

# CONTRIBUTION OF MARX & GANDHI IN EVOLUTION OF POST DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

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## **Abstract**

*The article presents the emergence of Post Development ideas way back to Marx and Gandhi. Though Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels presented their ideas on Capitalism and its exploitation in the early phase of industrial revolution, they recognized that this phase will be ruthless but is a temporary phase and will be eventually overthrown by communism, while Gandhi who saw the industrialization at its peak in 1909 and criticized such way of development and predicted that there's no looking back, if humanity follows the same path. Gandhi still had a hope that the traditional societies like India won't be gripped by such form of modernization. Eventually, the post-development theorists like Ivan Illich, Ashish Nandi and Andre Gunder Frank professed that the world has now become highly unequal, homogenized and was in grip of capitalism. However, unlike Marx, Gandhi and subsequent Post-development theorists do not put their trust in a single solution for the entire world.*

Karl Marx saw the modern bourgeois led development as a natural progression from feudal society. According to him the “epoch of the bourgeoisie” has emerged due to class antagonisms of serfs and feudal lords of preceding feudal society. However, the class antagonism doesn't fade away with the emergence of bourgeois society but gets consolidated. The clear class division between bourgeois- who control all the means of production and the proletarians- who don't possess any means of production except the labour of their bodies creates a conducive situation for proletarian revolution (Marx & Engels, 1888).

Marx realizes that modern capitalist society is exploiting raw material from the remotest corner of the world for their profit and is homogenising the world. This has been made possible due to the development of modern means of communication and transport. However, he projects this development as inevitable and necessary condition for the proletarian revolution. He predicts a revolution where proletarians of the entire world will come together as they will be able to identify the commonness among themselves and their common enemy i.e. bourgeois class. The proletarians will violently overthrow the bourgeois from their position of power and establish a proletarian led communist society which will mark the end of class antagonism (Marx & Engels, 1888)

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Like Hegel, Marx also saw history as a process of development which progresses to the better. Ideas of a theorist like Marx and Hegel form the basis of development theory that emerged post-Bretton Wood arrangement. However, the USA government wanted to use the idea of developmentalism in such a way that the spread of communism can be contained in newly decolonized nations. This was the reason that developmental theorist avoided acknowledging the theoretical base of development provided by Marx and others and prefer to equate developmentalism with modernism (Leys, 1996). The modernist theorist like Daniel Lerner emphasized the need for the development of the capitalist mode of the industrial economic system to promote material growth in traditional societies. According to them the traditional belief and practices are the main hindrance in the growth of the capitalist industrial economy (Lerner, 1999).

The development theory put the responsibility for the economic growth of countries on specific states by using the instrument of macroeconomic policies. The international monetary agencies like USAID and the World Bank provided expert knowledge and financial support to the third world countries to modernize themselves and achieve industrial growth (Leys, 1996).

However, by early 1970s the shortcomings of development theory got exposed. It not only failed in delivering the promised result of industrial development in third world countries but question against her intention behind homogenizing the world also started rising in the academic circle. The aggression of the US on Vietnam and her involvement against other communist ventures further exposed her intention of establishing absolute hegemony in the disguise of the humanitarian mission of development. These incidences combined with massive student uprising of the late 1960s gave prominence to post-structuralist and counter development theories like dependency theory and post-development theory to understand the situation of third world countries (Routray, 2015).

The post-development theorists are critical of the very idea of 'development'. According to them the idea of development is a post World War Two invention which has branded entire Global South or non-western countries as 'underdeveloped' at once (Ziai, 2012). The proponent of development emphasizes on the need of material progress in third world countries. However, the post-development theorists claim that it is a mechanism to create a western-centric world order where every country will be expected to follow the footsteps of industrialized capitalist countries by denouncing the countless way of livings embedded in their respective cultures. It will increase the demand for Western institutions, experts, technologies and products

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which will finally help in the economic expansion of only Western countries (Illich, *Development as Planned Poverty*, 1997).

Modernization mission has not only acted as a moral ground for developmentalism but also for colonial imperialism. According to Ashish Nandy, military might and technological superiority were not as much responsible for the success of modern colonialism as its “ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order.” These hierarchies promised a just and equal world in which many critical minds of Europe and East put their faith. They believed that modern institutions brought by colonialism will infuse rationality and critical thinking spirit of the West into the Non-Western world (Nandi, 1997). This line of thinking was not different from the idea of Marx who saw history as a progression towards the betterment. Before the emergence of M.K Gandhi in world’s political sphere in early 20th century, there was a general agreement among both political leaders and scholars that the effect of colonial imperialism may be bad for the present but it is also creating a ground for the greater good which will be realized in future. Many Indians were in believe that British colonialism has brought a superior form of political and economic organization and the road to India’s salvation is in the direction of becoming more like their colonial masters (Nandi, 1997).

Gandhi was among the first voices who challenged the ethical ground of colonialism i.e. modernisation and rejected the world view which celebrates homogeneity. Like Marx, he rationally analyzed the effect of capitalist industrial society which is always eager to exploit resources from the remotest corner of the world for profit. However, he rejected the idea of historical progression and belief that current exploitation will bring the cumulative benefit of an equal and just society to humanity in future.

In his first published work that is *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi warns that if we will set our hearts after machines, “we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre.” He suggests that “we should only do what we could with our hands and feet” (Gandhi, 1909).

Gandhi prophesized the ill effects of the ‘civilization’ based on modern capitalist industrialization way back at the beginning of the 20th century. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi warns against the institutions which are considered as modern emblems of development like railway, lawyers and doctors. According to him, these institutions are the basic reasons for the impoverishment of India and if “we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined.” He claims that it is the railway which allowed Britishers to make the hold on India so strong. For doctors, he writes that they promote consumption and excessive attachment towards life even when a person is on death bed (Gandhi, 1909).

Post-Development theorist who emerged in the 1970s seems to draw a lot from the work of Gandhi. We can find astonishing similarities in the works of Ivan Illich, who is considered as one of the pioneers of Post-Development theory. Ivan Illich in his essay, *Development as planned poverty* seems to resonate with the ideas proposed by Gandhi. He claims that we have become prisoners of our institutions. According to him factories, news media, hospitals, government, and schools are like “prepackaged solutions” which capitalist industrialized nation sells to poor nations in the name of development. He argues that these “packaged deal” benefits only a thin section of the society at the cost of the majority. It creates ‘underdevelopment’ in third world country which is nothing but a state of mind by which the producers of this ‘underdevelopment’ that are western countries control the economy of third world countries for their own benefit. According to Illich, underdevelopment occurs when “mass needs are converted to the demand for new brands of packaged solutions which are forever beyond the reach of the majority” (Illich, *Development as Planned Poverty*, 1997).

Illich illustrates his idea on modern medical establishment in his book, *Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis- The Expropriation of Health*, in detail. The book opens with the sentence that, “the medical establishment has become a major threat to health.” In the book, he argues that modern hospitals have devoid people from their autonomy over their body, life, and death (Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*, 1975).

Like Gandhi in ‘Hind Swaraj’, Illich in his essay, ‘Development as planned poverty’ raises the question on the entire model of capitalist industrialized society. Apart from the modern medical system, transportation, government and newsmedia he also raises the question on the modern education system. Illich argues that schools indoctrinate the imagination of the entire population of a society to make society believe that formal education can be provided only under the institution of school. This “schooling” of imagination provides the moral ground to legalize the taxing of the entire population to educate children of the rich in society (Illich, *Development as Planned Poverty*, 1997). In his book ‘*Deschooling Society*’ Ivan Illich makes a strong attack on the modern education system. He argues that the modern education system doesn’t promote true learning and it is impossible to provide universal education through this system (Illich, *Deschooling Society*, 1983).

Gandhi was also against the modern school system which promotes industrialization and urbanization. His long contemplation on alternative education consummates into his article in *Harijan* on 31 July 1937 as the Idea of *Nai Talim*. The Gandhian idea of education says that education and work are not separate. Modern schooling system alienates children from different

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productive work and is limited for preparing themselves for examinations (Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, 1947).

In conclusion, I will say that both Gandhi and Ivan Illich are highlighting the contradictions in the very structure of capitalist industrialized society and prophesying the self-destruction of this superstructure because of these contradictions. In prophesying this, both are close to Marx's idea of capitalism but they are different in their solutions. While Marx sees capitalism as a natural evolution of civilization and wants change only in the ownership of means of production whereas post-development theorists like Gandhi and Illich consider capitalist industrialization unnatural and denounce the industrial mode of production and structuring of society which helps industrialization. Unlike Marx, they don't advocate for single alternatives but multiple alternatives which will be rooted in the cultures of respective societies.

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