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Section—I

20 Marks Questions - 500-600 words Each

Q. - Explain Marx's theory of surplus value.

ANS.- Karl Marx's theory of surplus value is one of the central concepts in his critique of political economy. It forms the foundation of his analysis of capitalist exploitation and the dynamics of capitalist production. Marx introduced this theory in *Das Kapital* to explain how capitalists generate profit by exploiting labor. The theory rests on the distinction between labor power and labor, the value of commodities, and the extraction of surplus value.

Labor and Value

According to Marx, the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor time required for its production. Labor is the source of all value. However, labor power—the capacity of the worker to work—is itself a commodity under capitalism. Workers sell their labor power to capitalists for a wage. The wage represents the value necessary to sustain the worker's life and allow them to continue working, i.e., the value of labor power. Importantly, the value created by a worker in a given working day exceeds the value of their wage.

Creation of Surplus Value

Marx distinguishes between **necessary labor** and **surplus labor**. Necessary labor is the portion of the working day during which a worker produces value equivalent to their wage. Surplus labor is the portion of labor performed beyond that, generating surplus value for the capitalist. For instance, if a worker produces goods worth 100 units in a day, but their wage corresponds to only 40 units of value, the remaining 60 units constitute surplus value, which is appropriated by the capitalist.

Forms of Surplus Value

Marx identifies two main methods by which capitalists increase surplus value: **absolute surplus value** and **relative surplus value**. Absolute surplus value is achieved by extending the working day. By making workers labor longer without increasing wages, the capitalist extracts more surplus labor. Relative surplus value is generated by increasing labor productivity, often through technological advancements or improved work organization. If workers produce more value in the same amount of time, the proportion of surplus labor rises relative to necessary labor, increasing surplus value without extending the working day.

Exploitation in Capitalism

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The theory of surplus value highlights the exploitative nature of capitalism. Workers receive wages equivalent only to the value of their labor power, while capitalists appropriate the excess value created. This exploitation is systemic and forms the basis of capitalist profit. Marx argues that this structural inequality leads to class conflict, as the interests of the capitalist class and the working class are inherently opposed.

Significance of the Theory

Marx's theory of surplus value provides a critical explanation of how profit originates in capitalist economies. It challenges the classical economic notion that profit arises from trade or capital investment alone. Instead, profit emerges from the extraction of unpaid labor, making exploitation central to the capitalist system. The theory also lays the groundwork for Marx's broader critique of capitalism and his vision of a classless society

Q. - Explain the concept of 'negative liberty' with reference to the writings of Isaiah Berlin.

ANS.- Isaiah Berlin, one of the most influential political philosophers of the 20th century, is widely known for his distinction between **"negative" and "positive" liberty**. In his seminal essay, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1958), Berlin elaborates on the idea of negative liberty, which has since become a cornerstone in liberal political thought.

Definition of Negative Liberty

Negative liberty, according to Berlin, refers to the **absence of external constraints or interference** by others, particularly by the state, in an individual's actions. In other words, a person is considered free to the extent that no one prevents or obstructs their choices. It focuses on **non-interference** as the essential condition for freedom. Berlin emphasizes that negative liberty does not concern itself with an individual's abilities, desires, or rational capacities; it is purely about the space in which one can act without obstruction.

Key Features of Negative Liberty

1. **Freedom from Interference:** The core principle of negative liberty is that individuals should be free from coercion, oppression, or arbitrary authority. For example, laws that prohibit someone from expressing their opinions or practicing their religion infringe upon their negative liberty.
2. **External Constraints:** Berlin stresses that freedom is limited only by external obstacles, not by personal weaknesses or lack of resources. The freedom of speech is meaningful even if an individual lacks the skill to articulate their thoughts effectively; what matters is that society does not prevent them from speaking.
3. **Impersonal Nature of Freedom:** Negative liberty is primarily concerned with **the relationship between the individual and society or authority**, rather than with self-mastery or personal development. It defines freedom in terms of the **boundaries set by others**, not internal self-fulfillment.

Examples of Negative Liberty

A classic example is freedom of movement. If no government or person physically stops someone from traveling, that individual enjoys negative liberty. Similarly, in a liberal democracy, citizens have negative liberty when they are legally free to participate in elections, speak, or assemble without interference from the state.

Significance and Implications

Berlin argues that negative liberty is essential for protecting individuals from authoritarianism and tyranny. By limiting the power of the state and others, negative liberty provides a framework for personal autonomy and civil liberties. It underpins modern liberal thought, including constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, religion, and assembly.

Critical Observation

While Berlin appreciates the clarity of negative liberty, he cautions that it can be **misinterpreted or overstretched**. An exclusive focus on non-interference may ignore social, economic, and structural inequalities that hinder genuine

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freedom. This critique paved the way for discussions on positive liberty, which emphasizes self-realization and the capacity to act in one's true interests.

In conclusion, Isaiah Berlin's concept of negative liberty is a foundational idea in political philosophy. By defining freedom as **absence of external constraints**, Berlin highlights the importance of limiting coercion and protecting individual autonomy. While it is not without limitations, negative liberty remains crucial for understanding the rights and protections essential to a free society.

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Q. - Discuss Levi-Strauss' idea of social relations.

ANS.- Claude Lévi-Strauss, the French anthropologist and ethnologist, is widely regarded as the founder of structural anthropology. His work emphasized understanding the underlying structures that govern human societies and social relations, rather than merely describing observable behaviors. Lévi-Strauss' idea of social relations is deeply rooted in his structuralist approach, which analyzes the human mind and culture through binary oppositions and the universal patterns of thought.

At the core of Lévi-Strauss' understanding of social relations is the concept of **kinship systems**. He argued that kinship is a fundamental framework through which human beings organize their social world. Kinship rules, particularly those governing marriage, descent, and alliance, are not arbitrary but reflect the deep structure of human thought. He emphasized that these rules function to establish relationships, regulate behavior, and ensure social cohesion within communities. Marriage, for instance, is a key social institution that connects different kin groups, forming alliances that extend social networks and maintain societal balance.

Lévi-Strauss introduced the **"Alliance Theory"**, which shifted the focus from descent-based structures (like family lineage) to the importance of exchange in creating social bonds. According to this theory, social relations are primarily built through the exchange of women in marriage between kin groups. This "reciprocal exchange" is crucial for forming alliances, resolving conflicts, and integrating communities. The theory underlines that social relationships are not just personal or emotional connections but also structural mechanisms that maintain the social order.

Another significant aspect of Lévi-Strauss' idea of social relations is the concept of **binary oppositions**. He believed that human thought operates through contrasts such as raw/cooked, nature/culture, and male/female. These oppositions are reflected in myths, rituals, and cultural practices, including social organization. By analyzing these opposites, Lévi-Strauss showed that social relations are embedded in symbolic structures, which shape perceptions, norms, and interactions. The mind categorizes social life in terms of relationships and differences, highlighting patterns that are universal across cultures.

Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss viewed **mythology and cultural narratives** as expressions of social relations. Myths, according to him, encode social norms and collective wisdom, providing models for interaction and conflict resolution. By studying myths comparatively, he demonstrated that despite cultural diversity, underlying social structures often follow similar patterns, revealing the universal logic of human societies.

In conclusion, Lévi-Strauss' idea of social relations emphasizes that human interactions are structured, patterned, and deeply rooted in both kinship and symbolic logic. Social bonds, particularly through marriage and alliance, are central to

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maintaining societal stability. His structuralist approach shifted the study of society from observable behaviors to the underlying mental frameworks and universal principles governing human relations. Thus, for Lévi-Strauss, understanding social relations requires examining the hidden structures that shape human thought, culture, and social organization.

Q. - Is reality socially constructed ? Discuss with reference to the viewpoint of Berger and Luckman.

ANS.- Is Reality Socially Constructed? – The Perspective of Berger and Luckmann

The concept of reality has long been debated in sociology and philosophy. One influential perspective is that reality is **socially constructed**, meaning that our understanding of the world is shaped not just by objective facts but through social processes, interactions, and shared meanings. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in their seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), provide a systematic framework for understanding this idea.

Berger and Luckmann argue that reality is not purely objective or independent of human perception. Instead, reality is **produced, maintained, and altered through social interaction**. They distinguish between two forms of reality: the **objective reality** that exists independently of humans and the **subjective reality** experienced and interpreted by individuals. Social reality emerges when individuals collectively define and institutionalize meanings, making them appear "natural" and unquestionable. For example, concepts such as money, marriage, or education gain significance not because of inherent qualities but because society collectively agrees upon their meaning and functions.

The process of social construction, according to Berger and Luckmann, occurs through three interrelated stages: **externalization, objectivation, and internalization**.

1. **Externalization** refers to the creative process by which humans project their thoughts, ideas, and actions into the world. Through activities such as communication, writing, and cultural production, individuals shape their environment and social practices.
2. **Objectivation** occurs when these human-created norms and institutions take on a reality of their own. They become independent of the creators' control, acquiring an existence that seems objective and self-evident. For instance, legal systems, religious doctrines, or social roles appear as objective realities that guide behavior, even though they originate from human interaction.
3. **Internalization** is the process by which individuals learn and accept these socially constructed realities. Through socialization, people internalize norms, values, and expectations, making them part of their worldview. This internalization ensures that social structures persist across generations.

Berger and Luckmann emphasize that this cycle of construction and internalization is **continuous and dynamic**. Reality is not fixed; it evolves as social interactions and cultural interpretations change. Social institutions, norms, and knowledge systems are maintained only as long as people collectively recognize and reproduce them.

However, their theory does not suggest that all aspects of reality are socially constructed. Physical phenomena, such as gravity, exist independently of human perception. Yet, the meaning we assign to these phenomena—for example, categorizing certain illnesses or defining risk—remains socially mediated.

In conclusion, Berger and Luckmann convincingly argue that much of what we experience as "reality" is socially constructed. Social interaction, shared meanings, and institutionalization shape our perception of the world, giving structure and order to human life. Understanding reality as socially constructed encourages sociologists to explore how norms, knowledge, and institutions are created, maintained, and transformed over time. Reality, therefore, is not a fixed entity but a collective achievement continuously reproduced through social life.

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