
UNIT 3 DALITS IN THE LIGHT OF GRAMSCI'S THOUGHT

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Life of Antonio Gramsci
- 3.3 The Philosophical Standpoint of Gramsci
- 3.4 The Concepts of Antonio Gramsci
- 3.5 Gramsci and Ambedkar: A General Comparison
- 3.6 The Concept of Civil Society and the Caste System
- 3.7 Hegemony and Deconstruction in Dalit Politics
- 3.8 Limits of Applicability of Gramscian Concepts
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Key Words
- 3.11 Further Readings and References
- 3.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In the beginning of the present Unit, you will get a brief sketch of the difficult life of Antonio Gramsci under conditions of Fascism in Italy and his prison life. Then we would go for explaining Gramsci's reading of Marxism and his own concepts as addition to the Marxism already existing. Once we become clear about the conceptual world of Gramsci, then we would try to apply the Gramscian ideas to the Indian reality, particularly to the understanding of caste system. We may find certain remarkable similarities between the Dalit politics and the political path proposed by Gramsci for his own country. The similarities referred here do not mean any mechanical application of Gramsci to India. On the other hand we are interested to find the limits of any application of Gramscian ideas too. Thus, our objectives are:

Understanding the Gramscian concepts

Knowing the applicability of Gramscian ideas to Dalit politics

Identifying certain limits in applying the Gramscian ideas to the Indian scenario

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Marxism has proved itself as the most influential thought in the 20th century. Apart from its direct political articulations, it has its academic variations too. While Marxism has met with certain definite political failures, it has withstood the test of time and academic achievements. Marxism has shown itself as a successful social analytical theory particularly from the point of view of subaltern masses struggling for their emancipation. Marx, Engels, Roza Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, Che Guevara etc are the leaders of the Marxist political movement

all over the world. George Lukacs, Herbert Marcuse, Adorno, Louis Althusser and others are the academicians who contributed considerably to the making of 20th century Marxism. Thus, Marxism has undergone basic transformations in 20th century and early 21st century. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, is one among those who have been very much instrumental to changes and developments in present day Marxism. Gramsci has created waves of interest in re-reading and reinterpreting Marxism particularly in conditions of traditional societies with immense population of peasants. To us, it is pertinent that the recent developments in Marxism have changed the character of Marxism as an European theory and have come to contribute much to the understanding of Third World realities such as Indian society.

The present Unit is dedicated to the thought of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1936), his basic philosophical standpoint and his concepts as well as to the applicability of Gramsci’s ideas to the Dalit Question in India.

3.2 LIFE OF ANTONIO GRAMSCI

The British Historian Eric Hobsbaum says that Antonio Gramsci is the greatest original Marxist thinker of 20th century. Antonio Gramsci was born on 1891 in a middle class family in the Sardinia region of Italy. Italy in the early 20th century was a country of various segregated regions of uneven development without adequate unity and a country of rich tradition of Christianity, having the cities of Vatican and Rome at its midst. Gramsci hailed from the Southern region of Italy with its densely inhabited peasant population. Gramsci had a failing health during his adulthood and he could not pursue his education in philosophy systematically. As a youth, Gramsci joined to work in the Socialist Party of Italy and the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia inspired him to become a Marxist. He imagined that the creation of Workers’ Councils in Italy in the pattern of Russian Soviets would lead his country to Revolution. In 1921, along with some other people he became instrumental to the founding of the Italian Communist Party. However, making use of the nationalist ideology and underdevelopment of Italy, the Fascists captured power in Italy by 1922. Feeling the danger of arrest in Italy, Gramsci soon got out of his country and preferred to live in exile for a year in Moscow and then in Vienna. While in Vienna, Gramsci was elected to the Italian Parliament and he dared to enter into Italy as a member of Parliament. It happened so that he was anyhow arrested by the Fascist forces and was put into prison for a long term of 20 years. Within the prisons, Gramsci understood that with his failing health, all his enthusiasm would be destroyed under the prison conditions and he decided to resist his conditions by reading, thinking and writing secretly on the theme of Italian way to revolution. He wrote extensively on Italian history, philosophy and Marxism. Gramsci died in the prison in 1936. He was only 45 years old then. It was found that Gramsci had left written 33 notes full of his creative thinking about his country and Marxist theory. The notes of Gramsci found printing after the second world war with the title “Prison Notebooks”.

3.3 THE PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINT OF GRAMSCI

Gramsci refuses to take up Marxism as a pure economic theory. Neither he understands Marxism as a theory that stands upon any economic determinism.

On the other hand, his philosophical standpoint is that the strong point of Marxism is its dialectics. Dialectics is a philosophical trend that advocates flexible transformations between rigid standpoints. Dialectics as such is against any fixed unchangeable severity. It is a philosophy of change, interrelations and interconnectedness, mutual influences and elastic transformations. Gramsci revived the core status of dialectics in Marxist philosophy. He rejuvenated the dialectics of economic politics and cultural politics, the dialectics of objectivity and subjectivity and the dialectics of political society and civil society in Marxism. Gramsci refocused on the dialectics of spontaneity and consciousness in mass mobilizations for social change. He advocated the combination of the class politics and nationalist politics. He invigorated the blending of coercive methods and consensus ways in political organization so that it assumes an overwhelming moral content.

Gramsci called the Marxists of 20th century to learn from the experiences of religions during the medieval period and from the nationalist ideologies of the modern period. Religions and nationalism could assume the role of “national collective will” and popular hegemony through their subtle ways of psychological persuasions of ordinary masses. Religions and nationalism had an army of traditional intellectuals on their side and the traditional intellectuals always mediate the masses to the rulers. Gramsci suggested that the Marxist movements must achieve a national collective consensus in favor of social change and accomplish an alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals. That would be the path of revolution in traditional societies with uneven development.

3.4 THE CONCEPTS OF ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Civil Society: If economy forms the base structure of any society, there are two superstructures upon the economic base of society. They are the political society and the civil society. The political society comprises of the State Apparatus, State Institutions such as Law, Courts, the Departments of Police and other wings of Administration, Political Parties and modes of Election. Marxists including Marx, Engels and Lenin paid special attention to the political society and advocated the communists to achieve political power to realize social changes towards Socialism. But Gramsci says that it is high time that the revolutionaries must pay special attention to achieve hegemony in Civil Society. By Civil Society, Gramsci understands the social institutions such as education, ideology, family and religion that fundamentally influence the psyche and minds of the people and thus the private world of the people. According to Gramsci, the Civil Society is more powerful and proficient than the Political Society in terms of practical efficacy. In the Civil Society, not merely the objective structure of economy is active but also the subjective moments of belief, ideology and consent of the people prevail. In the Civil Society, the economic relations objectively and the consciousness (including the false consciousness) subjectively are operative. Without victory over the civil institutions, Marxism cannot achieve the national collective support and without which even the political victory would not be enduring.

Hegemony: The term “hegemony” was popularly used by Lenin during the October Revolution to indicate the strategy of achieving the political leadership of Working Class upon its allies in the Revolution. Thus the concept was

conceived by Lenin to denote the necessary political influence, even dominance, the working class must have upon its less proletarian working masses including the peasants. In such a scheme of things, the peasants were perceived as the petti-bourgeois who depending upon the historical circumstances may stand one with the workers for a revolution. Gramsci made use of the term hegemony but with a revised meaning. For Gramsci, hegemony is not a tactical alliance but a real alliance of social groups mediated by the progressive intellectuals to make it almost equivalent to a national collective will for a social revolution. Hegemony is less political and more ideological in Gramsci. The hegemony should act as a moral force of justice, even as the spirit of the national. Hegemony, thus, means for Gramsci the moral and intellectual triumph of Marxism as a national consciousness. When the hegemony is reached, a historical bloc comes into existence transcending the spontaneous economic interests of particular classes and an ideological cementing occurs among the toiling masses on the one hand and between the subalterns and intellectuals on the other hand.

Subalterns: Gramsci’s writings contain the impressions of his prison life that he could not use the Marxist terms openly and he prominently used the term “subalterns” in place of working class or working masses. However, in Gramscian Studies now, the term “subaltern” has gained more meaning than denoting merely the working class. It has come to denote the economically exploited, socially oppressed and denigrated, having the impression of spontaneity and passivity in all through history. Gramsci’s discussions lead to the idea that during the historical development towards the revolution, the subalterns get out of their spontaneity, indifference, passivity and superstitions, and rise to become the most active and collective national consciousness. The subalterns turn into the active and conscious hegemonic force. The common sense, religiosity and folklore of the subalterns are overcome and a conscious and practical phase is reached.

The Role of Intellectuals: Gramsci paid a special attention to the role of intellectuals in constructing the hegemonic consciousness towards revolution. He called the Marxist scholars to spot out the role played by the traditional scholars in constructing the religious ideology and the state ideology of nationalism in history. This fact informs us the tremendous importance of modern organic intellectuals in building the historical bloc and its hegemony. Gramsci represented the dialectical relationship between the elites and the masses towards ensuring the ideological hegemony of the oppressed. The intellectuals are to become the mosaic and take up the role of cementing the coherence among the subaltern masses. The intellectuals must play the most active role in transforming the spontaneous subalterns into the conscious social classes of praxis. Even a class intellectual is only spontaneous in his/her ideology. The need for revolution is the intellectual of the hegemonic praxis who makes it into a national task.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

 b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Brief the philosophical position of Antonio Gramsci

.....

.....

.....

2) Explain the Gramscian concept of Civil Society

3) Explain the Gramscian concept of Hegemony

3.5

GRAMSCI AND AMBEDKAR: A GENERAL COMPARISON

Gramsci is generally considered as the founder of Eurocommunism whereas the European path of revolution is seen as different from the Russian way to socialism. The decisive moment of the European path is said to be giving predominance to democracy. In other words, the Russian path is considered to be aggressively political whereas the European path is celebrated as a more civilian one. The “civilian” here means more of a path through social and moral consensus, and through constructing a national collective will. Philosophically, the conscious moment occupies a predominant place in comparison to the materialistic economic moment. In this way of interpreting Antonio Gramsci, he is often characterized as a Hegelian and social democrat.

There is a remarkably similar evaluation about Ambedkar, the leader of Dalit politics, in Indian writings. Ambedkar too is considered as an ideologue who pays primary attention to the democratic revolution in India. Some leftist writers are inclined to see Ambedkar as a caste reformer and social democrat. Ambedkar’s denouncement of violence in the Marxist concept of social revolution and his conversion to Buddhism as a peaceful moral path and finally, the legal means of safe-guarding the rights of the Dalits are seen by some of the scholars as evidencing the democratic spirit of Ambedkar.

A careful scrutiny of both Gramsci and Ambedkar would reveal that they cannot be characterized merely as advocates of democracy and peaceful transition. On the other hand, the analyses of Gramsci and Ambedkar stand tremendously nearer to the Italian and Indian realities that refuse to sit monolithically within the class essentialism of classical Marxism. The involvement and commitment of Gramsci and Ambedkar to their respective societies made them understand that the classical Marxist concepts were inadequate to comprehend their societies in all their concreteness. It is this latter realization that compelled Gramsci and Ambedkar to

move intimately into the inner layers of society that contributed to the introduction of fresh concepts about their societies. Gramsci and Ambedkar cannot be labeled just as social democrats but they realized that only through a democratic strategy of unifying the multifarious forces of the subaltern realm, the path for a socialist transformation can be moulded. According to them, a revolution should start from the specific conditions of the country. The specificity of Indian society is that it is a traditional one and the caste system occupies the most prominent place in its structure. Hence, a democratic intervention and mobilization addressed to the traditional structures of the society would be the starting point for any revolutionary change in India. In this regard, Ambedkar and Gramsci do not support the concept of stages of revolution but organically united the democratic and socialist stages of Indian revolution.

3.6 THE CONCEPT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

We refer back to the Gramscian dialectics of Political and Civil Societies here. Gramsci is not satisfied with the task of achieving the proletarian political power and he postulates that there is a civil society wielding real power upon the people and conditioning their every day life activities. This is not merely a political tactics but behind the idea of Gramsci stands the fact that there is a real structure of civil society exerting tremendous influence upon the people in practical terms. Ambedkar argued with Indian Marxists that there is a caste system in Indian society that was not taken note by the Marxists. In a sense, the caste system makes the private psychology of the Indians. Gramsci too maintains that the civil society makes the private life of its citizens. Ambedkar maintains that the independence of the country from the British colonial rule does not at all automatically mean a social revolution in India. According to him, the problem with India lies well deep into the history of Indian society. It has a caste system not merely in terms of economic relations but as a social order cultivated and safe-guarded by Hindu religion and its ethics all through its history that should be addressed primarily. Any talk on social change or revolution must address the problem of caste system that makes the faith, psyche, behavior and praxis of all Indians. It appears that Ambedkar had a concept of Civil Society well before Antonio Gramsci conceived it in Italian context.

Did Ambedkar have a concept of Civil Society? Yes. Ambedkar did have it. Dividing the Indian society into political and social (Read it as Civil) levels started actually well ahead in the late 19th century when Indians entered into modernity under colonial conditions. In late 19th century, the newly emergent Indian elites, did not speak politics openly against the British rulers, but actually created a space for cultural politics in difference to that of either Christianity or Western values. Even we can assert that cultural politics preceded direct politics under colonial conditions in late 19th century. Organizations such as Brahma Samaj in Bengal, Arya Samaj in Gujarat, Theosophical Society in Chennai, Singh Sabha Movement in Punjab, the Justice Party in Tamilnadu etc introduced the discourses of cultural politics in India in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in various parts of India. It is within these discourses of the cultural politics of India under colonial conditions that the caste question too appeared to be discussed. This is also the context in which the Dalit politics too came into existence.

As such the nationalist politics is a late comer in comparison to the politics of civil society in India. The nationalist movement brought to focus the question of Swaraj and national independence. From the beginning of 20th century, the nationalist politics of political independence and the cultural politics of civil society competed among themselves exhibiting two varying approaches to the question of Indian society and its development. Often the nationalist school of thought vulgarized the adherents of civil politics as anti-nationalists and pro-British. But actually the problem lies elsewhere. The problem as such was not at all whether one was national or anti-national. The problem was that India in its specific historical conditions exhibited two types of politics: one is the politics of civil society and another is the nationalist politics. In other words, well before Gramsci came to the concept of civil society within the Marxist frame, Indian society showed itself exposed to the politics of civil society as a specific case to discuss the caste system and its ideological ramifications. The Dalit politics in India anchored itself in the realm of civil society and the nationalists limited themselves in the realm of political society. India reached the concept of Civil society not in the Marxist frame but under the specific conditions of colonialism. Indian nationalism speaking only about the independence of the country from the British is a careful avoidance of the real problems of the Indian society, particularly its caste problem. It is also uncharacteristic of nationalism as a political discourse. Nowhere in Europe or elsewhere, the nationalism avoided its social questions. But Indian nationalism did it just to escape from its social responsibilities. Nationalism averting the caste question is merely seeking political power to the traditional caste elites.

The Dalit politics of civil society really was rich in its content to delve deep into the layers of Indian society. The Dalit politics actually flexibly moves into the realms of economy, politics, religion, ideology and culture. It is a dialectical process. The Dalit approach does not take anything deterministic and it is not in search of any determinant at all. On the other hand, it starts from the civil phenomenon of caste practices, elastically moves into its Hindu religious realm, further deals the political proportions of the caste system and finally explores the economic ramifications of the caste system. The Dalit approach, thus, is comprehensive and beyond determinism, and it seeks the rectification of the problem too in a comprehensive manner. Ambedkar is the classical exponent of this approach. It is here Gramsci is relevant to the Dalits.

Ambedkar reiterates that the caste society can practice tyranny and oppression against an individual in a far greater degree than a Government can. The means and scope that are open to civil society are far more extensive than those that are open to the political society, also they are far more effective. Neither Ambedkar had any illusion about the laws of the State. He maintains that rights are protected not by law but by the social and moral conscience of society. If the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no law, no parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the term. Ambedkar very flexibly moves from economic to social, from social to moral, from moral to political and vice versa. This is the dialectics of civil society and political society in operation. Without the knowledge of Gramscian Marxism, the Dalit movements had the genius to comprehensively unite the political and civil tasks of Indian society.

3.7 HEGEMONY AND DECONSTRUCTION IN DALIT POLITICS

Ambedkar is one among the first to understand the hegemonic role of ideology, specifically the Hindu ideology, in founding and maintaining the caste system. Ambedkar has entered into the evaluation of Hinduism when many European orientalist were reverting to Hinduism and its brahmanic core as the original and pure Aryan spirituality. All through the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century, the orientalist of Europe tend to celebrate Hindu religiosity as the best alive form of religious wisdom for all times. Some of the Indian scholars too were happy about the appreciation of Hinduism by the European scholarly world and they made use of the European admiration for their own conservative nationalist purposes. It is in such difficult circumstances that Ambedkar set himself to deconstruct Hinduism fundamentally.

Ambedkar widely uses the term “Hindu Social Order”. The term is almost equivalent to Hindu social formation or Hindu mode of Production. It means that Hinduism is basically a sociological religion. Its ultimate aim is to construct a particular type of society and to defend it. In Hindu religion, the social question occupies a predominant role and the theme of social order is crucial in Hindu religion. The segregation of castes has been programmed in the Hindu endogamic marriage pattern too. In Ambedkar’s view, Hinduism came into existence establishing the caste system and continues to protect the caste order. Ambedkar does not hesitate to say that the caste system in the Hindus has the foundation of religion. Hindus can not destroy their castes without destroying their religion. Hinduism has programmed graded inequality into the entire social fabric of the Hindus. Hinduism infuses hatred and suspicion among its members. Hinduism serves the interests of one particular class, the Brahmins, and the Brahmanic hegemony has been ramified upon all the non-brahmins. Ambedkar speaks about the Brahmin-Kshatriya alliance that had successfully worked all along Indian history. The Brahmin-Kshatriya alliance is the alliance of the civility with the politics of the traditional society. Ambedkar ultimately informs that Hinduism is basically immoral. This is the crux of Ambedkar’s critique of Hinduism that a sociological approach develops into a moralistic one. Ambedkar very fundamentally challenges the Hindu ideological hegemony. This has been done on the basis of the understanding of the Hindu religious hegemony operative all along in the history of India. Ambedkar sets himself to deconstruct fundamentally the Hindu ideological hegemony. Ambedkar scrutinizes the basic Hindu religious texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavat Gita, Manu Dharma and Puranas, and shows that the caste system is intact substantiated by all the Hindu scriptures.

Ambedkar builds an alternative hegemony too for the modern period. For this purpose he revives the oldest conflict of Indian history namely the contradiction between Brahmanism and Buddhism. Both Brahmanism and Buddhism are philosophies as well as sociologies that they came to compete one against the other from the most ancient days of Indian history. While Brahmanism desired a hierarchical social set up, Buddhism advocated an egalitarian and ethical order. In history, it might have happened that Brahmanism succeeded and Buddhism got defeated. But Ambedkar wants the old fight to be replayed now. This is a strategy of deconstruction to challenge the hegemony of the Hindu view. Ambedkar dares to problematize the moral justification of Brahmanism and

Hinduism. He proves that Hinduism does not possess a spiritual foundation not even an ethical foundation. In a sense, he asserts that Buddhism might have got defeated in the barbarian conditions of ancient India but let it be measured now in terms of the most modern yardsticks. Buddhism today, for Ambedkar, should achieve its modern hegemony against Hinduism. Marxism or the democratic ideals of French revolution would stand in support of Buddhism today. Ambedkar imagines an ideological leadership for Buddhism in terms of its egalitarian economy and sociology, ethical input, benevolent politics and humanist appeal. Buddhism must lead the new collective consciousness of the Indian people.

The Dalit politics of 20th century has a wonderful understanding of the role of intellectuals in constructing the hegemonic ideology. The Dalit intellectuals have come to capture the debates in religious themes, in literature, in history and in sociology. The debate invoked by Ayotheedasa Pandithar in the South and Ambedkar in the North between Buddhism and Hinduism is an unending one. Dalit intellectuals have been successful to enter into very challenging constructions of history from the most ancient days till date. Dalit writers are unbeaten in creative literature and literary criticism. The Dalits are in academia, administration, media, art and literature. The Dalit intellectual activities are hegemonic and deconstructive.

The Dalits politics desires to go beyond the spontaneity of Dalit caste consciousness and places the annihilation of caste as its agenda. The Dalit attempts to access education, jobs, literary creativity, political praxis, media, reconstruction of history and religion evidence that the Dalit program is well beyond mere construction of caste identities. Gramsci aspired that the subalterns should transcend their economic spontaneity, common sense and folklore and reach out to the hegemonic phase consciously placing the program of social transformation. It has to be asserted that the Dalit praxis is very much similar to the program aspired by Antonio Gramsci.

3.8 LIMITS OF APPLICABILITY OF GRAMSCIAN CONCEPTS

At this level of discussion one has to ponder upon the limits of the applicability of the Gramscian concepts to the Dalit politics. Gramsci's usage of the terms of civil society, war of position, hegemony etc are said to be characteristic of western society where, according to some of analysts, the civil consciousness is developed. According to the same scholars, the civil society is sounder than the political society in the western countries. The civil realm in the western society accommodates rational ways of discussion, human rights, media activism, a sense of justice, peaceful ways of mediation, consent and consensus etc that Gramsci decided to address the civil society. In Gramscian terms, the political society is aggressive and coercive whereas the civil society is based on psychological persuasion and consent.

It is at this point, one has to differ in the applicability of the Gramscian concept to Indian conditions. Although Ambedkar speaks about a civil society that is more efficient and practical than the political society, he did not mean that the Indian civil society is less coercive in terms of practicing the caste rules. On the other hand, it has to be specially noted that the caste practice at the civil societal level

in India is more aggressive and coercive than it is at the political level. The Indian civil society is thoroughly permeated by aggressive caste practices. Reason, logic, discussions, media activism, social ideals, religiosity etc miserably fail in front of the caste practices of Indian civil society. Here the civil society is not consent-based as it was conceived by Antonio Gramsci.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Apply the concept of Civil Society to Dalit situation in India

2) Apply the concept of Hegemony to Dalit Politics in India

3.9

LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to get introduced to the life and activities of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci had a difficult life, however he dedicated his prison years to introduce new categories of thought pertinent to the social reality of his own country. During the course, we have got introduced to the major concepts of Antonio Gramsci namely civil society, hegemony, subalterns etc. The role of intellectuals to mediate the working class and the subaltern masses to construct a collective consciousness too was elucidated in the unit.

A comparison of Gramsci and Ambedkar was undertaken in the unit to identify the applicability of Gramscian concepts to Indian reality. Concepts of civil society, hegemony and subalterns were studied from the perspective of Dalit situation in India and Dalit politics. The unit shows that the Gramscian concepts exhibit dialectical flexibility and come near to Ambedkarian approach to the study and understanding of Indian society. Towards the end of the unit certain limits in the applicability of Gramscian concepts are indicated.

44

3.10 KEY WORDS

- Dialectics** : Dialectics is a philosophical trend that advocates flexible transformations between rigid standpoints. Dialectics as such is against any fixed unchangeable severity. It is a philosophy of change, interrelations and interconnectedness, mutual influences and elastic transformations.
- Civil Society** : By Civil Society, Gramsci understands the social institutions such as education, ideology, family and religion that fundamentally influence the psyche and minds of the people and thus the private world of the people. According to Gramsci, the Civil Society is more powerful and proficient than the Political Society in terms of practical efficacy. In the Civil Society, not merely the objective structure of economy is active but also the subjective moments of belief, ideology and consent of the people prevail. In the Civil Society, the economic relations objectively and the consciousness (including the false consciousness) subjectively are operative.
- Hegemony** : For Gramsci, hegemony is not a tactical alliance but a real alliance of social groups mediated by the progressive intellectuals to make it almost equivalent to a national collective will for a social revolution. Hegemony is less political and more ideological in Gramsci. The hegemony should act as a moral force of justice, even as the spirit of the national.

3.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Ambedkar, B.R. *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*. Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1982-1992

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991

Omvedt, Gail. *Buddhism in India Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*. New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2005

Salamini, Leonardo. *The Sociology of Political Praxis: An Introduction to Gramsci's Theory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981

3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Gramsci refuses to take up Marxism as a pure economic theory. Neither he understands Marxism as a theory that stands upon any economic determinism. On the other hand, his philosophical standpoint is that the

strong point of Marxism is its dialectics. Gramsci revived the core status of dialectics in Marxist philosophy. He rejuvenated the dialectics of economic politics and cultural politics, the dialectics of objectivity and subjectivity and the dialectics of political society and civil society in Marxism.

- 2) By Civil Society, Gramsci understands the social institutions such as education, ideology, family and religion that fundamentally influence the psyche and minds of the people and thus the private world of the people. According to Gramsci, the Civil Society is more powerful and proficient than the Political Society in terms of practical efficacy. In the Civil Society, not merely the objective structure of economy is active but also the subjective moments of belief, ideology and consent of the people prevail. In the Civil Society, the economic relations objectively and the consciousness (including the false consciousness) subjectively are operative.
- 3) For Gramsci, hegemony is not a tactical alliance but a real alliance of social groups mediated by the progressive intellectuals to make it almost equivalent to a national collective will for a social revolution. Hegemony is less political and more ideological in Gramsci. The hegemony should act as a moral force of justice, even as the spirit of the national.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) The Dalit politics in India actually flexibly moves into the realms of economy, politics, religion, ideology and culture. It is a dialectical process. The Dalit approach does not take anything deterministic and it is not in search of any determinant at all. On the other hand, it starts from the civil phenomenon of caste practices, elastically moves into its Hindu religious realm, further deals the political proportions of the caste system and finally explores the economic ramifications of the caste system. The Dalit approach, thus, is comprehensive and devoid of determinism, and it seeks the rectification of the problem too in a comprehensive manner. Ambedkar is the classical exponent of this approach. It is here Gramsci is relevant to the Dalits.
- 2) Ambedkar is one among the first to understand the hegemonic role of ideology, specifically the Hindu ideology, in founding and maintaining the caste system. Ambedkar has entered into the evaluation of Hinduism when many European orientalist were reverting to Hinduism and its brahmanic core as the original and pure Aryan spirituality. As well as Ambedkar builds an alternative hegemony too for the modern period. For this purpose he revives the oldest conflict of Indian history namely the contradiction between Brahmanism and Buddhism. The Dalit politics of 20th century has a wonderful understanding of the role of intellectuals in constructing the hegemonic ideology. The Dalit intellectuals have come to capture the debates in religious themes, in literature, in history and in sociology.