

NATURE OF CLASS CONFLICT IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY : A Comment

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PROFESSOR Dandekar's paper raises a series of questions regarding the interpretation of the Marxian concept of class, analysis of the Indian data and his general approach to the study of Marxian theory. First, I shall take Professor Dandekar's interpretation of the Marxian concept of class and the application of this concept to paint a picture of the class composition in India. With mathematical precision Professor Dandekar comes to the conclusion that in India all employees, white-collar and blue-collar with wages varying between Rs. 200 and Rs. 2000 or more form the proletariat. I think, this classification is based on his and on several others' misinterpretation of Marxian concept of social class. According to Marx, differences in wages do not create classes. Marx did not recognize "the identity of revenues and sources of revenues" (*Capital*, Vol. III) as a class criterion. Or for that matter, a simple difference between rich and poor is not sufficient to explain two class conflicts or the "quantity of poverty", does not turn into a new "quality" of revolutionary attitude.

In one passage (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) Marx explains why a large group of men, even if they share the same economic activity and the same style of life do not necessarily represent a class. From Marx's point of view these are necessary but insufficient conditions for the reality of a social class. For a Marxian conception of class there must be a consciousness of unity, a feeling of separation from the other social classes and even a feeling of hostility toward other social classes (Raymond Aron). "Separate individuals form a class only to the extent that they must carry on a common struggle against another class." Even this consciousness of unity is not enough to form a class. This consciousness of the unity should be a politically defined one. Marx says, "Classes do not constitute themselves as such until they participate in political conflict as organised groups." This is a point which Professor Dandekar has not looked into very seriously.

For Marx, theory of class was not a theory of a cross section of society arrested in time, but a tool for the explanation of changes in total societies. While Professor Dandekar was mainly concerned with the existing state of society (here India) and was mainly guided by the question "How does a given society (India) in fact look at a given