

Services

[Are Services The Origin Of Ownership!](#)

A careful analysis reveals that we are the rightful owner of our labor, be it production work or a service. Entitlement of an individual to his labor constitutes the pith of all kinds of ownership. So far as his productive work continues to be there, he is the rightful owner of the same. Likewise if his work entails formation of an object manifesting his accumulated labor, he is also considered to be its owner.

But if a person is engaged in a sustained work and it does not exist in a crystallized form, then what type of claim does he have?

Would it be correct to say that a doctor who treats a patient can claim to be the owner of the patient's health? Is a tailor who transforms a piece of cloth given to him into a garment, entitled to a share? If you take your darling children to a doctor for treatment, can he put forth a similar claim and say that he should have a legitimate share of the children? Obviously not, because a person is not another person's property and therefore the interpretation of the term "ownership" is impertinent here.

However in the "service sphere", it would be correct also to say that person engaged in such activities is the owner of the same and no demarcation line is drawn. In both the spheres of "services" and "productive work", the individual's efforts act to constitute ownership.

However, the qualities of tangibility and crystallization cannot be ascribed to the former in the manner they exist in the case of the latter.

What would happen if a baker claimed to be the owner of the bread so baked, and refused to give bread to other. A doctor offers a service similar to that of a chemist, except that the chemist can produce and present the embodiment of his labor in the form of drugs. While a doctor cannot crystallize his work in an object. Although one can say that medical instructions can be considered to be productive. However, can a doctor's work be considered as productive if it is utilized to treat a retired old man, who is not productive to the society and is merely a consumer?

The stance adopted by socialists vis-a-vis wage system is a hostile one, advocating its complete liquidation. To further reinforce the conviction, they attribute the concept of alienation to it and go on to reason out that an individual, under the wage system gauges his personality in accordance with the level of his wage. In this bid, all other noble aspects of humanity, such as achievement of perfection, are eclipsed by his overwhelming consideration for monetary gains.

Therefore, to rid mankind of this evil with all its dangerous implications, wage system must be abolished from the sphere of economic activities, and treat the individual's labor value instead of wages as a proper remuneration to be paid to him.

However one can foresee that a person, with a lust for self-aggrandizement, under the conditions of a wage system or otherwise, will continue his relentless efforts in accumulating more wealth. For example, a switch-over from the wage system to a non-wage system would not guarantee the cessation of the mode of thinking of a self-sufficient carpet-weaver. He may furnish all his rooms with various carpets woven by him, instead of giving priority to or having no consideration for his society's needs for the same. In other words, his concern for his own self overshadows all other important aspects of a social life. Moreover, can you recall any practical socialist government under which the issue of wage system may have been abolished or become non-existent?

The Motive to Work

A full-fledged Marxist system is governed by the motto of putting unlimited goods and services at the disposal of the citizens. An individual worker is under no direct constraints with regard to the volume of his production and contribution to the state economy. While his entitlement to a share from the aggregate available goods and services are a discretionary matter for him. He is not obliged to maximize his production efforts. This is meant to drive out the concept of economic alienation from the socio-economic sphere, and thus render it clean of the injurious element.

The parochial attitude on insulating the economy from the concept of greater productivity as a means to achieve greater consumption levels, and to have an alienation-free society, will in the long run, cause degeneration of the economy through lethargy and sluggishness.

As a counter-argument it is contended by Marxists that under the conditions of a Marxist system, an individual, having attained the highest level of development, is spontaneously gravitated towards work and greater activity, while being utterly repulsive to laziness and inactivity. Therefore, an individual rendered jobless one way or the other would inescapably tend to view his joblessness as a factor limiting his progress towards perfection.

Therefore, under such a social set-up, individuals are activated to work out of an intense love for the system rather than the remunerations promised by it. Hitherto, we have neither witnessed nor come across such an example in the world except in case of some outstanding individuals. Under the existing

social institutions, whether capitalist or socialist, there are observed innumerable cases of servility of individuals. In certain cases, it may be more overt, and in others more subtle and covert. While in the former case, companies and individuals are the exploiters, in the latter, the State itself becomes the exploiter.

The idea that all individuals should possess capital and equipment so as to engage in the tasks of sowing and reaping, and thus provide their own food is fallacious. The services extended by a teacher or a doctor have nothing to do with the above-mentioned activities. They have their own distinct intrinsic usefulness, and their dispensation should meet all the relevant wants of the society. It is right that the principle of "from each according to his will, to each according to his wish" reigns supreme, and therefore the element of "alienation" is done away with.

It's right that the society abounds in its needed goods and services, owing to the twin factors of plentitude and the cultivated sublime quality of due self-restraint in consumption. This is supreme and can do away with alienation and all other evil repercussions of the wage system, but before having access to such human beings and such societies a mere shift from one system (socialism) to another (communism) is of no use. Because under any system, there are certain types of beneficial efforts, which ought to be paid wages so as to encourage a venture into the same. At the same time, any attempt at delimiting the individual's needs under communism, will raise a reversion to the conditions of socialism with all its concomitant limitations. Under such conditions an individual is prompted to engage in greater activity for higher gains subject to government's definition of the individual's level of needs.

In a bid to satisfy his social needs over and above what is initially dictated, an individual will have to engage in extra work, the remunerations of which are likely to be confiscated by the government. Meanwhile, systems different from socialism, have been more successful in production; and this is substantiated by facts.

No doubt economics plays a very crucial role, but it cannot possibly occupy the sacred place rightfully accorded to ethics as an infrastructure in human lives. The prime motive must be to mould individuals imbued with all the sublime qualities of "justice" and "integrity". Here we do not attempt to ignore the vital bearings of an individual's economic milieu on his morality and functions in the society. In other words, due importance is attached to the factors of morality, economy, spirituality and materialism interacting upon one another in the process of formation of an individual's entity.

Work constitutes the origin of ownership. Of course, if one allows public ownership on public property as it was discussed, then we would have ownership with no labor. There are, however, cases of *laghateh* which means that you find something which is not claimed by anyone. Such items are treated as common properties, and the act of picking it up and bringing it into one's possession is nothing but *Hiazat*. Therefore, *laghateh* means the act of coming into possession of a thing which has previously had an owner but for the moment is not claimed by anybody and it bears a price.

Now let us suppose that a person gives us a pen in whose production we were not involved at all. How can we treat such a case? This is a transfer, and constitutes a second-grade ownership. The original owner, whether the person who gave it to us or the previous owner, ought to have worked for it, and therefore the pen can be legitimately accepted.

Mr. A's father dies and he inherits his father's property. This too is treated as second-grade ownership because the inherited property is assumed to have been acquired through labor.

Therefore, we can conclude that labor is the platform where the concept of ownership originates and is molded, be it productive work or service of *Hiazat*.

Basis of Ownership

To sum up our previous discussions we can attribute three types of ownership to man. He is the owner of himself and therefore the owner of his current labor, the part of his labor crystallized in an object and he is also the owner of nature jointly with other human beings.

When we say man is the owner of himself, we are considering a human being vis-a-vis other human beings, and the idea of God, the Supreme Owner of the universe, does not come into the picture.

Here we are following innate logic that all human beings or, on a larger scale, all living beings, have a share in nature. An animal, preying upon other animals, can be considered to have its share in nature; just like human beings. However, the term "ownership" has applicability and pertinence only to human beings, and therefore animals are excluded. However, a man's action in separating his share from nature has to be governed by certain norms which act as safeguards to the rest of humanity's share.

All schools of thought have, invariably acknowledged human beings' dependence on nature, and the issue of ownership, its various kinds and degrees, has interspersed their history. Historical evidence testifies to our claim that ownership and its ensuing demarcation lines always dominated the relationship of an individual vis-a-vis another individual, group or groups of people.

Therefore, the idea of absolute commune contended by Marxists, does not enjoy historical sanction. At least there is no concrete evidence to this effect. Absolute common ownership may have existed only in the case of families. However, outside the family bounds, the social scene must have been rife with ownership-related conflicts.

Such views, because of the fact that they are crystal clear and obvious, do not need to be held and expressed unanimously and by all. Therefore, their opposition by a certain group does not invalidate them.

Up to now we have discussed three main origins of ownership. These are followed by three bases of ownership which are corollaries to the former types.

Exchange Or Barter

Exchange can be described as voluntary disposal of a good or service upon acquisition of a good or service of a different nature, on the basis of mutual consent. Messrs. A and B, both have an object of their own. Mr. A has a fancy for Mr. B's object and vice versa. So, their willingness to engage in the exchange enjoys all the necessary approbation accorded by innate logic. Therefore, in exchange, there is a shift of ownership of objects from one individual to another. I had a kilo of apples which I exchanged for a kilo of melons that my friend had. Through this process, what I possess now is one kg. of melons, and likewise my friend has in his possession one kg. of apples which initially belonged to me.

What constituted my ownership of the apples must have been either *Hiazat*, productive activity or service; and the same thing applies to my friend. This is, however, labelled as second-grade ownership; because my present ownership of one kg. of melons presupposed my having obtained one kg. of apples, either through *Hiazat*, productive activity or service. And likewise it is a "must" that my friend had to obtain his initial one kg. of melons through the same process. Otherwise, engaging in the barter would not have been rendered legitimate.

In barter, two values are placed against each other, and attainment of one value embodied in an object necessitates relinquishment of another value. However, the prerequisite which warrants transfer of ownership, is the prior acquisition of the object through the usual operations of *Hiazat*, productive activity or service.

In a village, a doctor may barter his service for a few eggs, or if the patient has no money, the doctor may accept firewood in return for his service which *Hiazat* has fetched him.

Likewise, a service is likely to be bartered for another type of service. A doctor and a painter may mutually agree that in exchange for treatment given by the doctor, the painter would paint his building. Therefore, the doctor would become the owner of the painter's labor for a specific period of time and according to all the specifications mutually agreed upon. In the latter case, ownership of the painter's labor by the doctor constitutes a second-grade ownership, and any unilateral revocation of the agreement is tantamount to violation. In the light of above examples we are therefore faced with another source for value which is called the exchange value.

Definition of Exchange Value

Proportion of exchange between two items of consumer value is called the exchange value. Determining the amount of this proportion is so intricate in terms of different types of societies that its full discussion demands a detailed account; and it is this proportion which can be just or unjust. Discussion of its constituents, namely energy input, the number of spent hours, quality and quantity of the tools deployed and of the goods or services offered and one degree of their relationship, has been a focal point and an indispensable weight in an unbiased determination of their equitability or otherwise.

An individual, living in a progressive society with innumerable and complex wants, cannot unilaterally meet all his needs through *Hiazat*, productive activity or service. At the same time, consequent upon his specialized sphere of activities, a surplus of goods or services over and above his individual and family needs is inevitably generated.

Therefore, a spontaneous ground for barter is provided, and it is used by the members of the society. It is noteworthy to mention here that an individual should always be barred through *Hiazat* from excessive accumulation of a good, which is scarce in nature, and from its barter for goods and services needed by him. This is meant to preclude the possibility of exploitation of others, who are not exposed to that particular good as he is.

Under conditions of primitive barter system confined only to neighborhoods, the possibility of exploitation is precluded. For example, a villager may exchange his surplus eggs for a certain amount of meat with his neighbor. Or he may exchange a glass of superior cow milk for a glass of inferior cow milk plus two eggs with his neighbor. However, if barter becomes professional in nature and is placed in the category of "services", then it ceases to possess its simple characteristics to pose the threat of exploitation.

For example, a peddler may offer to his village folks two meters of cloth brought from the city in return for 20 eggs, and thus a little profit is automatically earmarked for him. Now if he gets 2 1/4 meters of cloth for his 20 eggs from another cloth dealer, and exchanges the same for 25 eggs, then in the course of this barter, he has earned 5 extra eggs for consumption by himself and his family. Likewise, a provision store owner may get a profit of 150 *tomans* after 8 hours of work in a day. But if he gets 3000 *tomans* in a day, then it is an indication of exploitation; and the rates and his business activities must, therefore be regulated.

Therefore, we have seen that contrary to its initial stage, the barter system can be transformed into an exploitative affair in subsequent stages after it enters the domain of "services".

A trader, a dairy product shop owner and their like perform a specific role in society, and because of that, they become entitled to remuneration; just like a laborer.¹ However, utmost care must be exercised to ensure a just and optimum rate of return rather than unduly exorbitant profits rampant under capitalistic conditions.

Today, all the countries invariably engage in bilateral trade with one another. The capability of a merchant, however, in concluding a useful deal with the outside world, does not justify his action of charging exploitative rates from the people just because he has such acquaintance. Meanwhile, he is entitled only to a modest rate of profit.

Relinquishment: Innate logic has also sanctioned relinquishment of the use of an object as a resultant yield of his labor in favor of another person. In such cases, transfer of ownership is voluntarily affected from one person to another.

1. The scope of the term "labor" is large enough to accommodate terms like "physical" as well as "mental exertions". The managerial skill of a manager or that to an accountant constitutes a specific type of labor and exertion. However, this differs from that of a construction laborer. An accountant or a manager applies his mental capacities in the form of knowledge of economics. Accountancy, etc., in identifying and determining the value, the opportunity cost and profitability of an investment. Therefore, he automatically qualifies for dividends against the labor put in by him. The pay scale allowed to him may be equal to or two or three times larger than that of a simple laborer, but not 10 or 100 times.

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