

# ON CLASS CONFLICT IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

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THE ARGUMENT of Prof. V. M. Dandekar in his paper on the 'Nature of Class Conflict in the Indian Society', divides itself into two parts. The first part consists of a critical review of the doctrine of class struggle expounded by Marx (and Engels), particularly in the Manifesto of the Communist Party. In the second part of his argument Prof. Dandekar examines the relevance of this particular view relating to class conflict, to present-day Indian society. In the whole of his analysis what is under review is the 'Marxian' doctrine as distinct from the 'Marxist' doctrine, the distinction between the two terms being on the lines of that made by M. Rubel.<sup>1</sup> I shall address myself below to each of the two parts of Prof. Dandekar's argument separately one after another.

## I

It is a truism that the capitalist society today is different in several respects from that which Marx analysed in the 19th century. Marx developed certain analytical tools to understand what he described as the 'laws of motion' of a capitalist society. With the help of these tools he attempted to lay bare what he understood as the exploitative process under capitalism and to elucidate the mechanism by which change would inevitably take place. The pertinent question is whether these Marxian tools are useful even today under the changed circumstances.

In a sense 'class' is the fulcrum of the Marxian theory of social change. A few aspects of Marx's concept of class may be noted here. As Marx says in 'The Eighteenth Brumaire': "In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and that place them in a hostile attitude towards the latter, they form a class".<sup>2</sup> Thus it is not merely that classes are different and unequal, but the inequality which stems from the ownership (and lack of it) of the means of production and which consequently extends to possession of power of all kinds in society, breeds conflict. In the Marxian view this conflict is a vehicle of social change. Then again

<sup>1</sup> According to usage adopted by M. Rubel Marx's own views are referred to as 'Marxian' and those of his disciples as 'Marxist'. See, Leopold Labedz (ed.), Revisionism, "Essays on the history of Marxist ideas", p. 12, footnote 1.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in Marx-Engels: Selected Works, Vol. I", Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1955, p. 334.