

Chapter 2

Marxism, Neo-Marxism and Antonio Gramsci

2.1 Marxism and Neo-Marxism:

Marxism is a term given to the socio-political and economic theory proposed by Karl Marx (1818- 83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95). Marxism provides a comprehensive examination of socio-economic political developments. Karl Marx was an outspoken opponent of classical political economics and a materialistic view of history. There are several branches and schools of thought at the moment, all of which are either founded on traditional Marxism or have their own formulation governed by modern Marxist critics.

Marxism is exclusively based on Karl Marx's ideology. It is a framework for the development of an equitable society. Marxism is a political philosophy that analyses the various facets of a state in any particular country, where there is no distinction between the wealthy and the poor. It is a philosophy founded on a materialistic reading of history. "Marxism is often termed 'material criticism' because it seeks to establish a link between actual, material conditions - the economy, salary, factory conditions, profits, forms of living, population- and cultural forms (art) and abstract representations in cultural forms" (Nayar 126)

Marxism is a socio-economic theory that analyses class relations and social conflicts through a materialistic lens and views social transformation dialectically. Marx's views have been credited with inspiring socialist revolutions. His most prominent theory is materialism, which holds that religion, morality, and social structure are all based on economics. Ann B. Dobbie states Marx's argument in *Das Capital* (1867) as follows:

. . . Marx argued that history is determined by economic conditions, and he urged an end to private ownership of public utilities, transportation, and the means of production. Despite the variations and additions that occurred in the century that followed, on the whole, Marx's writings still provide the theory of economics, sociology, history, and politics called Marxism. (85)

Humankind, society, institutions, and people's mental processes have all evolved in response to the economic production and distribution of a given civilization. Economic variation has resulted in the establishment of class structure and, ultimately, class warfare and control. Marx's concepts about the class have had the most effect in this sector. He came up with the notion of class as a result of his materialistic interpretation of history and his emphasis on the dialectical unity of theory and practice.

Marx claims that in a class-based society the interest of the ruling class becomes central and they also use church, court and educational institutes to justify their ideologies in order to gain the support and agreement from the mass.

Marx argued that the state – in inegalitarian class societies – would inevitably reflect the interests of which ever class had the greatest stake in the economy. Hence it would use the material power of the state – the police and the army – above all else in order to preserve these economic rights. But he also insisted that the ruling class would also use the *Cultural* machinery of courts, Church, public education and communications system to put over ideological justifications of inequality in order to persuade the mass of the people to support the system or to neutralize potential oppositions; at the very least to ensure acquiescence. (Worsley 67- 68)

Marx and his disciples studied class not just to comprehend society but also to effect change. It was their endeavour to abolish hierarchy/subjugation in the guise of class. Despite this, he and his followers had a limited reaction and success as a result of his unification of the materialistic interpretation of history and the dialectical unity of theory and practice. Marx asserted that the ruling class monopolised art, literature, and ideology. That is, whoever controlled a society's means of production controlled the society. Marx felt that oppression is the result of social hierarchies. Pramod K Nayar in his work *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* makes a remark that;

Marx and Engels argued that the capitalist mode of production justified and naturalized itself through certain patterns of thought or ideas . . . With social structures such as education, culture and religion the oppressed classes believed that the order of inequality in society is 'natural' or 'preordained', and do not recognize that they are oppressed. This system of thought or representation that helps naturalize economic inequality and oppression is termed *Ideology* (130)

According to Mary Klages, for Marx, “. . . ideology, as part of the superstructure generated by an economic base works to justify that base; the ideologies present in a capitalist will explain, justify, and support the capitalist mode of production.” (129)

Marxist critics should identify the ideology and its activity in order to highlight both its merits and shortcomings. This approach to literature is founded on Karl Marx's ideology. Marxists considered literature as a component of the superstructure of civilization.

Literature, then, is a part of any culture's superstructure, from this perspective, and is determined, in both form and content, by the economic base. Literature

also participates in the articulation of forms of cultural ideology- novels and poems might justify or attack religious beliefs, political belief, or aesthetic ideas. Marxist Literary critics and theorists are interested in asking a range of questions about how literature functions as a site for ideology, as a part of superstructure. (Klages 129)

Marx and Engels embraced a sociological dimensional approach to textual study, which is comparable to the old historical technique. Marx and Engels added another dimension to this approach: economic means of production, which addresses how, when, and who decides on text publishing and content. Thus, a Marxist critical approach to a work must place a premium on the author's period, location, culture, and economic circumstances.

. . . Marxism expands the traditional, historical approach to literary analysis by dealing with sociological issues that concerns both the characters in a work of fiction as well as the authors and the readers. This added dimension, Marx believed, links literature and society and shows how literature reflects society and how literary texts can reveal truths about our social interactions. (Bressler 195)

Individuals are motivated by their own or borrowed ideologies (beliefs, values, and emotions). These beliefs are the result of the ruling class's creation. Ideologies are formed and propagated to the masses in a fashion that benefits the ruling elite. Marxist critics have always considered literature from any era as a creation that reflected the economy and ideas prevalent at the time.

According to Marx's Political Theory, modern workers are alienated and insecure. Additionally, the workers pay less, while a capitalist gets rich. Marx referred

to this as 'primitive accumulation', in which capitalists saw profit as their reward for discovering technology, while Marx maintains that the benefits are only achievable due to the workers' aptitude and intelligence. Marxism sought to establish a society based on shared ownership and a socialist economy devoid of private profit that benefits solely the person. Marx asserts that capitalism oppresses the proletariat, which results in revolution. According to orthodox Marxism, the human connection with society is contingent on materialistic development and its evolution over time. They were adamant that revolution would usher in a new economic structure devoid of centralised ownership.

Andre Beteille in his book *Marxism & Class Analysis* (2007) says there was a change in the constituents of society following independence in Asia, Central Europe, and Africa in the late nineteenth century, which resulted in changes in class definitions. New assessments and evidence should be introduced to demonstrate the value and character of class. Students from several fields (sociology, political science, and economics) have sought to define 'class' perfectly, but have failed. They referred to social disparity and political struggle as 'class'. It was challenging to articulate the class definition due to the uncertainty in the various sections. Class idea is critical for analysing society and being prepared to reinterpret definitions in response to shifting times. This is important in order to maintain the idea of class. Beteille asserts;

The Marxist often described their approach to society and history as the 'class approach' to indicate that they gave a kind of primacy to the analysis of classes that others did not. This does not mean that other sociologists did not deal with class, but the Marxists adopted a distinct and, on the whole, more consistent definition of it. They had only a distinct conception of class, but

also a distinct social theory and a distinct approach to political practice in which their concept of class was embedded (284).

According to Pramod. K. Nayar, Marx and Engels accepted the individual's class as a deciding factor in industrial societies. They contended that the upper class governed and controlled the working class. From a Marxist perspective;

Class, in simple terms, refers to a division within a particular society. In Marxist thought class refers to the *economic* group within a society:

- (i) A class of people controls the factory and industry (called 'means of production') and
- (ii) A class of people works in the factory. (122)

They continue by stating that the upper class controls production through factories and the working class labourers in those factories, which results in frequent conflict. "These two classes are always in conflict because the upper classes, or what Marx and Engels called the *bourgeoisie*, owned the means of production and working classes owned nothing except their labouring bodies" (122).

Throughout the twentieth century, particularly during the era of cold war (between the United States and the Soviet Union), a contrast was drawn between Marxist and Liberal sociologists. Their approach to social structure, social conflict, and social change was distinguished. Marxists used the phrase 'class approach' to refer to their approach to history and society, which placed a premium on the notion of class. This philosophy underpinned their whole approach to society and political processes. Nonetheless, their unique concepts of class, which provided them with unity and consistency, became their Achilles' heel. Their perspective developed into one that was dogmatic and impervious to factual information. ". . . Marxian approach

to class also became a source of its weakness in the long run. The approach became rigid and resistant to empirical evidence. . . ” (Beteille 284) Due to its unbending rigidity, it was unable to fight back against genuine experience. Liberal Sociologists, on the other hand, were more adaptable in their approach; they also had more variables, which paved the way for connecting the masses and explaining the relevance of class in order to examine society. “Liberal sociologists have worked with more variables and more flexible conception of class. . . ” (Beteille 284)

Marxist doctrines had a substantial impact on twentieth-century politics, society, and literature. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the political outlook became gloomy. Marxism’s fundamental goal was to fix capitalism’s faults, such as political and social disparities in society. “. . . Marxist wants to analyze social relations in order to change them, in order to alter what they see are gross injustice and inequalities created by capitalist economic relations.” (Klages 126)

Georg Lukacs (1885–1971), a Hungarian Marxist philosopher, is most known for his ‘reflection theory’, which states that a literary composition must accurately represent society. “By giving a text a close reading, these critics believe they can reveal the reality of the text and the author’s *Weltanschauung*, or worldview. It is critic’s job to show how the characters within the texts are typical of their historical, socioeconomic setting and the author’s worldview.” (Bressler 197)

Walter Benjamin examined the impact of shifting material conditions on the Earth’s way of production. He asserts that contemporary advancements and technology have obliterated the fundamental core of a piece of art. In the present day, each piece of work may be reproduced many times to the point that the original text’s essence quickly fades away. Benjamin believes that while a work of art is individual

and its effect is unique, contemporary ingenuity has prepared the path for simple duplication of the originals and also for easy accessibility.

According to Walter Benjamin's book *The work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction* (1935), art has lost its worth as a result of technology based art production. Film, sports, and other forms of mass entertainment, Benjamin contended, were developing a new type of spectator capable of critically dissecting cultural forms and making educated judgments on them. Under the pressures of mechanical replication, the aura of the work of art, distinctiveness, and authenticity declined. Numerous copies of art are made, and as a result, it loses its uniqueness. The advancement of technology has diluted the essence of an artwork. Benjamin was the first person to see “. . . that politics were being aestheticized in the contemporary era, deploying the techniques of mystification and cultural manipulation to produce media spectacles to gain mass assent to specific political candidates and groups.” (Kellner and Durham xviii)

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) well known for his epic theatre. He rejected Aristotle's concept of catharsis and “. . . argued that the audience must be forced into action and be forced to make decisions, not revel in emotions. In the hands of Brecht, the epic theatre became a tool for exposing the bourgeois ideology that had permeated the arts.” (Bressler 198)

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist critic and Mao Zeodang (1893-1976), a Chinese communist revolutionary, saw Marxism as a 'guide to action'.

The shortcomings of Marxism as prediction of the future did not really damage Marxism at all, Gramsci argued, for it was not some kind of prophecy that told you what would happen, independently of human will, as it were.

Rather, it told you what was worth striving for, and provided general outlines as how that struggle might be carried forward. It showed your place in society, identify the enemy, told you who your allies were, indicated the general line of march, and pointed out the main agencies of change and of resistance to change. (Worsley 102)

Marxism serves as the basis for Neo-Marxism. The Neo-Marxists accept Marxism's philosophy, including critical theory and psychoanalysis. Neo-Marxist thought rejects the synthesis of conventional Marxist concepts. Prominent Sociologists and Psychologists were members of the Frankfurt school. They placed a premium on philosophical and social considerations. Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer are the most notable Neo-Marxist critics. They emphasized culture, art, and philosophy. Ramesh has laid down the important views of Neo-Marxism, with regard to Literature and Culture, as follows:

- Literature may be a part of 'superstructure', but it is not a mere passive reflection of the economic base.
- It helps us to feel, and perceive the ideology from which a work of art originates.
- Culture plays a crucial role in spreading the ideology of the dominant class. But it has its own existence, and in turn influences the ideology.
- Social change is possible by creating awareness among the people about the decadence of human values by popular culture.(14)

The primary distinction between Marxism and Neo-Marxism is that Marxism placed a premium on the economic basis and superstructure, whereas Neo-Marxism placed a premium on the role of culture, religion, and politics as deciding factors and

effects on a human being's social existence. They were more concerned with the ideas and culture around a work of art when analysing it. Neo-Marxism placed equal emphasis on economic and cultural factors; it is also concerned with the politics, economics, and culture that impacted an author when he or she was creating a piece of art. Marxist literary theory analyses novels, paintings, and all other kinds of culture “ . . . it believes that cultural forms *reflect* social conditions, and the novel or film often reveals the truth about classes, class conflict and power relation within a society” (Nayar 124)

Poetry, novel, or a play, for the most part, is a work that displays the author's environment. The authors used writing to communicate their views on socio-political and economic events in their nation. By introducing a casual connection philosophy into their works, Neo-Marxism made sense of society's interactions with its culture. To comprehend society through a Marxist lens, western Marxists placed a premium on the study of culture, class consciousness, and subjectivity.

Marxism is seen as the political form of cultural theory since “(i) it links art with actual conditions within particular culture and (ii) it sees forms of art not as some special realm but intimately linked to the existing power relations within a particular culture” (Nayar 122). Marxist theory seeks to illuminate the actual socioeconomic situations, conflicts, and sufferings reflected in every piece of art, and it does so by analysing both the creator and the reader. Marxist culture is thus concerned with both the creation and consumption of cultural goods.

A Marxist approach to culture focuses on both the production and consumption of the cultural artefacts . . . it suggest that concepts and representations of beauty or ideals in literature and art are in some way

connected to material realities of economics, class relations, power and suffering. Marxism thus asks us to locate a *material* basis for culture. (Nayar 125)

Neo-Marxism began in the twentieth century as a response to Marx's ideas and to fill in the gaps left by Marx. The most influential Neo-Marxists originated from the Frankfurt school of social research at the University of Goethe in Germany. They emphasized on 'Dialectical Idealism' rather than dialectical materialism and economic determinism proposed by Karl Marx. They developed Marxist ideology by incorporating various cultural and critical theories; they also emphasized analytical, structural Marxism, which emphasised feminism and cultural studies.

One of the primary reasons for the birth of Neo-Marxism was that it was impossible for them to understand current society using classical Marxism. This resulted in the emergence of new perspectives from Neo Marxist critiques. One was the Neo-Gramscian theory or discursive analysis, and the other was analytical Marxism, which reintroduced other traditions into Marxist theory. Marx's theory was unsuitable for analysing the societies of the United States of America and Europe due to the numerous changes that occurred through time. Capitalism took on a new shape, prompting Marxist critics to develop new theories for analysing American and European society. Thus, the previous paradigm was unsuitable for analysing capitalism's new way of oppression. To examine the new capitalism, which must be practical and functional, fresh content, technique, and theory were required.

Gramsci was considered as the founder of Neo-Marxism with his Cultural Hegemony theory. Gramsci was the major influencer for the shift in Marxist mode of critical theory. Numerous critics, most notably Terry Eagleton and Frederick Jameson

from England and Edward Said from America, were influenced by Gramsci's philosophy. They claimed that literature should act in economics and politics and alter them. Literature has the potential to alter political structures and their impact on society.

Marxist critique was revived in the second half of the twentieth century, paving the way for a new non-ideological and separate work of art that emphasized literary structures and their values. In 1960, Louis Althusser, widely regarded as a Structural Marxist, argued that a society functions in two ways: through the 'Repressive State Apparatus' (RSA) and through the 'Ideological State Apparatus' (ISA) "Ideological State apparatus that include institutions and structure such as the family, religion, the media, the education system convince people of the 'correctness' of ideology by presenting it as a desirable object or idea." (Nayar 134) The term 'Repressive State Apparatus' refers to the citizens' tight obedience to the government's laws and regulations. The Ideological State Apparatus is unquestioning compliance with a set of norms and regulations promulgated by religious and educational organizations. Althusser coined the word 'Interpellation'.

Interpellation is the process of consenting to ideology, accepting it and not being aware of it. It makes the subject believe that s/he is an independent being and not a subject at all controlled by outside forces. In other words, ideology interpellates the individual as a subject but makes her/him believe s/he is a free agent (Nayar 135)

These ideologies were developed to serve the interests of the ruling elite. The working class is encouraged to think that they are expected to work according to the ideas presented by these institutions, unaware that these beliefs are indirectly

dominating them or compelling them to operate in accordance with the wishes of the ruling class.

Pierre Macherey (b.1938) maintains that every literary work contains a gap; these gaps contain hidden facts. Marxism, he asserts, seeks to unearth what has been left unsaid and to reveal the author's true meaning. A literary work should be devoid of omissions. Through his writing, the author must highlight the problems that are present in society.

Macherey declares that reading is actually a form of production and produces many meanings, not simply one. A gap exists, he asserts, between what we as readers and critics say about a text and what the work itself is saying, each being separate discourses. (Bressler 200)

Cultural theories based on mass communication began in 1950s and 1960s. Theorists started to analyze the effect of media over the mass. “. . . the concept of *culture* is central in all these theories. Media affects society because these affect how culture is created, shared, learnt and applied.”(Rai and Panna 9) There are two types of cultural theories: Firstly, microscopic (interpretive theories) focusing on the usage of media by individuals and society to adopt new form of culture and secondly, macroscopic (structural theories), focusing on the usage of media by the social elites through their wealth to exploit the media institutions. These structural theories concentrate on how the elites use media to influence the mass with their ideology in order to maintain their dominance.

There are macroscopic, structural theories which focus on how social elites use their economic power to gain control over and exploit media institution. These theories argue that elites effectively use media to propagate hegemonic culture as means of maintaining their dominant position in the social order.

These are called political economic theories because they place priority on how economic power provides a basis for ideological and political power. (Rai and Panna 9- 10)

The critics from the Frankfurt school of thought were regarded as the most significant exponents of Neo-Marxism. They critically analysed the Culture industry from a political point of view.

The Frankfurt school was one of the first neo-Marxian groups to examine the effects of mass culture and the rise of consumer society on the working classes which were to be vehicles of revolution in the classical Marxian scenario. They also analyzed the ways that the culture industries were stabilizing contemporary capitalism, and accordingly they sought new strategies for political change, agencies of social transformation, and models for human emancipation that could serve as norms of social critique and goals for political struggles. (Kellner and Durham xvii)

In the Frankfurt school of thought, there were four generations of critical ideas; the first generation critics included Max, Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, and Eric Fromm. Jürgen Habermas, Ralf Dahrendorf, Oskar Negt, and others comprise the second generation of critics.

Max Horkheimer was the director of the Frankfurt School and founded the magazine 'zeitschrift für Sozialforschung'. The inaugural issue had contributions from Leo Löwenthal and Erich Fromm. Horkheimer's Frankfurt School helpers included Pollock, Löwenthal, Adorno, Fromm, and Marcuse. They discussed a variety of subjects together. To mention a few, Fromm and Löwenthal specialized in

psychological analysis; Pollock, Grossman, and Marcuse specialised in economic history, and Löwenthal specialised in literature. Among them all, Erich Fromm was the most popular for his sociological analysis, which was elevated to prominence by Max Horkheimer.

In contrast to Benjamin, Adorno sought to expose the core cause of the deterioration of the artistic essence. Together with Max Horkheimer, he wrote *Dialectics of Enlightenment* in 1947 to explain the politics existed. Adorno and Horkheimer focused on popular culture in the article “Culture Industry: Enlightenment of Mass Deception”, a chapter from *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. “The term *culture industry* is used mainly to describe mass cultural forms. It transforms the individual from thinking and discerning individual into an unthinking consumer. The ‘culture industry’ does not want the consumer to think but to merely consume” (Nayar 143). These popular cultures are created to amuse capitalists. The core premise is to produce “. . . unthinking masses of people who accept commodified sentiments and entertainments as ‘natural’.” (Nayar 143) while popular culture provides an easy diversion from work, it really absorbs their minds and force people to rely entirely on the product. It gives a brief reprieve from reality and also diverts the populace’s attention away from the disease generated by the ruling class.

The popular culture and things are identical, with several variants of the same item. Nothing new is manufactured; rather, a tiny variant of the same product is marketed and manufactured. The popular culture has shaped the populace in such a manner that they feel that if any disaster occurs in their lives, it is due to their bad luck. Thus, it causes people to lose sight of reality and the fact that it was established by capitalists.

Jurgen Habermas (b.1929) in his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) traces the growth of culture industry, with Adorno and Horkheimer's Culture industry theory as base. He compares eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeois society with the modern society, what he calls as 'public sphere'.

Gramsci argued that the unity of prevailing groups is usually created through the state, in institutions of 'civil society' also plays a role in establishing hegemony. Civil society, in this discourse, involves institutions of the church, schooling, the media and forms of popular culture, among others. It mediates between the private sphere of personal economic interests and the family and the public authority of the state, serving as the locus of what Habermas described as "the public sphere". (Kellner 3)

Habermas states that the public is manipulated by the individual's interests and their opinions. Media plays a major role in supporting the political party, he says that the public opinion has transformed from logical debates and discussion to manufactured opinion of polls and media experts. ". . . gaint corporation have taken over the public sphere and transformed it from a site of rational debate into one manipulative consumption and passivity." (Kellner 6)

Gramsci inspired Stuart Hall, Raymond William, and Terry Eagleton in the United Kingdom, as well as Frederick Jameson in the United States. Gramsci asserts that culture is political and that in order to comprehend it, one must first comprehend its relationship to society. Raymond William focused on the function of literature in his work *Culture and Society*. According to Williams, an author is impacted by the society in which they live and a piece of art is created in reaction to that culture.

British Marxist Critic Raymond Williams (1921-1988) from the school of Western Marxism coined the term *Cultural Materialism* that “describes a theoretical blending of Marxist analysis and leftist culturalism.”(Rai and Panna 24) According to Cultural Materialism, culture is produced as the product of a community and the growth of a society. Cultural Materialists analysed the historic texts to which are used as a tool by the dominant group of people. They altered the values in the text to dominate the mass. “Cultural materialists want to bring attention to the means used by contemporary power structures like the church or state in order to disseminate ideology. For doing this, the historical context of a text and its political implications are explored. Then, on the basis of deep textual analysis, the dominant hegemonic position is made note of.” (Rai and Panna 24)

Williams in his work *Culture and Society* (1958) explores on the impact of industrial revolution which brought changes in the economic base and also ideological shift among the mass. He uses five key words; industry, democracy, class, art, and culture to examine the shift that took place from eighteenth century to nineteenth century. William establishes the relationship between literature and culture, he states culture and art forms are interrelated. “Literature and all cultural forms are intricately intertwined. Authorial ideologies, cultural and social institutions, and aesthetic forms as related to the different genres are all manifestly involved in a complex series of relationships that shape and develop each other” (Bressler 200). He exhibits that culture and art constructs the “lived experience of a person’s everyday life” by emphasizing on the symbolic nature of relationship between culture, ideology, social institution and art forms.

Terry Eagleton (b.1943) is one of the most important contemporary Neo-Marxists. His most notable works are *Criticism and Ideology* (1976), *Marxism and*

Literature Criticism (1997), *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983). Eagleton believes literature as a product of ideology and thus becomes a product of history. “Eagleton holds that literature is a product of an ideology that is itself a product of history. This ideology is a result of the actual social interactions that occur between people in definite time and location. One of the critic’s tasks is to reconstruct an author’s ideology and the author’s ideological milieu” (Bressler 201). Eagleton has critically approached the texts from different dimension using structural theories, Psychoanalytical theory, and Post Structuralism. “All of his diverse approaches to textual analysis attack the bourgeois dominance of the hegemony and advocate new revolution against such values” (Bressler 201). The main idea is to address the ruling class dominance of hegemony and bring about the new revolution for their dominant ideas.

Eagleton in his work *Criticism and Ideology* (1976) deviates from his mentor Raymond William’s “idealist epistemology and political gradualism” (Hopkins 136) and creates a new Marxist literary theory concentrating on the “semiotic approach to language and a materialist conception of history” (Hopkins 136). Eagleton understood the nature and function of ideology from Louis Althusser and Peirre Macherey and the significant role of culture used by the ruling class in maintaining power and domination from Gramsci’s theory of hegemony “Antonio Gramsci provides the theory of hegemony through which Eagleton seeks to understand the role of culture in establishing and maintaining class power and dominance.” (Hopkins 136)

A new project was proposed by British Culture studies and Frankfurt school aiming at analysing the bond of culture with Socio- economic politics, on which a culture is produced, consumed and transmitted, with Gramsci’s model of hegemony and counter-hegemony. “Employing Gramsci’s model of hegemony and counter-

hegemony, it sought to analyse “hegemonic” or ruling, social and cultural forces of domination and to seek “counter-hegemonic” forces of resistance and struggle” (Kellner 10). Stuart Hall (1932- 2014), a Jamaican-British sociologist belonging to Birmingham University proposed a theoretical approach to media in his work *The Encoding/Decoding model of communication* (1976), in which he emphasises on the message conveyed by the media and how the audience receive and decode. He states that while decoding a message audience decode the meaning perceived by them. “Hall concretizes his model with focus on how media institutions produce meaning, how they circulate, and how audiences use or decode the texts to produce meaning” (Kellner 11)

Frederick Jameson is a 1960s American Neo-Marxist whose work focuses on culture, architecture, film, and literature. He was influenced by George Lukacs and his notion of ‘reification’, which refers the relationship between human and society as inherent attribute. He asserts that human beings have been subjugated by the development of television and DVD devices. To comprehend capitalism in the current world, one must first comprehend commodification, as the majority of the modern world’s population relies on commodities to express their feelings.

Jameson’s critique of postmodernism begins with the following two fundamental assumptions as follows:

- (i) Popular and mass culture was a means of evaluating and assimilating political conditions and
- (ii) Postmodernity was a consequence of late capitalism (the age of diffused production, multinational capital, speculative finance and electronic linkages).

Proceeding from these two assumptions, Jameson argued that postmodern cultural trends and practices were cultural expressions of the deeper economic structures of new forms of capitalism. (Nayar 149)

For purposes of the current study, the researcher has chosen Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and function of intellectuals. The rationale for using Gramsci's theory is that the theoretical foundation for this study is that: Gramsci's theory is more appropriate in analysing the hidden culture-based dominance in the present scenario and in presenting a practical solution to the discrimination. His unique perspective on society and analysis can be applied to any given period of time.

2.2 Antonio Gramsci: early life and his work:

Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was an Italian philosopher of the twentieth century. He is internationally recognized for his Continental philosophy, Western Marxism, Neo-Marxism, and Marxist Humanism. He examined culture's relationship to politics. In November 1926, the Italian Fascist party under Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) imprisoned Gramsci for his communist activities in Italy. "At his trial, the public prosecutor said, 'For twenty years we must stop this brain from functioning'". Gramsci continued to write his ideas in prison, he wrote three thousand pages and it was published after his death. Gramsci was audacious in his analysis of the ruling class's rise to power between 1929 and 1935.

Antonio Gramsci was regarded as a controversial Marxist thinker, despite the fact that he was the original Marxist thinker in post Lenin period. Gramsci was passionate in Socialist Literature and Philosophy. Gramsci's brother was a socialist, which influenced him to become one himself. Throughout the First World War, he gained sufficient information about Socialism and took his inspiration from Benedetto

Croce, Vladimir Lenin, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Antonio Labriola. In 1947, his work *Prison Notebooks* was released posthumously; Henderson translated it into English in 1970. In 1970 Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith edited and translated Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* called *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, which is taken as the theoretical background for the current study.

Gramsci made one of the most significant contributions to Marxism with his brief articles on a various subjects. The following themes were discussed in the book:

- Cultural and Political role of Intellectuals.
- The Southern Questions
- The Political importance of Machiavelli
- Popular Literature
- Common sense and Folklore
- Subaltern group
- Education
- Literary Criticism
- Journalism
- Observation on Americanism and Fordism

Gramsci asserts that culture is not only a reflection of the economic foundation. He is opposed to both Traditional/Standard Marxism's Reflection theory and Post-parallel Marxism's realm theory. He never completely abandoned Marx's Infrastructure-Superstructure Schema, but he reinterpreted the fundamental concept of reflection. "He is against the traditional Marxist theory, According to Gramsci; literature participates for hegemony in society. It may help oppose oppressive

hegemony by suggesting and popularizing new types of hegemony.” (Malik and Batra 58) Gramsci’s interest towards society and culture started early in 1916 with his article *Socialism and Culture* in which he argued

‘Every revolution has been preceded by an intense cultural activity, by cultural penetration, by the penetration of ideas through the gathering of individuals, recalcitrant at first and only concerned with solving their own economic and political problems, day by day, hour by hour, without bonds of solidarity with others enduring the same conditions. . ..’(qtd in Namboodiripad and Pillai 12-13)

Gramsci says that, revolutions are all preceded by uncooperative cultural activity and depiction of ideas which exhibits the problems of one particular group without taking into account of people who are also enduring the same kind of economic and political problems. He further says that people involved in revolutions lack unity among the fellow beings. This was the first lesson learnt by Gramsci which made him to be a part of the socialist movement.

Gramsci was elected as central committee member of Italian Communist Party on 21st January 1921. During his days in Prison, Gramsci concentrated on the reasons for the defeat of communist in Italy and the victory of Fascists. The main reason he lays out is that the Italian communist failed to understand the ruling class hegemony. The ruling class rules the country with consent along with coercion, which lacked among the communist people. He further states that the communist must prove the country people that their project is in favour of them and they are the great leaders of the nation. “They had to understand hegemony- namely that the ruling class rules not merely with coercion but with consent as well; that the communists must convince the

country that their project is legitimate and that they are the authentic leaders of this national project.” (Namboodiripad and Pillai 14)

Capitalist hegemony shifted over the working class in the early twentieth century. Gramsci observed society and decided that dominance occurs with the permission of the working class; he coined the word “Hegemony” to refer to this new kind of domination. The term ‘hegemony’, which literally translates as ‘leadership or domination’, derives from the Greek word ‘egemonia’, which refers to a leader or ruler, frequently of a state other than one’s own. “Hegemony is the domination of particular sections of society by the powerful classes not necessarily through threats of violence or the law by winning their consent to be governed and dominated. Hegemony, like ideology, works less, through coercion than through consent” (Nayar 130).

Gramsci adopted this term ‘hegemony’ from Russia; although it was the political slogan of the Russian labour movement, it was not widely used in Bolsheviks party for a long time. “The term, then, was one of the most widely-used and familiar notions in the debates of the Russia labour movement before October revolution. After the revolution, it fell in relative disuse in Bolsheviks party” (Anderson 18). During his time in Moscow Gramsci learnt Russian language, and had close knowledge about the resolutions of Comintern (Communist International) founded by Lenin in 1919. Gramsci used it in his *Prison Notebooks*.

Gramsci used this concept of hegemony to examine the rules of capitalists and use it to form new Marxist intellectuals. Also he argued to expose the ideology which was used by the capitalists to subordinate the working class people. Anderson states that,

. . . the idea of hegemony acquired in Gramsci's work combined with his theoretical application of it to traditional ruling classes, to produce new Marxist theory of Intellectuals. For one of the classical function of the latter, Gramsci argued, was to mediate the hegemony of the exploiting classes over exploited classes, through the ideological systems of which they were the organizing agents. (21)

Capitalists appeal to the masses by arguing that their interest is beneficial to everyone and obtaining their agreement. The working class is led to feel that the solution they offer is the best option for them. According to John Storey,

Hegemony involves a specific kind of consensus: a social group seeks to present its own particular interests as the general interests of the society as a whole. In this sense, the concept is used to suggest a society in which, despite oppression and exploitation, there is a high degree of consensus, a large measure of social stability; a society in which subordinate groups and classes appear to actively support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meanings, which bind them to, and 'incorporate' them into, the prevailing structures of power. (Storey 80)

Hegemony, according to Raymond Williams, is a lived experience that is a constant process in modern capitalist society. Capitalists constantly alter their form of dominance, and while they never entirely coerce the populace, they ensure that their ideology is prevalent and functioning in society. Capitalists are occasionally liberal and accept certain requirements of the working class in order to reassure them that they, too, are embracing and respecting their concerns, but what they forget is that the bulk of the concepts and beliefs they adhere to belong to a single group. "A lived

hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits . . . It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified.” (*Marxism and Literature*, 112)

Gramsci studies society and asserts that the working class is coerced into accepting the capitalists’ ideas and views. While Gramsci did not entirely agree with Marx, he did accept Marx’s notion of economic foundation and superstructure. Capitalists are the determining factor and wield authority over society; as a result, it is far easier for them to persuade the masses to behave in accordance with their philosophy. The working class regards the capitalists’ views as theirs.

. . . the bourgeoisie establish and maintain what he calls hegemony, which is the assumption, values, and meanings that shape meaning and define reality for the majority of people in a given culture. Because the bourgeoisie actually control the economic base and establish all the elements that comprise the superstructure- music, literature, art and so forth- they gain the spontaneous accolades of the working class. The working people themselves give their consent to the bourgeoisie and adopt bourgeoisie values and beliefs.” (Bressler 198)

These eventually cause workers to lose sight of their own ideas, beliefs, and interests. The Bourgeoisie portrays its beliefs in such a way that there is no widespread pushback. They emphasise the positive aspects of their concept in order to get the support of working-class people. The working class community is oblivious to the larger significance. “According to Gramsci, “This shaping of people’s ideologies is, according to Gramsci, a kind of deception whereby, the majority of people forgets

about or abandons their own interests and desires and accepts the dominant values and beliefs as their own.” (Bressler 198)

The dichotomy of Civil Society and Political Society approach of Marxism was the basis for Gramsci’s civil society and political society. He gave more importance to the term civil society. He divided modern society into two levels. “The first was the *civil society* that functioned and sustained itself on the basis of general consent and mutual persuasion. Second was the *political society* or state, which functioned and sustained its power by the use of force.” (Namboodiripad and Pillai 47) Political society continued to exist with coercive power and civil society with consent.

Gramsci asserts that within the state exists a ‘civil society’ that is thoroughly organized and dominated by the bourgeoisie’s ideology. They use religious and educational institutions to influence the populace. They promote their views through a variety of cultural activities and literature: “The ‘civil society, with its structure of courts, the bureaucracy, religious and educational system spread ideology through the law, textbooks, religious rituals and norms so that the people imbibe them unaware of the ideology.” (Nayar 132)

Marx said that the bourgeoisie controls the superstructure. As with Marx, Gramsci asserts that the institutions of civil society are under the bourgeoisie’s control “The vast range of institutions that constitutes what Gramsci calls ‘Civil Society’ are also superstructural” (Jones 32). The Civil society which Gramsci observed includes political organizations, but it also includes the church, the school system, sports teams, the media, and the family. Gramsci argues in some of his uses of the phrases that the state is critical in connecting civil society to the economy, but in others, civil

society becomes a more inclusive term than this. Clearly, this model of the superstructure departs significantly from Marx's argument that it is a collection of institutions transmitting a homogeneous capitalist ideology. As it grows more ingrained in 'daily life,' it becomes increasingly difficult to discern the existence of a link between civil society and the functioning of power. (Jones 32)

Gramsci states, the term hegemony was employed by the civil society in order to maintain their constant coercion and consent of the people. Traditionally hegemony means, ". . . the domination of one country over another through physical force has been referred to as 'hegemony' in English dictionaries" (Namboodiripad and Pillai 47). The civil society was dependant on the *ideological hegemony*. From a Marxist perspective state is formed through the domination of one over the other with the use of force. But what Gramsci asserts is that though state is formed using force, it exists with the help of ideological hegemony over civil society. "Gramsci points out that though force is the basis of state, it is secured and sustained only through ruling class's ideological hegemony over civil society" (Namboodiripad and Pillai 48).

Gramsci asserts that ideas spread quickly through the institutions of civil society, influencing the masses to behave in accordance with the concept. When an institution is unable to get the agreement of working-class people, 'political society' intervenes to coerce people into accepting their ideals. At the end of the day, the bourgeoisie will put ideas into effect with or without violence.

If consent is organized through civil society, then coercion is the responsibility of what Gramsci calls *Political Society*. He defines political society at the society as the set of apparatuses which legally enforce discipline on those groups who do not give their consent during period, and which dominate the

whole of society in periods when consent has broken down. This suggests that the cultural, economic and political aspects of hegemony are, in the last instance, always underpinned by the threat of violence. (Jones 50)

According to John Storey (2008), hegemony entails a special type of consensus: a social group strives to portray its own particular goals as the general interests of the community. In this sense, the term refers to a society in which, despite oppression and exploitation, there is a high degree of consensus and a high degree of social stability; a society in which subordinate groups and classes appear to actively support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meanings that bind and ‘incorporate’ them into the prevailing power structures. (80)

Gramsci states that the organic intellectuals of the capitalist class’s task is to influence the working class, whereas Storey believes that “Hegemony is ‘organized’ by those whom Gramsci designates ‘organic intellectuals’.” (Storey 81)

Gramsci discussed about the role of intellectuals in *Prison Notebooks*. He states that each social group creates one or more intellectuals in order to maintain the groups’ activity in the socio-economic and political field. The capitalist create its own set of intellectuals for different departments.

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which gives it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in economic but also in social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneurs create alongside

himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizer of a new culture, of new legal system etc. (Gramsci 5)

Andrea Sau explains the role of intellectuals played in civil society:

“Intellectuals have various functions. *Their role as organizer and educators is their only common features.* They often act as ‘middle-men’ between different groups” (A *Marxist Theory of Ideology* 164). Gramsci divides intellectual into two categories in his *Prison Notebooks*: traditional and organic;

. . . “traditional” professional intellectuals, literary, scientific and so on . . .
 “organic” Intellectuals, the thinking and the organizing element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong. (131)

Gramsci argues that everyone in this world is an intellectuals but not all function of being an intellectual favoring society’s growth “All men are intellectuals one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.”
 (9)

Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a “philosopher”, an artist, a man of taste, he participate in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought. (9)

The above passage summarizes that every person apart from his profession, hold a special interests and holds individual ideology about the world, and possess unique values to encourage the people with new mode of thoughts.

Gramsci notes that capitalists foster a 'common sense' that benefits them. This common sense is passed down to and practiced by the working class. Thus, he proposes that a new common sense be developed that is applicable to everyone, regardless of class;

Gramsci notes that a working person may have two theoretical consciousnesses: one implicit within the labour that is performed and another that has been inherited from the past and which influences their moral conduct. The institutions of civil society must therefore try to reshape themselves in order to accommodate the uneven and multiple forms of common sense. (Jones 54)

Steve Jones quotes from Gramsci's work to illustrate the solution Gramsci seeks to bring forth for dominance. To overturn capitalism, workers must cease thinking of themselves just as workers and instead "They must think as who are members of a class which aims to lead the peasants and intellectuals. Of a class which can win and build socialism only if it is aided and followed by the great majority of these social strata" (Jones 45). To liberate itself from exploitation, the working class must appear and behave similarly to the bourgeoisie; revolution or the formation of councils will not result in total liberation from capitalist domination. "If the union of two forces is necessary in order to defeat third order, a recourse to arms and coercion (even supposing that these are available) can be nothing more than methodological hypothesis; the only concrete possibility is compromise" (Gramsci 384)

Only if the working class people willingly become an organic intellectual for their class and promote their ideas and ideals will freedom be attained. Gramsci says that the only way to adequately bridge the divide between leaders and followers is for the intellectuals to be organic to those they teach and convince. Steve (2006) says “The only way, he argues, in which the gap between leaders and lead can properly be bridged is if intellectuals are themselves organic to those they educate and persuade” (Steve 55). He also emphasizes the fact that organic intellectuals of the working class must form their ideas by consent rather than by pushing their beliefs on the masses: “. . . intellectuals must shape their world through consent rather than though imposing their ideas.” (Steve, 83-84). Gramsci adapted Lenin’s concept.

Lenin asked all working-class people worldwide to convene and establish a council to organize a rebellion against capitalist authority. Gramsci did not totally accept his theory, but he believed that developing a counter-hegemonic act against capitalist power was necessary and practicable in modern society.

What Gramsci took from Lenin was primarily the notion that the intellectuals, the working class and the peasantry need to be fused in some way. For that to be successful in the long term, the working class must develop its own theoreticians, to whom he gives the name *organic* intellectuals. (Steve 83)

Thus, capitalists have altered their mode of oppression; they now influence working-class people through religious, educational, and other institutions, all aided by organic intellectuals.

2.3 Summation

To sum up, in this chapter the researcher has explored the rise of Marxism and Neo-Marxism. Also, examined in detail about Antonio Gramsci's his early life, motivation, and his ideology towards the society. Gramsci was the first person to think diversely from traditional Marxism in that way he influenced the later Marxists who are collectively called as Neo-Marxists, Culture theorists and Post Marxists critics. Gramsci's theories become the base for the rise new perspectives in the realm of Marxism which is called Neo-Marxism. Neo-Marxist analysed the new mode capitalism under the influence of media with their new Marxist cultural theories embedded with other literary theories such as psychoanalyst theories, structuralism etc. The second part of this chapter explores on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, role of intellectuals and civil society. Through his theory it is evident that the ideological hegemony is the new mode of capitalism. Thus, uprisings alone will not put an end to exploitation; individuals must develop into organic intellectuals within their own class and spread the ideas, beliefs, and values essential to overcome capitalism.

Gramsci concentrated on the society and the culture that shaped the society. He states that domination happens with the consent of people with ideological hegemony. Such kind of domination is established in the contemporary retellings of Mahabharata. Though the retellings of Mahabharata are set in ancient period, the contemporary authors have used epic to address present social issues and the hegemony through the Mahabharata characters and events. A new way of viewing the epic paved way for new way of analysing and bring out the societal issues and concerns.

The following chapter 3 “Select Retellings of Mahabharata – a Critical analysis” elaborates on the need for retelling an epic along with the summary and critical analysis of the primary texts chosen for study. It traces the variations in the language, character, title, events in the four retellings of Mahabharata (*Jaya: an Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata*, *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*, *Karna’s Wife: an Outcast’s Queen*, *Shakuni Master of the Game*). The chapter also highlights the change of perspective that paved for an analytical study of the retellings of Mahabharata in the light of Neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s theory.