, “That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of class rule;... that the economic emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means... that the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists...”11
**Karl Marx and his Theory of Classes**

The concepts of ‘class’, ‘class structure’ and ‘class struggle’ occupy a central place in Marxist theory. Not only are they of theoretical significance, but also occupy a position of immense political importance. The analysis of class and class structure is of great importance in the Marxist analysis of any historical or contemporary situation. It is on the basis of such analysis that the groundwork is laid on which political strategies of revolutionary and socialist movements are developed. But such an approach does not mean that the strategy can be deduced from the class analysis but rather that it provides the context within which the political strategy can be generated. For Marx the identification of classes, that is the distribution of individuals or agents to specific classes by reference to their relationship to the productive process, was not a major problem. His central concern was the relational character of classes, as providing the distinctive character of classes themselves.

Though classes, class relations and class struggle are central concepts to everything, which Marx wrote, a comprehensive account of ‘Marx on class’ would amount to the daunting task of the complete reconstruction of his works. Moreover, there is no such homogenous entity or object as a ‘theory of class’ in the singular to be exponed. Marx wrote about class and class struggle at each of the major moments of his work. Stuart Hall while explaining the multiplicity of entry points to the study of class within Marx’s works says: “The polemic against the Left Hegelians in *The German Ideology*, the organisational purpose and rhetorical simplifications of *The Communist Manifesto*, the conjunctural political analyses of *The Class Struggles in France*, the theoretical labour of *The Grundrisse*, and *Capital* – each, because of its difference in aim and address, inflects the problem of classes differently.”

In comparison to other theorists of his time, the starting point of Marx is different. Marx believed that the duty of social theorists is to find out the laws of social development and
make generalisations and abstractions by studying the forms of interconnection within the process of the world. Further, he said, the social theorists should not only interpret and explain the concrete conditions of social life but also involve themselves in the struggle for change. Marx was also insistent that the test of the validity of a theory is in practice. He wrote: "The question whether objective truth belongs to human thinking is not a question of theory, but a practical question... the truth *i.e.* the reality and power of thought must be demonstrated in practice. The contest as to the reality and non-reality of a thought which is isolated from practice, is a purely scholastic question..." \(^{13}\)

It is generally accepted that Marxism took its form from three main roots. One of those roots was the development of Marx's analysis of French politics, particularly the bourgeois revolution in France in the 1790s, and the subsequent class struggles during the early 19th century. Another of the roots of Marxism is what is called 'English economics', i.e., Marx's analysis of the capitalist system as it developed in England. The other root of Marxism, which was its starting point historically, is said to be 'German philosophy'.

The basis of Marx's philosophy is materialism. He starts from the idea that matter is the essence of all reality, and that matter creates mind, and not vice-versa.

In other words, thought and all the things that are said to derive from thought -- artistic ideas, scientific ideas, ideas of law, politics, morality and so on -- are in fact derived from the material world. The 'mind', comprising thought and thought processes, is a product of the brain; and the brain itself, and therefore ideas, arose at a certain stage in the development of living matter. It is a product of the material world.

Marx, therefore, attempted to understand the real nature of human consciousness and society.

"It is a question not of setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive... in order to arrive at men in the flesh; but setting out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of
this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, images of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first (non-materialist) method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second (materialist) method, which conforms to real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness.\textsuperscript{14}

A materialist seeks an explanation not only for ideas but for material phenomena themselves, in terms of material causes and not in terms of supernatural intervention by gods and the like. And that is a very important aspect of Marxism, which clearly sets it aside from the methods of thinking and logic, which have become established in capitalist society.

The development of scientific thought in the European countries in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries displayed some really contradictory characteristics, which still remain typical of the approach of bourgeois theoreticians today. On the one hand there was a development towards a materialist method. Scientists looked for causes. They didn't just accept natural phenomena as god-ordained miracles, they sought some explanation for them. But at the same time these scientists did not yet possess a consistent or worked-out materialist understanding; and very often, behind the explanations for natural phenomena, they also saw, at the end of the chain, the hand of god at work.

Such an approach means accepting, or at least leaving open the possibility, that the material world we live in is ultimately shaped by forces from outside it, and that consciousness or ideas come first, in the sense that they can exist independently of the real world. This approach, which is the philosophical opposite of materialism, is popularly referred to as 'idealism'.
According to this approach, the development of mankind and of society -- of art, science, etc -- is dictated not by material processes but by the development of ideas, by the perfection or degeneration of human thought. And it is no accident that this general approach, whether spoken or unspoken, pervades all the philosophies of capitalism. They accept that capitalism is some kind of finished, complete system, which is incapable of being replaced by a new and higher system. And they try to present all past history as the efforts of lesser mortals to achieve the kind of 'perfect society' which they believe capitalism has achieved or can achieve.

Some of the greatest bourgeois scientists and thinkers, in the past or even today, show a tendency to jumble up materialist ideas and idealist ideas in their minds. For instance Isaac Newton, who examined the laws of mechanics and the laws of motion of planets and planetary bodies, did not believe that mind or thought dictated these processes. But what he did believe was that an original impetus was given to all matter, and that some sort of supernatural force provided this initial push.

Marxism, therefore, represents a systematic and fundamental break with idealism in all its forms and the development in its place of a materialist understanding of what is taking place in reality. Materialism in this sense provides one of the basic starting points of Marxism.

The other basic starting point is dialectics. Dialectics is quite simply the logic of motion. The underlying assumption powering the logic of dialectics is that things don't stand still, they change. But there is another form of logic, which stands in contradiction to dialectics, which is referred to as 'formal logic'.

Formal logic is based on what is known as the 'law of identity', which says that 'A' equals 'A' - ie. that things are what they are, and that they stand in definite relationships to each other. There are other derivative laws based on the law of identity. For example, if 'A' equals 'A', it follows that 'A' cannot equal 'B' nor 'C'.

52
This method of thinking has been a very important tool in the development of science and in the industrial revolution, which created the present-day industrial-capitalist society. The development of mathematics and basic arithmetic, for example, was based on formal logic. For instance, you cannot learn a table of multiplication or addition without using formal logic. And in the same way, the method of formal logic was also the basis for the development of mechanics, of chemistry, of biology and all other disciplines that sought to operate within the framework of scientificity and rationality.

In the 18th century the Scandinavian biologist Linnaeus developed a system of classification for all known plants and animals. Linnaeus divided all living things into classes, into orders and into families. This system represented an enormous step forward in biology. It made possible, for the first time, a real systematic study of plants and animals, to compare and contrast animal and plant species.

But there an underlying adhere to formal logic and was based on the assumption that homo sapiens equals homo sapiens; that musca domestica (the common housefly) equals musca domestica; and so on. It was, in other words, a fixed and rigid system. It wasn't possible, according to this system, for a species to equal to anything else, otherwise the system of classification would have completely collapsed.

The same logic was applied in the field of chemistry, where Dalton's atomic theory was based on the idea that matter is made up of atoms, and that each type of atom is completely separate and peculiar to itself -- that its shape and weight is peculiar to that particular element and to none other. Dalton's atomic theory led to a system of classification of elements whereby it was assumed that an atom of hydrogen was equal to another atom of hydrogen and an atom of carbon cannot be equal to an atom of any other element.

The method of formal logic, which came to inform the philosophy of science, while useful as an everyday method, threw up its inherent problematics whenever a different
approach was taken. For example, the problems in the Linnaean system of classification were brought to light through the work of Charles Darwin.

Darwin pointed out, for instance, that in the Linnaean system some types of plants are given separate names, as separate species, but actually they are very similar to each other. And yet there are other plants with the same name, of the same species, which are said to be different varieties of the same plant, and yet they are very different from each other. Darwin's own work provided a systematic basis for the theory of evolution, which for the first time said it is possible for one species to be transformed into another species. Before Darwin it was thought that the number of species on the planet was exactly the same as the number of species created by god in the first six days of his labour and that those species had survived unchanged over the millennia. But Darwin produced the idea of species changing, and so inevitably the method of classification also had to be changed.

Similarly, chemists also became aware by the late 19th century that it was possible for one atomic element to become transformed into another. For example, uranium and other radioactive atoms will split in the course of time and produce completely different atoms with completely different chemical properties and different atomic weights.

The dialectical logic, unlike the formal logic, starts off by postulating that there are no absolute or fixed categories, either in nature or in society. Whereas the formal logician will say that 'A' equals 'A', the dialectician will say that 'A' does not necessarily equal 'A'. Leon Trotsky, while explaining the logic of dialectics in his writings, says: "One pound of sugar will not be precisely equal to another pound of sugar. It is a good enough approximation if you want to buy sugar in a shop, but if you look at it more carefully you will see that it's actually wrong." Therefore dialectics can be seen as a form of understanding, a form of logic that takes into account the fact that things, and life, and society, are in a state of constant motion and change.
But to think that dialectics ascribes to the universe a process of even and gradual change would be simplistic. The laws of dialectics describe the manner in which the processes of change in reality take place.

Another law of dialectics states that the processes of change – motion in the universe – are not gradual, but also not even. Periods of relatively gradual or slight change are interspersed with periods of enormously rapid change. A change, which cannot be measured in terms of quantity but only in terms of quality. For instance while heating water the change in temperature can be measured in terms of degrees, which essentially is quantification of the change taking place in water. But then after a certain point in temperature the water becomes steam, and you can no longer quantify the change. At that point in time the change becomes qualitative.

Both Marx and Engels in their writings frequently refer to the transformation of quantity into quality. If evolutionary changes progress to a certain point under the impact of environmental changes, then those quantitative changes can add up to a qualitative change. In other words, changes in animal or plant species can be measured in quantitative terms only up to a point, beyond which the changes become qualitative. For instance, humans as a species are qualitatively different from chimpanzees or gorillas, or for that matter chimpanzees and gorillas are qualitatively different from other species of mammals. And those qualitative differences, those evolutionary leaps, have come about as a result of quantitative changes in the past.

The idea of Marxism is that there will always be periods of gradual change interspersed with periods of sudden change. Very often Marxists have used the analogy of pregnancy to describe the development of wars and revolutions. In pregnancy, there is a period of gradual development, and then a period of very sudden development at the end. The same applies to social development. These represent qualitative leaps in social development; but they come about as a result of the accumulation of quantitative contradictions in society.
Another important law of dialectics is 'the law of the negation of the negation'. 'Negation' in this sense simply means the passing away of one thing, the death of one thing as it becomes transformed into another. For instance, Marx looked at the development of class society as representing the negation of the previous classless society, which he called primitive communism. And in future, according to Marx, with the development of communism, we will see the emergence of another classless society, which would mean the negation of the present class society.

So the law of the negation of the negation simply states that as one system comes into existence, it forces another system to pass away. But that doesn't mean that the second system is permanent or unchangeable. That second system itself becomes negated as a result of the further developments and processes of change in society.

Another concept of dialectics is the law of the 'interpenetration of opposites'. This law quite simply states that processes of change take place because of contradictions and consequent conflicts between the different elements that are embodied in all natural and social processes.

Probably the best example of the interpenetration of opposites in natural science is the 'quantum theory'. This theory is based on the concept of energy having a dual character - in the form of waves, like electromagnetic energy, and in form of particles. In other words, it is accepted among scientists that matter and energy can actually exist in two different forms at one and the same time -- as a intangible wave and as a particle with a definite 'quantum' (amount) of energy embodied in it. Therefore the basis of the quantum theory in modern physics is contradiction.

Similarly, every society, according to Marx, consists of different contradictory elements joined together in one system, which makes it impossible for any society, any country, to remain stable or unchanged. The dialectical method, in contrast to the method of formal logic, trains us to identify these contradictions, and thereby get to the bottom of the changes taking place.
The attitude of Marx and Engels was to view social processes from the same dialectical standpoint from which they viewed nature -- from the standpoint of the processes that are actually taking place.

The starting point of Marx's science of society is that men must associate themselves to produce their means of subsistence. If men do not produce, they perish. He defined production as a social activity. The tools, the implements, and the skill and knowledge needed for production are 'forces of production'; while men are involved in the social activity of production they enter into multiple 'relations of production'. Social life develops only when people adapt their relations of production to the forces of production, and work out ideas and organise themselves in suitable institutions to that end. The two indivisible sides of social production are productive forces and relations of production. In the words of Marx, it is known as 'mode of production'. Mode of production, Marx says, is the determinative basis of social system. Society and its dominant ideas, political views and institutions depend on the mode of production. If the mode of production changes, as it has continuously changed since the inception of human society, the entire social system changes. Following a linear, evolutionary teleology, Marx said that every new and higher mode of production signifies a new and higher level in the history of man's development.

The change in the forces of production brings about a qualitative change in society. But, Marx said, if the change in the relations of production bear no relation to the change in the forces of production, social development is retarded. Any lack of harmony between the two (ie. Between the forces of production and relations of production) leads to acute conflict since a contradiction arises between the new forces of production and the old relations of production. This contradiction leads to antagonism between the two primary classes -- the bourgeoisie and the proletariat -- leading to a social revolution. In such an antagonistic social relationship, only a revolution, according to Marx, can bring about the necessary change needed for harmonious life. Marx explains this as follows: "In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of
these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rise legal, political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of man that determines their existence, but, on the contrary their social existence determines their consciousness.”

Those who adhere to Marxist theorising call this approach historical materialism. The term was never used by either Marx or Engels, though the latter did favourably contrast both 'materialist dialectics' with the 'idealist dialectics' of Hegel and also the German idealist tradition, and the 'dialectical' outlook of Marxism with the 'mechanistic' or 'metaphysical' standpoint of other nineteenth-century materialists.

Since 19th century capitalism was the essential reference point of his critique, Marx examines in detail the contributions of capitalism to social development. He also scrutinises its negative aspects, including its basic tendency to accumulate surplus value and exploit and oppress the working class. The laws of capitalist accumulation, Marx said, lead to serious exploitation of the working class by the capitalists. Marx suggests that it is only by struggle that the working class can liberate itself from the shackles of capitalist exploitation. He is clear that social and political changes cannot come about without struggle. Writing in the Communist Manifesto, Marx said, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended in the revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.”

Explaining the class structure in the post-industrial revolution society, Marx in his essays on The Eighteenth Brumaire and The Class Struggles in France drafted between 1850 and 1852 said, “… with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows and it feels that
strength more. The various interests are more and more equalised, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labour, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois... makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collision between individual workmen and the individual bourgeois takes more and more the character of collision between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeois... This organisation of the proletariat into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer and mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of workers, by taking advantage of divisions among the bourgeois itself."

As a theorist of social transformation, for Marx the purpose of change is a qualitatively higher social life. Consequently his attention is focused on factors inherent in the death of a society, particularly the capitalist society. For Marx a new society can be born only when social contradictions have been resolved. For contradictions to be resolved, they have to be properly identified and a struggle waged against them. The exploiting class has in its hands all the instruments of coercive power. The exploited classes need to organise themselves in order to conduct their struggle against the exploitative social system. Class struggles take place only when the masses are conscious about exploitation and the causes of it. As the level of consciousness arises, the struggle intensifies. For Marx, social and political change is achieved through conscious struggle of the working class against capitalism.

Marx emphasised that societies contain within themselves the causes of their decay and death. Social contradictions get resolved only when the society concerned undergoes a qualitative change. Marx emphatically declared that a revolution capable of changing a society cannot be manufactured to order. The most important prerequisite for revolutionary change is that the forces of production should exhaust all their potential of growth and that a serious antagonism should develop between the relations of production and the forces of production. To see whether such an antagonism exists or not, one
should examine the nature of the epoch concerned. "In understanding the nature of the epoch for revolutionary action, it is essential to remember that at the various stages of history of development of societies, different modes of production may co-exist."¹⁶

As societies develop, a dominant mode of production emerges – either the slave, the feudal, or the capitalist mode of production. Marx in *Das Kapital* said, "Just as it would be impossible to arrive at a correct judgement about an individual by noting only his own view of himself so it is impossible to judge whole revolutionary periods by the conscious way in which they see themselves for on the contrary such consciousness must be explained as the product of the contradictions of material life of the conflict between the forces of social production and their actual relations. No social order disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it, have developed, and the new higher relations of production never appear before the conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society... the problem itself only arises when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or at least are in the process of formation."

Marx advances a philosophy of history and a theory of society on the basis of which the correlation of social forces in a society at any given time is to be examined and interpreted for the purpose of waging a struggle for revolutionary change. Marx states this clearly as his distinctive contribution in the *Communist Manifesto*. "What I did that was new was to prove (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular, historic phases in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

Marx also dealt with crucial issue of the nature of the State. In his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Friederich Engels describes the State as a "power arisen out of society, but itself above it." Marx conceived the State as a coercive instrument at the hands of those who own property. He refuted the notion that State was a neutral agency. In history, Marx said, the need for the institution of State was first felt by
the propertied classes as the State could help them in the accumulation of surplus value and suppress the real producers of surplus who could resist such exploitation. The executive powers of the State with its enormous bureaucratic and military organisation could be used to establish or preserve security for capital investment. The State originated when classes emerged in society. Engels wrote: “An institution that lent the character of perpetuity not only to the newly rising division into classes, but also to the right of the possessing classes to exploit and rule the non-possessing classes. And this institution was found. The State arose.”

Essentially, students of social sciences can look at Marx’s philosophy as an attempt to find the laws of social development, much like Charles Darwin attempted to find the law of evolution of species by natural selection. In attempting to find the laws of social development, Marx follows the method of a materialistic interpretation of history. Since the processes in the capitalist societies were his focal points, Marx also examined the laws of capitalist development and the methods of capital accumulation and their social implications.

**Brief Outline: Contributions and Revisions to Marxism**

Many contributions have been made to the Marxian theory of social and political change. One of earliest and important of such contributions was that of V I Lenin, which acted as a blueprint for working class movements in many of the colonial countries in the 20th century. Lenin's focus was on the phase in which competitive capitalism enters the stage of monopoly capitalism. Based on his analysis of monopoly capitalism, he developed an exhaustive theory of imperialism and its consequences for the societies of the world.

According to Lenin, there are five essential features of imperialism. (1) The concentration of production and capital in capitalist societies develops to such a high degree that it creates monopolies, which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital and creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital', of a financial oligarchy; (3) the growth of the importance of export of capital, as distinguished
from the export of commodities; (4) the formation of international monopoly combines of capitalists, which divide up the world; and (5) the completion of the territorial division of the world among the greatest capitalist powers.

**Capitalism** develops by the creating and fulfilling demands in a society and as it evolves the bigger capitalists come together and construct monopolies. When the market in a parent society gets saturated, it becomes essential for the capitalists to look out for new markets. This urge for new markets, according to Lenin, gives rise to the ideology of imperialism, which is based on dominance and regimentation. And monopoly capitalism uses the instrument of State to subjugate other societies and territories. The result of imperialism, according to Lenin, is the development of an international division of labour on a world scale. Such a division reduces the colonies to the position of producers of raw material and importers of finished products from the ‘metropolitan centres’ — the advanced capitalist countries. Colonies, due to imperialism, become appendages of the metropolitan centres and suffer underdevelopment, deprivation and stagnation.

Lenin’s theorisation on imperialism influenced the anti-colonial movements in many countries, and acquires context in the face of the Indian working class movement, which in its initial phase was inextricably linked with the larger anti-colonial struggle in India. By the 1960s, there was growing criticism that the intricacies and diversity of Marxism was being lost with the fusing of Marx’s thoughts with the linearity of Lenin’s theorisations.

The advent of the Soviet Union and the use of Marxism-Leninism as a roadmap to future revolutions in the world were also seen as one of the reasons for the ‘simplification’ and the ‘universalisation’ of the philosophy. ‘Traditional’ or ‘orthodox’ Marxism, as it came to be called, and which dominated the communist and the workers movements for decades, came to be defined by the labels of reductionism and economism. The advocates of ‘contemporary Marxism’ like Stuart Hall, Nicos Poulantzas, Louis Althusser, Paul Hirst and those comprising the Frankfurt school (*Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin and Jurgen Habermas*) argue that reductionism
informing traditional Marxism presents all social phenomena as ‘reducible to’, or explicable in terms of, the ‘economic base’. Thus political struggles or social ideologies are explained as manifestation or ‘reflections’ of economic forces. Such an approach, according to these authors, reduces Marxism to a set of relatively universal and simple laws. The error of reductionism is that it leads to the conclusion that an analysis of any social or political phenomena can be done through an understanding of the economic development of capitalism. Such an interpretation of Marxism, according to advocates of contemporary Marxism, necessarily involves an assumption that the economy has secreted within it the essential constituents of all social developments.

It is this tradition, which contemporary Marxism has confronted and in doing so has examined the major texts by Marx himself. At the same time the works of Marxists, particularly Georg Lukács and Antonio Gramsci, who had earlier challenged the dogmatism creeping into Marxism, were also critically examined. In challenging a simplistic and mechanical interpretation of Marx, contemporary Marxism has needed to question many of the taken-for-granted concepts and theories, and to re-examine the very basis of Marxist theory. Much of this work has consciously elevated the importance of theory, which had lain dormant for so long during the Stalin era. But one of the consequences of this attention to theoretical issues has been that the work produced has been not only difficult, but often very abstract and not of any apparent direct political significance. Even Louis Althusser, who has played a central role in developing contemporary Marxism, has in his self-criticism pointed to a tendency towards theoreticism in his own work.17

While Marxists have always correctly placed emphasis on the integration of theory and practice, dogmatic Marxism has tended to seek to reduce this integration to a simple and direct relation in which theory has to subserve practice. Thus, every theoretical position was judged by its apparent political implications. As stated earlier the concepts of ‘class’, ‘class structure’ and ‘class struggle’ occupy a central place within Marxist theory. Contemporary Marxians reject the interpretation of Marxism in which all social phenomena can be ‘reduced to’ or derived from the economic. That leads them to start off
with a basic question: What is the nature of the relationship between the economic, on the one hand, and the political and ideological on the other?

Stuart Hall develops his analysis by referring to the solution posed by Engels in his famous ‘late letters’\(^{18}\), which rests on the ‘relative autonomy’ of politics and ideology. Tracing Marx’s analysis of class from its early formulations in *The Communist Manifesto* through to the latter treatment in *Capital*, and the historical texts, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and *The Civil War in France*, Hall sees in Marx a transition from a relatively simple dichotomy between bourgeoisie and proletariat, when a direct relationship is posited between contending economic classes in which the political class struggle is the reflex or result of the their polar opposition, to the ‘complex simplification’ of Marx’s latter works. Hall says that Marx in his latter works, without abandoning the concept of a fundamental dichotomy between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, no longer treats politics as the direct expression of class interests, but posits contending political forces – and not classes as such – as engaging in struggle. Hall contends that this requires an analysis, which Marx himself never fully or systematically developed, of ‘the specificity of the political’ or of the ‘relative autonomy’ of the political struggle. Hall also argues that readers of Marx should not counterpose an ‘early’ and a ‘late’ Marx, which incidentally Louis Althusser does, but grasp the ‘fundamental unity of his approach, which is one that requires continuing creative work to grapple with the problems of the complexity of this unity’.

Nicos Poulantzas, on the other hand, operates with a position that derives from Althusser, in which the relative autonomy, or ‘the determination in the last instance by the economic’, derives from the dual role of the economic level, as a distinct level within the social totality, alongside political and ideological levels, which at the same time provide the structure that determines the causal effects of the distinct level. Poulantzas, who was a member of the Greek Communist Party, insists that his work – *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* -- should be seen as an intervention in the strategic debates of the European communist and socialist movements. He argues that the conception of working class as being composed of all wage-labourers is fundamentally social-democratic. Wages, he
says, are the form of distribution with the capitalist mode of production. The basis of Marxist analysis of class must therefore found itself, he says, on the process of the creation of surplus value; and it is for this reason that the distinction between productive and non-productive labour is essential in determining the boundary of the working class. The positive identification of their class membership is provided by the political and ideological elements, in particular with reference to their authority and control within the labour process and the significance of mental labour. These criteria, Poulantzas says, establish their class location as a ‘new petty bourgeoisie’. If one goes by the logic presented by Poulantzas, then the salaried workers are members of a separate class. And to develop a strategy of class alliance between the working class and the ‘new petty bourgeoisie’, one must take into account their specific class interests, and must not assume that they necessarily share the same general interests as the working class. The development of the concept of a ‘new petty bourgeoisie’ makes possible a view of the essential conditions for constituting the hegemony of the working class in the transition to socialism.

While Poulantzas’ Althusser’s and Hall’s revisions to Marx’s theory are the most prominent and are seen to represent a ‘revitalisation of Marx’, there has been a fair share of criticism that has been directed at it. Paul Hirst argues that in order to escape from reductionism, Poulantzas ends up by equating economic classes and political forces. Hirst also critiques the notion of ‘relative autonomy’ and ‘structural causality’, which lies at the heart of the positions of both Poulantzas and Althusser. ‘Relative autonomy’, says Hirst, is an ‘untenable position’ because it tries to have the best of both worlds, on the one hand retain some notion of the ultimate correspondence between the economic and the political, on the other, to assert the specificity of politics and political class struggle. The central problem facing orthodox Marxism, says Hirst, is that it has to make a choice between economism/reductionism and recognising the ‘necessary non-correspondence’ between political forces and economic classes. This position, Hirst says, requires us to recognise that classes as such do not directly fight class struggle, but rather that it is political forces, which cannot be analysed as ‘representing’ classes, which are the agents which engage in struggle. Such a position, he argues, requires Marxists to engage in
concrete analysis of particular political situations to arrive at ‘appropriate political strategies’ for socialist transformation.

Alan Hunt in his paper *Theory and Politics in the Identification of Working Class* takes issue with the analysis advanced by Poulantzas. He rejects Poulantzas’ attempt to restrict the working class to productive labourers (labour which produces surplus value) saying it fails to reveal any fundamental division of cleavage that separates productive and non-productive workers. He also rejects the designation of all non-productive workers as members of a new class (new petty bourgeoisie) objecting to Poulantzas’s method of attributing ideological and political positions to non-productive workers, from which Poulantzas derives a convergence of class position between the ‘new’ and the ‘traditional’ petty bourgeoisie. Hunt in turn proposes a framework that needs to distinguish between ‘immediate’ and ‘class relations’ of production. Such a distinction, says Hunt, leads to the proposition that the ‘economic’ level specifies the potential boundary or parameter of the working class (as sellers of labour power/non-owners of the means of production), while ‘class relations’ embody political and ideological determinants which allow us to distinguish between the class practices adopted by particular sections of the working class.

Here Vic Allen’s paper, *The Differentiation of the Working Class*, which was presented at a conference organised by the Sociology group of the Communist Party of Great Britain in November 1976, is of interest. Allen insists that the modern working class is necessarily more extensive and more complex in its internal relations than the working class of early industrial capitalism. He examines the problem of the differentiation of the contemporary working class, and as a logical corollary seeks to analyse its politics and consciousness. Allen argues that it is possible to identify distinct ‘labour markets’ through which different sections of wage labourers sell their labour power, and that levels of skills and differential power relations with respect to the employers. The different labour markets, says Allen, are not simply economically defined, but also ideologically constituted. The important implication that flows from this analysis is that it makes it possible to understand the particular contradictions and antagonisms that can and do exist
among and between wage labourers, and consequently facilitates the analysis of the
different levels and forms of class struggle and class consciousness within the working
class. Allen's analysis also points towards a tendency within advanced capitalism for the
emergence of common responses from wider sections of wage labourers, epitomised by
the growth of trade union organisations among non-manual workers.

While approaches of contemporary Marxism toward 'traditional' or 'orthodox' Marxism
is marked by diversity in entry points to the basic tenets posited by Marx, there is an
underlying rejection in all of such approaches of the 'reductionism' and 'essentialism',
which had come to define Marxism.
References

5 Karl Marx, Capital Vol.1, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, pp 428-429
8 Karl Marx, Capital, Vol 1, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, p 429
9 Ibid, p 299
11 William Z Foster, History of the Three Internationals, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, pp 42-43
13 William Z Foster, History of the Three Internationals, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, p 81
14 Refer: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, Chapter one
15 Karl Marx, Capital, Vol 1, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954, p 523
18 Engels to Bloch, Schmidt, Mehring and Starkenburg (Borgius), Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence, pp 394, 396, 433 and 441, Moscow, 1975