

# Was Marxist Theory Correct?

By  
Tristan Barnett

## Introduction

As documented in Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism>

Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis that views class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and takes a dialectical view of social transformation. It originates from the works of 19th-century German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marxism uses a methodology, now known as historical materialism, to analyze and critique the development of class society and especially of capitalism as well as the role of class struggles in systemic economic, social, and political change. According to Marxist theory, in capitalist societies, class conflict arises due to contradictions between the material interests of the oppressed and exploited proletariat—a class of wage labourers employed to produce goods and services—and the bourgeoisie—the ruling class that owns the means of production and extracts its wealth through appropriation of the surplus product produced by the proletariat in the form of profit.

This class struggle that is commonly expressed as the revolt of a society's productive forces against its relations of production, results in a period of short-term crises as the bourgeoisie struggle to manage the intensifying alienation of labor experienced by the proletariat, albeit with varying degrees of class consciousness. In periods of deep crisis, the resistance of the oppressed can culminate in a proletarian revolution which, if victorious, leads to the establishment of socialism—a socioeconomic system based on social ownership of the means of production, distribution based on one's contribution and production organized directly for use. As the productive forces continued to advance, Marx hypothesized that socialism would ultimately be transformed into a communist society: a classless, stateless, humane society based on common ownership and the underlying principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs".

## Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is a conversation between Arjuna, a supernaturally gifted warrior about to go into battle, and Krishna – the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his charioteer. In the course of giving Arjuna all manner of spiritual and material advice, Krishna explains karma, the self, the Supreme Self, the purpose of yoga, the difference between our self and our material body, how our environment affects our consciousness, and how to attain the perfection of life. The Gita appears as a central chapter in the Mahabharata, the history of greater India. It is the essence of Vedic knowledge and one of the most important books of

Vedic literature. Lord Krishna spoke the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna about 5000 years ago and through disciplic succession the Bhagavad Gita As It Is gives commentary on the verses by Lord Krishna by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Pradhupada. Essentially the Bhagavad Gita As It Is is the highest authoritative text to explain the universe and the commentary is “almost” 100% accurate.

## **Knowledge**

As documented in the commentary in the Bhagavad Gita As It Is material knowledge is subject to error and not really “knowledge”. True knowledge comes directly from God and is not subject to error. Vedic knowledge being true knowledge which is actually a science (or the science of God) rather than a religion. The Bible and the Qur’an, although may have come directly from God can be misinterpreted because the information is not in disciplic succession. For example, the Qur’an was given to Muhammad (via an Angel as a messenger of God) and the interpretation of the information (or commentary) should be in disciplic succession from Muhammad. The author does not believe this to be the case in that disciplic succession has been lost from Muhammad to the current era. However, the commentary of the Bhagavad Gita As It Is is in disciplic succession from Lord Krishna as given by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Pradhupada. The commentary of the Bhagavad Gita As It Is states that anyone who reads and understands the Bhagavad Gita As It Is has a much higher source of knowledge than any Professor. Based on this argument all academics should be on equal pay without academic titles such as Senior Lecturer and Professor (which is somewhat political based on a review panel), and hence a “classless” society. In comparison obtaining a title of Doctor is a “fair” process and available to everyone based on writing a thesis as the highest level of academic education. Administrative staff working for universities should arguably be on a lower (but equal) pay than academics based on their level of education being lower than academics. In order for universities to function and make decisions there needs to be a level of hierarchy with the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dean of a Faculty, Head of School etc. These “titles” are purely administrative and should not use their position to exert power (or politics) over academic staff. This implies that the structure in general of organizations should take a similar approach. Also, cooperation within the organization would increase productivity (rather than workers competing within the organization). There is still competition across organizations and hence capitalism which would grow the wealth within organizations. Therefore, the average salary within an organization would be higher compared to a hierarchical structure where everyone is on a different level of salary. Of course, under this equal pay model the CEO will be on a lower income compared to the hierarchical structure model. But the primary motive for working is to be happy and under this equal pay model the average level of happiness will be higher (and arguably the happiness of the CEO will be higher). In privately owned companies the directors (including the managing director or CEO) generally own the wealth of the organization (such as shares). So the CEO is actually generating a higher long-term profit under this equal pay model. Some workers of course will not work as hard as other workers. Maybe there in the wrong job. Work itself should be a positive lifestyle of happiness (known as karma yoga) but under the current system there is alienation amongst workers, politics, abuse of power, noncooperation and more serious issues such as bullying.

## **Class Structure**

As stated in Krishna.org <https://krishna.org/the-horrible-indian-caste-system/>

“According to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me. And, although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable.” (*Bhagavad Gita 4.13*)

So we can see from this verse that in fact Krishna has created four divisions of human society and they are present everywhere in every society. Krishna goes on to describe these four divisions of society in the *Gita* as being *brahmanas* (the intellectual, priestly class), *ksatriyas* (the martial class, the kings, rulers, leaders, military men), the *vaisyas* (the productive class, principally the farmers who produce and distribute the food and also the businessmen) and *Sudras* (the worker class who have no ability to support themselves independently like the other three classes so they need to serve the other three higher classes for their livelihood).

The idea that everyone is equal, on the bodily platform at least, is absolutely not true at all. We are all born with different aptitudes, abilities and capabilities. In the West at least there is the illusion that anyone can be successful at anything but in reality this is not true. One will be successful if he works in an occupation that is suited to his natural aptitude, abilities and capabilities. So the system that Krishna recommends in the *Bhagavad Gita* is called *varnashrama dharma*, and this system recommends dividing the society into four divisions and in work according to their natural propensities.

This concept of a caste system implies why there are different occupations in society and although a form of hierarchy in an organization is necessary to make decisions to maximize productivity, organizations could still be considered “classless” and the majority of workers in an organization to be on equal pay; as demonstrated above in regard to academics.

## **Workplace Bullying**

As stated in Heads Up <https://www.headsup.org.au/supporting-others/workplace-bullying>

Bullying is a serious issue in workplaces across Australia and a risk factor for anxiety, depression and suicide. Workplace bullying can affect people in a number of ways, resulting in:

- distress, anxiety, panic attacks or sleep disturbance
- physical illness, such as muscular tension, headaches and digestive problems
- reduced work performance
- loss of self-esteem and feelings of isolation
- deteriorating relationships with colleagues, family and friends
- depression
- increased risk of suicide

## Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages.

<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/?fbclid=IwAR0kBLexnczOZ-pk8iC7XfWxj5ta2SomdEMDw8hogNuELcZyd-jczAxEtE>

It could be argued that everyone has a right to work and be paid as such as hence this could be considered a human right which is not defined by the United Nations as a UDHR. With a market capitalist society there will always be an unemployment rate. This implies a Universal Basic Income (UBI), which is a model for providing all citizens of a country or other geographic area with a given sum of money, regardless of their income, resources or employment status. The purpose of the UBI is to prevent or reduce poverty and increase equality among citizens, although it is not clear as to what level of UBI this should be. Also, it makes no sense for a highly paid income earner to be receiving a UBI and hence the economic model as defined below.

## Economic Model

The economic model is based on resolving class conflict in the workplace as this represents the most important conflict based on our everyday lives; and would therefore reflect on the economy as a whole including welfare. This also reflects on Marxist theory on class conflict in the workplace which has been a major factor in the formulation of left/right political ideologies. From yogic philosophy there are three of modes of material nature that we are all subject to causing miseries in this material world. From lowest to highest these modes are ignorance, passion and goodness. The majority of society is currently in the mode of passion by always looking at ways to increase one's wealth and is characterized by the attraction between man and woman. In order to obtain a transcendental state of consciousness and be free of miseries that exist within this material world, one must firstly transcend to the mode of goodness; where in this mode the accumulation of wealth is not the main priority but rather sharing the accumulation of wealth towards helping others. However, one's happiness in the mode of goodness may not necessarily be greater than one's happiness in the mode of passion. For example, in a working environment, employers are generally in the mode of passion (at least within Australian business) as their level of happiness tends to be greater in this mode regardless of the mode of nature that is present from the employees. This is reflected by the Australian unemployment system since under the current unemployment system there are many restrictions for obtaining unemployment benefits (testing of assets for example) and the unemployment benefits being significantly less (about 40%) of the minimum wage. Therefore, there is no threat to the employer to cooperate since it is highly unlikely that the employee will leave the job and the level of happiness for the employer is higher by not cooperating (and in a more serious case workplace bullying). The modes of passion and goodness could be equated to uncooperative and cooperative strategies

respectively as given in Game 1. From this game, the employer will always choose the uncooperative strategies by being in the mode of passion and receive a positive level of happiness. And consequently, the employee will receive a negative level of happiness. In order for both the employer and employee to cooperate (and be in the mode of goodness) and receive a positive level of happiness requires changing the unemployment system to force cooperation.

		Employer	
		Cooperative	Uncooperative
Employee	Cooperative	(1,1)	(-2,2)
	Uncooperative	(2,-2)	(-2,1)

#### Game 1: Levels of happiness under the Australian unemployment system

The economic model involves introducing an unemployment system such that an allowance for unemployment is provided regardless of financial status and the allowance is comparable to the minimum wage, with the minimum wage being at least the amount given by the UBI. If the unemployment benefits are comparable to the minimum wage then the unemployment benefits are somewhat equivalent to the UBI. Therefore, the UBI needs to be established to provide for a reasonable standard of living. Also the allowance is given to tertiary students. The unemployment system could be funded by an increase in the progressive taxation system and it is necessary for unemployment benefits to be paid back through taxation when work is established in the future. By introducing this employment system both the employer and employee obtain a negative level of happiness by not cooperating (mode of passion). If the employee does not cooperate, then the employer will always end up with a negative payout regardless of the strategy the employer adopts. If the employer does not cooperate, then the employee will always end up with a negative payout regardless of the strategy the employee adopts. Therefore, cooperation is forced for both parties to obtain a positive level of happiness and be in the mode of goodness. This is represented in Game 2.

		Employer	
		Cooperative	Uncooperative
Employee	Cooperative	(1,1)	(-2,2)
	Uncooperative	(2,-2)	(-1,-1)

#### Game 2: Levels of happiness under the revised unemployment system

This revised unemployment system would improve working conditions, 'fairer' pay for workers, increase cooperative ownership of productive property and consequently assist trade unions in these negotiation processes. Increasing cooperative ownership in particular has the effect of weakening private to common productive property which is in agreement with Marx's theory of resolving class conflict through common ownership. Work in general should be positive and a great lifestyle, and arguably the employee's level of happiness is greater when working with both parties cooperating, rather than receiving unemployment benefits. However, when workers become alienated through class conflict (employer not cooperating and in a more serious case workplace bullying) then this positive lifestyle can

have various health related effects. This unemployment system is likely to improve the welfare of the population through financial security. The economic model on resolving class conflict in the workplace is another example on the connectedness between health and conflict resolution processes. With an unemployment system which is comparable to the minimum wage there will be some people in society who take "advantage" of this and say surf at a beach all day and never work their whole lives. But again the average level of happiness across society will be increased. If surfers are happy and workers are happy then that is a good thing for society as a whole. Everyone needs to be occupied in life to achieve happiness and working in a job that you genuinely enjoy is a form of karma yoga that creates happiness. So essentially you are working for happiness rather than the money itself. If you become unemployed (as a result of the capitalist system where you may not be suited to that particular job and there is always an unemployment rate), then it is important to have financial security by having unemployment benefits comparable to the minimum wage until you are able to find another job that would be stimulating and generate happiness. Being unemployed and not getting unemployment benefits comparable to the minimum wage could lead to depression and even scale into poverty.

### **Public Housing**

Marx indicted that there is a class conflict between landlords and tenants and introduced the following policy: The ownership of residential property is both private and government; where private ownership cannot be used in rental and government ownership is only used in rental. The author felt this class conflict as a tenant over a dispute where the landlord (or agent in particular) felt the apartment was not kept tidy and was brought before a magistrate at the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal ([jpg](#)). Note that there was no actual damage to the property. It was messy in terms of papers on the floor, which is not a breach of Section 63 as stated in the Notice to Tenant. The kitchen was not kept clean, however the bathroom paint was peeling with mold and was not addressed by the agent over several years of making such a complaint – hence the author gave up on keeping the bathroom or kitchen clean as a result of the peeling of bathroom paint and built-up of mold. It was also stated by the magistrate that the author could claim compensation for the landlord not keeping the bathroom to a satisfactory level but the author never pursued this option. In the end the landlord removed the bathroom mold and peeling of paint by a complete repaint by a tradesman, and the author paid cleaners to clean the kitchen and bathroom. However, the class conflict continued when the landlord decided to increase the rent – given that the author had not been paid compensation for the build-up of mold and peeling of paint in the bathroom. Hence the following policies in agreement with Marx's theory:

- The ownership of residential property is both private and government; where private ownership cannot be used in rental and government ownership is only used in rental.
- The tenant has the option to not allow inspections during the term of the lease for the residential property
- Objective based formula that determines rental increase that is standardized across the rental property market.

## **Equal pay in men's and women's tennis**

The prize money for men and women are equivalent in all four grand slams which makes sense (although this is not the case across the ATP and WTA tours). This is again another example of Marxist theory.

Tennis ace Serena Williams is calling for pay equality, urging male players to be allies to their female counterparts and help bridge the gap. The prize money for male and female players for all four of the major tennis tournaments is the same, but that's not the case across other Association of Tennis Professionals and Women's Tennis Association (WTA) competitions. Williams, who holds the record for winning the most grand slam titles in the Open Era, said it was high time all players were paid equally. "In order for change to really be made, men and women have to work together," Williams said. "They have to have the same message; they have to support each other." Thanks to Williams' efforts, the topic has remained in the spotlight throughout the Australian Open, with many players quizzed on their views in their post-match press conferences.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/tennis-champions-drawn-into-equal-pay-debate>

Similarly, men and women should be on equal pay in the workforce (which is currently not the case - men on average are on higher incomes).

## **Home Economics**

Women are better than men at child bearing and it makes sense for women to be paid maternity leave (at their current salary) until the children attend school. Women could potentially setup a home office (assuming they have an office job) and work at say 2 hours a day whilst looking after the children. Women could also potentially work 1 day a week on weekends whilst the partner is looking after the children (assuming the woman is not a single parent). Home economics is a part of the economic system and someone has to look after the children.

## **Why has Marxist theory failed in the past?**

Communism has possibly failed in the past because governments have become corrupt and hence a class conflict between the government and its citizens. This reflects on a democratic voting system to ensure responsible governments. You do need governments and a bureaucracy in order for society to function effectively. However, all the above does not suggest communism (anti-capitalism) but rather looking at establishing equal pay and a classless society within a particular organization but still maintaining a capitalist society across different organizations and still creating a competitive environment and establishing wealth within organizations. This would improve productivity in the workplace and significantly reduce politics, alienation, abuse of power and bullying (which is quite a serious issue). Also, the economic model as defined above would force cooperation in the workplace and hence improve productivity which would increase the average salary amongst workers.