

Baqir Al-Sadr on Marxist Economic Model (Part-II)

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Sadr on Marxist conception of ideology

According to Marxism, the real cause of every ideological process whether it is based upon religion, philosophy or science is latent in the material and economic conditions. According to it, ideology; whether it is based on religion, philosophy or science has no independent history of its own. It changes according to the change in productive forces.¹

a) Marxism and Religion

Marxism shows a negative approach towards religion; it believes that religion is the product and outcome of the class conflict of society.²

Marx writes:

Religious suffering, indeed, is the expression of the real suffering, as also the protest against this suffering at the same time. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of the heartless world, as it is the spirit of the spiritless. It is the opium of the people, so the criticism of religion, then, is the first step towards the criticism of this valley sunk in tears.³

Marxism believes that, Religion as opium is given by the ruling exploiter to the exploited class to drink in order to make it forget its demands and its political role and submit to the existing evil reality.⁴

According to Sadr religion is not the ideological phenomena of the multiclass societies only, even the primitive societies which Marxism thinks were communistic in nature, practiced the ideology of religion.⁵ He further states that it is an undisputed truth that, religions always grow in the lap of the miserable and poverty stricken people. It illuminates their souls with its brightness, before it enlightens the entire society.⁶ He further argues that if religion could be treated as the creation of the ruling class then it should not have passed decree against the practices like Usury.⁷ Similarly, if religion

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could be regarded as the ideology of down trodden and oppressed only then it should not have accepted by the class not down trodden and not oppressed.⁸

b) Marxism and Philosophy

Philosophy according to Marxism is another intellectual manifestation of the material life and economic conditions in which the society lives. It establishes an inevitable relation between philosophy and productive forces. Knostantinov, one of the prominent Marxist say:

..... In fact the sociological, juridical aesthetic and philosophical ideas are the reflections of material conditions of social life.⁹

Evolution in philosophical thinking takes place along with the evolution in productive forces. According to British communist philosopher Maurice Cornforth:¹⁰

The advancement of science towards evolutionary conception, and which expresses the discovery of the actual evolution of nature and society, corresponded with the development of the industrial capitalism in the later part of the eighteenth century, obviously, this correspondence was not a merely a pure correspondence but expressed a casual nexus..... bourgeois would not have lived had not the continuous revolutionary changes in the modes of production brought in...it was these conditions which lead to the general appearance of the conception of the evolution of nature and society. Because of this the importance of philosophy in the generalization of laws of hange and evolution, did not result merely from the scientific discoveries but was rather tied with every movement of the new society in its entity.¹¹

Thus it appears that the above mentioned philosopher opines that means of production were changing and taking new forms and inculcating in minds of philosophers the conception of evolution which transferred the static philosophical theory of nature towards the revolutionary view which corresponds with the continuous evolution in the means of production. In other words there is a necessary causality between philosophy and means of production. Philosophy of a particular stage of history depends on the mean of production of that time. Philosophical ideas and views change along with the change in the means of production.

Sadr acknowledges the relationship between philosophy and productive forces. However, his difference with Marxism is an accepting economic cause

as the sole cause behind the philosophy. He mentions various early philosophers in this respect these include, Anaximander¹² Heraclitus¹³ and Sadr al-din Shirazi,¹⁴ whose philosophical ideas were the same as found in the 18th century materialistic philosophy. Sadr argues that if Marxism is true is its conception, that philosophy and productive forces should maintain the same pace, the philosophical ideas of these philosophers would not have been the same to the philosophy of eighteenth century.¹⁵

c) Marxism and Science

About science Marxism expresses the similar view as about philosophy, that is all the natural sciences progressively advance and grow in correspondence with the material needs opened up to them by the economic formation.¹⁶

Sadr acknowledges the relationship, between scientific progress and economic forces, however he disregards economic cause as the soul cause behind the scientific progress. According to him except in the modern times, all the societies which existed before were to a great extent alike as to their means and modes of production. Simple agriculture and handicrafts were the two forms of production in these societies. He argues that if the forms of production were same, then why was there difference in the scientific progress.¹⁷ He further says that although socio-material needs result in new inventions and discoveries, however, this cannot be the legitimate interpretation of history and its progress. For the simple fact that many needs remained thousands of years waiting until science opened ways to fulfill them.¹⁸

Sadr on Marxist Law of Value

Marxism holds the opinion that raw materials by their nature possess no exchange value. The exchange value in a natural raw material comes into existence only as a result of the rectification of human labor there in. Marx writes:

Take two commodities, e.g., corn and iron. The proportions in which they are exchangeable whatever those proportions may be can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron. E.g., 1 quarter corn = x cwt, iron what does this equation tell us? It tells us that in two different things in 1 quarter of corn and x cwt. Of Iron, there exists in equal quantities something common to both. The two things

must therefore be equal to a third, which in itself is neither the one nor the other.....if we leave out of consideration the use value of commodity, they have only one property left that is being products of labour.¹⁹

Thus work is the basis of exchange value. However, this law in Marxism does not apply in case of hoarding, similarly, this law is not applicable in case of some technical and monumental productions like a plate produced by an outstanding skilled artist or a handwritten letter which dates back to hundreds of years.

According to Sadr, work is not the basis of exchange value. He argues that two persons can create two different exchange values of the same commodity, at equal intervals of time due to the difference in their mental aptitude, desire to excel others and the kinds of feeling they harbor in their minds about that particular work.²⁰ Two painters, for instance, each of whom has one hour to paint a picture, but natural ability of one of them makes the picture painted by him more charming than that painted by the other. Thus Sadr considers work as a heterogeneous factor which includes units efforts, which differ in importance and vary in degree and value. He regards it a folly to measure work quantitatively and numerically alone.²¹

He further says that it is also possible to exchange a technical or monumental production at a rate higher than what has been spent on it in the form of work. A letter of historical importance for instance can be exchanged for a book of al-Kalim's history, if such an exchange is possible then what is the common thing between them besides labour?²² This means there are some other things between them besides labour. Similarly, Sadr argues that Marxism fails to explain the falling of exchange value of a commodity with the decline in the collective desire or demand for it. The value of the commodity falls despite the fact amount of collective work involved there remains unchanged. Sadr argues that, the degree of the utility of a commodity and how far it satisfies the need of a person both have a bearing on the constitution of the exchange value.²³ He concludes that it is not the work but the collective human desire which is a common factor between two things. If the desire for a particular commodity increases, one can pay every price to obtain it. Thus, it is not work, but the human desire on the basis of which exchange of commodities takes place. He writes:

Thus there is a collective desire for the coat as also for the cloth. This desire is attributable to the use and benefit they have in them. In this way, although

the benefits they render are different from each other, yet the result produced is common between them, which is the human deseed.²⁴

Sadr on Primitive Communism:

After investigating many contemporary societies, Marxism propounds the view that humanity has passed through a stage of primitive Communism at the dawn of its social life. The primitive conditions according to its prevail in these societies even to this day. These societies include most of the tribes in Africa, Polynesia, Malenesa, Australia, America Indians, Eskimos, and Lagoons.²⁵

On this, Sadr remarks that if these societies are accepted as primitive, then it goes against the law of inevitability of history in which Marxism believes, according to which, societies have continuously moved from one stage to another. He argues that how primitive societies can remain thousands of years at one stage without any development.²⁶

Marxism explains the nature and characteristics of property relations in these societies in the following words:

Human beings were obliged to pursue production a jointly social form and unblock (in group) to face the nature, due to man's weakness and Paucity of means. Cooperation in production necessitates the establishment of Communal Property and forbids the thought of Private ownership.....For the several low level of the forces of production rendered meager food and simple commodities in equal Portion obligatory.²⁷

Thus, Marxism has regarded scarcity of production as the main cause behind the communal social life. However, at same time it contradicts, while talking about the moral dispositions of the communist society and while glorifying its virtues.

About the American Indians Anderz a Marxist writer cites on the authority of Catalin,

Every individual of an Indian village has the right to enter any dwelling and eat if he is hungry; nay, those who were disable fo work or whom sheer laziness from hunting were able, in spite of that to enter any hose they want and share food with its intimates.²⁸

This shows that the production level in these societies was quite high. Taking into consideration the above passages Sadr concludes that, if the production level in the Primitive societies was high then what is the logical explanation of these societies being communistic.²⁹ He further argues that why did not occur

to anyone the idea of exploitation and fraudulence in terms of distribution of produced commodities, when there was enough possibility of it due to abundance of production. According to Sadr, the answer of all these things lay in the consciousness of these people, which was preventing them from doing so.³⁰ Thus, it was not the economic factor, which was responsible for the equal distribution of food in these societies, but the human nature which was not allowing them to make suffer others.

Sadr continues that, however, if the equal distribution was the result of scarcity of production, then what is the reasonable explanation of feeding those idle fellows by whose loss they would have lost nothing.

Sadr on slave Society

The communist society emerged into the slave society, as a result of the development in production forces. According to Marxism; due to increase in productive forces, an individual was able to meet his requirements by labour of a limited portion of time, but the productive forces were demanding more work. Thus, slavery system began to emerge to meet the new requirements of the new times. About the way it emerged it explains:

The individuals who were pursuing function of the leaders, senior was officers and the priests in a primitive communist society took to exploiting their position in order to obtain wealth and to acquire a public property and began to secede gradually from the members of their own societies to be formed into aristocracy.³¹

It further says:

The society converted the prisoners or war into slaves and began to gain an account of it, surplus product, till it became rich and was able, as a result of its wealth, enslave those members of the tribe, who had become debtors.³²

In view of the above passages Sadr argues that, the explanation Marxism provides about the emergence of the slave society contradicts with the historical materialism. The explanation regards political factor as the major and economic factor as the minor factor responsible for its emergence. It further fails to explain that why those masters were provided the opportunity of enslaving the others as communist society claims equality of it people.³³

Accordidng to Sadr, it was not the economic factor, but the human natures which gives rise to the slave order.³⁴ Man by nature loves comfort and leisure and when faces two ways to achieve one aim, surely chooses the less difficult.

It was this nature of man which inspired him to think of enslaving others. Such a method provided him a better guarantee of comfort and leisure. He argues that if the development was demanding more labour. It was more fruitful to make a free mutual agreement with the people, who were made slaves. Such a trend would have multiplied the labour, consequently, the production because; a slave works disinterestedly in contrast to a free man. However, such a trend was not followed as it contradicts with the human nature.³⁵

Sadr on Feudal Society

According to Marxism the slave society emerged into the feudal society as a result of the brutal exploitation of the slaves by their masters. In this way, thousands of slaves lost their lives. Besides, the conversion of majority of independent farmers and craftsmen decreased the number of armed forces and soldiers, which consequently, decreased the flow of slaves supplied through them. Because of all this a violent conflict arose between the scarcity of labour supply and the increasing demand of productive forces. Therefore, the slave society collapsed and the feudal order succeeded.³⁶

Such a change, according to Marxism, was revolutionary in nature as it was the result of class conflicts. Further, the change was the result of the development in productive forces because; it is the means of production which is the supreme force behind the history. Lastly, the change resulted into progress and development because, history always moves in forward direction according to the law moves in forward direction according to the law of historical materialism³⁷

Sadr mentions the transformation of Roman society from slave order to feudal order. He argues that the transformation was a voluntary action on the part of the master class and there was no revolution.³⁸ Sadr further says that transformation is not the necessary result of development in productive forces. It was the same agriculture and some handicrafts found in the slave order that continued in the feudal system. Contrary to this, the primitive society underwent a drastic change in the form of productive forces. The primitive man first used to take help of stones in their natural form to carry out his productive activities, and then he designed them into stone implements. Thereafter, he was able to discover fire. Later on, the forces of production developed and the mining implements and bows and arrows made their

appearance. In spite of all these great transformations the society is regarded as primitive communistic.³⁹ He argues, if the modes of production change while the social forms remain unchanged as in primitive society and if the society changes while as the modes of production remain constant as in feudal society, then how can Marxism explain the historical materialism in such a situation.⁴⁰

Similarly, the assertion that the change leads to the progress and development of the society is also not true. Sadr argues that instead of laying a positive effect, feudalism laid down a negative effect on progress and development. Feudalists remained contented with the agriculture revenues and its simple products, as a result of it, commercial capitalism got discourages. This resulted into wide spread poverty among the people.⁴¹

Sadr on the Emergence of Capitalist Society

According to Marxism, The Capitalistic economic system emerged as a result of the disintegration of the feudalist economic system.⁴² Marxism, while analyzing capitalism historically, lays much importance to the Primary accumulation of capital. It denies the conventional view point about political economy⁴³ which states that the capital production and the necessary wealth for the same, was the result of intelligence, frugality and good management by one class of the society. According to Marx:

This historical movement was completed by means of enslavement, armed robbery, there being no hand in its realization of planning economy intelligence, as believed by authorities of the conventional Political economy.⁴⁴

According to Sadr the Marxist description about the emergence of capitalism does not apply to the societies like Germany where a large number of feudalists built factories, carried on their administration and financed them with Feudal income they received. There was no violence, nor any movement of usurpation.⁴⁵ Similarly, it is not applicable to the commercial capitalism of Italy, which got huge profit to the Italian commercial Democracies like; Venice, Genoa and Florence because a class of traders came into being in these cities before the emergence of industrial capitalism. These traders earned huge profits by means of trade with eastern countries during the crusades.⁴⁶ Their profit was boosted as a result of their friendly ties with the rulers of Egypt & Syria. Consequently, on the basis of this profit, they set up large factories. In this way the capitalism flourished without any violence.⁴⁷

Sadr further says that, if the explanation provided by Marxism regarding the emergence of capitalism is regarded as absolute. It then contradicts with the emergence of capitalism is regarded as absolute. It then contradicts with the historical materialism. He argues, that, how could Marxists say that the reason behind the Primary capital accumulation and the existence of the capitalist class historically was the power of usurpation and subjection, where as it is itself a reason not economic by nature? As a matter of fact, Marx according to Sadr demolishes his historical logic himself and admits implicitly by that the class formation does not exist on economic basis.⁴⁸

Marxist Creed: Socialism and Communism

Socialism

Marxist creed means the social system to which Marxism calls and for the materialization of which it leads humanity.⁴⁹ It has two stages; Socialism and Communism.⁵⁰ From the point of view of the historical materialism, humanity will reach the highest stage of development on the basis of the law of dialectics. That highest stage is known as communism.⁵¹ However, before reaching that stage it will pass through a transitory stage known as socialism. During this stage a government will be established which will nationalize the resources of wealth and the capitalistic means of production. In this way a classless society will emerge in which the arrangement of distribution will be based upon the principle, "From everyone according to his capacity and for everyone according to his work." Marxist believes that the class composition is the result of private property.⁵² When the private property is abolished the society will turn into a single class.

Sadr argues that the class composition is not the necessary result of economic factor and the position of private property only. As many a class composition have existed in history on military, political and religious basis. Therefore, historically it is not necessary that the division of society into classes disappears with the end of private property, but it is also possible that a class composition may take place in the socialistic society on some other basis.⁵³

Further the economic and political nature of the socialistic stage according to Sadr, can lead to the creation of a new form of class inconsistency.⁵⁴ So for as the economic distribution in the socialistic state is concerned, it is based upon the principle, "For everyone according to his work," Sadr argues that it contradicts with the classless nature of the socialist society, because, the

individuals naturally differ from one another in their work efficiency, due to the difference in their capabilities, nature of the work and the degree of its complication. Thus, a talented worker gifted with genius and intelligence cannot be equalized with an ordinary worker.⁵⁵

Therefore, according to Sadr, Marxism finds only two solutions to solve the issue one; to adhere to the principle of distribution which state, “For everyone according to his work,” and therefore, distribute the production among the individual with different degrees, and create class inconsistency a new or it may take away the surplus value from the talented worker like capitalism, in order to equalize the wages.⁵⁶

The political nature of the socialist society also creates class inconsistency, based upon the possession and deprivation of the political power. Under socialism too much power is concentrated in the state. The state is not only a political authority but it also exercises unlimited authority in the economic sphere. According to Sadr, the ownership in its real substance is nothing but authority over the wealth and power. This authority is enjoyed by the political powers in the sociologist stage.⁵⁷

Communism

Communism according to Marxism, is the highest stage of human development. This is the final stage of history, in which the society will turn into a single class. All the class struggle will come to an end and the natural resources will be equally distributed. There are two pillars of communism according to Marxism; First, wiping out of Private ownership not only in the field of capitalist production, but in the field of consumption also.⁵⁸ Thus, it nationalizes all the means of production and all the consumer goods. Second pillar is the elimination of political authority and finally liberation of the society from the clutches of the government.⁵⁹

As for the wiping out of private ownership in all the fields, Sadr states that it does not drive its existence in the doctrine from the scientific law of value, as the nationalization of the means of Capitalist production is based on the theory of surplus value. Instead; the idea is based on the assumption that, the society will attain a high degree of richness, as the production powers will grow enormously; consequently, no room is left for private ownership.⁶⁰ Therefore, the distribution will be based upon the Principle, “from everyone according to his capacity, for everyone according to his need.”⁶¹

Sadr argues that history has never witnessed such a miracle so far. It was the result that thousands of innocent people lost their lives while materializing this experiment by the Marxists. Therefore, the experiment remained preponderating between socialism and communism till it expressed its inability to materialize communism.⁶²

As for the second pillar of communism (disappearance of government) is concerned, Sadr questions that how this change will take place? Marxists have been saying that the revolution against government always sprouts from the class which is not represented by that government; Sadr argues that if a change from socialism to communism is revolutionary, then which class is going to bring it, as in communism, the society is a single class.⁶³ However, if the change is a gradual one, then it contradicts with the law of dialectics. Sadr further argues that the change also contradicts the nature of reality because, how can government give a death blow to itself, while every other government on the face of earth adheres to its centre and defends its political existence till the last moment of its life.⁶⁴

Lastly, Sadr argues that if the miracle of communism is given the practical shape, will then the society not need an authority to regulate the proper distribution of work and the problems related to it?⁶⁵

References and Notes

- ¹ Baqir al-sadr, *Iqtisaduna* tr. English Our Economics, (WOFIS) World Organization For Islamic Services Tehran-Iran, 1982, Vol-2, Part 1, p.87.
- ² *Ibid.*,p.81
- ³ Karl, Marx, Selected Essays of Marxism (Arabic Tansl.)pp.16-17, Cf,*Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.81
- ⁴ Baqir al-Sadr, *Iqtisaduna* ,op.cit.p.81
- ⁵ *Ibid.*,p83
- ⁶ *Ibid.*,p.82
- ⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ⁸ *Ibid.*,p.83
- ⁹ Knostantinove, *Dur al Afkar al Tadmiya fi Tatwir al Mujtama* (The Role of Progressive Idea in Evolution of society), p. 8. Cf, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit., p.87.
- ¹⁰ Maurice Campbell corn forth (1909-1980) was a British Marxist Philosopher. He was the Official ideologists of the communist party of Great British. Wikipedia.Org/Wiki/Maurice Cornforth.
- ¹¹ Maurice Consforth, *Al Madiyat a IDialectia*(Dialectal Materialism) p. 40, Cf, *iqtisadun*, op.cit,p.88
- ¹² Anaximander who lived in the Sixth century B.C. 611-547B.C. gave to philosophy a c Conception of evolution which was not different in essence from the conceptions of Evolution which was not different in essence from the conceptions of evolution prevalent In the age of the capitalist production. He held that creatures in their first state were lowly things, then impelled by the power of their native motive force moved on by evolutionary process to higher and higher steps to concordance between itself and the external environment. Man, for instance was an aquatic animal but when water was swept off,this aquatic animal was obliged to seek congenial environment. So he acquired by the passage of time organs suitable for locomotory movement which enabled him to move upon dry land, and thus, became man.
- ¹³ Heraclitus born 535 B.C. Died 475 B.C. gave philosophy the conception of evolution based On the opposite and the dialectics. He affirmed that nature does not remain in a fixed state But is in continuous flux. This change from one form into another form and the motion are The reality of nature; and explains this motion by the law of opposite which means that a Thing in motion 'is' and is changing that is existence and non-existence at the same instance, And this union of two instances of existence and non-existence is the meaning of motion Which is the essence of nature and is reality.
- ¹⁴ Sadr ad Din al Shirazi, better known as Mulla Sadra (1572-1641). He believes that ancient philosophy combined with revealed truth gives the highest form of truth. He wrote a number of original works. The best of which is *Kitab-al-Hikma al-Muta'aliya*.
- ¹⁵ Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*,op.cit.,p.91
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*,p.103
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*,p.104
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*,p.105
- ¹⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, vol.1,p.38

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- ²⁰Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.91
- ²¹Ibid.,
- ²² Ibid.,pp.165-166
- ²³Ibid.,pp.166-170
- ²⁴ Ibid.,p.177
- ²⁵ Ibid.,p.127
- ²⁶Ibid
- ²⁷FredrichEngles, *Tatwir al Milkiyat al Fardiyap*. 14., Cf, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit,p.128
- ²⁸ Ibid
- ²⁹Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.129
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹FredrichEngles, *Tatwir al Milkiyat al Fardiyap*. 134., Cf, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit,p.134
- ³²Ibid.,p.135
- ³³Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.175.
- ³⁴Ibid.,p.131
- ³⁵Ibid.
- ³⁶Ibid.,p.136
- ³⁷ Ibid.,p.136-137
- ³⁸ Ibid.,p.137
- ³⁹Ibid.p.140
- ⁴⁰ Ibid
- ⁴¹Ibid.,p.143
- ⁴² Ibid.,p.144
- ⁴³ Political Economy is a common name for economics until the late nineteenth century, when government policies concerning finance and commerce (political) could at least be gradually separated from the realities of production, finance and trade (economic). Thus David Ricardo and John Start Mill's books (1817-1848) still dealt with "political Economy" where as Alfred Marshall's book (1890) is entitled Principles of Economics. Until recent times this term is the common name for the study of economic processes The term connotations of the inter relationship between the practical aspects of political action and pure theory of economics. Sometimes, it is argued that classical political economy was concerned with this aspect of the economy and the modern economists have tended to be more restricted in the range of their studies.
- ⁴⁴Karl Marx. *Das Capital*. Vol.iii, Sec.3. pp.1050-55, Cf, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.146.
- ⁴⁵Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.14
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.,149
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.,p.202
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.,p.203
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵²Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles, Op.cit,p.33

⁵³Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.209

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.,p.219

⁵⁶ Ibid.,p.220

⁵⁷ Ibid.,p.216

⁵⁸Baqir al Sadr, *Falafatuna*, op.cit.,p.28

⁵⁹Ibid.,p.81

⁶⁰Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.28

⁶¹Baqir al Sadr, *Falafatuna*, op.cit.,p.224

⁶²Baqir al Sadr, *Iqtisaduna*, op.cit.,p.225

⁶³ Ibid.,p.227

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.,p.228