

## NATURE OF CLASS CONFLICT IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

V. M. DANDEKAR

I have been asked to speak on a difficult subject. I accepted the invitation not because I feel equal to the task but because I believe that, for a proper appreciation of the several problems that the Indian society is presently facing, we must understand the nature of the underlying class conflict. This sounds very Marxian. I do not at all mind. Indeed, I shall feel proud if I am ever recognized as one belonging to that great school of social analysis. As I see it, it is not a single, inviolable, unchanging doctrine but a method of analysing social change, founded on unsparing examination of social facts and merciless pursuit of logical analysis. As late Prof. D. D. Kosambi said Marxism is a method of thinking and not a substitute for thought.

Unfortunately, Marxism has been altogether too often taken as a substitute for thinking. Baran and Sweezy, the renowned American Marxists, rightly complain that "Marxists have too often been content to repeat familiar formulations, as though nothing really new had happened since the days of Marx and Engels — or of Lenin at the latest. As a result, Marxists have failed to explain important developments, or sometimes even to recognize their existence." This has led to stagnation of Marxian social science with lagging vitality and fruitfulness.

I shall approach my subject with the Marxian method because it emphasises the importance of studying the society as a whole, how it works and where it is going. But I shall take into account new facts and developments that have occurred since Marx wrote and also the particular circumstances of the Indian society and, in the light of these, I shall be willing to modify Marx's conclusions wherever necessary.

It will be useful to begin by examining Marx's concept of Social Class and of Class Struggle. In his historical writings, Marx referred to several social classes. For instance, in his work *The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850*, Marx distinguished six classes: financial bourgeoisie, industrial bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, peasants, proletariat and Lumpenproletariat. In this, Marx was merely adopting the concept of social class which was widely used by historians and social theorists of that time.

\* G. R. Bhatkal Memorial Lecture delivered in Bombay on 28-12-1977.