

## Urban Cultural Philosophy in Light of Marxist Philosophy and Religious Thought: An Exploration of the Role of Spirituality in the City

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**Abstract:** Marxism, a doctrine body is introduced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels within the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally, it incorporated three main ideas which included historical theory, a political and economic program, and a philosophical anthropology. Before 1914, Marxism has also been practiced and understood by different socialists. Marx has criticized capitalism in his book, *“Das Kapital.”* This paper has focussed on the urban cultural philosophy in light of Marxist philosophy and religious thought within the context of China. For this purpose, the theoretical framework was discussed, focusing on the Marxism philosophy, its principles and holistic character. In this regard, the “Sinicization of Marxism” (SoM) was also discussed followed by policy orientation of Marxism. Therefore, it has been observed that Marx and Engels have presented a theoretical and practical approach of communism, which helped in improving the social relations. The ideological alienation of Marxism is presented in different forms in legal, economic, and philosophical theories. Marxism was introduced in China 1840 after the Opium war, and SoM was introduced in 1938. This helped in the integration of Marxism philosophy in Chinese culture, which was effective in improving the social development of the country. According to this philosophy, the social interactions and transformations influence the urban culture of a country, impacting the spiritual well-being and religious approach. The findings of the present study affirm the significant influence of urban culture on religious through and spirituality in the contemporary China in the light of the Marxist ideology. The present study has also been effective in providing different practical implications which can be effective in integrating communism and promoting worker rights.

**Keywords:** Karl Marx; Marxism; Sinicization; Communism; Capitalism; Urban Culture; Religion; Socialism

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In China, the unequal disbursement of resources, power and dominance

refers to the disparities regarding opportunities, wealth, and influence within different social classes. These disparities exert a negative influence on Chinese society in the longer run. The rapid advancements and economic reforms have resulted in the emergence of wealth gap among different social classes including the rich and the poor. However, this gap is evident in unequal access to education, the disparities in income, job opportunities and the access to healthcare etc. The Marxism theory developed by “Karl Marx” therefore focuses on the struggle among distinct social classes (Sheikh). According to Wei et al., the communist party in China has embraced Marxism theory due to which the economic and political system of China is potentially influenced (Wei et al., 2023). Marxism theory within the context of China has therefore affected various aspects including redistribution of wealth, state ownership of different industries and the pursuit of social equality. The Chinese leader usually undertake their governance in the form of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” which involves the principles of Marxist in the unique context of China. The concept of Marxist theory is also reflected within the context of China as it is of the view that distinct classes exist within a country. The dominant or rich class therefore exerts a potential influence on the weaker class due to which the lower class suppress with time. Therefore, both the political and ideological aspects are strongly influenced due to Marxist theory in China.

In China, Marxist theory was introduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mainly with the help of the “Marx and Engel’s” work (Guo & Wu, 2023). So those students and intellectuals of China who studied in Europe and were aware of communists and social ideas played a key role in prevailing Marxism in China. During the period of country’s invasion and the founding of people Republic in China the key issue has always been the puzzling and huge challenge of where China is heading. This was more related to what path China should adopt for its development and in which direction it should move. So, in the past century, China has made countless efforts and multiple explorations to solve this issue (Song & Zhao, 2022). It means that the Sinicization of Marxism is to join the real condition of China for thousands of years with Marxist theory so that a suitable philosophical road could be formed within the country (Ping, 2022). After the combination, the approach of Sinicization road has derived multiple theories through which Chinese continuous development can be guided. These theories therefore come down in a singular continuous line and entails the potential to keep pace with the time. It acted as the theoretical guideline for the development of China. Therefore, these theoretical accomplishments

which are the “science of Marxism and Sinicization” are the philosophical expression of the Chinese road and are potentially associated with each other.

The Chinese Communist party that was established in 1921 accepted Marxist theory as the guiding ideology. Following the supervision of “Mao Zedong,” Marxist theory was adopted by CCP within the context of China. The government in China still officially follows the “Marxism-Leninism” as the guiding ideology. But the practical implemented of Marxist theory in China has evolved to a great extent. Marxist theory has played a key role in “people Republic of China” from the revolutionary origins to the advanced political landscape. Although the practical application of Marxism in China has changed significantly and is moulded to the unique circumstances of China and the economic development of the country (Li & Zheng, 2023). Till today, Marxism holds numerous significances with respect to the ideology, it prevails in China with the elements of capitalism and the efforts of Chinese communist parties for maintaining effective control and stability. There has been a huge literature which has studied the Marxism theory from distinct ideologies but there is a scarcity of research that underlines the urban cultural philosophy in the light of Marxist philosophy and the religious thoughts on it (Paredes, 2023). The present research therefore fills this gap by exploring the role played by spirituality in China within the context of urban cultural philosophy. The philosophy of Marxist with its focus towards class struggle and materialism may considers spirituality from a distinct aspect focusing on socio economic factors. Whereas the religious consideration usually considers the spiritual aspects of life. Therefore, in the present research by considering both perspectives, a comprehensive and detailed understanding can be attained regarding the way spirituality relates with the urban life along with its influence on communities and individuals in China.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The present section aims to present a comprehensive review of the past studies on urban cultural philosophy in the light of Marxism and religion. Moreover, the present section explores the nuanced interplay of the three paradigms: Marxism, urban cultural philosophy, and religion to explore the role of spirituality in urban life. Furthermore, the present section identifies the gaps in the past studies on the nexus of Marxism, urban culture, and religion. In the classical perspective of the Sociology of religion, scholars

held this assumption that religion would disappear and lose its influence with urbanization and capitalist culture. This assumption was intensified by the decline of Christianity and the promulgation of Marxism, the ideology that viewed religion as a mystification of class interests (Turner, 2020). While analysing the association between urbanization and religion, Allam and Allam claim that religion has had a great impact on cultural, political and social landscapes in the city (Allam & Allam, 2020). Even in the contemporary era, religion holds a significant position in people's lives. Historically, urban studies have focused on hierarchical structures in urban settings. The 'urban' denotes a place or process of urbanization (Schafran, 2019). The work of Brien and Bove on Marxism explores "the spiritual" in the Marxist ideology (Brien & Bove, 2020). Their analysis of Marx's view of religion as the opium of people exhibits Marx's recognition of every individual's fundamental existential need to be associated with a religion. Villani et al. examined the role of spirituality and religion in the lives of adult Italians (Villani et al., 2019). The study revealed a positive influence of spirituality on the subjective well-being of people regardless of their religious status. Thus, the study affirmed the significant role of spirituality in contemporary society. As Marxism provides the theoretical and intellectual foundation for the Communist ideology, it has been explored as the intellectual foundation in the Communist countries. Ryu explored the role of Christianity in the Communist country, North Korea (Ryu, 2019).

Historically, the authoritarian rule of Kim Il-Sung (1912–1994) exerted strict Communist control over every dimension of North Korean society. Similarly, the country's religious policies, peoples' perceptions of religious beliefs, and attitudes towards people affiliated with religious beliefs were strongly influenced by the Communist ideology of the state, which was rooted in the atheist philosophy of Marxism. However, Kim's attitude towards Christianity was an anomalous case. He belonged to a Christian background. Therefore, he was never found condemning Christianity in public. Fahy has also emphasized the hate crimes of the Communist government in North Korea against religious groups (Fahy, 2019). Ngoc explored the status of Vietnam as a former strictly communist regime and a religiously pluralist country (Ngoc, 2020). Vietnam is primarily a communist country and has historically held a Marxist attitude towards religion. However, many communist countries have transformed from strictly atheistic countries to religiously pluralist regions. However, North Korea still promulgates atheistic notions and does not exhibit any kind of religious tolerance. On the other hand, previously atheistic and intolerant

communist countries like Russia and China have grown to exhibit religious tolerance. In addition, the study revealed that Vietnam was already tolerant towards religious pluralism and there was religious tolerance even in communist Vietnam. The study indicates that communism and religious pluralism coexist in Vietnam. However, Roszko claims that this religious plurality in Vietnam is strictly controlled by the state (Roszko, 2021). The state perceives religion as a competing authority in the country. As a result, the state does not recognize many of the religions of many highland ethnic minorities as official religions. The state regards these people's conversion as an outright rejection of the Vietnamese culture and traditions. Historically, Vietnam has been a hub of religious diversity and has sheltered people belonging to Buddhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Pietrasiak explored the history of Catholics in Vietnam and revealed that the state has regarded the Catholics as anti-national and anti-patriotic (Pietrasiak, 2023).

The Indochina war strengthened this narrative under the rule of the communist party, which came into power due to the promulgation of its nationalist and communist ideologies. However, after the reform of Doi Moi, the country went on the road to economic liberalization, resulting in more tolerance and acceptance of religious groups. As a result, the Catholics started enjoying more freedom and were even allowed to join the communist party. Petri analysed the situation of the Christians in Cuba, which has historically exhibited its adherence to atheist and anti-religious ideologies due to the framework of Communism operating as the intellectual foundation in the country (Petri, 2021). Today, Cuba is one of the most sensitive countries in the context of religious freedom. Evangelistic activities in the country are limited due to legal restrictions. The affiliation with a religious group is regarded as a political move against the country's regime. Thus, several studies have explored the interplay of spirituality and religion with the Marxist philosophy and urban culture philosophy. However, there is a significant research gap in the literature concerned with the role of religion and spirituality in contemporary China, and the present study aims to fill this gap by drawing on Marxist philosophy.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Marxism Definition

Marxism is stated as a both political and social theory. It incorporates

Marxian economics as well as conflict theory. Marxism was formulated in 1848 by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. Initially, it was laid out as the theory of revolution and class struggle. Marxian economics have largely criticized capitalism which was presented by Marx in 1867 in his book named *"Das Kapital"* (Mavroudeas, 2020). According to this theory, capitalism is a form of social and economic reproduction, which is flawed inherently, leading to failure. Capitalism is referred as a production process in the capitalists own all final products, tools, factory, raw materials, and profits while the labor is hired for carrying out the production processes. They are paid wages in return and no profits are shared with the workers. Marx also utilized the "labor theory of value (LTV)," for understanding the associated disparities in market prices (Doyle Griffiths, 2020). Marx highly criticized the concept of LTV, stating that the value of labor represents their violation. Both Engels and Marx have laid the groundwork for theoretical and practical approach of communism, which supports a classless system, emphasizing that all property is owned communally. In today's time, only Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, China and Laos integrate communist systems (Chenshan, 2019). However, communism has been predated by socialism over the years. Socialism is based on the public regulation concept within the production means, however, the people might also own private property. Socialist reform has been promoted in the present political and social structures. Both socialism and communism have opposed capitalism, which represents an economic system, incorporating laws system and private ownership. This system protects the ownership and transfer rights of private property.

Within the context of capitalism, two key issues were also claimed by Marx which include surplus labor extraction and chaos in the free competitive market. Therefore, according to Marx, capitalism would result in increased inequality, competition, working-class status and zero profit sharing among labor. This has also supported the alienation idea of Marx. This economic alienation was also supported by other secondary ideological as well as political alienations, representing a world in which the relationships between the individuals are distorted. The ideas formation of people is closely associated with material relations and activity (Henri & David, 2023). This is observed in all human activity including their spiritual, political, or intellectual activities. In this regard, law, religion, metaphysics, and morality are also considered to be vital in the real world. Marx's ideological alienation is presented in different forms within the context of legal, economic, and philosophical theories. A lengthy critique was done by Marx in initial *"Das Kapital"* and later in *"The German Ideology."* In this regard,

the supremacy of ideological alienation was observed within the context of religion (Rioux et al., 2020). Along with the ideas of Feuerbach regarding religion, Marx also stated religion to be a human consciousness product. According to Marx, religion might disappear with the changes in the associated society.

### 3.2 Holistic Character and Principles of Marxism

Holistic thought of Marx is presented in three systems including nature, society, and human. In the society's big system, the integrity thought of Marx can be stated as vividly and incisively. Marxism is a scientific truth which is developed and tested within practice. The "theory of opening-up and social reform" is stated as a communication relations and structure change theory. It is a theory which focuses on social development on the basis of historical materialism (Yanqiong, 2019). Therefore, the empirical methodology cannot be effective in dealing with the Chinese problems which arise from socialist development, emphasizing the "Sinicization of Marxism" (SoM) to transform the traditional culture in China (Li, 2022a). Moreover, the economic structure is stated as the base for all associated social relations, focusing on the production relations and productivity. However, the social structure theory expresses the holistic thought of Marx in the social structure. The three main components of Marxism include a political and economic program, historical theory, and philosophical anthropology. The society's nature is determined by the productive relations which produce the economic and social basis. Some scholars have also stated that the advantage of Marxism's basic principles lies in the combination of Marxism's three components which help in grasping its scientific knowledge (Wang et al., 2022). Based on various positions within the social structure, the role of Marxism is also different in whole society. The social structure can also be categorized into various objects, based on different angles. Therefore, more focus should be given on the social practice, transcending the past struggle between reform and revolution, promoting the society's development with joint social efforts.

The theory of all-round production represents the holistic thought of Marx within the social production. According to this theory, people live in a larger society system which depends on different relationships and resources. Therefore, without these settling conditions, Engels and Marx would have been liberals and not communists (Li, 2022b). The main goal of their lives was to disintegrate the capital logic. Additionally, the human beings have also changed the association between them and the natural world to fulfil their own needs. Therefore, it has become essential to

transform the advanced Marxism thought of sociality and humanism into Chinese culture, which can help in its adaption to the associated innovation and development within the economy, social politics, and culture of China. The basic principles within the context of Marxism incorporate openness, historicity, and development.

### 3.3 “Sinicization of Marxism” (SoM)

The SoM concept was initially put forward in 1938 by Ai Siqi and it was implemented in 1941. It applied dialectical materialism to the reality of China, formulating the world outlook of materialism and dialectics within the territory of China (Ping, 2022). For this purpose, the practical materials of China are considered for transforming China into a weapon and sharp method to attain liberation and independence. SoM is referred as the combination of “Marxist theory” (MT) with the culture as well as reality of China so that MT can possess the Chinese factors and adapt to fulfil the needs of the country. Therefore, Marxism was first introduced in China in 1840 after the “opium war.” During this war, the people suffered from different hardships. In addition, many western ideas also made their way into China (Zhang, 2021). The initial dissemination was from the foreigners who entered China to promote Engels and Marx theories. During this time, the theory was one-sided and fragmented and did not include all Marxism aspects. As a result, the people were less attracted towards these theories. Therefore, with the increase in the suffering of China, many people came forward to save the country, but all in vain. These people made many attempts to save the country from revolution victory, but all of these attempts were failed. However, the 4<sup>th</sup> May movement outbreak and the October Revolution within Russia, Marxism was also introduced at a larger scale in China (Li, 2022b). It was later accepted by a larger number of intellectuals. These intellectuals adopted different new channels to promote their innovative ideas. However, different problems have been faced by the people and other socialists in understanding the MT in China. Moreover, MT has also played an important role in the development of China into a communist nation (Meng, 2021). The SoM is an important concept for this paper as it can be effective in understanding the urban culture philosophy and religious approaches within the context of China.

### 3.4 Marxism’s Policy Orientation

The Marxism’s policy orientation focuses on the exploitation as well as inherent inequalities in the associated capitalist systems. It also supports



the central planning, empowerment of labor, collective ownership, and redistribution of wealth. Practical implementation of MT varies from the associated geopolitical and historical context. Some of the crucial factors within the context of Marxism's policy orientation are discussed below:

- According to MT, the society is categorized into two categories which include proletariat, which includes the working class and bourgeoisie, which includes the production's owners (Buissink, 2020). According to this philosophy, the history is influenced by the struggle between these categories, which also impact the distribution of resources and wealth. Therefore, the main aim of MT is to empower the proletariat.

- MT has also emphasized the abolition of the ownership of private property within the production process, supporting the concept of collective ownership. This approach is considered to be effective in reducing the wealth concentration and prevention of labor exploitation by private owners (Marx, 2019). Moreover, MT has also focused on the promotion of labour's rights. For this purpose, different policies have also been made over the years to support the rights of labor, motivating them to perform their best.

- MT also promote the redistribution of wealth and other associated resources to promote equality in the society. In this regard, taxation can be increased for the wealthier people to fund important social services and programs (Huettinger & Boyd, 2020). Additionally, Marxism also focusses on the promotion of economic and social equality which is crucial to reduce income, healthcare, and education disparities.

Therefore, capitalism is criticized by Marxism, emphasizing the implementation of communism which is crucial to promote equality in the society.

#### 4. URBAN CULTURE IN CHINA

The urban culture in China is potentially influenced by the ideas and principles of Marxism and the "Chinese Communist Party." According to Mojab and Carpenter, the class struggle and urbanization are the strong predictors of Marxism theory (Mojab & Carpenter, 2019). The urban China applies this concept to address the issues of inequality and class-based discrepancies among the superior and inferior groups. The struggle for class was promoted by "Chinese communist party" as a purpose to attain social equality which has impacted the urban culture. This is due to the fact that it has conveyed a sense of collective responsibility so that these issues

can be resolved. Marxism placed the “working class” (also known as proletariat) at the centre of its “revolutionary framework” (Huang & Ng, 2022; Turenko, 2022). In Chinese Urban areas, it has led to the prevalence and promotion of proletarian culture in which industrial worker’s struggles and contributions are acknowledged and celebrated. Therefore, the cultural activities, proletarian arts and literature have been motivated and encouraged, so that the experiences of urban workers can be reflected.

The ideology of Marxist supports collectivism and cooperative ideology instead of individualism. In this way, urban culture has been influenced as collectivism and a sense of community has been encouraged in the urban workplaces and neighbourhoods (Seeck et al., 2020). According to Pandžić, Marx’s work has laid the foundation for the future communist leaders such as Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Lenin (Pandžić, 2021). Functioning from the premise that capitalism lays the foundation of its own destruction, this idea has led to the formation of the basis of “Marxism” which served as a collective base for communism. The urban planning and architecture in China have also been influenced by Marxist theory, focusing on the functional or utilitarian designs in accordance with the requirements of working class. Therefore, the construction of public spaces and communal housing has been worked under the “Marxist principles” of shared resources and equitable disbursements. In the contemporary China, a critical mixture of socialist ideas, conventional aspects and the global influences has been reflected (Xuetong, 2020). However, the governmental body in China persists to promote the various aspects of socialist culture and ideology while implementing the elements of consumer culture and modernity in the urban areas.

The working class has also played a key role in shaping the urban culture of China particularly in accordance with the CCP and Marxist theory. The Marxist theory gives huge importance to the working class by considering them central towards the struggle of revolution. In the context of China, this perspective has resulted in the promotion of working class. This is due to the fact that they are considered central to the drivers of progress and social change. The labor Unions have also played a central role in representation of the interests of urban workers (Sayers, 2020). According to the guidelines of CCP, these unions are obliged to support the rights of the workers along with maintaining an adequate amount of control. In China, the rights of workers and the conditions of labor are crucial aspects of the “urban culture.” This the reason that the labor disputes or negotiations in Chinese urban culture are usually subjected to headlines. Similarly, in the urban workplaces, CCP exerts a significant influence and

within the urban factories many party organization exists (Ogunniran, 2020; Pang & Shi, 2023). Due to this, the parties exert a potential impact on the working class. Moreover, the ideological training and political education are the most common practices in the urban workplaces regarding the Marxist principles and ideology of parties.

As China has industrialized and urbanized to a great extent, a number of workers from the rural areas has moved to the urban areas for employment. Therefore, this urbanization has also altered the urban culture resulting into a great increase in migrant working class with various cultural challenges and characteristics (Ogunniran, 2020; Whiting, 2022). Through a prominent focus on proletarian culture, influence on the CCP and collective values the working class in China has played a key role in transforming the Chinese urban culture. As China has gone through different economic reforms along with urbanization, the experiences of the working class and the cultural potential has also changed resulting in a critical and diversified urban culture as evident in different cities of China.

## 5. RELIGIOUS APPROACHES IN CHINA

Owing to its huge population, it has become difficult to determine the religious identity of the people in China. Scholars have faced numerous difficulties in determining the religious identities and beliefs of the Chinese people due to the authoritarian rule of the government and the skeptical attitude of the Communist Party towards religion (PRC, 2023a). Moreover, there is a linguistic distinction of the connotation associated with religion in East Asia and other regions. Moreover, it is still not clear whether there has been a substantial change in the religious landscape in China since 2010 or not. Some studies have suggested a religious revival in China (PRC, 2023b).

In past, the Communist Party in China has tried to obliterate the religion in the country by calling it a reminiscence of China's feudal history. The reason behind this intolerance for religion is the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Communist Party. China was one of the states that accepted Marxism and Leninism as a revolutionary ideology symbolizing its modernization and independence. Today, China remains the only world power where the Marxist ideology persists and has been unaffected by the downfall of communism in the late 1980s (Saich, 2021). In the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), the linguistic codes for the religious beliefs are Zhongxiao (宗教) and Xinyang (信仰). These linguistic codes signify a

formal commitment to a religious organization or value system in the context of China. Thus, the closest translation of the English word “religion” in Chinese linguistic code is *Zhongxiao*. The term was adopted by Chinese scholars in the earlier half of the last century. The term was adopted while translating Western literature into Chinese language. Even today, *Zhongxiao* does not represent religious beliefs or customs it denotes a formal affiliation of an individual with an institutionalized clergy. Furthermore, a great portion of the Chinese population regards *Zhongxiao* as superstitious beliefs and moral corruption, a notion supported by the Marxist and socialist ideologies of the state (Meyer, 2022). In ancient China, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were the three dominant religious philosophies, and these philosophies have a significant impact on contemporary Chinese society as well (Wang & Wang, 2021). Article 36 of the constitution of China allows the citizens to enjoy the freedom of religious belief and limits the freedom to the practice of normal religious activities.

However, there is no definition of normal religious activities in the constitution (Li, 2020). The Chinese government recognizes Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism as the official religions. People associated only with these religions are allowed to build places of worship and perform religious services in the country (Yang, 2018). In contemporary China, many beliefs and practices are often associated with the term religion. However, membership in a formal clergy or institution is found only in a few. In East Asian regions, there is very little philosophical, cultural and traditional distinction between Buddhism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Taoism and other such folk religions that represent the worship of local folk deities (Hung et al., 2021).

People are often found following the religious practices of multiple folk religions without any regard for the boundaries or any formal institutional body (Huang et al., 2021). A significant factor that obstructs the accurate measurement of religious identities in China is the government’s authoritarian control over religious practices and places of worship (Mattingly, 2020). According to the U.S. government’s report, the total population of China till midyear 2022 was 1.4 billion. According to the 2019 SCIO, more than 200 million people are associated with a religion with almost 5,500 religious groups all over the country (OIRF, 2022). The preaching of the five official religions is banned in the country due to the government’s strict control over proselytizing and formal religious institutions (Min, 2019).

Resultantly, some religious groups face harsh treatment such as almost

one million Muslims, Uyghurs, have been detained in specialized camps. This authoritarian control over a particular religion can be linked with the Marxist atheistic ideology, which regards faith or religion as a backward concept (Dabphet, 2020). Thus, Chinese people exhibit reluctance to associate with a religious belief due to several linguistic, cultural and political factors (PRC, 2023a).

## 6. ASSOCIATION BETWEEN URBAN CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS APPROACHES

The religious approaches in contemporary China are governed by the world's largest atheist party, the Communist Party. Grounded in the Marxist philosophy, the party primarily discourages any kind of religious affiliation. In urban China, the Communist Party continues to exercise its control over the religious practices of people (Li, 2020). Thus, in contemporary China, the Marxist atheism exists in a dualistic opposition to the religious freedom (Wang, 2022). Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the contemporary Chinese state has been striving to achieve secularization and thus it has treated religion as an anomaly in the social and political realms. This state-promoted secularization has caused many violent actions exercised by the state on traditional religious practices (Cao, 2018). Contemporary China under the rule of Xi Jinping is exercising Buddhist diplomacy. Buddhism is a shared faith and cultural heritage among many East Asian countries, in a major portion in India. Over the years, China has considered making productive relationships with its neighbouring countries a primary motive of its diplomatic policy. With more than 245 million Buddhists and 16,000 Buddhist temples, Buddhism emerged as a primary source of soft power for China. Therefore, the state has been investing in Buddhist institutions as a part of its urban planning (Chung, 2022).

Religion has historically been regarded as a product of rural life and cities are generally considered secular places (Manouchehrifar & Forester, 2021). Over the years, interdisciplinary studies on urban culture and religion have studied the association between urban culture and religion under the influence of modernity. These studies were based on urban modernity and non-urban religious approaches and traditions. Nevertheless, some historical studies on urban culture have regarded the cities as a place of religious innovation (Burchardt et al., 2023). Burchardt and Westendorp analyzed people's religious investment in urban settings in the context of

Hong Kong (Burchardt & Westendorp, 2018). The study emphasized the significance of immaterial factors in studying urban religion. Zhang et al. analyzed the association between religion and the happiness and well-being of people in rural and urban settings (Zhang et al., 2019). The study revealed a positive association between religion and happiness in rural settings.

However, the influence of religion on the happiness of urban residents was insignificant. China's antipathy towards religious affiliation was at its peak during its cultural revolution. Karl Marx, the promulgator of Marxism has referred to religion as the "opium of the people." Thus, he viewed religion as a repressing factor that reduced the public awareness of class conflict. Thus, it does not let people go against the class system (Marx, 1970, p. 31).

Therefore, China's Communist Party has always promoted atheism as its official ideology, encouraging its members to avoid any kind of religious affiliation. The party's attempts to eradicate the religious beliefs and practices from contemporary China were at their peak during the 1970s. There was a strict prohibition of any kind of religious activity. There was a dictatorial promulgation of the cult of Mao (Poceski, 2021). However, the scholars have observed a revival in the religion in China since the 1980s. The revival of Confucianism in public life has been seen as a voice against the Marxist conception of religion in China (Mauldin, 2020). China has seen a religious revival over the past few decades, particularly in the context of its Christian population. Since the 1970s, the state has shown tolerance for a range of religious traditions, accepting Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Islam, and Protestantism as the official religions. There has been an increase in the number of local temples in the urban and rural settings.

A substantial number of religious sites have been built to hold communal services and for private worship. Local governments have been planning to restore religious sites to promote tourism and economic progress. As a result, the metropolitan centre of Shanghai has transformed into a hub of religious establishments. There are various local shrines, temples, mosques and churches in this urban centre (Poceski, 2021). The country is on the way to having the largest Christian population by 2030. The government has introduced numerous regulations to control its Christian population as the Communist Party views the religious groups as threatening the country's social security (Albert, 2018). Over the years, the Marxist control of the Chinese Communist Party over the life of the public has enhanced. The state has an authoritarian control over the media and religious groups.

The civil society and human rights movements in the country have been facing many challenges due to the authoritarian regime of its Marxist party (House, 2018). However, there is a wide range of religious faiths and practices prevailing in contemporary China. Even the followers of the same religion have diversity among them (Zhu, 2018). Thus, scholars have claimed that modernity in the context of China is characterized by rapid urbanization and the treatment of religion as a separate sphere of life (Kipnis, 2019).

## 7. CONCLUSION

The present research has been conducted to analyze the urban cultural philosophy in light of the Marxist philosophy and religious thoughts. For this purpose, the researcher has explored the role of spirituality in China. The researcher adopted a descriptive research strategy and undertook an in-depth analysis of the holistic character and principles of Marxism. The Sinicization of Marxism, the policy orientation of Marxism and urban culture in China has been explained in detail. The researcher has also discussed the religious approaches in China and the potential association between the religious approaches and urban culture in China. The discussion reflected that Marxism promotes communism that is a classless aspect.

In simple terms, it deals with the equal treatment of people in a society regardless of any status or class-based discriminations. The discussion has also highlighted that within the context of China, people also utilize religion for supporting their perspectives and personal motives. According to Marxism theory, social interaction strongly impacts religion. Due to this reason, people utilize religion for the political benefits. Within the context of China, Marxism philosophy was introduced during OPM war in the country. Afterwards China implemented and officially adopted the Marxism for the promotion of their social development. There are three components that were integrated by China in their social systems and eliminated the private ownership within the country. So, the Marxist theory focuses on the elimination of class distinctions and promotes the social equality.

However, the theory of Marxism exerts both positive and negative influences in China. The perception of this philosophy is dependent on the context and the nature of policies that have been implemented in China. However, it can be concluded that the significance of Marxism theory in

China are perceived distinctly by various groups and similarly, the opinions regarding this approach can also be highly differentiated.

## 8. IMPLICATIONS

This study has been effective in determining various practical as well as theoretical implications. A few of these implications are discussed below:

### 8.1 Theoretical Implications

This study has been effective in providing a detailed understanding of MT, incorporating different principles and components of Marxism. For this purpose, the concept of SoM has also been highlighted to understand the urban culture philosophy and religious thoughts within the context of China.

In this regard, the religious thoughts have been effective in promoting a spiritual dimension, focusing on the role of moral values, faith, and ethics in influencing social relations. According to Marxism, urbanization results in exploitation of labor and alienation. This also influence the emotional and spiritual needs of the working class, emphasizing the implementation of equality.

Moreover, this study has also helped in understanding the difference between communism, capitalism and socialism which can encourage various nations to take important measures to promote equality. This study has also helped in understanding the role of socialism in the development of a nation, which can encourage various nations to protect the rights of their workers, resulting in effective outcomes.

### 8.2 Practical Implications

The present study can be effective in the development and implementation of different policies within the context of MT which can be helpful in promoting equality. This study has also been effective in presenting Marx's criticism regarding capitalism theory, emphasizing the implementation of communism. Moreover, the present study has also been effective in highlighting the role of capitalism in destroying the social relations within the context of production. Thus, this study can be effective in encouraging different nations to focus on the formulation and implementation of laws and regulations for the labor, ensuring the promotion of rights of the workers.

In addition, this study can also be effective in promoting redistribution



of wealth, encouraging different governments to increase tax on wealthy people in the production sector. This approach can be effective in promoting equality in the community, leading to positive outcomes. As a result, more nations will also be encouraged to incorporate communism in their system to promote equality. Future researchers can also be encouraged to focus on different components of Marxism to contribute to the associated literature.

## 9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Every research entails some shortcomings. So is the case with this study. In the present research, the researcher has studied urban cultural philosophy within the context of Marxist philosophies and religious thoughts. This research has been conducted within the context of China, there are other countries which practice communism including Laos, Cuba, and North Korea etc.

In this regard, the application of Marxism within other countries have been ignored. Future researchers can therefore assess the cultural philosophy under the Marxist philosophies and religious thoughts by studying it in the context of other relevant countries where the approach can be applicable. Moreover, this research has analyzed the research topic in accordance with the Marxism idea proposed by Marx. Due to this excessive focus on Marx, the perspective of Engel has been ignored which also possess a limitation of biasness in research. Therefore, the future researchers can equally investigate the Marxism philosophy in a distinct context by paying a considerable amount of attention to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Due to the cross-sectional time constraints, this study has focused on the topic by limiting the aspects and topics related to the study. So, it encourages a room for a detailed and in-depth research regarding Marxism theory by enlightening different pros and cons of this theory under distinct settings. In this way, the limitations of this study can be addressed leading to diverse ways to overcome the potential challenge.

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