



The Value Pursuit of Marxism in China: To Serve the People

TANG Bin^{[a],[b],*}; XUE Junjun^[c]

^[a]Post-Doctor, Member of Marxism Theory Research Center of Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

^[b]Lecturer, School of Marxism, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

^[c]Postgraduate Majored in Marxism Sinicization Research at College of Marxism, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Serving the people is an important part of Mao Zedong Thought, and is the fundamental purpose of CPC. Marxism provides a theoretical basis for human liberation and development. Its ultimate value pursuit is to achieve the free and all-round development of human. Mao Zedong systematically discusses the main content of the thought of serving the people, which are the specific performance of Marxist value pursuit in China. Mao Zedong thought of serving the people is throughout the entire process of Marxism’s localization, and “whether it helps improve people’s living standards,” “represents the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people” and “people-oriented scientific development”, “China dream is a dream of people”, etc. are all the development of Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people. Serving the people is the value pursuit of Marxism in China.

Key words: Marxism in China; Serving the people; Pursuit of value

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INTRODUCTION

Marxism serves for the emancipation of the proletariat, whose theoretical goal is free and comprehensive development of human. The localization of Marxism also has a value pursuit of “human”, which is to serve the people.

1. THE VALUE PURSUIT OF MARXISM

Marxism can be broadly divided into philosophy, political economy and scientific socialism. Studies on the value pursuit of Marxism can take the three parts as carriers.

Marxist philosophy has been formed based on German classical philosophy. Marx has excluded idealism from his philosophical system: in Hegel’s theoretical system, objective idealism carried by absolute spirit occupies a central position, whose substance is to transform a non-existent abstraction into spirit, then imposes it onto people thus makes people’s status under spirit. What Marx has done is to stress the importance of the specific subject of practice – human; as per Feuerbach, abstract people replaces real people in the field of social history, which still cannot really liberate people. Marx emphasized that history has been created by people. Marxist philosophy is the philosophy to liberate people.

Dialectical materialism and historical materialism provide scientific world outlook and methodology to Marxist political economy (*Introduction to Marxist Political Economy*, 2011, p.9). Political economics studies

production relations, especially the capitalist relations of production, through the concept of commodities, currencies and capitals, etc. to reveal the tragic status of workers and capitalist exploitation. It is not a moral preaching, but the interpretation of the theory. Under the logic of capital, workers' labor is alienated, capitalists are personified capitals, science and technology are also alienated, and everything is alienated. Marx's research is to analyze the capitalist relations of production which cause these alienations. Marx's political economy is to make a profound analysis of the existing system, and to find new ways to achieve human liberation.

On the basis of philosophy and political economy, Marx has established a theoretical system of scientific socialism whose purpose is to build a new system which is able to realize the free and comprehensive development of human. Scientific socialism is the theoretical result obtained during the process that Marx and Engels used Marxist philosophy and political economy to investigate capitalist society (*Introduction to Scientific Socialism*, 2011, p.2). We can say that the value pursuit of scientific socialism more clearly refers to the development of human. Methodological basis of philosophy, rigorous argument of political economy, blueprint of scientific socialism, Marxism has always struggled for the liberation of human. The value pursuit of Marxism is human, free and all-round development of human, and liberation of mankind.

2. SERVING THE PEOPLE IS THE VALUE PURSUIT OF MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT

2.1 Connotation of Serving the People

Serving the people is an important part of Mao Zedong Thought, which is the theoretical achievement of Marxist value pursuit in China. Mao Zedong has repeatedly stressed serving the people, and serving the people wholeheartedly has become the purpose of the CPC.

2.1.1 The People-Oriented Viewpoint of Historical Materialist

"People, only people are driving force to create the world's history." (*Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.7]*, 1999, p.1031) Mao Zedong's sentence affirms people's impetus for the development of history. Creativity of people is unlimited, Mao Zedong highly appreciated the creativity of people, which is also the reflection of the people-oriented concept. Mao Zedong pointed out: "We Communists should brave the storm and face the world; this storm is the storm of people's struggles, this world is the big world of people's struggles. "Three Stooges, a wise synthesis", that is to say, people have great creativity." (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.3]*, 1991, p.933) The "people" in the view point of historical materialism of people creating history refers not to the elites, but to the common people.

The people-oriented concept also includes the thought that people can liberate themselves. As early as in the domestic revolutionary war Mao Zedong made a clear statement: "Buddha has been erected by the peasants, in a certain period the peasants will cast aside the Buddha with their own hands, and there's no need to discard the Buddha for them too early." (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.1]*, 1991, p.33) With the revolutionary development and publicity of advanced theories, Chinese people, including the peasants will certainly gradually awaken and break their heavy yokes to achieve liberation. China's revolutionary road is a strong evidence of this.

The people are the creators of history, people's creativity to create history is infinite, and people will be able to liberate themselves with their own strengths. Mao Zedong used simple language to discuss these basic views of historical materialism, which is the people-oriented thought, based on which the thought of serving the people has been built.

2.1.2 The Working Methods of Everything Is for the People, Everything Relies on the People, and From the People and to the People

Everything is for the people and everything relies on the people are built on the basis of a high confirmation of people's status. Mao Zedong firstly mentioned serving for the people in 1939. He criticized Confucius' viewpoint about "courage", pointing out that the "courage" of Confucius is "used to oppress the people and safeguard the feudal system, not to serve the people." (*Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.2]*, 1993, p.163) Mao Zedong's view is that we should be courageous to truly serve the people. Mao Zedong explained the view that literature and art should serve the people in *On New Democracy* and *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*. He said: "(The new democratic culture) should serve the toiling masses of workers and peasants who form 90% of our whole nation (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.2]*, 1991, p.708). For the literary and art forms in the past ages, we also do not refuse to use, but in our hands, they will be reformed, added with new contents, and changed to be a revolutionary server for the people." (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.3]*, 1991, p.855) In 1944 Mao Zedong published the article of *Serve the People* which clearly raised serving the people at the height of the purpose of the party and army. It is one of the most essential works of serving the people of Mao Zedong Thought.

The working method of from the people and for the people is the premise of serving the people. Only when we go deep among the people, we can get information, understand their needs, and resolve their sufferings in a pleasantly acceptable way. "Put people's opinions (scattered and unsystematic) together (through research into centralized and systematic views), propagate, explain them to people, make them be people's own opinions, make people persist and put these opinions into practices, and test the correctness in people's actions. Then we collect

opinions from people again, and implement into people again. Therefore we form an infinite cycle, each time our work will be more correct, more vivid and more abundant.” (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.3]*, 1991, p.899) Mao Zedong explained the basic steps of the working method of from the people and to the people: collect information, process information; publicize and explain, internalize into people; externalize into actions, testing opinions; collect again, adjust opinions; act in cycles, and strive for excellence. This is the best performance that Mao Zedong applied Marxist epistemology into serving the people.

After the founding of the P.R.C. Mao Zedong still repeatedly stressed the importance of maintaining close ties with people, he said:

In wartime, we should keep close ties with people, officers should be integrated with soldiers, army should be integrated with people. At that time, we had some shortcomings, people still understood us. Now it is normal time, not war, but trainings. If we do not insist on closely contacting the people, the people will find it's difficult to forgive our shortcomings. (*Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.7]*, 1999, p.280)

This emphasis is aimed to the military system, but it is equally applicable to the entire party and country. We rely on serving the people to make the victory of revolution, in the era of peaceful building, serving the people is equally indispensable.

2.1.3 The Communist Concept of Life and Death of Dying for the People

Communists have undergone the bloody wartime. Revolution, construction and reform must be aimed to serve the people, and establish a concept of life and death that dying for the people is weightier than Mountain Tai. This is the communist attitude toward life and death.

Mao Zedong in the article *Serve the People* mentioned that Zhang Side is just an ordinary kiln soldier, but his spirit of sacrificing for the people's interests is commendable. Mao Zedong pointed out: “dying for the people is weightier than Mount Tai; serving for the fascists, for the exploiters and oppressors is lighter than a feather.” (*Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Vol.3]*, 1991, p.1004) Such cases are numerous in the CPC's history. There are martyrs who fought bloody battles fearing no sacrifices for a new China in the evolutionary war time, there are predecessors who worked hard on various fronts of the construction of the motherland disregarding life and death, and there are workers who're struggling to establish a more prosperous motherland fearing no dangers and difficulties in the new period of new era.

The people-oriented concept is the basis of Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people. That everything is for the people, everything relies on the people, from the people and to the people are the specific content and requirement of Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people. That dying for the people is weightier than Mountain Tai is the loftiest realm that Communists serve the people.

2.2 Serving the People Is Essentially Consistent With the Value Pursuit of Marxism

Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people has broad and profound contents, which is consistent with the value pursuit of Marxism.

First of all, Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people is the inheritance to serving the people of Marxism. As early as in his high school graduation thesis in 1835, Marx discussed the idea of “work for human” from the perspective of career choice (Liu, 2011). In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels proposed: “The proletarian movement is the independent movement for the majority of people, and works for the benefits of the majority of people.” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels (Vol. 1)*, 2012, p.411) In *Civil War in France* Marx said: “Universal suffrage is not to decide every three or six years what people from the ruling class to be the representative of people in Parliament, but to serve the people in the communes.” (*Selected Works of Marx and Engels [Vol.3]*, 2012, p.100) Lenin also repeatedly stressed the need to serve the people in different forms. In *The Party Organization and Party Publication* she said:” It will be a free writing, because it does not serve for the ladies who eat all day long, not for a ten thousand elites who are bored and worried about their fatness, but for the millions of working people, for these essences, powers and future of the country.” (*Selected Works of Lenin [Vol.1]*, 2012, p.666). Lenin also pointed out that the Soviets are aimed to serve the people. He said:

Here, for the first time democracy serves for the masses and workers, and is no longer a democracy for rich people. While in all bourgeois, even the most democratic republic state, democracy has always been the democracy for rich people. (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping [Vol.3]*, 1993, p.568)

Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people is in line with the thoughts of above classic writers, and is the inheritance of their thoughts of serving the people.

Secondly, Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people is in line with China's national conditions. Under the special condition of semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, serving the people was also localized, and its language had a Chinese flavor. China has emphasized people since the ancient times, but the “people” has been the object to be drawn by the ruling class to maintain its governance. Mao Zedong proposed that the “people” in serving the people refers to the overwhelming majority of Chinese people. According to the central task at different times, the object of people is different at different times, but its main target includes the masses of proletariats and peasantry. By the Chinese charm in language, Chinese characteristics of object and Chinese habit of expression, Mao Zedong has localized Marxism of serving the people in China.

Finally, Mao Zedong Thought is consistent with the value pursuit of Marxist theory. The ultimate value pursuit

of Marxism is the free and comprehensive development of human. Mao Zedong thought of serving the people is the unavoidable way to promote human liberation and development when the developmental level of productive forces is not high, when China has gradually explored the road of development, and when classes, political parties and states still exist. In China, only when all the party members and cadres consist in serving the people and all levels of government do serve the people, the majority of the Chinese people are able to continuously liberate and develop, and eventually achieve self-liberation and development.

3. SERVING THE PEOPLE IS THE LOGICAL ORIGIN OF MARXIST VALUE PURSUIT IN CHINA

Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people has been established on the basis of inheritance to the Marxist value pursuit, and is instructive to the entire historical process of localization of Marxism.

3.1 Inheritance and Development of the Thought of Serving the People

Mao Zedong Thought is the first great leap of the localization of Marxism. It also provides a value orientation for the localization progress of Marxism. Deng Xiaoping Theory, the important thought of “Three Represents”, the scientific concept of development as well as realization of the great China dream all inherit and develop this thought.

3.1.1 Whether It Helps to Improve the Living Standards of the People

Deng Xiaoping Theory focuses on “what is socialism and how to build socialism”. For these two issues, Deng Xiaoping made answers respectively, which are the theory of socialistic essence and the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Finding out what is the purpose of socialism is aimed to better build socialism, therefore, the task of Deng Xiaoping Theory is how to build socialism.

On the construction of socialism, Deng Xiaoping has put forward the theory of reform and opening up, theory of the primary stage of socialism and theory of the socialist market economic. To evaluate the achievements of socialist construction, the standard should be determined by the people. “The standard of judgment should be whether it is conducive to the development of socialist productive forces, whether it helps enhance the overall strength of socialist countries, and whether it helps improve people’s living level.” (*Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping [Vol.3]*, 1993, p.372) The development of productivity and comprehensive national strength, in the final analysis, are for the people. Hu Jintao pointed out at the 100th anniversary of Deng Xiaoping’s birthday:

“Comrade Xiaoping always believed in the people, relied on the people, always put the people’s supports, their agreements, happiness and approvals as the starting point and destination to formulate principles, policies and make decisions.” (*Selected Important Documents since*, para.3, 2006, p.152)

3.1.2 Represents the Fundamental Interests of the Overwhelming Majority of Chinese People

The theoretical theme of the important thought of “Three Represents” is to answer “What kind of party to be built and how to build the party.” “Establishing the party for the public, ruling for people” is the basic requirement proposed by Jiang Zemin on party building. In 2000 his investigation to Guangdong Jiang Zemin completely and accurately represented the important thought of “Three Represents” for the first time, he said: “when summarize over 70 years’ history of our party, we can draw an important conclusion, that is, the reason that our party is able to win the supports of the people is because during the various historical periods of revolution, construction and reform, our party always represents the developmental requirements of China’s advanced productive forces, represents the orientation of China’s advanced culture and represents the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of people in China. Through the development of correct lines and policies, we will make unremitting efforts for the realization of the fundamental interests of the country and the people.” (*Selected Works of Jiang Zemin [Vol.3]*, 2006, p.2)

“Three Represents” is a requirement for the party, by contrast, we can find that it is in line with the main contradiction in our society, namely, the contradiction between people’s growing material and cultural needs and the backward social production. The representation of the orientation of productivity and culture is to solve this problem, and the representation of the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of people is to provide a direction to solve this problem - for the people’s interests, which is essentially consistent with Mao Zedong Thought of serving the people.

3.1.3 People-Oriented

The yardstick has been determined, the target of self-building of leadership has been represented, so the next step is the question of how to develop. The scientific concept of development has been conceived and generated in such a context. In 2003 when Hu Jintao visited Jiangxi Province he explicitly used the “scientific concept of development” for the first time. The resolution of the 6th Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee explained the meaning of the scientific concept of development, “adhere to the principle of people-oriented, establish a comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable concept of development, and promote the comprehensive development of economy, society and people.” (*Selected Important Documents Since*, para.4, 2005, p.465).

The report of the 17th National Congress of the CPC noted: “The scientific concept of development, the first prerequisite is development, the core is people-oriented, the basic requirement is to be comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable, and the fundamental method is to take all factors into consideration.” (*Selected Important Documents Since*, para.4, 2009, pp.11-12)

The scientific concept of development is the overall requirement to the economic and social development, and its core is people-oriented, where the “people” refers to the majority of Chinese people. Since the 17th National Congress, the party and the country have established a series of lines and policies which are all around the core of people-oriented: Building a service-oriented government is to better serve the people; integrating urban and rural development is to better serve the majority of people; developing socialist cultures is to meet the higher demands of people’s spiritual life; developing a learning-oriented party is to maintain the learning status of the party and continuously improve its ability to serve the people all these have a common goal, that is, to better serve the people.

3.1.4 China Dream Is a Dream of People

The new leadership leads the people to continue to work hard in order to achieve the goal. Xi Jinping explained the meaning of China dream, he said:

Everyone has an ideal and pursuit, has his own dream. Now we are discussing the China dream, I think, to achieve the great rejuvenation of Chinese nation is the greatest dream of Chinese nation since the modern times. This dream gathers the aspiration of generations of Chinese people, reflects the overall interests of Chinese nation and Chinese people, and is the common expectation for each Chinese son and daughter. I firmly believe that when the Communist Party of China has been founded for a hundred years, the goal of building a moderately prosperous society will be able to be achieved, and when new China has been founded for a hundred years, the goal of building a prosperous and harmonious modern socialist country of civilization and democracy will be a definite reality. (*The Excerpts of Xi Jinping’s*, para.8, 2013, pp.3-4)

China dream is a dream for the country, for the nation, and for every Chinese people (Xi, 2013).

China dream refers to national prosperity, national rejuvenation and people’s happiness. Its premise is national prosperity and revitalization, and destination is the happiness of the people. China Dream is the goal, and striving to achieve China dream is actually a journey to achieve, maintain, and develop the interests of the people. As Xi Jinping said: “China dream in the final analysis is the dream of people. We must closely rely on the people to achieve it, and must continue to work for the benefits of the people.” (Xi, 2013)

How to judge the success of our work, how to build the core of leadership of the socialist cause, how to realize the concept of people-oriented in development, and how to better safeguard the people’s interests in the process of achieving China dream, these are the reflections of Mao

Zedong Thought of serving the people in the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and are the inheritance and development of the thought of serving the people.

3.2 Serving the People Is the Main Value Throughout the Localization of Marxism

Mao Zedong Thought is the theoretical result of the first leap of the combination of Marxism and China’s reality, and is also an important ideological origin of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Mao Zedong Thought plays a key role in connection between Marxism and the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the thought of serving the people is in a critical position in this nexus.

Mao Zedong Thought has opened a great journey of localization of Marxism, which is also the process that sinicizes the value of Marxism. From the height of human history, Marxism has proposed the value pursuit of free and comprehensive development of human. China is still in the primary stage of socialism, and there is still a long way to go from human’s free and all-round development. The value pursuit of all-round development of human should also be combined with China’s reality, and this is the thought of serving the people. Free and comprehensive development of human is our ultimate pursuit, but due to the great distance between the reality and ideal, the free and comprehensive development of human is not yet a conscious state. We need a party which can serve the people wholeheartedly as the core of leadership to put the value of Marxism into practice.

The thought of serving the people in Mao Zedong Thought is the theoretical achievement of localization of the value pursuit of Marxism, and the Communist Party of China has conducted revolutions, constructions and reforms under the guidance of serving the people, this is why it could win supports of the masses and could achieve one victory after another. While the background keeps changing, the practical problems faced by our country’s development are constantly updated, but the thought of serving the people is never antiquated, like the revolutionary era and the era to explore constructions have passed, but Mao Zedong Thought never goes out of date. Different times give the party different missions. The concept of serving the people is also growing while inheriting. The common value source of these concepts is to serve the people.

Mao Zedong Thought is the inheritance and development of the value pursuit of Marxism, is the source of value pursuit of the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and is also the value pursuit of Marxism in China. It reflects the purpose of the party, reflects the mass line of the party, and is the intrinsic value power of revolutions, constructions and comprehensively deepening reforms.

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