

## Karl Marx's echo in Ambedkar

From driverless cars to smart speakers, ieDecode demystifies new technology

On May 5, 1818, Karl Marx was born. Today, the world reaches and celebrates the bicentennial Marx's Birth. "Happy Birthday, Karl Marx. You were right," wrote Jason Barker, the author of the novel, *Marx Returns*, in *The New York Times* on April 30.

Barker has underlined that "today the legacy (the philosophical legacy of Marx) would appear to be alive and well. Since the turn of the millennium, countless books have appeared, from scholarly works to popular biographies, broadly endorsing Marx's reading of capitalism and its enduring relevance to our neo-liberal age".

The celebration of the birth of Marx is indeed a celebration of a new consciousness. During these 200 years Marx, along with his close comrade-in-arms, Friedrich Engels stood for an idea, an ideology and a science of a new human being, of a new social order and a new world.

The Marxian doctrine of philosophical materialism, dialectics, the materialist conception of history, the class struggle, surplus value and scientific socialism, have abiding significance for our times. This time is marked by new forms of oppression and exploitation and new and intense movements against hegemony and dominance arising out of altered methods of production for unchaining humanity from all kinds of enslavements and exploitations.

The Marxian doctrine is not a dogma — it is always a doctrine for action. Marx, who experimented with the philosophies of Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach, formulated his position way back in 1845 that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the point is to change it".

The change and transformation of the social, economic and political order are not possible without a revolutionary process of critiquing the system, which often remains immune to interrogation and acquires a strange resistance to criticism. The capitalist mode of production transitioning to new levels because of advances in technology and electronics and getting irreversibly tracked on the lines of Fourth Industrial Revolution, driven by robotics and artificial intelligence, would cause major upheavals across the world. The existing levels of deprivation and inequality might get exacerbated and give rise to the domination and exploitation of those who would not be beneficiaries of the order. This challenge can be met by critiquing the present system, which has deepened inequality and intensified the levels of poverty and deprivation.

Marx had talked about the new conditions of oppression and new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. How right he was indeed in outlining the emerging world order in the middle of the 19th century. Now we have new forms of oppression against women, marginalised sections of society, farmers and the labour class across the world. In the context of environmental movements assuming enormous importance in fighting for the ecological rights of people, it is important to recall what Marx had written about the "subjection of nature's forces to man, machinery". It thus assumes significance in the present day quest for sustainable development.

The growing consciousness of gender equality and women's empowerment has brought women's issues to the centrestage of development and progress. It is instructive to note that Marx, along with Engels, had predicted that communism would do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production. This is of abiding significance to address the rising trend of violence and discrimination against women and girl children in our country and across the world.

The degeneration and dehumanisation caused by capitalist society has been best reflected in the Communist Manifesto: "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers." In the neoliberal era, this has become a poignant reality. The alienation suffered by the humans and the dehumanisation process has robbed the essence of human beings, irrespective of the profession they pursue. The need to salvage the humanity and restore the human essence rests on the robust questioning of the system which has been tragically manifested in the high levels of inequality of income. This phenomenon has been studied by scholars such as Thomas Pickety, whose book *Capital in Twenty-First Century* has been deeply influenced by Marx's methods of analysis and explanation.

B R Ambedkar, who wrote *Buddha or Karl Marx*, championed the cause of social justice and annihilation of caste in Indian society. The vision of Ambedkar is not different from the vision of Karl Marx.

No wonder, therefore, that the 200th birth anniversary Karl Marx is being hailed in the bastions of capitalism and in the theatres of struggles all over the world. His legacy will endure and inspire human beings striving for their ultimate liberation from all forms of exploitation and enslavement.

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