

Mao Tse-tung and His Contributions to Marxism

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Abstract

This paper discusses about life and works of communist leader Mao Tse-tung. His ideology is considered as Maoism which in fact is the improvised and developed form of Marxism. Mao practically applied the theoretical approaches of Marxism in his country. Mao was the principal Marxist Theorist as we consider their and ideology and work, both Mao (Maoism) and Marxism focus on a proletariat revolution that would change the society. Marxism focuses on the urban workers while Maoism focuses on the peasant or farming population. Marxism was a theory. Maoism adopted the theory of Marxism and applied it to China. Marxism believes in an economically strong state that is industrialized. Maoism does not give value to industrialization or technology. Maoism believed that industrialization would provide further means to owners to exploit people further. That way, industrialization was believed as a means of weakening the proletariat revolution. Marxism believed industrialization to be an essential component for a proletariat revolution because then only the workers will know how much they are suppressed by the capitalist state. Thus this paper analytically and descriptively tries to study the Mao's works as communist leader in China and contribution to Marxism.

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Introduction

Mao Tse-tung was the principal Chinese Marxist theorist, soldier and statesman who led his nation's Cultural Revolution. Born on December 26, 1893, in Shaoshan, Hunan Province, China, Mao Tse-tung served as chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1959, and led the Chinese Communist Party from 1935 until his death. Mao's "Great Leap Forward" and the Cultural Revolution were ill-conceived and had disastrous consequences, but many of his goals, including stressing China's self-reliance, were generally laudable. Mao Tsetung's life was that of a practical revolutionary. From an early age, he devoted his energies to the task of liberating the Chinese people from their age-old oppression.

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Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to explore the concept of Mao Tse Tung (Maoism) in the application of Marxism in China in different perspective. This paper tries to analyze the concept of Marxism and Maoism. It also analyzes about the Mao's contributions to Marxism.

Methodology

This paper makes a brief description and analysis about the Chinese prominent leader Mao Tse-Tung and his biography along with his work in the establishment of communism in China. It also tries to analyze the concept of Marxism and Maoism; the thought given by Mao himself. And most importantly it tries to analyze the Mao's contributions to Marxism. As this is an

analytical and descriptive paper, it makes the optimum use of data from the secondary sources on the concept of Marxism, Marxist Political philosophy and Mao's contribution to Marxism and ideology of Maoism.

Mao Tse-tung: Brief Biography

Mao Tse-tung was the principal Chinese Marxist theorist, soldier and statesman who led his nation's Cultural Revolution. Born on December 26, 1893, in Shaoshan, Hunan Province, China, Mao Tse-tung served as chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1959, and led the Chinese Communist Party from 1935 until his death. Mao Tse-tung authored many books, among them: *On Guerilla Warfare* (1937), *On New Democracy* (1940), and *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (1946-1976). Mao Tse-tung died from complications of Parkinson's disease on September 9, 1976, at the age of 82, in Beijing, China.

Early Life

In the late 19th century, China was a shell of its once glorious past, led by the decrepit Qing Dynasty. Mao Tse-tung was born on December 26, 1893, in the farming community of Shaoshan, in the province of Hunan, China, to a peasant family that had tilled their three acres of land for several generations. Life was difficult for many Chinese citizens at the time, but Mao's family was better off than most. His authoritarian father, Mao Zedong, was a prosperous grain dealer, and his mother, Wen Qimei, was a nurturing parent.

Cultural Revolution

In 1966, Mao Tse-tung made his political return and launched the Cultural Revolution. Appearing at a gathering at the Yangtze River in May, the 73-year-old Mao swam for several minutes in the river, looking fit and energetic. The message to his rivals was, "Look, I'm back!" Later, he and his closest aides choreographed a series of public rallies involving thousands of young supporters. He calculated correctly that the young wouldn't remember much about the failure of the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent famine. In a classic autocratic method to gain control, Mao Tse-tung manufactured a crisis that only he could solve. Mao told his followers that bourgeois elements in China were aiming to restore capitalism, and declared these elements must be removed from society. His youthful followers formed the Red Guards and led a mass purge of the "undesirables." Soon Mao was back in command. To prevent a repeat of the rejection he received during the Hundred Flowers Campaign, Mao ordered the closure of

China's schools, and young intellectuals living in the cities were sent into the countryside to be "re-educated" through hard manual labor. The Revolution destroyed much of China's traditional cultural heritage as well as creating general economic and social chaos in the country. It was during this time that Mao's cult of personality grew to immense proportions. While Mao attended a small school in his village when he was eight years old, he received little education. By age 13, he was working full-time in the fields, growing increasingly restless and ambitious.

At the age of 14, Mao Tse-tung's father arranged a marriage for him, but he never accepted it. When he turned 17, he left home to enroll in a secondary school in Changsha, the capital of Hunan Province. In 1911, the Xinhua Revolution began against the monarchy, and Mao joined the Revolutionary Army and the Kuomintang, the Nationalist Party. Led by Chinese statesman Sun Yat-sen, the Kuomintang overthrew the monarchy in 1912 and founded the Republic of China. Spurred on by the promise of a new future for China and himself, Mao reveled in the political and cultural change sweeping the country.

Marxism

Marxism is a theory and method of working-class self-emancipation. As a theory, it relies on 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 laborers 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".

Marxism has developed into many different branches and schools of thought, with the result that there is now no single definitive Marxist theory. Different Marxian schools place a greater emphasis on certain aspects of classical Marxism while rejecting or modifying other aspects. Many schools of thought have sought to combine Marxian concepts and non-Marxian concepts, which has then led to contradicting conclusions. However, lately there is movement toward the recognition that historical materialism and dialectical materialism remains the fundamental aspect of all Marxist schools of thought. Marxism has had a profound impact on global academia and has influenced many fields such as archaeology, anthropology, media studies, political science, theater, history, sociology, art history and theory, cultural studies, education, economics, ethics, criminology, geography, literary criticism, aesthetics, film theory, critical psychology and philosophy.

Maoism

Maoism is the vision, policy, ideology, and political thoughts of Mao Zedong and his associates in the Chinese Communist Party. Mao Zedong Thought, or simply Maoism, is the vision, policy, ideology, and political thoughts of Mao Zedong and his associates in the Chinese Communist Party that were practiced from around 1920 until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. It represents a revolutionary outlook that was applied as a guiding ideology for the Communist Party of China. However, it is difficult to point out the content and basic features of Maoism in the context of the evolving course of the Chinese Communist revolution. The major difference between Mao Zedong Thought and other components of Marxism is that it advocates for peasants as the main revolutionaries in China because they are better suited to establish a revolutionary class in the country compared to the industrial working class.

The Origin of Maoism

The Chinese intellectual tradition of the past century can be defined by the concept of iconoclasm and nationalism. By the turn of the 20th century, part of the China's traditional elites like landlords increasingly became skeptical of the Confucianism. Therefore, they created a new part of the Chinese society, heralding the start of a revolution against the gentry as a social class in the country. In 1911, the last Imperial Chinese dynasty fell, leading to the final failure of the Confucian moral order. Confucianism later became synonymous with conservatism, leading to the iconoclasm among the Chinese intellectuals in the early 20th century. Iconoclasm was expressed profoundly during the New Culture Movement from 1915 to 1919. It aimed at doing away with the past traditions and cultures of the Chinese people.

The Chinese intellectual traditions were also dominated by the radical anti-imperialism that evolved it into a fierce nationalistic fervor which had a great impact on Mao's philosophy. In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles was signed which transferred the land ceded to the Germany in Shandong to the Japanese rather than returning to the Chinese. The treaty led to a violent protest in Beijing, politically awakening a society which had been inert and dormant. Prior to the violent protests in 1919, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had elicited interest among the Chinese intellectuals but a revolution was not considered a viable option until the 1919 protest.

Differences between Maoism and Marxism

There two differences between Maoism and Marxism are how the proletariats are defined and what political and economic conditions would start a communist revolution:

1. For Karl Marx, the proletariats were the urban working class, which was determined in the revolution by which the bourgeoisie overthrew feudalism. For Mao Zedong, the proletariats were the millions of peasants, to whom he referred as *the popular masses*. Mao based his revolution upon the peasants, because they possessed two qualities: (i) they were poor, and (ii) they were a political blank slate; in Mao's words, the peasants were: "A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful words can be written on it".
2. For Marx, proletarian revolution was internally fueled, by the capitalist mode of production; that, as capitalism developed, "a tension arises between the productive forces and the mode of production". The political tension, between the productive forces (the workers) and the owners of the means of production (capitalists), would be an inevitable

incentive to proletarian revolution, which would result in a Communist society, as the main economic structure. Mao did not subscribe to Marx's proposal of inevitable cyclicity in the economic system. His goal was to unify the Chinese nation and so realize progressive change for China in the form of Communism, hence, revolution was needed as soon as possible. In *The Great Union of the Popular Masses* (1919), Mao said: "The decadence of the state, the sufferings of humanity, and the darkness of society have all reached an extreme".

Mao's works on Marxism

Mao Tse-tung was not only a man of revolutionary action. He also had deep learning which embraced diverse fields such as economics, politics, philosophy, art and culture and military affairs. All aspects of Marxism were enriched by his thinking: the theory of the party, state and revolution; the development of a people's army and people's war, the theory of building socialism and philosophy.

Mao's "On Practice"

According to the Marxist theory of knowledge, expounded by Mao in "On Practice", all knowledge arises from social practice, particularly material production, the class struggle and scientific experiment. Knowledge develops in two interconnected stages (a) the perceptual stage- here only external and superficial aspects of a thing are grasped; (b) the logical stage - here concepts, judgments, inferences and theories are formulated; the essence of things is grasped, along with their internal contradictions, their laws and internal relations with other things. The logical stage develops out of the perceptual stage. Once formulated, theories must be reapplied to the practice of changing nature and society - this is dictated by the fact that such theories are formulated to solve practical problems and that their truth can only be determined by that application. There is no such thing as abstract truth, truth is always concrete. The cycle of knowledge is practice, theory, practice.

With this as his basis, Mao Tse-tung always insisted that the problems of the Chinese revolution could only be solved by the concrete investigation of Chinese realities. Mao Tse-tung stated pointedly: "In discussing a problem, we should start from reality and not from definitions..... Marxism teaches that in our approach to a problem, we should start from objective facts, not

from abstract definitions....and we should derive our guiding principles, policies and measures from an analysis of these facts."

Mao's Own Application

Mao Tsetung's most important contribution to Marxist philosophy is embodied in his work "On Contradiction". The opposites in a contradiction cannot exist without the other. Internal contradictions in processes, whether simple or complex, are its source of development. Mao's "On Contradiction" examines contradiction from all its aspects, including the temporary unity of opposites, which contradiction is principal and which secondary, antagonism and non-antagonism in contradiction, etc. The first great Marxist to point out the primacy of the law of unity of opposites, Mao Tsetung's whole thinking was permeated with dialectics. He once said of himself, "Take me, for example, I am not at all more intelligent than others, but I understand dialectics and I know how to use it in analyzing problems. If we use dialectics to analyze an unclear problem, the problem becomes clear in a trice. You must study dialectics, its efficacy is very great."

Conclusion

Mao Tse-tung is considered as one of the great leaders of world politics whose contributions to the development of today's China is praised all over. He left a controversial legacy in both China and the West as a genocidal monster and political genius. Officially, in China, he is held in high regard as a great political strategist and military mastermind, the savior of the nation. However, Mao's efforts to close China to trade and market commerce and eradicate traditional Chinese culture have largely been rejected by his successors. While his emphasis on China's self-reliance and the rapid industrialization that he promoted is credited with laying the foundation for China's late 20th century development, his harsh methods and insensitivity to anyone who didn't give him full faith and allegiance have been widely rebuked as self-defeating. Similarly, Mao Tse-tung has systematically studied the laws of the Marxist-Leninist dialectics and has developed Lenin's thesis contained in his work *On the Question of Dialectics*. Mao Tse-tung does not deny the law about quantitative and qualitative change or the law of the negation of the negation. Engels had dealt with all these things in his *Anti-Duhring*. But, what Mao Tse-tung does point out clearly is that out of these three laws, the most basic law is that of the law of contradictions and the law of the unity of opposites. In this way, he has put this question in a monistic way. He has refuted the theory of putting these three basic laws on a parallel footing.

For example, Stalin says that the second feature of the dialectical method is the law of motion or development. Actually, motion or movement is inherent in contradiction and this had been pointed out by Engels in his *Anti-Duhring* when he said “motion itself is a contradiction.” If we grasp that the law of contradiction, i.e., the law of the unity of opposites is the most basic law of materialist dialectics, then we can understand that all the other laws of dialectics spring from this basic law. Thus, it is clear that by asserting the primacy of the law of contradiction, the law of the unity of the opposites, Comrade Mao Tse-tung has creatively developed Marxist-Leninist philosophy and dialectics.

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