

Production of ideological hegemony and social changes

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Abstract

This paper mainly discusses the process of evolution of a popular ideology in the society and how to establish its hegemony. This paper will also make an attempt to analyse the forces which imposes ideology; and how the established ideological hegemony could be challenged and can bring the fundamental changes in the societal functioning. This paper argue that It is the control over the resources, and others means of production by certain section of the society (ruling class) provide them institutional power (school, judiciary, ministry, hospital, etc.) to them to exercise, decide and structure various code of conduct, ethics, morality and knowledge system in the society.

Keywords: hegemony, ideology, ruling class, Marxian, Gramscian

Introduction

Ideology has long been an important and most ambiguous and controversial concept in our repertoire. Ideology may be understood as a systematic and specific language system or symbolic order governing representation of society's hierarchy and associated authority pattern. This paper attempt to argue that ideology is a set of belief constructed under the certain political idea of dominating class or social group in the society. Ideology is not any kind of discovery or invention which exogenous to society, but it has their own materialistic basis very much. Whenever new ideology are established in the society, it does not only change the societal conversation, custom, culture and human interaction but also constitute dominated ideology of that time and established new constitute of dominating class.

Ideology refers to the set of systematic, elaborated, delimited and analogical system of thought or ideas like political ideologies or religious doctrine or better to say the ideology in certain epoch is the dominant class idea of the political ideologies and religious doctrine in that epoch and Which establish their ideological hegemony through expressing ultimate values and 'weltanschauung', which is related to the dominant class ideology. In macro-sociology Marxist, ideology is considered as a level or instance of a social formation. What we may say in broader sense ideology is the subjective dimension of social life as general consciousness among masses. So in this very broad sense production of ideology and social changes will be the topic of my discussion. Marx sometimes compared social formation with the geological formation to emphasise the continuous character of the historical process. The phenomological analysis states that subjective mind creates a subjective reality which as time goes by; turns into institution, tradition and culture and then finally acts back on the subjective minds and shape it But in this process of production of ideology question, arise whose subjective mind's subjective reality dominates the general consciousness of society. In this respect, Marx module on ideology is satisfactory and express scientific analysis of ideology. Marx say's ideology itself represent the production of an idea, conception, of consciousness, all that the people

imagine, conceive, experience, say and including such thing as law, morality, religion, metaphysics. Ideology functions as a superstructure of the real socio-economic relation in certain society.

Production of Ideology

Society is a system of representation and normative structure. Individual are the materialistic substratum of this representation it means individual are the carrier of collective representation. In Durkheim conception, collective representation is the social fact because it is real in effect, a social fact as objective, a structural element. Durkheim states the element of society; the social fact is social norms that are individual common habit, pattern of action, institution. For example, he pointed out the things like law, language, metaphor, currency system. Individual are a carrier of collective representation implies two things. One is individual in his action is forced to subject and subordinate himself to social facts. Here force in a sense that to be called normal human being in the different discourse of life in that society. This process carries on even before you born, and after birth automatically you got your subjective identity. Second is individual himself through socialisation conceive and convinced what collective representation states and also thereforee reproduce it in his action. In Durkheim famous word, society is *sui generis*. Social facts cannot be explained in term of biology, economics, physics, psychology, etc. social facts can only be explained in term of other social facts. Althusser has propounded two aspects of ideology. One is about the operation of ideology and another as one instance of social formation. According to Althusser ideology does not interpret or reflect real world but reflect the imaginary relationship of the individual in society to the real world. Althusser states that ideology has a material existence because an ideology always exists in apparatus or practice. Ideology always evident itself through in action like, in rituals, conventional behaviour and so on. The main purpose of ideology is to represent the individual as a subject of it. So, ideology is so pervasive in our daily life, in every social activity that it forms our very reality and appears as an

ultimate truth in societal conception. He has offered the structural interpretation of Marxism. He was not satisfied with the Marx concept of false consciousness. He refers ideology as a feature of consciousness. Ideology as an apparatus is a set of an institution which produces and reproduce the social state of knowledge, and he also disputed the Marxian notion that there exist an external social reality independently from ideology. Rather all the features of reality are expressed in language, and inseparable from the feature of consciousness singled out as ideology. But in my opinion, Althusser notion of ideological as a state apparatus is parallel to the Marxian concept of ideology as false consciousness. Whatever be the set of the institutions set up worked as state apparatus very much deeply diffused or under the influenced of the dominant class of the society of certain period. So these institutions are bound to propagate the ruling class idea, conscience and understanding of reality which perform in their favour and which also form the common conscience of people which obscure the actual socio-economic relation of people of that time. Marx has referred the ideological hegemony as the subordinate class 'false consciousness. The concept of 'False consciousness' derived from the Marxist philosophy of class relation or class struggle. According to this theory, the members of the subordinate class to the ruling class live under that consciousness about their material based social relations which are not correct or real. Because that consciousness is created by the dominated class of society through controlled all the means of production which conceal the real exploitation, subordination and domination of subordinate class (workers, serf, and peasant), those social relations embody. This concept refers the systematic misrepresentation of given economy based on the social relation in the consciousness of working class. Marx has given the objective theory of the class based society, based on the analysis of certain kind of production relation existing, that time in the society which constitutes the certain specific and significant social relation. A person's social class is determined by his or her position within the given production relation of society. The subjective characteristics of the people like thoughts, mental framework and identities that is the mental construct which gives the cognitive power to understand his/her position in a given economic system. In society, there is an inherent conflict of material interest between dominant class and worker (subordinate) class. The Marxist theory asserts that the social mechanism and institution emerge in such way that systematically creates the distorted, blind spot and errors in the consciousness of underclass. Marx theory of 'Ideology' is presented in *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engel [1845-49]). Marx refers ideology is the system of an idea through which people understand their world. A central view of this theory is ideology, and the thoughts are not independent of each other and are not independent of the materialistic condition under which people live rather than consciousness determining materialistic condition.

The system of ideology favours the class advantage of ruling class in society. Marx has also explained this phenomenon through the concept of commodity fetishism. Commodity fetishism destroys the real social relation exist among masses. It creates an illusion in the society. In a society, commodity is solely perceive as money equivalent rather than being understood as standing within a set of social relation of production. For example, we see only money value of a

commodity, like, when we buy the shoe in today's production system we perceive as if we are exchanging money regarding some commodity and labour goes under shoe making, and workers disappear from our imagination. We started to see in term of money which mystifies the real social relation based on domination and exploitation. In this formation of ideology, Antonio Gramsci has very extended the Marxian concept of ideology and society. Gramsci has given it more important role in politics and history than classical historical materialism. Gramsci has argued that underclass has the potential ability to influence the terms of its consciousness. Therefore there will always be conflict between the dominant class and proletariat's class over the term of representing the existing social reality and relation.

Ideological hegemony

Understanding the society and human behaviour about each other has been the persistence interest of a social scientist. Here I have attempted to discuss the myth that people act according to their own pure conscience or thought. I have also borrowed the term hegemony from Gramscian framework to bring deep insight into the dynamics of ideology, which how the ideology of any time became the common sense of society and people accepted it as a natural phenomenon and custom of society. What they called in layman term 'BE PRACTICAL'. In a given society in a given time there are many sets of thought, ideology and perception are in conflict with each other, but only certain sets of idea prevail and established their hegemony. In simple words hegemony refers to those sets of an idea which form the common sense of the masses or established as common conscience. Like when we talk about the menace or demerits or malfunctioning of neoliberal policy in current economic context and gives its measure to restructure or reform it, we still incorporate all those terminologies like perfect competition, free market, optimisation, utilitarian to form our argument against malfunction of this neoliberal phenomena. But the interesting thing is that all these malfunctionings of neoliberalism is itself the product of this conceptual framework, free market, utility maximisation, perfect competition, etc. this is what the influence of ideological hegemony.

In a Marxian sense, dominant class in the society can reinforce its material control through the successful extension of that control to the ideational arena, specifically within the institution of civil society (Marx and Engel). The most important aspects of hegemony are to suppress the alternative idea through the establishment of a different social concept like what is legitimate, true, sane, beautiful, good, practical and like, neoliberal philosophy of development is the current day's concept and truth of humanity. Gramsci describes the process of ideological hegemony in which dominant class is having basic and strong control of different economic institution and political institution which also privilege the ruling class to access primary ideological institution like culture, religion, education, morality, and communication media. This eventually forms the common sense of the masses which provide those clear notions, perception and global truth of ruling class not the real existing truth of masses and truth of their perspective. "Gramsci used the concept of hegemony to refer how basic structural characteristic of given socio-economic status which ultimately forms, provide and determine the logical life in the society. Ideological hegemony

is the network of fundamental principle and assumption created by dominant class in the society is a sense operational deduction work out. In a Gramscian sense, it is a certain way of life, habit and thought which dominate the society and carries the certain concept of reality which is successfully diffused throughout the different institution of society and private manifestation. Such power of dominant class privileged them not only inculcating their value but also able them to censorship the heterodox ideology and also able them to define a parameter of legitimate discussion debate over alternative belief, values and world view”.

A consequence of the hegemonic process is that the majority of the population is largely unaware of an alternative reading of history, the hegemonic process does not create a value consensus but confusion, fragmentation and inconsistency in the belief system. Garson (1973:174) ^[7] describe the result “satisfaction is perpetuated on a superficial but enduring basis by the absence of alternative model capable of raising expectation beyond the level presently satisfied by the firm. In this view, the suppression of ideological alternatives is an integral extension of the legal apparatus which systematically expelled revolutionaries from the trade union in the absence of visible alternative no mass-based opposition emerges and the structure of control can continue unchallenged (David L. Sallach 1974) ^[13].

In a study of the belief and attitude among auto workers, “It is found that rather than possessing a coherent ideology, whether reactionary liberal or radical, one find them to be full of ambiguity and overlays of consciousness. Different and seemingly contradictory orientation will be evoked depending upon the context. The formation of consciousness among the larger population and existence of ideological parameter on public discussion and debate are but two sides of the same hegemonic process, the former being a consequence of the latter” (Garson 1973) ^[7]. The term hegemony refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert 'total social authority' over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by 'winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural'. In a very simple word, it is the material capabilities of ruling class which give them access to every institution of society and diffused their set of an idea to establish their own ideological hegemony which latter take the form common sense of masses or a collective agreement to a specific logic of life which they practice in everyday life. The pattern of production relations is the starting point for analysing the operation and mechanism of hegemony. Production is to be understood in the broadest sense. It is not confined to production and reproduction of physical goods used or consumed. It covers the production and reproduction of knowledge and of and of social relation, morals and institution that are prerequisites to the production of the physical good (Cox 1989) ^[5]. Hegemony would, therefore, be established “if the relationship between intellectuals and people's nation, between the leader and led, the rulers and ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion. Only then can there take place an exchange of individual elements between the rulers and ruled, leaders and led, and can share life be realised which alone is the social force with the creation of historical bloc” (Gramsci 1971) ^[8]. Marxist theorists believe that the major source of social control come from the process of ideological hegemony.

Society deals with the inherent characteristic of human nature in family, group, society, country, and within the course of scientific development of society whereas the dominant ideology of certain period which control these societal phenomena based on human interaction in different situation on their own term and condition in favour of dominant class with the conscious consent of subordinate class to ruling class idea which characterize the hegemony in society. Like, a monetary policy or fiscal policy is an instrument used to stabilised the market economy in a capitalist mode of production the same way ideology hegemony is an instrument in the hand of dominating social group in the society (Given the present situation of asymmetric distributed resources among people and ownership of means of production in the few hand in the society leads creation of capitalist class) to rule state or better to say to rule people on their own term in democratic and peace manner. The term hegemony refers to a situation in which a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert 'total social authority' over other subordinate groups, not simply by coercion or by the direct imposition of ruling ideas, but by 'winning and shaping consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural' Hegemony can only be maintained so long as the dominant classes 'succeed in framing all competing definitions within their range'. Marx and Engel have stated that individual conception of the world come from two ideas and conflict between them. One is received idea which is individual percept from experience of his daily life through analytical reasoning and intellectual labour. Other is a practical idea which he exercises because these ideas are in practice in daily life in society through interacting with each other and other social intercourse. Practical ideas are the basis of ruling ideas to carry their hegemony in every discourse of society. Gramsci has called these phenomena of hegemony as ‘contradictory consciousness. Gramsci has explained hegemony: “an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional manifestation, informing with its spirit, all taste, morality, custom, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations” (Gramsci). In broader explanation historically, it is a necessary required material condition for one class to hegemony over society. First at the production level where a hegemonic class can successfully establish new mode of the production system, new productive force and destabilise old socio-economic relation in revolutionary's ways. Then they must control state apparatus to make equilibrium between hegemonic class and productive class. State apparatus like school, law and order, police, political institution, etc. then at lastly intellectually and morally they established an organic link at level civil society by continuous ideological practice through an educational institution, culture, mobilisation, religion. This process diffused the dominant class conception of the world as a truth which obscures the exploitative mode of production relation between dominant class and subordinate class which form a very strong social integration with same note ion cause submitting a subordinate class consent to view of dominant class as a natural conception of the world. When social integration is achieved in dominant class favour, they link their ideology to given structure of society. What Gramsci called the ruling class project which basic motive is to connect its ideology as an organic link between society structure and

its superstructure which is the myth established by ruling forces. Marx has simply explained that any idea become the dominant idea because it has material power influencing and decisive control over the economic activities of the society. According to Gramsci, it is the organic ideology connection which organises masses and directs them several socio-economic activities. For Gramsci, everything which is the expression of the "people-nation" is the "national-popular will". Thus, a successful hegemony is one who can create a "collective national-popular will", and for this to occur, the dominant class must be capable of articulating its hegemonic principle by absorbing all the national popular ideological elements. It is only when this occurs, Gramsci contends, that the dominant class can appear as representing the national interest

Ideological hegemony and social changes

In a social science basic task is to understand the process of social changes and interpret the process of social changes and acquire knowledge and utilise it to influence the process of social changes. With the advance of man knowledge of productive power and its materialistic condition, the mystic and metaphysical conception of understanding observational and perceptual cognition has gradually replaced social relation and relationship between man and nature. That is a sensory perception and impression that are gathered through direct experience. Man's knowledge develops with his sensuous activity while struggling for existence with his surrounding environment. This process is continuing since time immemorial to exist. This process of acting upon external material world induce a man to think and accumulate experience about the relationship between man and nature. It is the question of own existence which motivates them to remain in a continuous struggle with his surrounding for sustainable life. Therefore, the theory of knowledge has linked inevitably with a history of civilisation. And this process of knowledge generates set of a different idea and the dominant idea that define and characterises each epoch in human societies. Evolution of society in each epoch has their specific dominant idea which characterises the certain social order which also keeps changing with continuous changing with continuous changing social needs about changing their materialistic condition. This process eventually leads to change in ideological hegemony and turn change in social order, social perception, social habits and convention, social reality and meaning of the existence of life.

When we talk about social changes, it may have many aspects. Social changes are a continuous process. We can consider one aspect of social change under a specific ideological hegemony and another we can consider after establishing a new set of ideological hegemony. The former aspects of change I will attempt to analyse in Indian societal context. Social changes under the established ideological hegemony can be considered as new appearance of societal activities and production relation but with the same set of fundamental ideas and value system.

Indian society is a Hindu Brahmanical society. It has a hierarchy based on caste system. It constitutes four castes. Brahmins and Rajputs share upper caste and Brahmins are considered to be a more pure species in Hindu society. Sudras are considered as lower and the more impure species. It is a highly discriminating society based on caste. Inter caste

marriage are restricted, and even untouchability also practices at it extreme form. All the resources are, and institutions are concentrated to only upper caste society. Lower caste people are also prohibited from attending school and they are only treated as an eternal servant class to them. Historically this society has testified cleavage in society characterise by atrocities, subordination, discrimination and exploitation that has raised the people to demand justice and equality. It is a continuous struggle and several movements for dignity, force the government to implement caste base reservation system in school, colleges and government job for the economic upliftment of Dalits. In the beginning Jyotiba Phule, and latter leader like Periyar, Ambedkar and many Dalit leaders have fought for the right of Dalit. And later Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 has been passed to protect the right and dignity of Dalit. This process of democratic changes in Indian constitution has strongly influenced the socio-economic status of Dalit. They got access to all educational, social, economic and political institution, which enabled them to the establish certain amount of material control in the society and initiate a debate in their perspective. And many big leaders also came in to exist from this section and sharing the state activity. This process has brought major changes in society like the abolition of untouchability, sharing of the same value, the right to opportunity, etc. but this are the changes happens under the same Brahmanical ideological hegemony. The basic element of Brahmanical ideology is purity. Now those who are uplifted in the socio-economic term are started treating themselves as purer than so called caste below them or among each other sub-caste. A recent incidence in Dharampur district of Tamil Nadu, other backwards community has burnt the village of Dalit against inter-caste marriage (*The Hindu* 8 Nov. 2012, *Teelka Magazine* vol.9 issue 48, 1st Dec 2012). Caste atrocities by upper caste are not a new phenomenon and it still going on. Like this there are several cases of caste violence in U.P and Bihar specially and many other states, more interestingly it largely visible in between so called OBC and SC ST. Though, many major Dalit movements has been initiated in history like Mukti movement lead by poor Dalit against Saints poet, Satyasodhak Samaj movement for self-respect in Maharashtra, Adi Dharma movement in Tamil Nadu, anti-touchable movement etc. and these movement has also brought many big changes but still, in my opinion, Brahmanical ideology of 'Purity' is still haunting our so called lower caste society. We can say it by by many cases of honour killing in Haryana's and the U.P state of India. This shows how deep Brahmanical hegemony rooted to Indian society. Those Dalit and backwards caste people succeed in transformed their class and become a partner in ruling class are might be bearing minimal discrimination or perhaps not could be rear phenomena but those are still backwards in terms socio-economic development is still bearing all sorts of its burnt in every sphere of life.

Despite the fact, that a group of educated Dalit's and progressive organisations has fought and lead the movement against the Brahmanical system of exploitation, but, could not succeed completely. Brahmanism as an ideology is still well preserved in the structure of Hindu society structure. Though people are against casteism social conscience of the society shows that casteism is still prevailing in the society like same caste marriage, honour killing against inter-caste marriage and

humiliation of Dalit in several institutions of society mainly in an educational institution, during an interview or violent raging against Dalit students. In a Gramscian sense, still, Brahmanical ideology rule every institution of society through its established hegemony by 1000 years of caste practice and functioning notion of specific societal order. They structured the school, their textbook in which explanations of a historical event are from their point of view and praising of their glory; they decided the culture of society according to their material condition and ritual related to festival, marriage ceremony, etc. Brahmin has deprived Dalit very systematically from land, resources and education and politically generated their consent towards their socio-economic system. It is the material control of Brahmin and privileged access to a social, economic and political institution which established their hegemony 'the hegemony of purity' by diffusing their set of an idea to every social institution, setting the parameter of debate to any social issue and define morality and logical in society. And which also decide the ultimate truth of life in the society and slowly become the common sense of the people. Historically in every society, dominant ideology always get challenged by alternative views but slow it got suppressed by dominant ideology through strong institutional control only if these alternate ideas are not well motivated by deconstructing the fundamental assumption of ruling ideas. But these alternative views bring minimal changes to society and masses or in a Marxian sense these changes are merely the neutralising force to prevent the uprising of masses from destroying the fundamental principle of ruling ideological hegemony. Today's India's institutional structure has become a pyramidal type, the top space of each institution and department are occupied by the upper caste mostly Brahmin and lower space are left out for the Non-Brahmin and lowest are still preserved for only Dalit's. In a Marxian sense still, Indian society's mode of production are controlled by Brahmanical superstructure through their ideological hegemony inflicted in the mind of masses through cultural hegemony, coercion and sometimes military power.

Social changes under new established ideological hegemony are based on new set of the idea and thought with the new order of production relation. In this context, Marx and Engel have thought that only by changing the materialistic condition of under ruling class hegemony would change individual's consciousness or better to say deconstruct the false consciousness of subordinate class. Consciousness does not enjoy an independent of the physical world but is constituted by the material condition of human existence. When we understand the different position of people in a given definite societal condition regarding their institutional, social and economic relation, then we can understand the origin of thought and consciousness. With this view and change in view can bring about the real social changes which must be meant for the people not for the certain dominant class. It's only by reconstructing the new ideas of socio-economic relation not based on the old fundamental conception of society under ruling class ideology can bring widespread social changes.

Conclusion

The Marxist view of society which is extended by Gramsci in his concept of hegemony reveals some important aspects of the relationship between class structure, ideology and social changes. It is the control over the resources, and others mean

of production by a certain section of the society provide institutional power (school, judiciary, ministry, hospital, etc.) to them to exercise, decide and structure various code of conduct, ethics, morality and knowledge system in the society. These institutional power slowly and steadily perpetuate their idea in the mind of common people which generate common conscience in the society and established ruling class hegemony. The dominant class that is the ruling class which have the privilege to access the cultural, religious, education, economic and political institution of society and debate on social change and advancement of logical life in society are circumscribed within the well-defined and structured parameter of ruling class. And the only way to bring great social change for masses we need to consistently deconstruct dominant ideology, fight to change the given materialistic condition of subordinate class masses and reconstruct the set of the idea and thought from people or mass perspective.

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