Prophet Muhammad's Islamic and Marx's Communist movements have inherent consonance and unity between them in fundamental and major issues. And the application of the two social systems has bore almost the same outcomes, too. Islam and Marxism are as if each other's "soul buddies" – almost.

[This essay is a translation from my Bangla article, □ □□□□□ □ □□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ *?*]

During my school, college and university days, I used to support Communist political movements in Bangladesh, still holding my religious belief that Islam was the best religion. But as horror stories of brutality committed by Marxist regimes started coming out after the fall of Communist governments in Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe, I ran into a phase of confusion because of the miserable failure of Communism and the unpardonable brutality under its application. Questions came to mind: How could such brutality be perpetrated by governments, guided by such a peerless blueprint of humanism? I thought leaders had made gross errors in application. Communism itself had no theoretical problems. Communism had fallen into that miserable plight solely due to the wrong people at its helm.

Thereafter start the phase of my transformation from Muslim Communist to agnostic or atheistic Communist and eventually to liberal atheist today. The seeding of doubts in religion and eventual my transformation into an atheist started with the reading Bertrand Russell's book. Russell was initially fascinated by Marxism. Successful Bolshevik Revolution in Russia (1917) had elated him. He visited Russia at the invitation of its Communist government in 1920 hoping to drum up his support for the Bolsheviks. But he returned with his fascination toward Marxism shattered due to the brutality of the Bolsheviks, the lack of liberty under Communism and the religion-like fanaticism of Communists. Similar thing had happened to our very own Rabindranath Tagore, who, following his visit to Russia at Stalin's invitation, became critical of the Communist repression of freedom of mind and expression, angering his inviter.

Russell wrote that Marxism has its foundation on the teachings of Jesus – that is, inspiration for the emergence of Marxism lies in Christian theology. At the time, I couldn't accept Russell's claims, because,

- Firstly, Marxism is an atheistic social theory, which emerged out of its battle with the very Christian religion.
- Secondly, Marxists are extremely opposed to Christianity

One will find appreciation for Hinduism amongst many communists in the West. All over the world, especially in non-Islamic countries such as from India to the West, one will see almost universal sympathy or appreciation for Islam amongst Communists. But appreciation for Christianity is rare if not totally absent amongst Communists, whether from the West or India or Bangladesh. If the foundation of Communism lies in Christianity, how could there be such near-universal hatred for Christianity among Communists anywhere in the world? What is certain however is that if there is sympathy for any religion among Communists, that religion has to "Islam".

Today, having studied the Bible carefully, I can't deny Russell's claim that the foundation of Marxism is contained in the teachings of Jesus. The most fundamental aspect of Communism is guaranteeing the subsistence for every individual in society. The responsibility for ensuring the livelihood of a person is placed on the shoulder of all others society. In the teachings of Jesus (i.e. Gospels), we see him feeding thousands of hungry people from a piece of bread in his possession. For example, in Mark 8:1-10, Jesus takes out a piece of bread from his bag and feeds 4,000 assembled men and women. Elsewhere, we see Jesus telling his prospective disciples to sell away their properties and riches, and distribute amongst the poor. For example, in Mark 10:21 Jesus tells a rich disciple of his:

…Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

Therefore, feeding all peoples in society with ones riches, even distributing one's wealth amongst the poor, is a fundamental teachings of Christianity (Whether or not Christians practice it is a different matter!). Similar is the most fundamental and important pillar of the Communist social system. Therefore, Russell's claim was spot on.

The questions, therefore, arise that:

1) Why Marxists show such abhorrence toward Christianity, but sympathy toward Islam?

2) Is it because of the greater similarity between Islam and Communism?

My latest investigation, indeed, points to the same – that Communism has greater similarity with Islam than with Christianity. Let is see how.

- ***Establishment of Proletariat Rule***: In the eyes of Marxist theory, the followers of Prophet Muhammad were basically the uneducated, poor and oppressed of the Arab society; they actually were the "Proletariat" of Communism. And feeding them and establishing their dominance in Arabia – that is, establishing the unilateral dictatorial governance of the Proletariat was the central aim of Prophet Muhammad's Prophetic movement. It may not have received theoretical prominence in Muhammad's preaching, but it was the central aim of his actions. On the other hands, Jesus had clear sympathy toward the Proletariat, but there is no emphasis for establishing their dominance in society or state, unlike in Prophet Muhammad's movement.
- ***Armed Revolution***: The primary aim of the Communist movement is to smash the existing social system with governance or dominance of the privileged and the rich. In so doing, the rich were to be subjugated under the Proletariat or exterminated them completely through mass-murder, and their wealth and riches were to be confiscated for feeding the poor or redistributing among them.

Prophet Muhammad's movement was nearly the same. In the Quran, we see Prophet

Muhammad condemning the rich, and when his mainly poor and deprived followers became powerful in head-counts and forces of arms, Muhammad started attacking and exterminating or exiling the rich communities of Arabia, and distributing the looted wealth of those communities amongst his Proletariat supporters (although he kept a bigger share, one-fifth, for himself). Allah has even revealed an entire chapter in the Quran on the matter of looted properties, name Surah *Al-Anfal* or *Spoil of War* (Surah 8).

We therefore see that on the question of armed revolution, Prophet Muhammad's Islamic movement and the Communist movement stand on the same line. But it is absent in Jesus' movement. Instead, we see Jesus sucking up to the powerful imperial Roman rulers, wherein he advised the Palestinian Jews to show subservience and duly pay taxes to the Romans.

Therefore, it becomes evident that in matters of both feeding and providing for the poor and armed revolution, Islamic and Communist movements stand on the same line. And in both matters, Islam was the pioneer for the Communist movement. Whether or not did it happen in reality, Islam certainly gets a place as *a priori* example for Communism to emulate.

Indeed, in the letters exchanged between Frederick Angels (d. 1895) and Karl Marx (d. 1883), the founding fathers of Communism, we see that they deemed Prophet Muhammad's Islamic movement as a kind of economic struggle between the rich and the poor like in Communism, in which the poor Bedouins were on one side and the settled or city-dwellers, engaged in the profession of commerce and industry, on the other. So, wrote Angels in a letter to Marx:

"Islam is a religion adapted to Orientals, especially Arabs, i.e. as on one hand to townsmen engaged in trade and industry and on the other nomadic Bedouins – their lives, however, a periodically recurring collision. The townspeople grow rich, luxurious and lax in the observation of the 'law.' The Bedouins, poor and hence of strict morals, contemplate with envy and covetousness these riches and pleasures. Then they unite under a prophet, a Mahdi, to chastise the apostates and restore the observation of the ritual and the true faith and to appropriate in recompense the treasures of the renegades." [1]

Thus, in the eyes of Angels, Prophet Muhammad's armed Islamic movement was a struggle of the poor (Proletariat) against the rich (exploiters/oppressors) for establishing parity in power and wealth. And Marx expressed agreement with Angels in his reply. Elsewhere Marx wrote:

"Muhammad was the man who rose with an iron will among people who worship idles. He invited them to monotheism and plant the immortality of psych in their souls. So not only he has to be included among the prominent men of the history, but also we have to confess by all of our hearts that he has been God's prophet." [2]

Therefore, we need not be surprised that well-known Irish socialist thinker Thomas Carlyle, is his book "*On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*", gave Muhammad a distinguished place, declaring "his admiration with a passionate championship of Muhammad as a Hegelian agent of reform, insisting on his sincerity and commenting 'how one man single-handedly, could weld warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades.'"
[3]
To be noted that Hegel (d. 1831) was the pioneering philosopher of the Communist movement.

Therefore, Islam, like Communist revolution, was not only a materialist struggle between the rich and the poor, but both Angels and Marx, the founding fathers of Communism, also saw Prophet Muhammad's revolution as a prior prototype of sorts for their own movement.

There are, therefore, compelling reasons behind the fact that Christianity and Judaism became the object of Karl Marx's harshest criticisms, but Islam was spared of the same.

Differences between Islam and Marxism

Despite the fundamental similarity and unity between the Islamic and Marxist movements, there are apparently some fundamental differences between the two. For example, Muhammad's Proletariats were only those, who would accept his leadership and faith; the rest constituted oppressor and exploiter class, and hence the object of extermination and plunder. In the Communist movement, although all of the poor and deprived were theoretically the Proletariat, in the real application of Communism, the same happened as in Muhammad's case. For example, in the Soviet Russia assisted successful Hungarian Communist revolution under the leadership of Béla Kun in 1919, peasants had overwhelmingly supported the revolution. But after the revolution, when the Béla Kun government wanted to nationalize all personal property, the same peasants refused to give up their lands. As a result, the peasants, who were key to the success of the Communist revolution in Hungary, became the target of oppression and brutality of the Communist government they had steered to power.

Communists placed in power through successful Marxist revolutions in the 20th century, such as in Russia, Eastern Europe, China, Cambodia and elsewhere, have caused the death of tens of millions of people (85 to 100 million in all)
[4]
. A considerable part of them died of famine, particularly in China, but the majority of them were killed by the Communists. And the majority of those died at the hands of the Communists in those countries were ordinary people of the society. Extermination of such a large number people in such a short time is rare in history. And because they had differences of opinion with the Communist authority or that they opposed the certain policies of the Communists, they had been killed in such large numbers despite belonging to the Proletariat class.

Prophet Muhammad, too, applied a similar protocol. He attacked those individuals and communities of Arabia, who refused to embrace his movement, mass-slaughtered or exiled them without caring whether or not they were rich or poor, and captured their homes, farms and wealth. The looted properties were distributed amongst his own followers, himself keeping one-fifth share of it. He also tried his best to exterminate those, who, after embracing his movement, left it – namely the apostates of Islam. The reason for Prophet Muhammad's attack of the infidels has been outlined by Allah in verses 59:3-4 of the Quran:

"And if not that Allah had decreed for them evacuation, He would have punished them in [this] world, and for them in the Hereafter is the punishment of the Fire. That is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger. And whoever opposes Allah – then indeed, Allah is severe in penalty."

In other words, a rejection of the Islamic movement of Allah/Muhammad was sufficient justification for attacking the rejecters for their extermination or mass exile, and confiscating their wealth. Prophet Muhammad applied exactly the same protocol – he attacked those communities, who refused to embrace his movement and leadership. And in the process, he had exiled the Banu Qainuqa and Banu Nadir tribes from Medina, while exterminated, by mass slaughter, the Banu Quraiza, Banu Mustaliq and the Banu Nadir Jews of Khaybar, earlier exiled from Medina. (see Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, Karachi, p. 363, 437, 461, 490, 510)

The Islamic and Marxist Utopia (Heaven)

We see that except for some secondary matters, such as belief God and afterlife, Islam and Marxism show strong unity or consonance between them. Still, Marxism has its own alternative to Islam's belief in the afterlife or passage to Heaven therein. Marxism dreams of a Heaven but on the earth itself in the form of a "Utopia" or "Perfect Society". Islam and similar religions, on the other hand, dream of a heaven both in this world and the imaginary life to come next, particularly in the latter. And Islam and Marxism undertake the same *modus operandi*, namely violence or armed revolution, for the creation of their respective earthly Utopia. The command for armed revolution for creating its own ideal society on earth is absent in Christianity.

What is interesting is the fact that there is fundamental similarity between Islam's afterlife Heaven and Marxism's earthly Utopia, although it may not have been clearly spelt out. The Islamic Utopia or Heaven would be such a society, where all needs and wishes of its blessed residents would be fulfilled automatically. Whether one craves to drink wine or eat certain fruits, it will be in his/her mouth as soon as the thought comes to mind. They don't have to do any work for that. As a result, the only thing the residents of the Islamic Heaven would busy themselves with is pleasure and unceasing sex with heavenly virgins.

Marx, too, dreamt of a similar Utopia in effect. According to Marx, work and efforts for meeting the daily necessities of life deprives us of the opportunity for our personal and intellectual development, which should be the primary objectives of the thinking human species. Therefore, there is a promise for liberating humans from the production machinery or labor-force as much as possible in the ultimate Marxist society (Utopia). In that ultimate Marxist society, the production system would be highest, possible completely, mechanized. In this respect, Marx wrote: [5]

"Freedom in this field (i.e. from labor) can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom only with this realm of necessity as its basis. Shortening the working-day is its basic prerequisite."

It means that in Marx's Utopia, efforts for production will be aimed at sufficiently feeding the stomach, not more. In other words, human beings, at the height of their true freedom, would be detached from the production machinery as much as possible. With the blessing of science, machines would be sufficient for producing enough to take care of our stomachs. Therefore, human beings, as per Marx's dreams and wishes, would dedicate themselves to do whatever

they like for their personal and intellectual development.

It's obvious that Marx's desired "ultimate Utopia" would be nothing but a factory of idle minds (people). And in that a society, as per Marx's expectations, human beings, in line with human nature and out of their own free will, will busy themselves in activities for a so-called personal and intellectual development, purely aimed at self-satisfaction of the individual. What would or could those activities be?

Undoubtedly a very few individuals at best would engage themselves in intellectual investigations and development, while the overwhelming majority would busy themselves in pleasure and entertainment – wine, marijuana, music and sex. In such a society, only these activities would be in consonance with human nature. Therefore, Marx's Utopia is hardly different from the Islamic Paradise. They are nearly reflections of each others.

In sum, it is doubtless that Prophet Muhammad's Islamic and Marx's Communist movements have inherent consonance and unity between them in fundamental and major issues. And the application of the two social systems has bore almost the same outcomes, too. Islam and Marxism are as if each other's "soul buddies" – almost.

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[1] Engels, *On the History of Early Christianity*, 1894.

[2] Quoted from the book, '*Muhammad among Western Scholars'* (p. 10), in *Prophet Muhammad in Western Thinkers' Viewpoint*
; http://www.ido.ir/en/en-a.aspx?a=1390050401

[3] Heroes and Hero Worship, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Carlyle#Heroes_and_Hero_Worship

[4] *Mass killings under Communist regimes*;
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_killings_under_Communist_regimes

[5] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 3, p. 85; New York, 1967