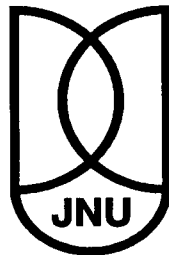


**INEQUALITY AND CHANGE:  
EXPLORING THE INDIAN MIDDLE CLASS**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Suraj Beri**



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**DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation titled '**Inequality and Change: Exploring the Indian Middle Class**' submitted by me in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

  
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**CERTIFICATE**

We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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## **Introduction**

Inequality is an important feature of social life. Social inequality has several dimensions: gender, caste, class, religion, race, ethnicity, etc. There has been a lot of work that explores dimensions of social exclusion, social stratification and how the axis of these inequalities changes over time. In all likelihood, these concerns will remain on the social science agenda. Social processes like 'industrialization', 'globalization', 'liberalization', 'democratic forms of governance' have produced social inequalities in different manners.

Some sociologists have argued that 'inequality is inevitable and harmonious' for the social life, while others question its social value. Comparative studies of social indicators such as education, health, housing conditions, sex ratio, proper food etc. also inform the presence of material inequalities in our lives. These material and status inequalities have been decisive in shaping the future of the individuals and groups. Thus, studies of class inequalities have been important for the public policy and social theory. The question of class inequalities has been discussed in its descriptive as well as explanatory frames.

After its independence, India initiated the processes of socio-economic change which not only transformed the old traditional structure of hierarchy but also made it a self-reliant nation. While Nehru attempted to build a self-sufficient industrial nation with a strong state, the later political leaders have continued this dream by bringing in various policy changes. The idea of five year planning was the beginning towards a more self-reliant economy and therefore the turn towards 'modernization'. These processes of modernization, urbanization and industrialization gave impetus to the emergence of 'middle class'. It expanded both in Nehru's period of mixed economy as well as Rajeev Gandhi's period of technological innovations and the opening of the economy to the foreign/domestic private entrepreneurs. But the growth of middle classes continued both with the expansion of public sector (during 1960's and 1970's) as well as after the expansion of the private sector (after 1990's). The emergence of public sector, after independence led to the new orientation of the economy. Note that this shift in state policies has its repercussions at a broader societal level. Middle class tends to alter the worldviews in the sphere of family, religion and politics. It also exerts its influence in the public sphere and society

at large. Scholars and commentators have long argued for middle class analysis to explain the dynamics of India's development as well as the parallel persistence of social inequalities (Misra, 1961; Varma, 1998; Fernandes, 2006). Thus, there is a need to explore the formation of the middle class in India. While the political economists started talking about the coalition between different classes (including, bureaucrats, and self-employed, small farmers<sup>1</sup>) during the growth of the economy. It was claimed that the Indian economy may be passing through intermediate regimes<sup>2</sup>. However, the discourse of Indian middle class has also been studied by sociologists, who argue about its role in the nationalist movement and its role in social life. It was also argued that the middle class in India imitates the western counterpart and claims its legitimacy by its modern values, progressive outlook.

To deal with these queries emerging out of the mainstream opinions this work attempts to examine critically these claims in the light of theoretical models of the concept of the 'class' within the discipline of sociology. The next section briefly discusses the problem of the discourses of the Indian middle classes.

### **Contextualizing Indian Middle Class**

Scholarly writings started engaging with the section of society called 'middle class' during the colonial period itself. Those accounts and commentaries were more of a historical in nature than sociological. Still these accounts provided new insights about what is the nature of this group in a country of castes and communities. These writings deal primarily with two kinds of issues; first is about their origin, and the second issue is about which events and factors continued their existence. In other words, what were the historical and social causes for its growth? From this perspective, the studies have depicted that the middle class in India did not emerge suddenly as a response or result of the industrial revolution and then ushered the change in traditional social structure as is the case in Europe<sup>3</sup>. He argued that the middle class emerged

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<sup>1</sup> Barabara Harriss-White (2003) in her analysis of Kaleckian Model of 'intermediate classes' argued that these classes constitute a very crucial actor in the process of accumulation in the macro-economics of India. The question and is whether these can be called as middle classes.

<sup>2</sup> Bardhan's (1984) analysis of class coalitions purports to explain the economic growth. Similarly, K N Raj (1973) also tried to explain the economic growth through Kaleckian (1972) conception of 'intermediate regimes'.

<sup>3</sup> Misra, B. B. *The Indian Middle Classes- Their Growth in Modern Times*. New York: Oxford Publications. 1961.

during the colonial era primarily due to its educational policies which were introduced to fulfill the administrative requirements of the British rule.

Another spurge for the interest in the middle classes comes after the independence when Indian state aimed for the development of its socio-economic and political institutions. This time the focus was on what role these classes would play in the national development. But what exactly the middle class means still remained unclear. Some defined it as *a petty bourgeoisie* (small propertied, self-employed, educated white collar) following the Marxian model of class (Desai, 1984). While some argued that it is actually the alliance of many sections of the peasants, lower middle class and self-employed individuals (see Raj, 1973; Markovits, 2002).

There are studies which critically examine the character of middle class in India in different ways. At a very general level the middle class in India is characterized by a bundle of contradictions. On the one hand, it is argued that this class played a significant role in the national movement to mobilize the masses against colonial rulers. And later due to the mixed economy of Nehruvian era, this class thrived well and was able to define the national agenda, brought notions of *modernity*, provided a *progressive vision* for the nation. Studies<sup>4</sup> have pointed to the changes in attitude towards the significance of caste and religion among the Indian middle class youth. Contrary to this depiction, it is also argued in the writings of scholars that the middle class is a *conservative* group and *traditional* in nature. Thus, this way of looking at middle class sounded similar to the Marxian notion of the old petty bourgeoisie. On the whole, the studies have shown that though the middle class has grown in terms of size and economic prosperity but their cultural values<sup>5</sup> and norms remain the traditional (Shah, 1987; Gupta, 2000; Joshi, 2001). This class even developed a contradictory attitude towards the new entrants from lower castes (Misra, 1961). Where as many social scientists had regarded that the Indian middle class has led national movement and was the patriotic class during the Nehruvian era too. This is also argued that this class steadily developed a *selfish* and *individualistic* character and which does

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<sup>4</sup> Demerath, Jodhka & Demerath, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Dipankar Gupta in his study *Mistaken Modernity* (2000) argues that it is actually the elites who call themselves 'middle class' in India and who imitate the western cultural norms. Gupta also states that 'middle class is an attitude to life and did not necessarily connote wealth and convenience' (Gupta, 2008: 79). Thus, Indian middle class do not have the 'middle class values' about modernity, education, enlightenment, care about the fellow citizens etc.

not speak for larger sections of people in spite of being in a position to do so (Varma, 1998). This change was attributed to the altered socio-economic context i.e. economic reforms or liberalization. Thus, the 'middle class' is increasingly getting preoccupied with its own growth and becoming consumerist class (Seth, 1999).

Studies have also tried to explain the rise of the 'new middle class' within the backdrop of neoliberal reforms unlike the earlier middle class which originated during the colonial times and had been state centric (Upadhyaya, 2004). Introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) in 1991 accelerated the neoliberal reforms and led to changes in the state policies towards economic development. It had important consequences for wider 'social life' and not merely for nature of markets, fiscal deficits, foreign exchanges and balance of payments (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2002) etc. The initiation of these economic policies led to changes in state's orientation and also in the relationship of different social groups with the state. Broadly, these neoliberal reforms included following policy changes– reduction of state intervention, allowing private initiatives, freedom for international capital to enter domestic market, deregulation etc. these policies have influenced implicitly the socio-cultural practices of the social groups defined on the basis of caste, class and ethnicity etc. These contexts have also highlighted the shift from 'skill and credential based' conceptualization to 'consumption' based understanding of Indian middle classes.

It is these contrasting descriptions that show how much the Indian middle classes have been the center of public as well scholarly attention. For instance, it highlights several contradictions i.e. traditional or modern; collective or individualist in orientation, pro-state or pro-market. This ambiguity about the nature of the middle class brings us to the question of the *social composition* of this group. Thus, with the *internal differentiation* in terms of caste, religion, age, occupational milieu, how this group can speak a singular narrative about India is an important question (see Deshpande, 2003; Baviskar & Ray 2011; Mishra, 2010; Kochhar 2003; Harriss, 2007). This issue raises questions such as whether the entry of lower castes in 'middle class' has intensified the diversification in terms of i) social composition and ii) class consciousness of the middle classes in India. These questions can be related to debates about the nature and character of the middle classes.



Consequently, this work raises some questions related to the *identity & culture* of this class on the one hand; and their *relationship to the reproduction of social inequalities*, on the other. This necessitates a critical discussion on the *social location* of this class as well as the *formation of its world view* is essential to critically examine the observations provided by the commentaries and popular works. These questions are important and take us back to understand the very concept of *class* itself. This work seeks to discuss different perspectives on the role of middle class in current day socio-cultural discourses. It would critically analyze how the subjective dimensions of material and symbolic inequalities can explain the structures of inequality. Similarly, it's pertinent to ask whether the study of 'consumption pattern' is sufficient to understand can exhaust the concept of class as market surveys do, or it has to be taken at structural level i.e. 'relations of production', 'employment relations', 'volumes and compositions of different capitals' or institutional mechanisms of 'closure and usurpation', 'property relations' etc.

### **The Question of Social Class**

Social class has been a crucial category for the sociologists. In its diverse frameworks, it explains the structures aspects the unequal distributions of material sources. The bulk of literature since Marx and Weber talked about social class to explain social structure. The old notion of social class which was based on the Marxist model of property relations, where the working class was seen as a historic actor in overthrowing the capitalist social order, is losing its appeal. Classical works of Karl Marx (1848) to study capitalist society and social inequality primarily in terms of social classes have been criticized for ignoring several other axes of inequality such as identity, race, gender etc., where one form of inequality cannot be reduced to another. Still Marx's (1934) analysis of capitalism on the basis of class inequalities is extremely helpful in understanding social inequalities. Marx deployed a macro frame to define social class and which constrains and determines the individual's actions and views. Max Weber expanded Marx's conception of social inequality by separating polity from the class and also from status, to understand the distribution of power in a different manner. According to Weber (1978), social class is determined by 'market situation'. Thus, the exchange relation (social action) between sellers and buyers in the market situation is significant to the understanding of class (ibid.). This

difference in the conception of class led to an upsurge of ‘class debates’ between the sociologists working in these two schools (Marxian and Weberian) of thought.

Many sociologists have also undertaken the task of reconstructing typology of social class on the basis of the empirical research. The three leading sociologists (though differing in their approach), who have worked extensively on the concept of class are Erik Olin Wright and John Goldthorpe, and Pierre Bourdieu. These three sociologists have raised different questions about class. For instance, relevance of ‘exploitation’ and ‘ownership of assets’ in explaining class relations (Wright, 1979; Wright 1985), the question of ‘social mobility and changes in the class structure’ (Goldthorpe, 1963; Goldthorpe, 1985), and the question of the ‘reproduction of class through the ‘objective conditions of class and formation of class habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1984). The concept of social class as seen now-a-days is more of an axis of social differentiation, which also produces forms of identity. Another related theme which enables to examine the class differentiation is the process of class formation. Within a particular historical moment, socio-economic practices, role of state and related positions of other collectivities shape the way a class will acquire a distinct form. For instance, Marx was concerned about how the working class will develop into distinct and genuine collectivity in the capitalist society. Similarly, the recent approach called ‘micro-class’ is inspired from the writings of Durkheim’s notion of ‘occupational associations’ (Grusky, 1998) has emphasized studying ‘disaggregate class at the local level’. Similarly, the ‘social closure’ models highlight centrality of ‘exclusion and usurpation’ in class formation (Parkin, 1979; Murphy, 1988). Thus, this work seeks to engage with these debates and explain the relevance of class not only for the American and European contexts but also for the South Asian.

### **Middle Class in Sociology**

The concept of the middle class is one of the most debated concepts in academic and popular circles. It is employed in the discussions on political mobilizations, new social movements, popular culture, and the changing landscape of social spaces in urban areas. It is also a kind of reflexive exercise for us as intellectuals who belong to it; herein lies the keen interest in explaining the centrality of this class in relation to socio-cultural discourses. On one hand, there have been critical studies to analyze the transformed socio-economic context in which this new

class emerged worldwide after the introduction of capitalist economies. The middle class as a category is quite 'modern' in that sense. On the other hand, some thinkers saw it as residual category which will disappear with further growth of capitalism as it will be usurped by the two major classes. Whereas the Weberians saw it as a vibrant segment of the population which will grow further with the rise of bureaucratic forms of work. It is debated that with the development of capitalist democracies, a managerial and professional group will emerge which will articulate the notions of progress, and shape the world view of the masses in post-colonial nation states. In these discussions, 'middle class' is seen as the symbol<sup>6</sup> of growth that works for the nation, brings modern values and norms and shapes the national consciousness. Meanwhile, Neo-Marxists have raised the question that how the 'middle class' has maintained its privileged positions, and what are those mechanisms which define its position in relation to the working class as well as .

On the contrary, studies influenced by cultural theory have characterized the middle class as conservative, narrow minded, self-guided, deeply embedded in traditions, and which hegemonies the public sphere. These various narratives can be located within the debates on 'micro-macro' approaches in social theory. This work then attempts to understand i) how the concept of the middle class can be taken as case to explain the 'objective/subjective' dichotomies in social theory and ii) how it can be overcome through an approach followed by Bourdieu's theory of 'capitals and habitus'. Thus, the analysis of the approaches would be helpful in understanding the nature of politics and discourses of inequality in India. Hence, this dissertation analyzes the dynamics of unequal relations through the different theorizations of the middle class. It explores the emergence and growth of the middle class in India.

### **Research Questions**

Thus, as discussed above, the class is embedded in the very fabric of social organization of the societies. In this work, social inequality is being explained through the dimension of social class. Accordingly, the central research question of this work is: what does the concept of social class

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<sup>6</sup> Erving Goffman (1951) argues in his article 'Symbols of class status', that class symbols includes more than one social qualifications and they further differentiates people (Goffman, 1951:296-297). Thus, 'class symbols' influence people's actions and behavior (ibid.).

tell us about inequality and social change? In the Indian context, it is extremely useful to find out what role does middle class perform in relation to inequality and social life in general. Thus, the following are the research questions which try to probe and ask explanations to the above question:

- a) What is the relationship between *social class* and *inequality*?
- b) What do we understand by the 'Middle class' in the Indian society? How do we understand the '*internal differentiation*' of the middle classes in India?
- c) What is the *relation* between *the middle classes* and *Indian state*? How is this relationship being articulated in the different social contexts in India?

### **Methodology**

This dissertation is primarily based on the critical review of the existing literature on different aspects of the formation of the middle class in India. It begins with a study of Erik Olin Wright, Goldthorpe, Giddens and Bourdieu's notion of 'social class' in relation to middle class in Indian metropolis. This work would employ particularly the Bourdieu's notion of class in order to understand the nature of the Indian middle classes in relation to the other classes in different historical phases. The work utilizes various books, articles in journals, and newspapers etc. The research would be explanatory in nature. Hence, the study is primarily based on the secondary sources of data and archival work. The study of middle class from this vantage point of view would actually provide a detailed analysis of i) the way 'middle class' is theorized in sociological writings across societies, ii) how 'social class' in Indian context enables to make sense of social inequalities and in the context of socio-economic changes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The major scope of this work is to review the existing literature of social inequality and 'social class' in order to understand the socio-cultural practices of the middle classes in India. There have been studies of middle class's dominant character in the areas of economy, politics, popular culture, electronic media and information technology sector. It studies the composition and differentiation within the middle class vis-à-vis its articulation of a singular cultural identity for instance as consuming class. It explores the interconnections between class relations and social

inequalities, to study the role of Indian Middle classes in the contemporary phase of liberalization and democratic form of governance.

### **Organization of Dissertation**

The work would be divided into four chapters. The first chapter will deal with the broad theoretical background of social inequality and how class has been a central concept to study social inequalities across societies. The discussion will help in understanding the relevance of concept in present day sociology in the light of the works of Max Weber, Ivan Szelenyi, Alvin Gouldner, John Goldthorpe, Erik Olin Wright and Anthony Giddens who have given significant attention to the concept of social class in sociology to study social life. This brings us to the theoretical concepts formulated by Pierre Bourdieu to understand social class with 'hegemonic capitals', cultural capitals which reproduce unequal social relations continuously. This chapter would also juxtapose the critics of class analysis i.e. Jan Pakulski & Malcolm Waters, Rom Harre, Alain Touraine etc. who find class as an old concept and irrelevant to study present day society.

The second chapter would focus on the concept of middle classes in sociology and how does the study of middle class help in understanding social inequalities. The question is not limited to the 'definition' of middle class but also what are the practices of this class, what is its nature i.e. in relation to politics, in terms of other sections/classes of society i.e. the capitalists as well as the working class. Thus, by making it as a *relational category* we can get some better insights to understand social inequality. E O Wright and John Goldthorpe have done empirical studies to formulate respected Neo-Marxist & Neo-Weberian models of social class and drew the class schemas. It will discuss the notion of the petty bourgeoisie as developed by Pierre Bourdieu, which is helpful to understand Indian middle classes.

The third chapter would then analyze how the middle class has been emerged in India and what are the major descriptions about this class. It will analyze the material conditions in which middle class becomes a significant section of the society. The second section will discuss the theoretical models developed to understand and explain the nature and structure of middle classes in India. The two models can be seen as prominent to understand different aspects of the

formation of the middle class in India- namely i) structural location and ii) cultural values. Thus, it will analyze the contradiction between these two models and how the theoretical insights from the previous chapter can explain the structural location as well as cultural practices of this class. Along with the question of 'internal differentiation' becomes central to explain why the middle class acts the way it does, and how can we relate its character to its internal differentiation. The chapter will also engage in the study of the political practices of middle classes in India. It will discuss how the nationalism as a subtext is crucial to explain the formation of the new middle class in the present phase of neoliberal reforms. It is very important to engage with these issues within theorizations provided by Bourdieu, Giddens and other class theorists. Simultaneously, this phase is also characterized by a different nature of middle classes whose relation to state, civil society and the market is altogether different from the earlier phases.

The concluding chapter will try to analyze the present summary of the chapters and discuss what are the possible insights developed from this work. This study provides a theoretical framework to understand middle class in urban spaces; conflict among different social classes and their relationship with the state. It would raise the questions that necessitate empirical study on this area for instance, the study of Metropolitan cities like Delhi or Gurgaon where the constant development of industrial areas with certain legal frameworks create antagonistic circumstances within social classes. It asks the questions for the further research. How the structural location can be understood of the new middle classes and related to its cultural practices. It is essential to study the various forms of restructuring of the middle classes as an impact of the new economic policies and social and cultural context of the present day India.

## Chapter 1

### UNDERSTANDING 'SOCIAL INEQUALITIES': DIMENSIONS OF 'SOCIAL CLASS'

#### Introduction

Class is one of the prominent categories to understand social inequalities in modern societies. Across the societies, social class is the expression of the inequalities which are both material and cultural kind. Class has given rise to several discussions on the questions of- how these inequalities are reproduced; whether social places deterministically shape individual actions or conscious action on the part of agents define class relations. The theoretical debates on class analyze the dynamic *relation* between individual and group on the one hand, and how his relation is based on the *unequal resources* among the groups. Class inequalities are also important to understand the interconnections between ascribed and achieved statuses.

The present work is a review about how social class has been viewed in the classical debates and what changes and modifications have been made by the recent theorizations. The objective is to understand and explain how social relations are organized around social class. Thus, the pertinent question is, what are the definitional criteria suggested in different approaches which can also explain the different types of classes. This aspect is very crucial especially in all the models of social class. The first section would study the conception of class in the classical works of Karl Marx and Max Weber. It would try to analyze what are the basic concerns of class in these writings. Their works are crucial to the understanding of how class can explain the dynamics of inequalities in capitalist societies. It will explore the various theoretical models of the concept of social class i.e. from *macro* to *micro* models and then compare these models to examine their relative merits and demerits in explaining unequal relations. The second section will focus on the works of sociologists who have applied Marx and Weber's conception of class in their empirical studies. Thus, it will study works of Neo-Weberians such as John Goldthorpe, who operationalized the concept of class in his project on mobility studies. It would also discuss the various schemas of class analysis developed by neo-Marxists which question its capacity to explain unequal relations and class inequalities in the advanced capitalist societies. In

the third section, we will discuss some recent approaches which have been theorized class while overcoming macro or micro dependent models. Hence, the works of Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu are critically analyzed which provide a more comprehensive understanding of the social class, and has the capacity to overcome the limitations (class consciousness, class locations) of classical approaches. It will then help to develop a basic understanding of social class on the basis of the insights from these models.

### **Social Class-**

Social class is central to the understanding the social organization of societies. The concept of social class has been significantly debated, and also critiqued in social sciences. Edgell argues that ‘the modern vocabulary of class is inextricably associated with the total reorganization of society that followed the industrial revolution’<sup>1</sup>. Beginning with the very basic dictionary meaning of the word class<sup>2</sup>, which is “i) a group sharing the same economic or social status i.e. the working *class*, ii) social rank; *especially*: high social rank, iii) a group, set, or kind sharing common attributes”; which is a very general understanding of the concept of ‘class’. The concept of social class is known to originate from the ‘tax system of the Roman Empire with class corresponding to tax bands’ (Dahrendorf, 1959: 3–4). The development of capitalism has been identified with the emergence of ‘modern world’. Therefore, class is also a modern phenomenon different from traditional societies, where the inequalities are defined in terms of ascribed statuses i.e. age, gender, caste, race, religion etc. Though these traditional inequalities based on ascription, have continued to be significant in the modern era. Thus, in European sociology ‘class’ was a very dominant concept to study social order, patterns of inequality, capitalist production and revolutionary politics. At the same time in Indian context, village studies and caste emerged as central concepts to make sense of social order and discrimination and social inequalities.

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<sup>1</sup> Edgell, S. *Class: Key Ideas*. Routledge: London. 1993: 1

<sup>2</sup> “Class” Def. The Merriam Websters Collegiate Dictionary. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2003. URL: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/class>. (Accessed at 12<sup>th</sup> march, 2013)



The social history of the concept of social class across societies reflects the multiple ways in which class has been used to understand social differentiation within societies. This chapter tries to examine the core element to explain the functioning of class in the different models and up to what extent class structure shapes the actions of individuals, occupying positions within it.

### **Macro Analyses of Social Class-**

In the macro theorizations of social class, two classical sociologists i.e. Karl Marx and Max Weber are two key figures. This section will critically analyze the questions pursued by them in their class theory. The comparative understanding of their works will provide a significant insight into the concept of class.

#### **Social Class: the '*positions within the relations of the production*'**

Karl Marx analyzed capitalist society of France and England on the basis of his empirical observations, for both theoretical and political purposes enhanced his understandings of social class<sup>3</sup>. Although he has not provided anywhere in his writings a complete detailed classification and unified theory of classes, still from his works one can draw a picture of what he meant by 'class'. Marx in his incomplete chapter on 'Classes' in *Capital* Vol. III (1959), described about the three types of classes in capitalist England:

The owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and landowners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground-rent, in other words, wage-laborers, capitalists and landowners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production. (Marx & Engels, 1959: 610)

Marx's theory of social class is significant at two levels- firstly, an abstract account of two warring classes; secondly, his political observations provide a closer picture of the classes. There are certain elements of 'classes' which are essential to understand Marx's conception. Lipset and Bendix define social class in Marxian terms as 'any aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organization of production' (Lipset & Bendix, 1967: 7). Thus, according to Marx,

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<sup>3</sup> Marx's unfinished account of class in the chapter 'Classes' in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol. III* (International Publishers, NY 1959). Institute of Marxism-Leninism USSR 1959: 1025.

in all the historical phases, there are contending classes who have antagonistic interests. Jon Elster (1986) also supports this view that Marx, unlike others, talked about the existence of classes in both market and non-market societies (in case of surplus value being extracted through non-economic coercion). Marx's central focus was to understand the capitalist mode of production in his time, whether it was the case of the French class struggle or the German society. In *German Ideology* (1968) Marx<sup>4</sup> describes the various dimensions of social class as:

The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a *common battle against another class*; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors. On the other hand, the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their *conditions of existence* predestined, and hence have *their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, become subsumed under it*.

This is the same phenomenon as the subjection of the separate individuals to the division of labour and can only be removed by the abolition of private property and of labour itself... (Marx, 1968:35, emphasis added)

Marx's intention of writing about class was definitely different and guided more by the political activities of that time, whereas the analyses of sociologists cater to the academic concerns. Marx talked about both objective and subjective criteria to define class, *objective dimension* includes— a) *the position* which the individual occupies in the social organization of production (Lipset & Bendix, 1967: 8-9), b) the development of private property as primary point of contradiction of interests within individuals (ibid.). The *subjective dimension* includes – c) comfortable position to communicate with fellow class members to discuss ideas and programs, d) co-operation among individuals while working for their life i.e. that's what Marx meant by 'social', e) growth of *class consciousness among the members of the class* such as solidarity arising out of common interests and their common fate, '*feeling of hostility*' towards other class members which makes them aware of their own class position. According to Marx, only after the development of this subjective feeling the *class in itself* will become *class for itself*. The point to be kept in mind is, social class in Marx's model determines individual behavior, actions, and the reverse is not

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<sup>4</sup> Marx, Karl and Engels, F. *The German Ideology*. USSR: Progressive Publishers. 1968: 34-40.

possible. Thus, class in the Marxian sense, at a macro-level definitely inter-linked to social and political conflict.

In *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1869), Marx was trying to understand peasant as social category which did not share the characteristics of social class i.e. objective conditions of mutual relations, common interests and playing the same part in the organization of production as peasants remain isolated and thus lack development of a 'class consciousness'. It is worthwhile to see how Marx's statement captured the important aspect of the class:

Thus the large mass of the French nation is constituted by the simple addition of equal magnitudes—much as a sack with potatoes constitutes a sack of potatoes. *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 an attitude hostile toward the latter, they constitute a class; in so far as there exists only a local connection among these farmers, a connection which the individuality and exclusiveness of their interests prevent from generating among them any unity of interest, national connections, and political organization, they do not constitute a class.* (Marx, 1972: 106, emphasis added)

But the various historical instances challenge his idea of lack of 'class character' of peasants. Marxists have further developed this 'subjective aspect of class' as explained by Marx. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1971), George Lukacs distinguishes between the 'class consciousness' and 'empirical ideas', which all the individuals belonging to a class, develop about their life conditions. According to Lukacs, class consciousness then, is the 'class-conditioned *unconsciousness* of one's own socio-historical and economic condition' (Lukacs, 1971:52). In a way, Lukacs emphasizes the force of the class position, which shapes individual's notion about self and identity. He explained how class inequalities are justified (using Marx's notion of reification) in the name of a common, mass culture.

Bottomore (1970) also points out about the particularity of class consciousness in Marx's notion of class. He argues that class consciousness in the Marxian sense, means the formation of class ideologies, formation of class based organizations which defend and articulate 'class interests' (Bottomore, 1970:64-65). This understanding of class consciousness is still relevant

and explains the social and political conflicts. Building on Marx's notion of class, Russian Marxist revolutionary, V. I. Lenin defines class<sup>5</sup> in the following words:

Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy. (Lenin, 1919:421)

Thus, Lenin articulated the precise and comprehensive understanding of social class based on people's position in the social organization of production. Raymond Aron (1950) critically discussed about the usage of the concept of class by Marx in his works and provided a lucid but critical account of it. He argued that Marx had used a very general meaning but one should use it in a specific historic sense i.e. he used class in the case of modern industrial societies<sup>6</sup>. Raymond Aron has summarized the three major ways in which 'class' has been 'understood' by Marx: a) as a historical social group distinguished by common interests and psychological similarity, b) as a social category distinguished by a certain type of income, and finally as c) a social class distinguished by its consciousness of a certain place in the process of production system and the desire to overthrow the existing system (Aron, 1950: 5). For instance, Aron points out that, Marx discussed about class as 'real social groups' seen in particular historical circumstances, the 'actors in drama during the February Revolution, Napoleon's coup d'état are the industrial workers in the towns, the lower middle class, made up of craftsmen and tradesmen, the peasants, landowning capitalists and financial capitalists' (Aron, 1950: 3).

Although Aron has refuted Marx's idea of 'revolutionary mission of proletarians' and still he follows Marx's three tier differentiation of philosophical, sociological and economic aspects of social categories. Aron's contention of the class as defined in terms of income is problematic since Lipset & Bendix have pointed out clearly that 'to Marx income or occupation

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<sup>5</sup> Lenin, V.I. A Great Beginning, *Collected Works: Vol.29*. Moscow: Progressive Publishers. 1919: 421.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Aron, 'Social Structure and Ruling Class: Part I'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 1950 1(1): 1-16.

cannot be the criterion of class of one's class position' (Lipset & Bendix, 1967: 8). Similarly, Anthony Giddens (1981) has analyzed the axioms of the 'meta-theoretical model' of Marx. According to Giddens, classes in the Marxian model express the 'fundamental identities' in the society and are established on the interdependence and 'conflict' and this notion about classes is fundamentally shaped by 'Hegelian dialectics' (Giddens, 1981: 29).

Finally, we can summarize the basic elements of Marx's theory of social classes in some points. The first point is, social class constitutes a collective of individuals who share similar positions in the *organization of production in society*. This similarity leads to the development of understanding of *common interests of each class*. Linked to it is the second point, according to which, this *feeling of being a member of one class* necessarily differentiates it with another class and hence the 'conflict of interests'. As Edgell (1993) puts it 'the reason why relations between employers and employees are 'antagonistic' because in order to make profit and survive in competition, the former are constrained to exploit the latter' (ibid. 3). At a general level this antagonism arises from the inherent and inevitable adverse relation between profit and wages. Aage Sorensen (2000) states that the master criteria of 'exploitation' determined the class in Marxian model and which is further rooted in 'the labour theory of surplus value' (Sorensen, 2000:17-19). Similarly, Marx's usage of 'intelligentsia class', 'ideological class', 'dangerous class' or 'lumpen-proletariat', 'transitional class' hints at various ways in which these social groupings can be defined (depending on the context) in relation to other classes (e.g. bourgeoisie or proletariats or land owners) and class fractions. Hence, his works suggest locating classes in a *particular context and time*. The formation of any *association or union of a class*, which could lead the economic and political conflicts, is an essential feature to understand how class interests are articulated, maintained and then *objectified*. Thus, the fact is that 'communal action' would be realized only if there is any such body of a particular class. The 'historical role' which 'class' performs or assigned to in Marxian model is significant and has to be kept in mind while understanding the changing nature of whole societies.

#### **Max Weber: 'Class as market situation'**

Max Weber, a great German sociologist, also studied social class as a crucial category to understand *the distribution of power* in society. He analyzed the dimensions of social

stratification in terms of classes, status groups and parties. In *Economy and Society* (1978), Weber has discussed 'class situation' as 'typical probability of i) procuring goods, ii) gaining a position in life, iii) finding inner satisfactions' (Weber, 1978: 302). Weber stated that 'class situation' as shaped by 'market situation' (economic factor) determines 'life chances' (economic and non-economic factors) of the individuals (ibid.). In his discussion, Weber pointed out the three kinds of class— a) '*property class*' which is primarily determined by differences and possession of property, b) '*commercial class*' as defined by the marketability of goods and services, and c) '*social class*' which refers to the totality of those class situations within which individual and generational mobility is easy and typical (ibid.). Weber also talked about an objective criterion of social class in the three points, whereby he denied class having an existence comparable with communities:

We may speak of class when i) a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life chances, in so far, ii) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income, iii) is represented under the conditions of commodity market or labor markets. (Gerth & Mills, 1946: 181)

Weber though defined classes in terms of the market situation; he still followed Marx up to some extent when he emphasized significance of property in shaping the conditions of individuals in the market. He acknowledges the significance of 'property' in 'class relations' when he argued:

Each kind of class situation, and above all when it rests upon the *power of property per se*, will become clearer efficacious when all other determinants of reciprocal relations are, as far as possible, eliminated in their significance. It is in this way that utilization of the power of property in the market obtains its most sovereign importance. (Gerth & Mills, 1946: 185, emphasis original)

But this condition is one of the other many such conditions i.e. services which can be offered in the market. He further classifies propertied into-rentier and entrepreneurs, non-propertied into-white collar or unskilled manual workers. Thus, it is the 'market' which decides that the 'naked possession or absence', sharing a 'common condition', indicate the individuals chances or opportunities and class (ibid.: 1946:185-186). Weber's idea of life chances is extremely helpful in understanding the most talked about 'middle class life styles', 'petty bourgeoisie ethics' in the

context of the rise of middle classes across societies. It's this specific criterion of 'market situation' and his separation between class and status, which explains why Weber thought that the *slaves* cannot be a class because their life chances are not determined by offering some services in the market but due to their *subjugated status*.

Weber also mentioned about the possibility of the communal action (of classes) being shaped by the 'class interests' i.e. *economic interest* (Gerth & Mills, 1946: 182). He challenges the Marx's notion of 'class consciousness' leading to class unity and the rise of class struggle which would revolutionize the mode of production. Weber undoubtedly rejected the 'thesis of polarization' predicted by Marx, and rather discussed the development of capitalism along with the increasing process of *rationalization* and *bureaucratization* which set the momentum for further diversified system of classes.

Critics of Weber have argued that he deliberately ignored or lessened the possibility of a *communal action* flowing from working class and also impaired the significance of 'class struggle' or 'class conflict' which was given a prime importance in the writings of Marx. Erik Olin Wright, one of the influential neo-Marxist, has provided a systematic critique and inadequacies of Weber's theorization of 'class'. Wright (2002) points out that Weber's deliberate separation of the *problem of exploitation* from the concept of class is the central difference in class as analyzed by Marx and Weber. Whereas the 'class' in Marx's model is rooted in the model of exploitation, class in Weber's analysis has been centered on the problem of 'life chances' (ibid.: 832). Weber in his 'interpretative sociology' has argued for 'methodological individualism' which is also reflected in his model of class, where *individual's class situation* can be studied through *his/her market standing* and thus, class for Weber does not constitute 'community relations'. Thus, methodologically as well as politically Weber's conception of class not only differs but shows a contrast to Marx's model. L.W. Warner in his work, *Social Class in America* (1960), has conceptualized social class and status as more or less synonymous. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) also accepts the Warner's emphasis on integrating 'class' and 'status' instead of treating them as separate. Warner's work is thus, a critique of Weber's difference between class and status.

The above discussion clearly shows how Weber has reduced the role of class to 'economic interests' along with its separation from status, which is incorporated back in Bourdieu's

theorization of class. It is this aspect which is very crucial for understanding Indian middle classes, which are distinct in terms of their membership of various castes, religions and ethnic groups etc.

### **Neo Marxists on Class Analysis**

After discussing the concept of social class by Marx and Weber, it is necessary to analyze how sociologists have further developed the category of social class. The major dominant schemes which have emerged as a continuation of the classic work can be classified in terms of neo-Marxists such as Erik Olin Wright (1979, 1985, 2005), Poulantzas's (1975) work on class and capitalism) and neo-Weberians (such as John Goldthorpe, Richard Breen and Antony Heath's work on social mobility and class) and neo-Durkheimians (David Grusky's work on inequality and micro classes). These sociologists have developed the concept of social class on the basis of their empirical works.

### **Nicos Poulantzas: 'Structural' Notion of Class**

One of the prominent structural Marxist, Nicos Poulantzas has systematically elaborated his model of class. In his work, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1976) Poulantzas has applied the Marxist notions of social class as interpreted by Louis Althusser, Marx and Lenin. Poulantzas (1976) began by arguing that classes are those social groupings which are constantly in a class struggle and it includes economic struggle, 'ideological and political relations' (Poulantzas, 1976:14). These relations are independent of the consciousness of the social agents. Thus Poulantzas defines class as-

A social class is defined by its place in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its *position in the social division of labor as a whole. This includes political and ideological relations.* Social class, in this sense, is a concept which denotes the effects of the structure within the social division of labour (social relations and social practices). This place thus corresponds to what I shall refer to as the *structural determination of class*, i.e. to the existence within class practices of determination by the structure- by the relations of production, and by the places of political and ideological domination/subordination. *Classes exist only in the class struggle.* (Poulantzas, 1976: 14, emphasis added)



Out of this definition three crucial points of class can be derived- i) Class can be defined *only in class struggle*, ii) Classes are *objective positions* in the social division of labor, and iii) Classes are defined *structurally at economic level, ideological and political levels*. Poulantzas differentiates his understanding of class from the classical Marxist notion of class (i.e. mode of production determining the political and cultural domination). He argued that the political and ideological forms of domination are part of structural determination of class, which negates any possibility of economic 'structure' being the deciding factor of political and ideological elements. Poulantzas emphasizes the Marxian notion of understanding 'fractions', 'strata' as class fractions and class strata respectively rather than separate social groupings. According to Poulantzas, this is the 'major distinction between Marxist theory of social classes and other conceptions of 'bourgeoisie sociology' (Poulantzas, 1975:197). He was referring to the works, for instance, which differentiated between class & status groups (Weber) and class and political elites etc. Poulantzas also widened the Marxist analyses to recognize the presence of a class which is neither 'capitalist' nor 'proletariat' i.e. petty bourgeoisie. He attempted to provide a structural Marxist approach within the 'realist analyses' of social classes and critiqued both 'idealist and empiricist' models of social class, which according to Poulantzas pose wrong questions:

There is a clear epistemological collusion here between the nominalist/ idealist conception of social classes (of classes as an 'abstract model ') and this empiricist conception, with both leading to the same results: in one case, it leads to social groupings which fall outside the class grid, and in the other, to individuals and groupings that do not take part *in* the composition of classes, and are seen as sums of individuals. (Poulantzas, 1975: 203)

In the above account, Poulantzas is raising his problem with these two analyses in their theorization of 'class' which remain insufficient in explaining the presence of middle class. But his deliberate demarcation between 'class determination' and 'class position' is a crucial element which explains that there may be a class which takes a position which might not be its real position (Poulantzas, 1975:15). In other words, the middle class can take positions which are bourgeoisie in nature and orientation, but by doing so it does not become bourgeoisie.

## **Erik Olin Wright and the American Class Structure**

He is one of the leading American sociologists, who has developed Marxian analyses to understand the changes that has taken place in the American class structure (Wright 1978, Wright et al. 1989; Wright, 2004; Wright 2005). He has developed class schemas to describe the persistence of class inequalities. In his earlier works such Wright (1979), there seems to be a general analysis of the concept of class, i.e. relational aspect & gradational aspect; whether class to be defined in market relations or production relations; through authoritative relations or exploitative relations. It discussed that how 'class defined as positions in social relations of production can mediate between income inequality' in the context of American society (Wright, 1985: xx). His model explains how class locations can provide insights about the objective possibilities individuals can have in their life.

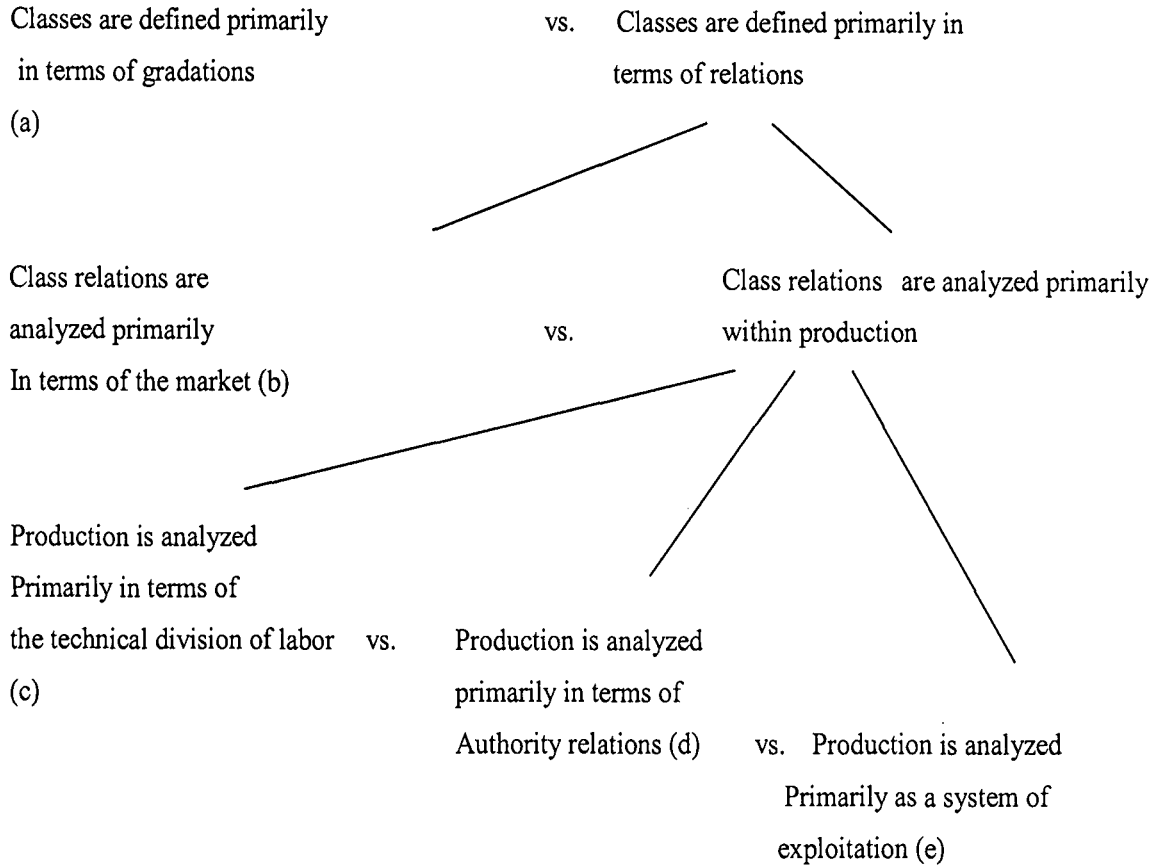
Wright (1985) started with an understanding of social class from the Marxian method and found that there are two dimensions of class analyses which set the agenda for research; a) whether the analyses focuses on class structure or class formation, and b) the level of abstraction at which classes are analyzed (Wright, 1985: 9). Wright also shows the importance of the 'capacity to appropriate surplus labor' to be seen as the core element of the definition of class in terms of the 'capacity of the dominant to control the surplus', 'control over the surplus provides the dominant class a control over social and political power', 'the capacity of the dominant to shape the direction of social change and development' (Wright, 1985: 15). Wright's work also provides the advantageous position of Marxist analysis of class to grasp the 'mechanism of exploitation' (ibid.).

Wright follows exploitation theory as proposed by Roemer (1982). It emphasizes the production of surplus and the significance of the 'mode of production' to conceptualize classes in different periods of history i.e. beyond 'market' based capitalist society, whereas Weber's theory recognizes class only in 'market situation'. Wright then, describes five major types<sup>7</sup> in which class is defined, which is following:

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<sup>7</sup> Wright, E. O. *Class Structure and Income Determination*. New York: Academic Press, 1979.

## Erik Olin Wright's (1985) Typology of Definition of Class



(Source: Wright, 1985: 5)

Therefore, Wright argues emphatically that when *class* is defined in terms of *social relations of production*, working class cannot be equated with *manual labour* and middle class as *mental labour* (Wright, 1979: 118). Finally Wright has described three 'distinct' features of Marxist analysis of class (Wright, 1985) as follows-

- The Marxist analysis defines 'class' in a 'relational' notion rather than a gradational one.
- According to the Marxist model, the central basis of the class lies within the '*social organization of production*' rather than *the market*.
- Within the social organization of production, this model trace the roots of analysis of class in the process of exploitation rather than the technical division of labor or authority relations although both play an important part in this model as well (ibid.: 17)

Thus, classes are defined as 'common positions within the social relations of production, where production is analyzed above all as a system of exploitation' (Wright, 1985: 17). After dealing with the definitional aspect of classes, Wright has also analyzed the class maps or positions underlying class relations as they exist in American capitalist society, which are described as below-

The overall class structure of capitalist societies thus consists of a) those positions within production relations which define the basic class locations (bourgeoisie, proletariat and petty bourgeoisie), b) those positions outside the spheres of the production which are linked to basic class locations, c) those positions within production relations which define contradictory class locations within class relations (managers, semi-autonomous employees, small employers), d) those positions outside the sphere of production which are linked to contradictory locations. Taken together, these positions would define a comprehensive class map of capitalist society. (Wright, 1985: 54-55)

Thus Wright has devised a '12-category typology of class locations in capitalist society' on the basis of possession of different assets and means of production- 1. Bourgeoisie, 2. Small employees, 3. Petty Bourgeoisie, 4. Expert managers, 5. Expert supervisors, 6. Expert non-managers, 7. Semi credentialed managers, 8. Semi-credentialed supervisors, 9. Semi-credentialed workers, 10. Uncredentialed managers, 11. Uncredentialed supervisors, 12. Proleterians (Wright, 1985: 88).

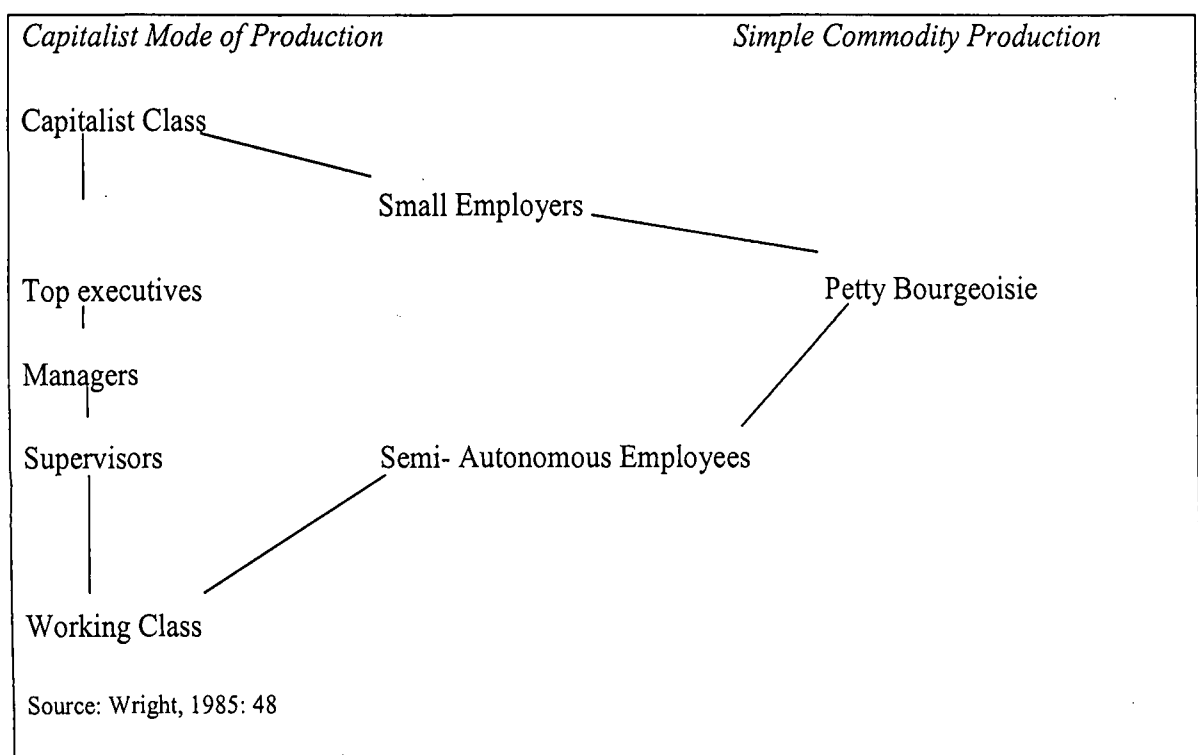
Wright has analyzed the concept of 'contradictory class location', to explain the new middle class, which would be discussed in the next chapter. In short, Wright's model of class basically deals with structural analysis of class relations to show historical significance and theoretical issue.

### **Complexities of 'Class Locations'**

According to Wright, the term 'class' thus can be more fruitfully used as an adjective (Wright, 2005) i.e. *class* structure, *class* relations, *class* locations etc. than as a noun, because the use of 'class' as noun i.e. which class do you belong, to 'working class', would implicitly mean the

class relations and class structure of the society. Here the 'location' within class relation means to place individuals within the systematic way of interaction (Wright, 2005: 14). Wright has tried to understand the problem of 'contradictory locations', for instance, in the case of managers and professionals. The ambiguous issues of 'temporality of location', 'strata in class', 'families and class locations' do emerge when one talks about the class location of housewives, old age retired persons, children etc. Wright has tried to explain the positions of the individuals or groups having 'mediated locations within class relations' (Wright, 2005). Wright has developed the following 'basic class map of the capitalist society' within the class tradition-

**Figure 1.1** Basic Class map of Capitalist Society- Wright's Model of Class (1985)



Note- In Figure 1.1 the two consistent class (bourgeoisie, proletariats) locations are described in the capitalist mode of production, one in simple commodity production (petty bourgeoisie). Between these three are contradictory locations in class relations, small employers, managers, semi-autonomous wage earners.

Wright argued against mistaking these complexities as the multiplicity of classes and clarifies-

A class "location" is not "a class"; it is a location-within- relations. The number of such locations within an analysis of class structure, then, depends upon how

fine-grained an account is needed for the purposes at hand (Wright, 2005: 19, emphasis original).

Wright's model of class can be better understood when it is compared with Poulantzas' model of social class, as both tried to develop a Marxist model of the class to understand social inequality in the context of capitalism and the increasing attacks on Marxism to capture the inequality in this new phase of capitalism. Wright's model at least provides theoretical linked with differential class outcomes and the central mechanism for this is the *class structure*. Sorenson (2005) critiques the emphasis on 'exploitation' without looking into the 'rent' (following Ricardo) and 'property rights' as crucial to explain class based inequalities.

### **Neo- Weberians on Class Analysis**

In this section Goldthorpe's model would be studied to understand their conception of social class in their empirical works on social mobility in Britain. Thus the changes which are made in Weber's notion of class as 'market situation' by neo-Weberians provide a closer examination of the concept of class which can be fruitful for understanding 'middle class' in India.

### **John Goldthorpe**

Goldthorpe, one of the leading sociologists of the neo-Weberian school, has contributed comprehensively to the concept of social class. In his early work which was actually a test of the validity of *embourgeoisement thesis*, (See Goldthorpe & Lockwood 1963) resulted in his work on '*The affluent worker in the class structure* 1969 in the context of the British social structure. His work on social mobility in Britain led him to develop a class scheme on the basis of 'employment relations in the market'(Erikson & Goldthorpe,1992) that has been used extensively in the works of Richard Breen (1995, 2001), Antony Heath and Sanjay Kumar (2002), Antony Heath & Divya Vaid (2010). Goldthorpe's operationalization of the class is seen as Weberian and extensively used for empirical analysis.

**Table 1.** The *Class schema* from Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992)

<b>Full Version: Eleven Classes</b>	<b>Collapsed Version-i Seven Classes</b>	<b>Collapsed Version-ii Five Classes</b>	<b>Collapsed Version-iii Three Classes</b>
<b>I</b> Higher-grade Professionals, administrators, officials and managers in large industrial establishments	<b>I + II Service class:</b> professionals, administrators and managers; higher grade technicians		
<b>II</b> Lower-grade Professionals, administrators, officials and managers in small industrial establishments		<b>I+II + III White Collar Workers</b>	
<b>IIIa</b> Routine non-manual employees, higher grade (administration and commerce)	<b>III Routine non-manual Workers:</b> employees, routine non-manual workers in administration and commerce; sales and services		<b>Non-manual Workers</b>
<b>IIIb</b> Routine non-manual employees, lower grade (sales and services)			
<b>IVa</b> Small proprietors, artisans etc. with employees	<b>IVa +b Petty-bourgeoisie,</b> small proprietors, artisans etc. with and without employees		
<b>IVb</b> Small proprietors, artisans etc. without employees		<b>IVa+b Petty bourgeoisiel</b>	
<b>IVc</b> Farmers and small holders, other self-employed workers in primary production	<b>IVc Farmers:</b> farmers and small holders, other self-employed workers in primary production	<b>IVc + VIIb Farm Workers</b>	<b>Farm Workers</b>
<b>V</b> Lower grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers	<b>V + VI Skilled manual:</b> Lower grade technicians and supervisors of manual workers, Skilled manual workers		
<b>VI</b> Skilled manual workers		<b>V +VI Skilled Workers</b>	<b>Manual Workers</b>
<b>VIIa</b> Semi- and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture)	<b>VIIa Non-skilled workers:</b> Semi- and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture)	<b>VIIa Non-skilled workers</b>	

VIIb Agriculture and other workers in primary production	VIIb Agricultural labourers: Agriculture and other workers in primary production		
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(Source: Erikson & Goldthorpe. 1992: 38-39)

Whereas the earlier work of Goldthorpe (1980) focused on the differentiation of occupations in the market situation and work conditions, the later class typology developed by Erikson & Goldthorpe (1992) have analyzed social class in a different manner. They argue that-

The aim of the class schema is to differentiate positions within labor markets and production its or more specifically...to differentiate such *positions in terms of the employment relations* that they entail. (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992: 37, emphasis added)

According to this definition of social class, the employment relations within the labor contract have become influential in shaping their social relations. Thus the classes in this model are differentiated according to the labor contract, skills and resultant employment relationships in terms of degree of control or monitoring over one's work. There is a subdivision of IV on a sectorial basis as shown in the Table No. 1.2, where the Classes I and II are composed of employment relationships defined in 'service relations', on the other hand, class VI, VII have a 'labor contract relationship', it is also reflected in class III her non-manual relationship is more prominent, and class V and the class IIIa have mixed relations.

Goldthorpe (2001) in his study of mobility in Britain analyzed data sets and employed original seven fold class schemas:

- |                               |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| I <i>Upper Service Class</i>  | II <i>Lower Service Class</i> |                               |
| III <i>Routine Non-manual</i> | IV <i>Petty Bourgeoisie</i>   |                               |
| V <i>Supervisors etc.</i>     | VI <i>Skilled manual</i>      | VII <i>Non-skilled manual</i> |

(Breen & Goldthorpe, 2001:88-89)

They classified these different classes on the basis of his conceptual understanding of class as 'employment relations' (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992: 37). While discussing the use of these schemes to study mobility Breen argues that-



In Goldthorpe's schema, classes capture two major distinctions. One distinction is that between employees and employers, including the self-employed (who are mainly placed in class IV). The other distinction is that among employees according to the nature of their relationship with their employer. (Breen & Goldthorpe, 2000: 395)

Thus, Goldthorpe's analysis provides a crucial element about how class positions and class outcomes are related. Although this model emphasizes the employment relationship, skills and nature of contract, it ignores what Wright has called 'power relation' in terms of 'element of exploitation and domination' in explaining the relation of these classes with each other. Similarly, it can be argued that Goldthorpe<sup>14</sup> model is although more suitable for class as 'research programme' but it lacks a coherent 'class theory'. But its strength is in the emphasis on 'employment relations' as the crux of class relation, which is an important insight to make sense of middle class.

### **Micro Class models**

Much before Grusky popularized the notion of micro classes, there were studies which emphasized the subjective elements related to the class and class-consciousness of individuals and groups. The most significant work emphasizing micro approach is Richard Centers' *The Psychology of Social Classes* (1949). Centers has emphasized the *subjective belonging* as a criteria to define class. His analysis sounds similar to Durkheim's notion of society which exerts an external force and part of an individual's identity. But it highlights the relationship between socio-economic position and psychological attitudes. Thus, the individual's relation to economic strata imposes certain attitudes and interests and values (Centers, 1949: 28-29). One another work which rather adopted 'objective approach' to study classes is Maurice Halbwachs' *The Psychology of Social Class* (1958). Halbwachs argued that an individual is not born as 'peasant, workers, farmer, lawyers and so on but these social categories exist and influence one's behavior and thinking in a very significant way'(Halbwachs, 1958: 119). These group features exist over

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<sup>14</sup> Goldthorpe and Erikson (1992: 394) have acknowledged it and Aage Sorenson (1991) have critiqued Goldthorpe's class schema on this major shortcoming

and above individual and depend upon social background (ibid.). Thus, social class in these models becomes a source of reference and belonging, which shapes one's identity and attitudes.

### **Class Formations**

E P Thompson (1963) also discussed about class in his analyses of radical movements in England and had written the most influential work on class. In the Preface of *The Making of The English Working Class* (1963) Thompson talked about class as 'something which happens in human relationships.' In his socialist humanist perspective, he sees more historical relations into a class rather as a 'structure' of any objective reality or bracketing it and then deducing abstract elements out of it. Thus, Thompson critiques the structuralist' model, which talked about structural determination of class. He writes that:

Class is defined by men as *they live their own history*, and, in the end, this is its only definition. (Thompson, 1963: 11, emphasis added)

Thus, Thompson was trying to show the class as significant for historical investigation and defined it in terms of 'relationships' which change over a period of time. He explained that people's experience of class depends upon the 'production relations' (Thompson, 1963: 9-10). He had tried to grasp what remained to be theorized fully as the 'objective' dimension of class often leads the marginal position of the 'subjective' aspect of the class. Thompson's work attempted to connect the class structure with class action to explain the class relations more significantly. Thompson's work in discussed the value patterns, ideas and institutional forms through which class operates in the consciousness of its members. This argument has a problem in understanding the objective position, because in this model the act of consciousness defines the class; if there is no conscious action, it means absence of class. Moreover, this framework lacks the space to understand and explain 'class alliances'.

### **Neo-Durkheimian model of Class**

David Grusky's neo-Durkheimian model of social class is seen as another alternative approach to study social inequalities and specially the structured by class. He differentiated between the *nominal tradition* of class and a *realist tradition* of class. Postmodernists have emphasized upon realist traditions and thus have criticized the nominalist traditions of social class. Grusky

suggests that the alternative possibility is to study micro-classes which are real social groupings i.e. people themselves relate to it and use these terms. Grusky & Sorenson (1998) are of the view that unless we move from 'aggregate conception of classes' to 'disaggregate occupations where the processes of closure, collective action and exploitation can be clearly studied (Grusky & Sorenson, 1998: 1187).

Grusky and Sorenson (1998) classify the major models of class analysis into two main categories – a) realist and b) nominalist; while looking at their composition in terms of aggregate occupations and disaggregate occupations. They further divide realist and nominalist types into gradational and categorical. They place Marxist, neo-Marxist analyses into realist-categorical but in aggregated model and Weberian & Neo-Weberian model is placed into a nationalist - category but aggregated model. While they place their own class analysis, into both realist and nominalist, but disaggregated models. Grusky and Sorenson suggest that in order to salvage class analysis large, macro aggregated models which cannot capture many social processes should give way to 'disaggregated models of class'. This approach to class takes its inspirations from a Durkheimian understanding of 'occupational groupings' which are intermediate groupings between state and individuals (ibid, 1192). Their claim for a 'realist' position emphasizes that:

the disaggregate classes are closed and self-aware sociopolitical groupings that act collectively and imply a specific style of life. (Grusky & Sorenson, 1998: 1196)

In this model of class, Grusky and Sorenson are also applying closure theory of Ossowski (1963) and Murphy (1988) and talk about how occupational organizations, which are institutionally embedded in society, employ exclusionary tactics to close and protect their privileges, to produce social identity. Parkin (1979) has talked about two such tactics- a. Private property, b. Credentialism. This theoretical insight provides a deeper understanding of the inter-class relations and the rules that they deploy to protect inequality. Grusky and Weeden (2001) initiated a debate on the reconstruction of the research agenda on social class by suggesting the case for disaggregation and applying the theory of social closure to study 'real classes' at the ground.

### Challenges to 'Class Analyses'

Harriet Bradley (1996) though following a more interrelated account on inequality, describes major three challenges to class theory:

- a) The argument after World War era that social structures have changed so rapidly that earlier framework of class does not hold any relevance and there is a need to revise the conceptual model to understand class structure.
- b) A second kind of critique of class analysis has been generated from the point of view of 'inter-sectionality', according to which social inequalities cannot be reduced to class where gender, race and ethnicity are similarly very crucial differences, and each has its own relevance and autonomous functioning.
- c) A third kind of critique of class theory has come from the intellectual movement popularly known as postmodernism, which rejects any theorization having holistic and grand character. Marxist framework becomes the obvious target of this 'anti-meta theoretical movement', for being all inclusive and generalization about the historical nature of societal changes and social class as the basic groupings of all societies. Postmodernism has challenged the social class theory for being totalizing theory which silences different groups and which is also a 'socially constructed term' rather than a real existing collectivity. (Bradley, 1992: 2)

In recent years there has been a continuing debate on the usefulness of the class, many social scientists have argued that societies have changed considerably and the contemporary societies cannot be studied through the old concept of class. The class analysis as discussed by Nisbet's works 'The Decline and Fall of Social Class' (1959) and Gorz's 'Farewell to the Working Class' (1982) are the early declaration of the decreasing relevance of the concept of social class. S M Lipset and Clark (1991) also questioned the relevance of social class in the context of studying politics in American and West European societies. Lipset and Clark (1991) argue that because of further 'decomposition of labour' and 'decline of hierarchies' the salience of social class is on decline as the voting pattern has changed from traditional 'working class- left', 'capitalists- right' dichotomies and showed the date from 1947 to 1986 which justifies the claim of decline of 'class

voting' in all western democracies (Lipset & Clark, 1991: 403). The study also finds these claims as supporting evidence to Daneil Bell and Alain Touraine's 'post-industrial' thesis.

Ray Pahl, for instance as questioned its worth in studying social inequalities in the context of Britain. Similarly Jan Pakulski & Malcolm Waters in their work *The Death of Class* (1996) have argued that present day inequalities are more complex and diverse, thus class is no longer the key concept to understand social order. Pakulski & Waters (1996) claim that "*with the declining commitment to Marxism, the collapse of Soviet communism and the waning appeal of socialist ideologies in the West, class is losing its ideological significance and its political centrality*"(ibid.: 1). They have argued that industrial societies have changed and to a new phase called 'post-industrialization', 'post-modernization', 'status conventionalism' and social, political and economic inequalities have to be understood in terms of status, prestige. They cite the following reasons for the erosion of class from the political life:

A wide redistribution of property; the proliferation of indirect and small ownership; the credentialization of skills and the professionalization of occupations; the multiple segmentation and globalization of markets; and an increasing role for consumption as a status and lifestyle generator. (Pakulski & Waters, 1996a: 4)

In their critique of class analysis and claim or its decomposition, Pakulski & Waters (1996) still recognize that the focus of their work is on 'advanced societies of the capitalist West' where a 'class remains salient in 'less developed countries (LDCs) of Asia, Africa and Latin America'(ibid.: 4). They further argued about the stratification which we see today is because of cultural consumption and not through class and division of labor, where the process of globalization has played an important role in changing the economy, technology and political structures and it has resulted in global inequalities instead of national inequalities.

In a recent article, Ulrich Beck (2007) also critiqued the 'methodological nationalism' of class sociology, which neglects the cosmopolitan nature of inequalities and individualization process (macro-sociological phenomena). Thus according to Beck, these processes have led to

'de-structuring' as well as 'ethnic pluralization' of classes. Beck while explaining two fold critics of class, writes:

There are two ways of discussing the 'end of classes'. One is the well-trodden highway of welfare state integration of the proletariat – with the aim of leveling class differences *and* social inequality (which Atkinson and the class sociologists imply is what I say); the other approach, which is the one I have taken from the start, is the investigation of the *paradigm shift in social inequality*. Individualization theory is then precisely *not* a theory of pacification (as is implied) but a *theory of crisis*, which furthermore shows, how the transnationalization of social inequalities bursts the framework of institutional responses – nation state (parties), trade unions, welfare state systems *and* the national sociologies of social classes. (Beck, 2007: 680, emphasis original)

While the critique of Beck emphasize more on changes happenings due to processes of globalization, the critiques of Harre (1981) are grounded in the challenges of the micro-sociology to social class as macro sociological concept. Rom Harre argues that the macro social collectivities are more a kind of 'taxonomic collectivities' whose 'ontological status' is questionable (Harre, 1981:140). Harre argues that it is because of the lack of any substantial relations between members of a 'class' on the ground, the macro-sociological concepts such as 'social class' are merely 'rhetorical and mythical devices' (Harre, 1981:149). Thus by invoking the 'methodological individualism', Harre rejects the 'social class' as 'real macro collectivities' as it was used for various purposes historically, but it lacks any empirical 'macro-entity' which can explain the 'structural relations among its members'(ibid.: 155-156).

These critiques of social class from diverse perspectives are important to contemplate the theories of class in the context of persisting social inequalities. It would be problematic definitely, to deploy the 'two models of class', 'deterministic models', particularly in the Asian context and to ignore other dimensions of unequal relations (caste, religion, race, ethnicity, sex etc.). Simultaneously the issues related to increasing economic inequalities within different groups can be explained through the category of social class.

## Approaches to Social Class beyond 'Macro & Micro' models

The above sections encompass the large array of definitional debates on class, within the legacy of Marx and Weber. In this section there will be a discussion on the theoretical approaches, which are developed as a critique of the classical approaches. These models include Giddens's theory of social class based on his 'structuration thesis' (Giddens, 1981) and Bourdieu's (1984) model of social class based on 'capitals and habitus'. Both of these models also reflect the tendency in the social theory to synthesize the dichotomy of 'micro and macro' or 'subjective and objective' dimensions. It will also bring the elements of the 'social closure' approach to social class as discussed by Frank Parkin (1979) and Raymond Murphy (1988).

### Giddens- "*Structuration of Class relationships*"

Anthony Giddens (1981) critically analyzed the theories of class as developed by Marx and Weber and also the models of Ralph Dahrendorf, Raymond Aron and Stanislaw Ossowski. Giddens began his analysis with studying the variances of the 'classes' in two epochs, such as feudalism and capitalism, at an 'abstract level'. In other words, he states that the feudal class structure is not 'economic' in the purest sense as it included economic as well as political elements. In developing his own model of the class, located within the 'structuration theory' Giddens defines class as 'a large scale aggregate of individuals comprised of impersonally defined relationships, and nominally 'open' in form' (Giddens, 1981: 100). Giddens theory of class can be laid out in following premises— a) According to Giddens, market occupies structure of power in the capitalist societies. Therefore, though its embedded in power relations, the market situation can not be explained as structure of authority (ibid.: 102). b) Giddens defines 'property' as 'a particular case of capacity to determine the bargaining outcome' in the market (ibid.: 103). c) He gave a new term called 'market capacity' to explain 'all forms of relevant attributes which individuals may bring to the bargaining encounter' (ibid.). Thus, differentiations in market capacity<sup>15</sup> thus refer to 'economic returns other than income i.e. security of

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<sup>15</sup> Similarly, John Elster, an economic and political theorist, also argued that class can also be characterized on the basis of 'economic and *non-economic endowments*' in the market. These 'endowments include property, skills and cultural capitals' and individuals who can best utilize them according to the purpose at hand (Elster, 1986:147). Elster's account of agents' actions being influenced according to 'endowment structure' has some parallel features

employment, prospects of career advancement, and a range of 'fringe benefits', such as pension rights' (ibid.). The formulation has the capability to ground these relationships based on differential capacities as structured form of classes.

Giddens uses the term '*structuration of class relationships*' and emphasized a very crucial element in class theory which is his focus on the *modes in which 'economic' relationships become translated into 'non-economic' social structures*' (ibid.: 105, emphasis added). In this sense he follows Weber's idea of 'social classes', which explains the 'formation of common network of social relationships between individuals, by the fact of their common mobility chances' (Giddens, 1981: 48). Giddens differentiated between the *mediate* (certain factors which intervene between market capacities and structured systems of class relationships) and the *proximate* (the local factors which shape class formation) structuration of class relationships' (ibid.: 107). His proposition explains how classes tend to operationalize forms of exclusion in terms of *control over market goods and services*<sup>16</sup>, thus he says-

the structuration of classes is facilitated to the degree to which mobility closure exists in relation to any specified form of market capacity. (Giddens, 1981: 107)

Giddens is Weberian in his emphasis on the three forms of market capacities (which is just another form of Weber's concept of 'market situation'). These three capacities are- i) 'ownership of property in the means of production, ii) possession of educational or technical qualification', and iii) 'possession of manual labor-power' (ibid.: 107). Now these three capacities are translated into the threefold classes- *upper class, middle class, lower class* (ibid. emphasis added). The sources of *proximate structuration* are classified into three forms- i) 'the division of labor within the productive enterprise, ii) the authority relationships within the enterprise and iii) influence of distributive groupings thereby referring to the structuration of class relationships in the sphere of *consumption*' (ibid.: 109, emphasis added). His conception of distributive

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with Bourdieu's notion of class condition and three capitals and reflection in the embodied dispositions of the agents. Giddens, Elster and Bourdieu have captured this crucial aspect of social class in their analyses.

<sup>16</sup> Giddens' analysis of class exclusion in the form of 'control over goods and services' is very much similar to Raymond Murphy's conception of 'social closure' (Murphy, 1988) in the context of class. Social closure will be discussed later in this chapter.



groupings helps in understanding what can be the fruitful theoretical insights by combining class and status.

Giddens has, thus tried to overcome Weberian limitation of class as differentiated from status, by arguing that structuration of class relationships can 'overlap' with that of 'ethnic or cultural differences and *status group membership itself becomes a form of market capacity*' (Giddens 1981: 112, emphasis added). Giddens thus opens the closed framework of class and expanded by bringing status also within 'structuration of class relationships'. Thus this model based on market capacities and the combination of the sources of 'mediate and proximate structurations' create a threefold 'class structures, is generic to capitalist society' (ibid.: 110). While talking about the *subjective dimension of class*, Giddens differentiated 'class consciousness' from 'class awareness'(ibid.: 111) and argued that whereas the former has a tendency to see two things- one, one class has its own unique behavior, patterns of thinking, life styles; two, these behaviors, living styles etc. are seen as distinct and different in relation to another class; and in the case of later, he refers to the common values, ways of living, behavior patterns which prevail within a class. He differentiated between his 'class-consciousness', 'conflict consciousness' and 'revolutionary class consciousness' (as Marx envisioned).

Edgell (1993) summarizes Giddens' thesis, which outlined the sources of classes: 'the possession of property, qualifications and physical labour power' and these sources led to the formation of three classes- a) dominant/upper class based on property, b) an intermediate/middle class based on credentials and c) a working/lower class based on labour power' (Edgell, 1993: 53). Giddens though differentiates his own analysis of social class from that of Herbert Marcuse for whom modern societies have turned into 'one-dimensional society' where the class differences are undermined. Due to the 'economic opportunities' in the capitalist economies which produce diverse differential 'life chances', Giddens says, '*the basis for the existence of classes*' (Giddens, 1981:273, emphasis original). This emphasis on 'life chances within a market situation' brings Giddens close to Weber notion of class. Similarly, Giddens' notion of social class shares some elements with Bourdieu's conception of class. The emphasis on 'three forms of market capacities', is somewhat similar to 'three forms of capital'. Thus the next section would discuss Bourdieu's critical conceptualization of class and how his model can provide

some insights to understand 'middle class' within the debates on class in general and studying 'Middle classes in India' in particular.

### **Pierre Bourdieu: "Misrecognition of Class Inequalities"**

One of the most influential sociologists, whose work has sparked crucial debates about class analyses, is Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu not only provided new concepts to understand class along with the status, but also discussed how inequality is reproduced through class lifestyles, patterns of thought, habitual practices etc. Bourdieu also linked together, using his 'reflexive sociology' as well as theory of practice, the i.e. realist and nominalist views on the classes. Bourdieu (2013) thus writes that social classes exist, before the sociologist embarks upon studying it, first as 'the objectivity of the first order' i.e. as unequal distributions of material resources (Bourdieu, 2013: 296). Social classes also exist as the 'objectivity of the second order' i.e. the way individuals form their strategies, classifications and categorizations (symbolic capital) on the basis of 'the first order' (ibid.). This notion about double objectivity allows Bourdieu to bring together material capital and 'symbolic capital'.

Bourdieu's work deals with the structured practices of different classes as well as about class consciousness and consequential inequalities. In his classical work, *Distinction*, Bourdieu has discussed social classes in France, by integrating the sociology of social stratification and culture. Bourdieu argues that social class broadly refers to distributions of what he calls 'volume of capital' and 'composition of capital' (Bourdieu, 1984). He pointed out the significance of both vertical and horizontal class divisions. Bourdieu formulates the 'practice-unifying' and 'practice-generating' concept, that is, 'class habitus' and his analyses of the reflection of external material existence onto 'class habitus'. He defines 'objective class' as-

The set of agents who are placed in homogeneous *conditions of existence* imposing homogeneous systems of dispositions capable of generating similar practices, and who possess a common set of properties, objectified properties, sometimes legally guaranteed (as possession of goods and power) or properties embodied as class habitus (in particular systems of classificatory schemes). (Bourdieu, 1984:101, emphasis added)

He critiqued the idea of identifying class with occupation and rather provides a wider framework of class, where 'class or class fraction is defined not only by its position in the relation of production, as identified through indices such as occupation, income or even educational level, but also by a certain sex-ratio, a certain distribution in geographical space (which is never socially neutral) and by a whole set of subsidiary characteristics which may function, in the form of tacit requirements, as real principles of selection or exclusion without ever being formally stated' (ibid.: 102). He distinguishes broadly three main classes, which are unified through their symbolic capitals, cultural consumption: *the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, the working class*. Thus, there exists 'fields of the social classes', Bourdieu argues, which are the 'site and struggles' where 'agents' compete and maximize their capitals and increase their positions within the field (ibid.: 228). Bourdieu has shown the differentiation between 'office workers (ledger clerks, bank clerks, agency clerks, typists) and commercial employees (mainly shop assistants) in terms of their 'dispositions and practices' (ibid.: 104). He highlighted that i) the relationships between class fraction and practices, ii) secondary properties into focus by relating both of these elements with class. Bourdieu has described what he meant by social class in following words:

Social class is not defined by a property (not even the most determinant one, such as the volume and composition of capital) nor by a collection of properties (of sex, age, social origin, ethnic origin-proportion of blacks and whites, for example, o natives and immigrants-income, educational level etc.), nor even by a chain of properties strung out from a fundamental property (position in the relations of production) in a relation of cause and effect, conditioner and conditioned; *but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices* (Bourdieu, 1984: 106, emphasis added).

Thus the 'structure of relations' between the properties is significant to the concept of social class as 'constructed by the researcher'. Bourdieu's work is reminiscent of Veblen's popular work *The Theory of Leisure Class* (1934), who emphasized the life styles, 'conspicuous

consumption' as significant criteria for class claims<sup>17</sup>. Bourdieu differentiates between class as classificatory category and class as social groupings with real identities. The constituting elements of the class have a *relational* weight and the element having more weight would be deciding factor and he further adds that many factors which contribute to the constructed class are important in terms of their place and value that they give to dispositions and practices over a time. Bourdieu also places the sex factor within the class framework when he says that 'sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity' (ibid.: 107). He provides instances from lowest class positions that women as skilled or semi-skilled workers have and the high proportion of women in personal care works such as hair-dressing, beauty parlor and domestic service etc. show the class and sex relationship. Another significant criterion of class is the concept of 'symbolic domination' which explains the transformation of class.

According to Bourdieu (1984), cultural capital is acquired through one's socialization and it varies by social class and thus serves as a sound basis to mark social differences and forms of social exclusion. Thus, according to Bourdieu's theory, social class determines individual's choices, likes-dislikes, 'tastes', as class habitus is shaped by 'class conditions of existence' and these class distinctions are further reinforced in agent's lives<sup>18</sup>. In response to it, cultural values, aesthetic practices of individuals create social groupings and social classes. It's a kind of two way process, where group (social class) aesthetics shape (class habitus) individual choices to food, dressing, music, cinema, art, body structure, attitudes, interests, etc. and these dispositions through distinctions further lead to certain kind of social positions (class positions). Hence, according to Bourdieu, classes always appear as status groups, their culturally stratified tastes legitimate the structure of economic domination by presenting it in a misrecognized form. Thus,

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<sup>17</sup> Veblen in his work *The Theory of Leisure Class* (1934) discusses that economic life is driven by the social stratification and how dominant class uses conspicuous consumption to display a dominant status.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu has extensively benefitted from the insights provided by William Lloyd Warner, who studied the social class in America and integrated class and status. Warner in his significant work *Social Class in America* (1949) writes, 'Social Class enters into almost every aspect of our lives, into marriage, family, business, government, work and play. It is an important determinant of personality development and is a factor in the kind of skills, abilities, and intelligence an individual uses to solve his problems...the house they live in, the neighborhood they choose to live in, and the friends they invite to their home, consciously, or more often unconsciously, demonstrate that class values help determine what things we select and what people we choose as our associates' (Warner, 1960: p.ix).

the 'naked acts of class interest are clothed with the mantle of the selfless pursuit of commonly recognized symbolic goods, making winners appear not as exploiters but as gifted individuals with superior cultural endowment' (Gartman, 1991: 423). Thus cultural capital, social capital and economic capital are the mechanisms through which class inequalities are reproduced. Bourdieu's class analysis provides a link to understand class theory and differential outcomes, which we problematized in Goldthorpe's as well as Wright's schemes. Bourdieu's theoretical position i.e. how objective conditions (class in this case) can shape, constraint and engender preferences (e.g. tastes, habitus) and practices according to the objective requirements of the conditions, is the most important insight.

Using the concepts of economic capital and cultural capital, many studies (Bourdieu, 1978; Wilson 2002) have shown the salience of social class in shaping various ways in which distinction is expressed and unequal relations and closure is formed. Following Bourdieu's approach, Wacquant (1991) has emphasized that theorizing middle class at the merely the structural location cannot explain much about it and the historical study about the middle class at the 'political and ideological level' (similar to Poulantzas' view) is also very important.

### **Social Closure Theory and Class Inequalities**

Broadly 'social closure theory' can be seen as an offshoot of Weber's notion 'monopolization of goods, skills and products' (Weber, 1978: 44-45) which gave emphasis on studying the 'exclusion' as a crucial element to understand class relationships (Parkin, 1979: 89). Although Weber has discussed the 'closure' in the context of 'closed forms of groupings', how do they operate, later scholars have applied it to analyze class exclusions. He indicated about the procedures of this closure such as 'rational closure on grounds of expediency are [sic] economic associations of a monopolistic or a plutocratic character' (Weber, 1978: 44). He explained the appropriation of rights as closure in the case of status groups i.e. Indian caste system. Taking clue from Weber, different scholars<sup>19</sup> have tried to develop a broad framework to explain 'exclusions and usurpation' in inter-class relations. Murphy (1984) has criticized the stratification theories for the neglect of 'monopolization of property' especially in the context of rise of capitalism worldwide as structure of power and domination.

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<sup>19</sup> See Parkin, 1974; Parkin 1979; Collins, 1975; Collins, 1979; Murphy, 1984; Murphy, 1986; Murphy, 1988.

Frank Parkin (1979) has attacked Marxism, especially Marxist Structuralist (the works of Poulantzas) in his analysis of social class on the one hand, while constructing a systematic critique of Stratification theory and Functionalist school. Parkin advances a theory of (neo-Weberian kind) class closure<sup>20</sup> based on the criteria of the 'property' and 'collective attribute'. Parkin writes:

'exclusion strategies aimed at what Weber calls the 'monopolization of opportunities' are frequently employed by one segment of the subordinate class against another, most usually on the basis of race, sex, ethnicity or some other collective attribute. (Parkin, 1979: 89)

Parkin also suggests that instead of the similar kind of class consciousness, in these socialist societies the conventional 'classlessness model' assumes that there exist two tier systems of 'Party-elites' versus 'non-Party masses with no intermediate classes' (Parkin, 1969: 355). He says that the recent studies have shown that instead of classlessness model, western capitalist class structure has been more prevalent in Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary etc. Parkin has tried to convert the Marxian notion of exploitation into 'exclusion' and 'usurpation' based closures. Where the former refers to the downward exercise of power through subordination' and the latter refers to the upward exercise of power by usurping the benefits of elites (Parkin, 1979; Murphy, 1984). Thus, Parkin argued that classes can be defined according to the pattern of collective action instead of place in relations of production (ibid.). There has been a strong tendency of comparing class structures in broadly defined as western capitalist societies with socialist societies in order to argue against the Marxian model of class while presenting a different picture of class structure. This criteria lead to two-class model of Parkin where a) dominant class based on the principle of exclusion and b) Dominated class based on the principle of usurpation and those classes who employ both the strategies of exclusion and usurpation in relation to lower and upper classes respectively. This is where Parkin brings his notion of 'dual closure' to define the

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<sup>20</sup> Parkin's notion of 'closure' and Murphy's theory of social closure has very much in similar to Charles Tilly's recent work on inequality, *Durable Inequality* (1998), where he explained the major mechanisms of inequality: exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation (Tilly, 1998: 10-11). His notion of 'opportunity hoarding' is also influenced by Weber's concept of 'closure' as well as Bourdieu's concept of 'capital' and competition among agents within the 'field'. Thus, it provides strong ground to analyze the common elements of a model of class can be explained as domination, exploitation and process of exclusion i.e. opportunity hoarding and usurpation.

nature of intermediate or middle classes. He criticized 'sociological model of class' not engaging with the question of 'private property' and Parkin attaches primacy importance to the 'conscious collective action' of classes rather than the objective position in the production (Parkin, 1979). Parkin has critiqued the over-emphasis on 'structural aspect' in defining class-

The most damaging weakness in any model of class that relegates social collectivities to the status of mere incumbents of positions, or embodiments of systemic forces, is that it cannot properly for those complexities that arise when racial, religious, ethnic, and sexual divisions run at a tangent to formal class divisions. (Parkin, 1979: 4)

Class in Parkin's theory essentially becomes the 'objective conditions of exclusion' as a consequence of the twin processes of 'individualist'(credentials) and 'collectivist'(sex, race, religion) relationship of exclusion (ibid.: 68). Another defining feature of class in this model is its capacity for the 'collective action' i.e. exclusion or usurpation (ibid.: 113).

Raymond Murphy (1988) has critiqued the Marxian theory while borrowing insights from a Weberian understanding of closure and developed the *social closure theory* based on *exclusionary codes* (of credentials and experience). He explained the process of 'monopolization of resources' in his analytical model. These exclusionary modes keep renewing in the responses to the demands presented by those who get excluded and thus the structures of these exclusions continue. In another article, Murphy (1986) laid on the systematic critique of the class theory of Marxists as well as of the Parkin's theory of class. Murphy (1984; 1986) argues that Parkin gave overemphasis on collective action and avoided deliberately the structuralist relationships and objective structural positions. Without dealing with the structural positions it is very problematic and difficult to understand the wide array of exclusions and their conditions of formation. It also collapses into 'tautology' as what constitutes a dominant class i.e. the one which exercises power in 'downward direction', how do we know the 'direction is downward, because the groups belongs to dominant class' (Murphy, 1986: 249). Following Weber's notion of social class, Murphy defines social class essentially as a 'global concept which takes into account all the major socially structured mechanisms of domination and exclusion, mutual antagonism and incompatibility of interests' (ibid.: 252-253). In other words, Murphy attempted to relate

conceptualize together Weber's notion of 'class' and 'status groups' within his theory of closure. With this critical adherence to Weberian analysis, Murphy developed his notion of class which includes relation between *structural position* and *conscious collective action*. It is due to this linkage between material position and cultural aspects; Murphy's theory of closure is significant to our understanding of class.

### **Class as 'Conditions of Existence with Capitals' and 'Class Habitus'**

It is pertinent to ponder at this moment, how class can be conceptualized after the comparative analysis of various theoretical approaches. The first criterion is that, social class can be studied through 'relational' approach rather than gradational one. In the models of Marx, Poulantzas, Wright and Bourdieu and Giddens, we find that this aspect of 'social class' is very strong and it has its advantages in studying inequality in relation to other classes and non-class collectivities (race, caste, religion, ethnicity etc.). The second element is what are the themes significant in defining class, it is here that Weber's 'closure' and Marx's 'exploitation', both in their own way help to understand the processes of monopolization and exploitation, which underlie the class relations. Giddens and Bourdieu have suggested integrating the separation of 'class' and 'status'. Giddens have highlighted the relevance of *non-economic structures* in the 'class structuration'. Similarly, Bourdieu model of class based on capital and habitus provide the linkage between objective positions and subjective dispositions. Bourdieu conceptualized his theory of social class while bringing these two aspects within the fields of social class. His concepts of 'cultural and economic capital' are the synthesis of this dichotomy between different forms of resources. This framework thus expands the horizons of social class by bringing in both cultural and material aspects of inequalities. Bourdieu's work is important to understand the life styles, manners, cultural values as been incorporated because of their location in class field. In this way, Bourdieu and Giddens have suggested an alternative to explain class inequalities while overcoming the duality of *agency* and *structure*. It is significant to recall what classical sociologist, Emile Durkheim has suggested regarding the question of 'classification'. Durkheim argued that it is the 'divisions in the *social organization* first which is reflected in the human's classification of natural order' later, rather the reverse. Therefore it is helpful to understand how people classify themselves into different classes on the basis of their *habitus* which is based on



the objective class conditions. Durkheim explains it succinctly as ‘the first logical categories were social categories; the first classes of things were classes of men into which these things were integrated’ (Durkheim & Mauss, 2009: 48-49). He attempted to explain how the classification of social order is incorporated into the individuals who thought of themselves in terms of groups and then further classify their natural order. This insight helps us in understanding Bourdieu’s theory of two levels of classification included within the social class i.e. i) objective class conditions and ii) how people categorize themselves on the basis of the first order of objective reality.

The central problem of the traditional class theory is its emphasis on ‘economic’ criteria, which renders class worthless in explaining social phenomena i.e. ‘cultural hegemony’, ‘middle class culture’ and the ‘normative aspect of structural relations’ etc. Thus we suggest that the framework based on Bourdieu’s notion of social class and borrowing elements from Marx, Weber, Giddens, Wright, Goldthorpe, Parkin, Murphy provide a more expanded conceptualization of social class. Through the ‘classificatory practices’ class hegemony and stratification is reproduced and thus Bourdieu’s objective to expose this at cultural level through consumption (which is not ‘naturalized’). Thus *social class, following Bourdieu, can be defined as an aggregate of individuals who are in a common position within the structure of unequal distribution of economic capital (income, wealth, property and occupation, conditions of work), cultural capitals (educational qualifications, credentials, skills), symbolic (prestige and honour) and social capitals (contacts and networks)*. Therefore, different mechanisms such as ‘monopolization of property/capitals’, ‘domination’, ‘social closure’ further implicate class practices. Through the concept of ‘*class habitus*’ one can understand the insulation of the objective conditions on the agent’s different practices. But along with it, Marx’s idea of ‘collective action’ as a significant feature of class need not be undermined. Class provides a framework for collective action although not necessary for revolutionary goal but for everyday conflicts, interests based on the composition of these capitals. But the theory of ‘social closure’ has its own limitations. For instance, at one level ‘social closure’ model enables one to look towards the strategies of the segments or fractions of middle class to hegemonize the social space and closure towards the lower classes, but at another level this ‘social closure’ model also loses the contact with objective *societal conditions* in which classes exist and develop (according to

Murphy's critique Parkin). Thus, Bourdieu's concept of 'field' is extremely suitable here, to discuss the *political and economic structures* which shape the future of class 'relations' and 'class habitus'.

Within this framework the next chapter would focus on the debates on 'middle class' within sociological theories. Thus these debates indicate towards the trend which argues for associating status within class. This separation following Weber's work was reflected in Weberian i.e. Goldthorpe's analysis of class as well as neo-Marxist Erik Olin Wright discussion about class based on exploitation. Integrating insights from neo-Marxists, and neo-Weberians, along with Bourdieu's framework captures the crucial aspect of both micro and macro questions, as well as 'economic' and 'socio-cultural' dimensions of class. Within the debates about social class, a crucial category is 'middle class'. There have been lots of theorizations on middle class still it remains vague and ambiguous category. The questions generally discussed are whether middle class is a class like working class or it is out of class structure i.e. occupying a separate position as status group and identity. Then, 'middle class' is talked more as 'status groups' rather than a class, and sociologists have explained the problems for further operationalizing it. It is essential to situate, for instance, Indian middle class within certain historical context and discuss about its formation and growth. The next chapter will discuss these questions in detail and will try to develop a workable framework to understand middle class in an empirical setting.

## Chapter 2

### MIDDLE CLASSES AND THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

#### Introduction

This chapter will try to grapple with the concept of 'middle class' as it has been debated and theorized in the discipline of sociology. The previous chapter has provided us a comprehensive account of the various approaches to understand class. It talked about how differential capitals in the social and economic sphere led to the formation of different classes. Therefore, it hinges on the formation of class structure. In the continuation, the aim of this chapter is to develop a comparative understanding of the 'middle class' in order to comprehend two main issues: i) what are the *theoretical grounds* on which the concept of 'middle class' is based, ii) what *social phenomena* does the concept of 'middle class' explain.

Therefore, the first section would discuss the *definitional question* of the middle class. It will briefly describe various meanings attributed to the term 'middle class'. Then the discussion will turn to explain the emergence of the 'middle class' in a transformed socio-economic context as a result of the rise of the modern capitalist societies. The second section would then discuss the various *theoretical grounds* upon which the major approaches to the middle class are based. This section would also deal with the definitional aspect of the 'middle class' and present a critical analysis of the conception of middle class emerging out of these models. Hence, it would suggest a more synthesized approach based on the theoretical insights provided in the works of Bourdieu, neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians and other major theorists. It would also explain how the conception of 'class' in general and 'middle class' in particular, reflects a shift from a very 'economic' and 'structural' notion of class to a 'socio-cultural' one, which includes both dimensions.

The third and final section discusses the practices of the 'middle class' and class condition of middle class in capitalist countries and suggests that a context-specific understanding can better explain the practices of middle class in Indian society. This discussion

will end with a framework which argues that explaining the relation of the middle classes with other class will enable us to study Indian middle classes in a more concrete and fruitful way. It is important to explore how one can explain the nature of social inequalities through the unique and significant 'conditions of existence' and related practices of the 'middle class' (Bourdieu, 1984). It also highlights the 'composition and volume' of overall capitals i.e. objective class conditions which shape and consequently develop 'class habitus' (ibid.).

### **Middle Class: A Definitional Question**

Long ago, Aristotle talked about 'the best political community' i.e. middle class, it stabilize the nature of things unlike other the two classes, i.e. the upper class and the poor (cited in Lipset and Bendix, 1967: 1). To him, the 'best' city was one in which 'citizens [were] composed of middle classes' (ibid.: 2). A city which claims to be composed of the 'best political community' (which means middle class) is the state, which is the 'best administered'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly the category of the 'middle class' has been used in the European context to define those sections of society which exist in between 'aristocracy' and 'working classes'. It was Rev. Thomas Gisborne,<sup>9</sup> who used the term 'middle class' in 1785 to denote the 'propertied and large entrepreneurial class' i.e. people who lay between landowners and agricultural labourers (Ahmad & Reifeld, 2002). The term 'middle class' highlights 'the element of socio-cultural changes that evolved as a central feature of the transition from feudal social structures towards the modern-industrialized and capitalist societies' (ibid.). It thereby also generates sharp polarizations between the working class, poor and the capitalists- industrialists (ibid.).

These instances indicate the different notions of the 'middle class',<sup>10</sup> in terms of their location in the social order and their political behavior. The major difficulty for sociologists in defining the middle class is that it cannot be classified as a class of capitalists or wage laborers. Most of the sociologists agree that it consists of well-paid professional and managerial employees,

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<sup>8</sup> Lipset and Bendix, 1967: 1

<sup>9</sup>Quoted from Ahmad, Imitaz & Reifeld, H. 2002. *Middle Class Values in India and Western Europe*, Social Science Press, New Delhi

<sup>10</sup>'Middle Class' is defined as 'a class occupying a position between the upper class and the lower class; *especially* : a fluid heterogeneous socioeconomic grouping composed principally of business and professional people, bureaucrats, and some farmers and skilled workers sharing common social characteristics and values' in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2003, Online, URL: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/middle%20class>. (Accessed at 21<sup>st</sup> March. 2013)

intelligentsia, and white collar employees. Also the question of its 'internal differentiation' becomes a frontal attack against its conception as a 'class'. Thus there is a need for a more analytical approach to make sense of the class location of the middle class as well as the process of formulation of a 'middle class identity' in spite of internal differences. These are some of the important questions which have been discussed in the field of social stratification and inequality. time and again, but a fresh explanation and critical analysis is required.

### **Emergence of a New Socio-Economic and Political Order**

The concept of 'middle class' attained significance within the context of socio-economic transformations. This section thus discusses two such interrelated contexts a) the process of *embourgeoisement* and b) the growth of the *post-industrial society*; which would explain the rise of middle class and the ways in which sociologists conceived of it. These are taken as the theoretical contexts to the discussion of the 'middle class' in this work. For instance, the *embourgeoisement thesis*,<sup>11</sup> which was formulated in the context of post-war Britain during the 1950's and 1960's, was an attempt to understand the changes in class structure. It was projected as the process of leveling of class differences i.e. due to an improvement of the lives of the workers; their life-styles changed, started thinking like 'middle class' and aspiration to possess more than the basic facilities, develop conservative political orientations etc. Thus, class differentials no longer mattered in the lives of the people where mass culture dominated. The collective feeling among workers existed only as a means to some local interests (wage, unions etc.) and not as universal end to overthrow the capitalist order and usher in a classless society. Thus, Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1963) highlight the process of *individuation* (withdrawal into their private lives) among the new working class. This phenomenon, for many sociologists, reflected the decline of class as significant actor in social life. Goldthorpe and Lockwood (et al. 1967) in their study of the *affluent worker* discussed the embourgeoisement thesis. They based their study on the work of Ferdynand Zweig (1961), who had conducted a study of working class families at home and at work in England and concluded that 'working class life finds itself on the move towards new middle class values and middle class existence' (Zweig, 1961: ix). On the

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<sup>11</sup> Abrams and Rose conducted a study of the weakening ties between working class and labour party in Britain during 1960's and highlighted the process of embourgeoisement. For further details, see Abrams, M and R. Rose, *Must Labour Lose*, Middlesex, Harmondsworth. 1960.

other hand, some have explained the emergence of middle classes<sup>12</sup> with the coming of 'the Enlightenment' and 'the Industrial Revolution' which created a rupture in the traditional social order. John Goldthorpe, through his work on 'affluent worker' responded to Zweig's proposition of *embourgeoisement*, and the decline of the labor party as a sign of a shift in the political alliance of the working class. Goldthorpe's studies showed empirical evidence which could suggest, whether any changes have occurred or not in the class structure, and in the working class's political attitudes, in the context of the development of industrialism and capitalism after World War II (Goldthorpe and Lockwood et al 1967). In their work *The Affluent Worker in the class structure*, Goldthorpe and Lockwood & others (1969) said:

'On such grounds, therefore, we held to the view that thesis of the progressive embourgeoisement of the British working class was, to say the very least, not proven; and that, as usually presented, it involved a variety of confused and dubious assertions'. (Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer and Platt, 1969: 26)

Rather, Goldthorpe argued that the process was more a kind of 'convergence in the normative orientations of some sections of the working class and of some white-collar groups' (op. cit., p. 26). Generally it can be seen in opposition to the thesis of 'proletarianization' as discussed by Marx, Lenin<sup>13</sup> and later Marxists. Thus, the frequent growth of commerce and trade is considered to result in an increased demand for laborers, thus more wages, and finally it results in advancement of socio-economic conditions of workers and they in fact 'experience' embourgeoisement<sup>14</sup> in their life-styles, habits and attitude and political participation and thus become a *middle class society*. In these studies, occupation was studied as a central criterion of class but it had a number of problems and was thus criticized by sociologists using the Marxian

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<sup>12</sup> See Ahmad, Imitaz & Helmut Reifeld. *Middle Class values in India and Western Europe*, New Delhi: Social Science Press. 2002.

<sup>13</sup> V.I. Lenin in his work also hinted about the process of 'embourgeoisement'. In 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, chapter 8 quotes Engels' statement- "on October 7, 1858, Engels wrote to Marx, "The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy, and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world this is, of course, to a certain extent justifiable." Thus Engels seems to argue that it is Britain's dominant condition in World's economy that has led to emergence of affluent sections within working class.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Engels in his work on *Conditions of Working Class in England, 1887* analyzed the economic conditions of workers worsened after the industrial revolution, various diseases, malnutrition etc. were at high in industrial cities.

notion of class (Wright, 1997; Scott, 1994; Poulantzas, 1975; Bourdieu, 1984). The changes in economic policies in democratic states flourished the imagination of an 'open' society in place of a 'closed society' the norm for all countries. This was also further in support to assumptions of neo-liberal democracies, which promised more equality and freedom for the people. Therefore all these tendencies, which Goldthorpe (1996) calls the 'Liberal Theory of society', would lead to the decomposition of class or class inequalities and thus demand a 'new conceptualization' of social inequalities. Thus 'the questions of openness and of the possibility of a 'meritocracy' were central to debates over educational policy and stimulated a spate of investigations into social mobility between classes' (Crompton and Devine, Savage, Scott, 2000: 2).

The second thesis which explains the changes in socio-economic life is the theory of 'industrial society', which describes the industrial phase of capitalism as the expression of the 'institutionalization of class conflict, where the concept of class loses its application' (Giddens, 1981: 318). Thus, it can be seen as a radical extension of the thesis of *embourgeoisement*, which claims that society in the future would be essentially a '*middle class society*'. Glassman (1997) also hints at the same phenomenon of a changing sociopolitical order and reformed economic structure due to a 'high-technology capitalist industrial system'; thus a new set of strata has emerged and affects the whole political structure. In the case of Britain, mobility studies (see Cole, 1956) have shown that during the 1950's both upper class and proletariat was disappearing. Cole argued that 14.5% of occupied heads of households were administrative, managerial and professional workers, 7.6% farmers, small employees and shopkeepers and 73.6% workers, manual and non-manual. Thus he concluded that no single criterion could define class (Quoted in Frankel 1970). Ralf Dahrendorf (1972) examined the nature of conflict in *industrial society* and critiqued the Marxian theory of class. Industrial society, according to Dahrendorf, is characterized by 'mechanized commodity production in factories and enterprises' and capitalist society is one of its parts (Dahrendorf, 1972: 40). The social structure of industrial society reflects the change in *roles*, and *separation of ownership and control* and thus formation of new social groups (different from those in capitalist society) i.e. capitalist, manager, heir, bureaucrat (ibid., 1972: 45-46).

With the turn to a 'post-industrial' social order, the structure of society had been transformed and there emerged a society which Daniel Bell calls the society of 'knowledge and technology' (Bell, 1974: 17). It is basically a 'service economy' where the 'white collar occupational groups' i.e. professionals and managers, scientists and engineers become the 'key groups in society' and the number of blue collar workers diminish (ibid.: 17-19). In the same theoretical mode, Alain Touraine (1971) also depicts the changing nature of society, from industrial to 'post-industrial society'. He refers to this society as a 'technocratic or programmed society' where production no longer decides everything in society (Touraine, 1971: 2-3). He points out the various features of 'post-industrial society' which are different from earlier capitalist industrialist societies i.e. a shift from 'exploitation' to 'alienation' as the central problem of the order. Touraine then turns toward the emergence of 'new classes' in the wake of post-industrial society. He argues that the traditional conception of classes was extremely useful until nineteenth-century Europe, but it is unable to explain the concrete realities of post-industrial society, where the *mass society* has blurred class consciousness, belonging and class differences. Instead of the sociology of class, he recommends a 'sociology of organizations' in a 'programmed society' (Touraine, 1971: 43). Thus, rather than identifying himself with class theorists, Touraine talks about the emergence of new social groups such as (in a hierarchical order) *professionals, technocrats, bureaucrats, experts* (service class), *employees* and *operators* (ibid.: 70) based on the levels of knowledge and education, kinds of technical training, credentials and specializations, etc.

Similarly, Patrick Joyce (1995) has pointed out explicitly the challenges for class analyses as 'the restructuring of the western economies away from the manual and industrial sectors has meant the dwindling of the old manual 'working class' and the coming of what has been called 'post-industrial' society'(Joyce, 1995: 3). In his work on the American Middle Class, C. W. Mills<sup>15</sup> rightly said that "the general idea of new middle class, in all its vagueness but also in all its ramifications, is an attempt to *grasp these new developments of social structure and human character*" (Mills, 1969: xx, emphasis added).

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<sup>15</sup> Mills, C.W. *White Collar- The American Middle Classes*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1969.



This brings the issue of the ‘boundary problem’, which is the defining feature of the debates on middle classes. Hamilton & Hirszowicz (1987) argued that while the boundary between the capitalist class and middle class can be easily marked on the basis of ‘ownership of property’ and ‘control’ but the same distinction is not that fruitful in the case of the middle class and working class. One of the distinctions made between the middle class and the working class is: the *nature of the occupation*, where the working class is ‘concerned with production and middle classes are concerned with organization tasks for instance, administration, planning, supervision and management etc. (Hamilton & Hirszowicz, 1987). In UK, sociologists- Mike Savage and Fiona Devine and others conducted a survey called Great British Class Survey (GBCS)<sup>16</sup>. In the survey 1,60,000 people participated, the researchers found that Britain’s class structure is fragmenting. They developed a seven-class schema which includes:

- *elite*-The most privileged class, which has high level of all three capitals (economic, cultural, and social);
- *established middle class*- with high levels of all three capitals, but not as high as Elite, culturally engaged;
- *technical middle class*- new, small class, with high economic capital but less culturally engaged;
- *new affluent workers*- medium levels of economic, but higher levels of cultural and social capital, young and active;
- *emergent service workers*- New class with low economic but high ‘emerging’ cultural capital, high social capital, young and often found in urban areas;
- *traditional working class*- Low on all three capitals, older on average than other classes; and finally
- the *precariat, or precarious proletariat* (Times of India, April 4, 2013).

The notion of ‘class’ operationalized in this survey is inspired by the writings of Pierre Bourdieu, whose concepts of capitals and habitus are very important to capture the social differentiation as well as class conflicts. Thus in response to ‘boundary problem’, Savage et al. (2013) have argued that though these three forms of capitals overlap, they produce specific distinctions and get combined to generate class boundaries (Savage et al., 2013: 5).

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Elite to precariat, Britain now has 7 social classes’, *Times of India*, April 4, 2013, URL: [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-04/science/38277667\\_1\\_middle-class-upper\\_class-population](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-04/science/38277667_1_middle-class-upper_class-population). (Accessed at 6<sup>th</sup> April 2013).

### **Dynamics of ‘Class Location’ and ‘Class Culture’**

The important questions now, are how to differentiate middle class from the other classes (lower and upper classes), and what do inter-class relations tell us about social structure and structural inequalities. There are three major issues in the discussion on class location and class action discussed below:

*Firstly*, there are two major approaches to the middle class; namely the Marxist and the Weberian. Marx’s analysis has ignored the ‘significance’ of the middle classes (though he talked about the emergence of new petty bourgeoisie). Rather he emphasized the process of *polarization* and *proletarianization* to explain the nature of capitalist society. Weber’s work poses the question of class differently. Rather than class as the central axis of stratification, it is seen as one among the other three forms of distribution of power. The neo-Marxist’s model of class analysis has improved the earlier position by providing a theoretical angle to the ‘new middle class’ on the basis of ‘productive/non-productive’ criteria. It is conceptualized as ‘contradictory locations’ within the class structure. Similarly, the neo-Weberians have theorized ‘new middle class’ as ‘service class’ in terms of its ‘employment relationships’.

*Secondly*, in the context of debates on the ‘death of class’ or the ‘*paradigm shift in social inequalities*’ (Beck, 2007), how do we make sense of a class which emerged with the further growth of the capitalist economy. The question is, how do we study the sections of society who are in ‘real terms’ better than workers in terms of *salary condition of the job, resources available at this class condition* i.e. bonuses, medical facilities, status, educational qualifications etc. and who do not do manual jobs, who are being employed by company owners and state offices, and engage in supervisory, managerial work. Similarly as Bourdieu argues, this class does not share a ‘relations of ownership’ as bourgeoisie, and ‘they are being exploited by the ruling class and who still continuously maintain their distance from the lower class in terms of their taste’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 260). Thus, a broader framework of class i.e. which relates location with cultural values, can explain these changes.

*Thirdly*, one more pattern can be observed in these various models, – the micro and macro debate. In the general discussions, macro refers to the study of class structures, class typologies etc. and micro refers to the study of class cultures i.e. working class attitudes, middle

class values, lifestyles, etc. Thus, it articulates the conventional dichotomy of subject matter of sociology whereby some like Giddens and Bourdieu have developed possible syntheses of the so-called dichotomy of social theory. Reading this underlying pattern of the theorizing of the middle class is very important as it includes the three major elements in it. The first is about the theorization around middle class; secondly, the methodological argument about the relevance of the concept, and finally the operationalization of the concept of 'middle class' e.g. as individual or household or the work relations as the unit of analysis. It is in the last element, the problem between 'micro and macro' or 'agency and structure' emerges, which creates further complexities to study the middle class.

These concerns highlight the significance 'location' which remains ambiguous in the works of Marx and Weber. The following sections will deal how this question has been dealt in these works. Along with it, the issue of 'class consciousness', 'class relations' of the middle class also led to the development of cultural models. This explains the shift in these approaches to understand middle class from a 'production' to 'consumption' or 'cultural' dimensions. Broadly these perspectives are classified into two major types, although social class includes elements from both of these perspectives.

**a) *Structural Models of Middle Class:*** These include those perspectives which emphasize class structure and class formations, and try to explain the middle class by invoking categories such as 'petty bourgeoisie' (Marx), 'skills and professions' (Weber) 'unproductive labor' (Poulantzas), 'contradictory class locations' (Wright), bringing in 'micro conceptions of class as real groupings' (Grusky), 'employment relations' (Goldthorpe), 'structuration of class relations', 'credentials' (Giddens) and 'classes as systems of places' (Abercrombie and Urry), etc.

**b) *Cultural Models of Middle Class:*** These include basically those theorizations of middle class which emphasize a conceptual marriage between 'class and status'; 'class and culture', 'cultural production' in case of 'intellectuals' (Szelenyi), control over 'cultural capital' (Gouldner) and 'compositions and volumes of economic, social and capital' (Bourdieu) etc.

Though for conceptual clarification these types have been framed here, this does not mean that they are totally unrelated, in fact they make more sense when we see these two models of middle classes in relation to each others. The purpose behind this classification is to reflect

upon the artificial classification made by sociologists who differentiated 'class' from 'status' (such as Weber, 1978; Mills, 1959; Goldthorpe, 1996). Thus, an integrated model of both these kinds would be a better conceptualization of class. As mentioned earlier, these debates highlight the problems of the 'subjective and objective' binaries in order to understand the structural element as related to its status and cultural aspect.

### **A. *Structural Models of Middle Class***

#### **a) *Marx and Petty Bourgeoisie***

The term 'middle class' within sociology conveyed (especially during the 1950's and 1960's) the sense of 'Marxism as an outdated model' to study class structure (Hindess, 1987). Dahrendorf has argued that the Marxian model of class explained nineteenth-century capitalism reasonably well but became outdated and could not explain the rise of the middle class especially professionals and civil servants etc. If we try to understand the Marxian dialectic of class as the driving force of history and class struggle as essential feature of all the societies in general and capitalist societies in particular, then it is a very crucial task to locate the 'new middle class' properly in the class structure. Again if we try to apply the Marxian method to understand 'new middle class' as members of the proletariat since they neither possess the means of production of their own nor they sell their labor power like workers, then the methodological as well as practical problem arises as to how a manager in public sector banks or a private company can be seen as having the same class interests with those of the workers in the same bank or company. But Marx was aware of the complexity of the division of labor and also of the 'intermediate strata' in British society and thus, in *Capital Vol. III* he wrote that:

In England, modern society is indisputably most highly and classically developed in economic structure. Nevertheless, even here the stratification of classes does not appear in its pure form. Middle and intermediate strata even here obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere. However, this is immaterial for our analysis.  
(Marx: 1959: 610)

Thus his idea about the middle class as sinking into the proletariat has been critiqued and thus the *embourgeoisment* thesis is developed to counter Marx's thesis by arguing that in the due

course of capitalist development the middle class is expanding and thriving (Wright, 1980). The contradiction in the understanding of Marx continues especially in regard to 'middle class': at one place, he referred to it as the 'manufacturing middle class' (Marx & Engels, 1969:4) and a class of skilled laborers. Marx also talked about the nature of this middle class and its relation to the other two classes (a more abstract account) in following manner:

The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay, more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If, by chance, they are revolutionary, they are only so in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests; they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat. (Marx and Engels, 1969:11)

But it is quite possible that what Marx is referring to here is what others call the 'old middle class' and which declined with the rise of modern capitalist economy and liberal democracy and gave birth to a 'new middle class'. Marx also hinted about the birth of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' in the *Manifesto* in the following words

In countries where modern civilisation has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie, and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeois society. (Marx & Engels, 1969:29)

However Marx said that even this class will not remain an independent class due to forces of competition and the development of capitalism and thus did not pay needed attention to it. It is this 'new middle class' through which one can understand the dynamics different classes in present-day societies. In our view the most fundamental point regarding *Marx's analysis of classes is his dynamic decoding the structure of capitalism* and it is this aspect which remains beyond the scope of neo-Weberians: if at all it attracts their attention, it remains marginal. Instead neo-Weberians have developed class analysis to study the social changes taking place in

the social structure and social mobility among various classes. Wacquant (1991) summarizes the three major neo-Marxist positions on the conception of 'middle classes'<sup>17</sup> a) the one which says that the middle classes exists but just as an intermediary group. The major proponents of this model, Wacquant mentions, are L. Corey, F. D. Klingender, Harry Braverman, Guglielmo Carchedi, Rosemary Crompton and Jon Gubbay etc.; b) the second view is that this intermediate group will wither away and sink into working class with the processes of capitalist production; c) the third position, which sees the middle class as a class proper and analyzes its features and interests, has been developed by neo-Marxist Erik Olin Wright and Nicos Poulantzas, which would be discussed later in this chapter (Wacquant, 1991:43-44). Weber's analysis of social class has been widely accepted by many sociologists, especially in studying social changes through mobility patterns across societies.

#### **b) Weber's *Skilled and Professional Class***

Weber in his work *Economy and Society* provides his three-dimensional model of class. Middle classes' are seen as the groups who are between what he calls 'positively privileged class' in relation to property and 'negatively privileged' class' in relation to property, in other words between the property-owning and property-less class. These classes make their living on the basis of their 'property or skills'. He tries to argue that these classes eke out their livings on the basis of 'skills' or the 'little property' they have (unlike the working class). Weber also includes (under his classification of commercial classes) in the middle class the self-employed farmers and craftsmen, private and public officials and also the 'liberal professions and 'labor groups with exceptional qualifications' (Weber, 1978: 302-304). In his third and consolidated classification of 'social class' he refers to 'petty bourgeoisie, property-less intelligentsia and specialists, which includes the above-mentioned white collar professionals, technicians, and bureaucrats.

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<sup>17</sup> Loic J.D. Wacquant (1991) has discussed in detail the various theories of middle classes and what are their basic problems and argued for more comprehensive conceptualization of social class. For further detail, see Wacquant, Loic 1991. 'Making class: the middle class(es) in social theory and social structure' in McNall, S. G. , R. F. Levine and R. Fantasia (eds.) *Bringing Class Back In*. New York: Westview Press.

### c) Neo-Marxists on *'Middle Class' in Capitalism:*

Within the Marxist tradition, new models have been invoked to explain the class location of 'middle class'. Neo-Marxists are prominent in developing a moderated model of class, which is more acceptable within the sociologists and increases the strength of Marxist theory. The *Frankfurt School*, led by Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse etc., also formulated a synthesized dialectical (more Hegelian than Marxist) framework to analyze culture and ideology within capitalist society. Similarly, structural Marxists like Nicos Poulantzas developed an Althusserian-Marxist synthesis of 'class theory'. On the other hand, the American sociologist, Erik Olin Wright, developed Marxism as 'class analysis' on the basis of his empirical studies of class structure and inequalities in American society. Thus, this section will deal with the neo-Marxist analyses of the concept of 'middle class'.

*Middle Class as part of the 'New Petty Bourgeoisie'* - Nicos Poulantzas (1975), one of the major contributors to structuralist Marxists analyses of social classes in the context of capitalism has discussed the emergence of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' in detail and discussed how the notion of 'structural class determination' can help in examining the social-political nature of this class. Poulantzas has distinguished those who produce surplus value for the capitalists the from other employees and also identifies certain types of employees as performing political and ideological functions on behalf of capital. In his work, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1975), Poulantzas critiqued the 'prevalent tendencies' of rejecting Marxism as a doctrine in the wake of the rising 'middle class' which is being theorized as a 'mere assemblage of declassed agents' (Poulantzas, 1975: 203) and how the middle class can be better understood as a section of the 'new petty bourgeoisie'. About the rise of 'white collars' in relation to the embourgeoisement thesis, he says-

The considerable increase, throughout monopoly capitalism and its various phases, of the number of nonproductive wage-earners, i.e. groups such as commercial and bank employees, office and service workers, etc., in short all those who are commonly referred to as 'white-collar' or 'tertiary sector' workers. The first line of thought to which this has given rise is one that expressly attempts to refute the Marxist theory of social classes and with it the theory of class

struggle. It is generally based on, or at least tainted with, the general notion of dissolution of class boundaries and the class struggle within present society, and this process is allegedly marked by a generalized 'embourgeoisement', i.e. by an 'integration' of the working class. (Poulantzas, 1975: 190-191)

His distinction between 'structural class determination' and 'class position' is very important in the context of the study of the middle class and we find similarities with Wright's (1985) approach. Poulantzas criticized the theses on the emergence of 'new class' which are described as a failure of Marxian analysis and tend to ignore the specificities of 'middle class' and to use the term 'to mean the classes no longer exist' (Poulantzas, 1975: 197). Following the Marxist notion of social class as real social groupings rather than a nominal conception of 'class as schematization of reality' Poulantzas has discussed a variety of theoretical and methodological issues in order to develop his understanding of the 'middle class'. Poulantzas has analyzed the 'old petty bourgeoisie' and 'new petty bourgeoisie' in his work but he sees the new petty bourgeoisie as belonging to the same 'old petty bourgeoisie' i.e. 'small-scale production and ownership, independent craftsmen and traders' (Poulantzas, 1975: 204). Thus *the middle class is defined on the criterion of 'unproductive labor'*, which provides only service to the capitalist in exchange for a salary. According to Poulantzas, the 'middle class' does the job of the circulation and redistribution of surplus labor and is not directly involved in the exploitation as experienced by the working class although the new petty bourgeoisie also experience extortion of labor outside of their wages; these wage-earners are not positioned in direct confrontation to the capitalist who comes into contact with them as a buyer of their services in exchange for a salary (ibid.: 205). Poulantzas explained that workers in the sphere of circulation and employees of financial enterprises do the task of circulating and redistributing the surplus value among various fraction of capital and thus these workers do not produce value and cannot be part of the working class. Two main characteristics of this are, i) their political and ideological orientations being similar to those of the petty bourgeoisie (individualism, hostility towards the working class) and ii) the conflicted situation between the bourgeoisie and working class (Wright, 1980). However, Hindess points out that Wright estimates that the working class would be very small minority if one followed Poulantzas's strict notion of the working class (Hindess, 1987: 59; Wright, 1980).



Wright (1985) has critically analyzed Poulantzas's model of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' and has tried to develop a model which encompasses the diverse positions in between the two major classes.

### **Erik Olin Wright and '*Contradictory Class Locations*'**

Neo-Marxists have been willing to bring authority relations into their analyses of the class structure of modern capitalist societies. Erik Olin Wright (1985) has explained the concept of 'contradictory class locations' during his empirical work of income determination. In his later work, the working class is defined through the element of *exploitation*, which thereby places employees (who are not exploited) in intermediate class. Within his Marxist model of four essential elements – 'class structure (as a sole determinant of social power, unlike in Weber's model), class struggle, and class consciousness and class formation', simultaneously an attempt is made to explain the concept of the 'middle class'(Wright, 1985: 30). Both Wright and Poulantzas have tried to evolve a modified version of 'class analysis' which recognizes the 'new middle class' explicitly. While analyzing the middle classes within the Marxist analysis of class structure, Wright suggests that there are 'three processes underlying class relations:

- i) 'economic ownership over investments and the accumulation process,
- ii) possession in terms of the control over physical means of production,
- iii) control over the labour power of others' (Wright, 1978: 75).

Wright (1985) has identified three main classes in capitalist American society: capitalists, workers and the petty bourgeoisie (self-employed). He explained the significant characteristics of the 'middle class' and are called 'contradictory class locations', i.e. managers and supervisors who are salaried employees in capitalist enterprises. Similarly, many technical workers and professionals enjoy autonomy, being 'petty bourgeoisie', but are not 'self-employed' and thus are occupying the 'contradictory class locations'. Wright points out that

Since concrete societies are rarely, if ever, characterized by a single mode of production, the actual class structures of given societies will be characterized by a complex patterns of intersecting exploitation relations. There will therefore tend to be some positions which are exploiting along one dimension of exploitation

relations, and while on other are exploited. Highly skilled wage earners (e.g. professionals) in capitalism are a good example; they are capitalistically exploited because they lack assets in capital and yet are skill-exploiters. Such positions are typically referred to as the 'new middle class' of a given class system. (Wright, 1985: 87)

Thus Wright's classification of the wage earners on the basis of two exploitative relations e.g. 'organizational assets' and 'skill/credentials', allows recognition of the class positions of 'expert managers, non-managerial experts, non-expert managers etc.' (Wright, 1985: 284). Within the capitalist society, the 'new middle class' thus occupies 'contradictory locations within exploitative relations' and hence is 'simultaneously [exploiting] and exploited' (ibid.: 285). Then, Wright adds, in feudal, capitalist and socialist modes of production, bourgeoisie, managers/bureaucrats and intellectuals/experts would be in 'contradictory locations of class relations' respectively (ibid.). Now in this conceptualization of 'new middle class' in capitalism Wright also succinctly describes the general behavior of this class in relation to capitalists (though variable in different historical contexts):

At least in the advanced capitalist countries, corporate managers are so closely integrated into the logic of private capital accumulation that it seems quite implausible that they would ever oppose capitalism in favour of some sort of statist organization of production...It therefore seems completely unrealistic to treat managers and bureaucrats as even potential class rivals to bourgeoisie... (Wright, 1985: 90)

Thus 'new middle class' is explained in this approach not as a 'class proper' but as having 'locations in more than one class'. This later approach to the 'new middle class' within exploitative relations (Wright, 1979) is an improvement on his earlier conceptualization, where 'domination' was the crucial element. In his later writings, Wright's approach is 'materialist and historical' and 'analytical'. Wright says that middle class 'location within the class relations is defined by the nature of their material optimizing strategies given the specific kinds of assets they own/control' (Wright, 1985: 91). Thus Wright emphasizes the 'exploitation' based conception of class, such as the 'three forms: ownership of capital assets, the control of

organizational assets and possession of skills and credential assets' (ibid.: 283). He borrows the criteria of 'exploitation' from Marx and Roemer,<sup>18</sup> instead of a domination-based (as Dahrendorf suggests) describes 'new middle class' as 'doubly contradictory locations' (Wright, 1979: 26). Thus Wright<sup>19</sup> develops a model of class where the 'new middle class' consists of positions which are 'simultaneously exploiting and exploiters'. Wright (1988) also deploys a typology to explain the possible 'class alliance' the new middle class can enter into a) using one's (contradictory location within exploitation relations) to 'gain entry as individuals to dominant class', b) 'forging an alliance with the dominant class', and c) 'forging an alliance with the working class' (Wright, 1988: 129). Wright's Marxist analysis of the 'new middle class' in class structure provides a new alternative along with Poulantzas' views, but again pays scant attention to 'subjective' dimensions in understanding class relations. This model helps very little in understanding the role of *non-economic sources* in class formation.

#### **d) Neo-Weberians and *Middle Class***

In the works of neo-Weberian sociologists, social class has different trajectories and even includes some elements of Marxian analyses. The major contribution to class in terms of social mobility, educational differences, etc. can be found in the writings of Goldthorpe (1967), Dahrendorf (1969), Richard Breen and David Rottman (1995), Yuan Cheng and Antony Heath (1993).

#### **Goldthorpe and *Service Class***

John Goldthorpe in his mobility studies has shown that the 'new middle class can be defined in terms of *employment relationships*' (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992) and thus includes 'all higher-grade professionals, self-employed or salaried; higher-grade administrators and officials in central and local government and in public and private enterprises; managers in large industrial establishments; and large proprietors' (Goldthorpe, 1980: 39). From a neo-Weberian framework, Goldthorpe has developed a systematic analysis of classes in Britain, which is a major

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<sup>18</sup> For an interesting discussion of class and exploitation from an Analytical Marxist perspective, see John Roemer. *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1982.

<sup>19</sup> For example see Erik Olin Wright. 'What is middle about the middle class' in John Roemer (ed.) *Analytical Marxism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988: 114–140.

contribution to the class theory. Goldthorpe<sup>20</sup> discusses the major differentiation between the working class and the 'service class', i.e. the professionals and managerial employees. There are two factors of differentiation: a) 'employment status', which explains the distinction between employers, the self-employed and employees; b) 'regulation of the employment', i.e. distinguishing positions on the basis of the nature of the relationship, for instance a labor or service relationship (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992). They argue that classes can be conceptualized 'on the basis of class positions of the collectivities of individuals and families and where the class position is defined primarily in terms of 'employment relations'<sup>21</sup> in labour markets and production units and especially in regard to employment status and regulation of employment etc.' (Goldthorpe, 1996: 486). Thus, for Goldthorpe the *service class* is an aggregation of occupational relations rather than a class which performs certain functions, such as the bureaucracy in Dahrendorf's approach.

Goldthorpe attacks the Neo-Marxist and structural Marxist models 'new middle class' as being unable to explain the possibility of 'collective action' in which this class would engage (Goldthorpe, 1982). Moreover this class is seen as 'conservative' and supportive of social stability. On the other hand Goldthorpe has also responded fiercely to the model presented by 'New class' theorists namely Gouldner and others, for analyzing the emergence of class based on 'cultural capital' and 'members having high levels of education and training' but failing to provide the structural location of this class (Goldthorpe, 1982). Goldthorpe<sup>22</sup> elaborates on the concept of the 'service class' as developed by the Austro-Marxist, Karl Renner, to analyze the

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<sup>20</sup>Goldthorpe discusses 'service class' while critiquing Marxian accounts of 'middle class'. See John Goldthorpe, 1982. 'On the Service Class, its formation and future' in Giddens, A & G. Mackenzie (ed.) *Social Class and the division of Labour: essays in honour of Ilya Neustadt*. USA: Cambridge University Press. 1982

<sup>21</sup>Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) have argued that, 'employment relationships regulated by a labour contract entail a relatively short-term and specific exchange of money for effort. Employees supply more or less discrete amounts of labour, under the supervision of the employer or of the employer's agents, in return for wages which are calculated on a "piece" or time basis. In contrast, employment relationships within a bureaucratic context involve a longer-term and generally more diffuse exchange. Employees render service to their employing organization in return for "compensation" which takes the form not only of reward for work done, through a salary and various perquisites, but also comprises important *prospective* elements—for example, salary increments on an established scale, assurances of security both in employment and, through pension rights, after retirement, and, above all, well-defined career opportunities' (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992: 41-42).

<sup>22</sup>For further details of Renner's work see John Goldthorpe. 'On the service class, its formation and future' in Anthony Giddens & G. Mackenzie (ed.) *Social Class and the division of Labour: essays in honour of Ilya Neustadt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1982: 162-185.

structural location as well as their difference from the working class; i.e. he provides a 'relational account'. Goldthorpe, citing Renner's characterization of the 'service class', highlights three major elements: a) employees in public service (bureaucrats), b) employees in private service (managers, professionals, technical experts) and c) employees in social service, i.e. agents in welfare' (Goldthorpe, 1982: 167). The basic differentiation, which Goldthorpe argues Marxists have not provided, between the service class and working class, is with regard to the 'code of service' of the former and 'contract of labour' of the latter, or the difference between 'salary' and 'wage'; thereby highlighting the differences in employment relations and conditions and employment status of both the classes. While explaining the peculiarity of the 'service relationship', Goldthorpe writes:

But what is yet more central to the logic of the service relationship, in regard to monitoring and maintaining the quality of service given, is the part played by rewards that are of an essentially prospective kind; that is, as embodied in understandings on salary increments, on security both in employment and after retirement and, above all, on career opportunities. (Goldthorpe, 1982: 169)

Thus, what makes the different jobs (of manager, professionals and experts) constitute service class' is the following factors of 'sharing the common work and employment conditions', 'amount of autonomy and discretion in their work' and the trust towards the organization (Goldthorpe, 1982). It is because of these two typical factors of the 'need to delegate authority' and 'specialized knowledge and expertise' that Goldthorpe argues that the question of differences of occupations and what Giddens calls the different 'para-technical relations', do not preclude professionals from 'service class' because of the commonality of the two abovementioned factors. In other words these differences do not result in different class positions but differences within the 'service class'. Goldthorpe's work also emphasizes the stability of patterns of inter-generational mobility in the 'service class' and also the stability of those individuals who once entered into service class, it is refers to the formation of what he calls 'demographic identity of service class' (Goldthorpe, 1982).

John Roemer (1988) has critiqued this 'domination-centered' model of social class because it is exploitation in terms of the distribution of 'productive assets' which is the central part of class

relations. Though domination is also an important element in the labour process, it cannot be the actual criterion for the concept of class. Ralf Dahrendorf<sup>23</sup> has located the service class in the higher reaches of the public and private sector bureaucracies, and thus identifies 'classes' in terms of their positions within the 'exercise of authority', rather than in production relations (Dahrendorf, 1959). Dahrendorf has examined Marx's theory of class in his own formulation of 'class conflict in industrial society'. Dahrendorf critiques Marx's 'private property'-based class theory and points out that the 'decomposition of labour' because of the process of separation between 'ownership' and 'control' in the industrial society has rendered Marx's theory worthless (Dahrendorf, 1959: 40-42) The 'new middle class', according to Dahrendorf, consists of salaried white collar workers, bureaucrats etc., which is a section of society that is 'born decomposed' (ibid.: 51). Due to his theory of conflict, he sees middle class as divided between two main classes and thus fails to provide any concrete theorization of it. Thus, these approaches influenced by Weber conception of class have analyzed various aspects of the middle class i.e. concerns of size, process of fragmentation, critique of proletarianization thesis, and mobility patterns.

#### **d) Anthony Giddens: 'Middle Class Structuration'**

Anthony Giddens (1981) began his analysis of the 'new middle class' by problematizing the manual/white collar dichotomy and also providing a critique of the *embourgeoisement thesis*. He argued that after industrialization process American society entered into a 'neo-capitalist' period of the relative decline of small businesses and there was enlargement of the middle class (due to the growth of professional and clerical occupations) up to such a level that the US was being called a 'middle class society'(Giddens, 1981). The expansion of the white-collar sector in capitalist societies has been a major area of research in many studies on upward social mobility (see Lipset and Bendix, 1967). The significant markers of 'middle classes' are 'differentiation in *market capacities* conferred by '*educational and technical qualifications*' [which have] resulted in differential 'economic returns' (Giddens, 1981:179, emphasis added). Through 'mediate structuration' Giddens explains the distribution of mobility chances within a given society (ibid.:

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<sup>23</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) in his work 'Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society' has analyzed Marx's model of class and presented a critique of Marxian class which fails to capture the *authority relations* as central to class relations in the present day capitalist societies.

107-108). What interests Giddens is the 'heterogeneous' character of the middle class rather than the middle class as an undifferentiated category. Moreover, according to Giddens, 'the traditional superiority of white collar workers in terms of job security' is major distinction if we try to understand the 'embourgeoisment thesis'. Giddens said that

If we consider the totality of economic returns available to manual and non-manual workers, the idea that any kind of overall 'merging' of the two groupings is taking place may be unequivocally rejected. The overlap is confined to segments of skilled manual occupations on the one hand, and of clerical and sales occupations on the other. (Giddens, 1981: 180-181)

While building his argument on the basis of differentiation between manual and white collar workers as emphasized by Lockwood<sup>24</sup>, Giddens combined it with Dahrendorf's central argument of 'authority structure being regarded as a class system' and thus tried to formulate a very complex critique of the existing models of the 'middle class'. Giddens states that it is also significant to give attention to the element of differentiation between manual and white-collar workers on the basis of 'distributive groupings' formed by neighbourhood segregation. According to Giddens, in urban areas in the context of Britain the 'middle class neighborhoods' varied from 'working class neighborhoods' and also arguments were put forward explaining this class segregation due to the job security of white collar workers, availability of house loans and mortgages etc. (Giddens, 1981:184). Giddens relates this neighbourhood class differentiation to class relationships:

Differences in neighbourhood organization are directly bound up with the exploitative connotations of class relationships, apart from those pertaining to the economic sphere itself - particularly in so far as these differences influence the distribution of educational chances. (Giddens, 1981: 184)

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<sup>24</sup> See, David Lockwood. *The Blackcoated worker*. London: Allen and Unwin. 1958. In his work, Lockwood had studied the changes in the stratification position of clerical worker and manual worker. He defined class in terms of three criteria: *market situation*, *work situation* and *status situation*. Thus class position of any occupation can be understood by looking at material rewards obtained from the market and the symbolic rewards gained from its status position.

While making a point about the differentiation within middle classes, Giddens talked of the two main sources of differentiation within middle class: a) its origin in market capacity and b) those deriving from variations in the divisions of labour (ibid.: 86).

On the basis of the differentiation based on different offering of market capacity and symbolic skills, Giddens also challenged the notion of 'service class' as Dahrendorf had used it, i.e. to refer the occupations being common in that they perform various services, which according to Giddens fails to distinguish between class and division of labour; while defending the usage of the term 'middle class' to refer to those white collar workers within organizations and within the framework of the 'bureaucratic hierarchy of authority'. White collar associations, Giddens argued, are not something very rare, they exist and function differently from unions of manual workers. In his later writings he seems to be implicitly arguing for the study of identity (against a backdrop of debates between modernity and postmodernity and the 'reflexive project of self'), with class no longer central to his analysis. Even then, Giddens<sup>25</sup> spoke about two kinds of societies: 'class-divided non-capitalist societies and capitalist class societies', and also emphasized the key role of private property in social organization and the institutional separation of economic from political; as he writes:

In calling capitalism a class society and thereby distinguishing it as social system from class divided societies, I mean to emphasize principally two things: the primacy accorded to the economic, and more generally to the transformation of the nature; and following from the above discussion, the intrusion of exploitation and class domination into the heart of labour process (Giddens, 1981a: 121)

Thus the structural models of 'middle class' have been prominent in mapping out class structures and schemas to explain how the 'middle class' can be defined as having an objective position, on the basis of certain qualifications, which influence their structural location in relation to both capitalists and working class.

John Urry, a British sociologist, has developed a 'structural theory of the middle class' (Urry, 1973) on the basis of theoretical insights from Marx, Lockwood and Klingender. Urry argues that the middle class can be explained as one which performs the functions of labour and

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<sup>25</sup> Giddens, Anthony. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, Vol. 1, Power, Property and the State*, Berkeley: University of California. 1981a: 121.



capital. While following Marx, Urry explains that with the growth of capitalism this class emerges as the result of a growing surplus and as a class which '*consumes more than it produces*'<sup>26</sup> (ibid., 1973:184, emphasis added). Thus within the capitalist mode of production, a class emerged though 'fragmentary and ambiguous' (similar to Wright's conceptualization) but still the 'privileged minority' which is dominant in the 'work situation' unlike capitalists who are dominant in both the 'work and market situation' (ibid.: 186).

Urry and Nicholas Abercrombie (1983) have critiqued Giddens' notion of middle class, while questioning the assumption of all members sharing 'market capacity'. They further argue that Giddens neglects the proletarianization arguments, which are shown in Marxist writings on middle class. Urry and Abercrombie (1983) argue that the middle class can be better understood on the basis of 'work situation and the market situation'; they creatively bring Marx and Weber together. They point out that the 'service class performs the functions of control, reproduction and conceptualization necessary for the capital in relation to labour' (Urry & Abercrombie, 1983:122). Recent theorizations have challenged the structural models for ignoring the cultural aspect of class, and have reconstructed cultural models of class which emphasize the status, norms, life styles etc.

**B. Cultural models of the Middle Class-** The emphasis in these models is basically on understanding the 'formation' of the middle class as a repository and representative of mainstream culture. Thus, the primary purpose here is not deciphering the structural locations or analyzing class in terms of 'mode of production' or 'employment relations', but on the kind of social relations and values that the middle class propagates or the formation of the 'middle class identity'. This challenges Weber's theory, according to which class in general cannot have similar features to the community. Studies on the middle class through this model have successfully argued against the theorizations which deny that class is a 'social group' and label it merely a 'conceptual category'.

**i) Gouldner & 'New Class'** - Alvin Gouldner, critiquing the Marxian model of class which does not elaborate on the 'intellectuals', develops his analysis of 'intelligentsia' as a 'new class'

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<sup>26</sup> This assumption which has been explained by Marx that surplus labour produces surplus value but 'surplus class' which consumes more than producing' quoted in John Urry, 'Towards the Structural theory of the Middle Class'. 1973: 177. On the basis of this insight 'middle class can be also seen as 'consuming class'.

having a particular 'cultural and human capital' and thus as different from both capitalists and workers. This class (though internally differentiated) plays a significant role in 'formulating a critical discourse of culture' and controls the economy in both capitalist and socialist societies (Gouldner, 1978: 155). The context of the emergence of this class is *post-capitalist society* and *post-industrial society*, where neither capitalists nor proletarians rule and thus the 'new class' based on technical expertise and knowledge will be the dominant class. The two main theoretical logics of new class theory are: 'theory of its distinctive language, behavior and culture of discourse' and 'theory of capital – human capital' (Gouldner, 1978: 157). Gouldner depicts the 'new class' as 'elitist and self-seeking and uses its special knowledge to advance its own interests and power, and control its own work situation' (ibid.: 159), although it 'contributes to collective needs' (ibid.: 158) and thus calls it a 'morally ambiguous universal class' (ibid.: 159). Thus, new class theories have avoided empirical questions and emphasized more on its ideological orientations. Goldthorpe has criticized 'new class theories' for ignoring the question of 'the structural locations of the actors involved' (Goldthorpe, 1982: 166).

Ivan Szelenyi, a Hungarian-American sociologist, also critically analyzes what he calls 'three waves of new class theories' (Szelenyi & Martin, 1988: 650). Szelenyi divides the theorization of the 'new class' into three waves: a) the first wave theory, *the anarchist theories of intellectual class* (1870-1917) and the major contributors were Bakunin, W. Machajski b) the second wave refers to theories of bureaucracy and technocracy, by Djilas and Galbraith and finally c) the third wave theory of knowledge class and intelligentsia by Gouldner (Szelenyi, 1988). The first wave of the theory of the new class emphasized 'agency', the second 'structural position' and the third 'consciousness' (Szelenyi & Marin, 1988). Thus, Szelenyi seeks to understand what kind of domination is likely to be the order of the day: the bureaucratic form, the form based on domination based on wealth, or, as Gouldner suggests, 'knowledge based domination'.

On the other hand, Grusky and Weeden (2001) have tried to present a 'micro-class' approach, to study class as 'real groups' through a 'disaggregate model' and focus on particular groups in specific situations and then '[understand] class identification, collective actions and social

closure', in response to the critics of class who declare it to be 'dead' (Grusky and Weeden, 2001).

## ii) Bourdieu and '*Petty Bourgeoisie*'

Pierre Bourdieu, in his impressive empirical work *Distinction* (1984), has analyzed social class in a well-framed theoretical apparatus of 'theory of practice' along with the concepts of 'habitus and capitals'. *Distinction* also articulates the hidden structures of cultural domination running on class lines. In his three-tier class model, Bourdieu differentiates classes according to their 'volume and composition of capitals' and 'class habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984:100-101). 'Petty bourgeoisie', says Bourdieu 'invests more in cultural goods and practices' (Bourdieu, 1984: 319). He depicts the 'different dimensions of cultural consumption' to make sense of 'tastes' resulting from the 'material conditions of existence' of various classes e.g. 'tastes of luxuries' and 'tastes of necessity' (ibid., 1984:177). While discussing the nature of 'new petty bourgeoisie' Bourdieu writes

And the emergence of this new petite bourgeoisie, which employs *new means of manipulation to perform its role as an intermediary between the classes* and which by its very existence brings about a transformation of the position and dispositions of the old petite bourgeoisie, can itself be understood only in terms of *changes in the mode of domination*, which, substituting seduction for repression, public relations for policing, advertising for authority, the velvet glove for the iron fist, pursues the symbolic integration of the dominated classes by imposing needs rather than inculcating norms. (Bourdieu, 1984: 153-154, emphasis added)

Bourdieu here explains both the change in class condition and class practices of the 'new petite bourgeoisie' significantly in a *relational* mode. Various sections of the middle class share a dynamic relation as 'producers and consumers' of the 'legitimate culture' (ibid.: 323). He points out that 'professionals and commercial employers' spend differently according to their 'economic capital' and 'cultural capital'. Sections rich in their respected capitals (*economic capital* i.e. shopkeepers, craftsmen, small landlord etc.; *cultural capital* i.e. office executives,

public and private employees, teachers etc.) invest more, in that the middle class spends more on 'cultural goods' such as 'books, newspapers, stationery, sports, music, entertainment' etc. while less on expensive food and goods, whereas the 'professionals go by the popular taste' (ibid.: 184-185). Bourdieu states that 'taste, a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, helps to shape the class body' (ibid.: 190). The petite bourgeoisie thus differentiates itself from working classes and the capitalist class (cultural knowledge about music, film, photography, art, etc. and 'tastes of pretension' which they are most predisposed to). The critical understanding of the position of the petite bourgeoisie in social space describes the way in which they develop particularly the 'petite bourgeoisie habitus'. Bourdieu mentions some of these dispositions as follows: 'asceticism, rigour, legalism, the propensity to accumulation in all its forms' (ibid.: 331). He thus relates the rates of fertility with social origins and deduces that middle class fertility rates are lower as their chances of mobility are comparatively higher, whereas working classes and dominant classes have higher rates of fertility. Consequently, the petite bourgeoisie (due to its location) develop some kind of ideological and cultural values towards future, which provides them 'a boost' to their capitals for further improving their positions (ibid.: 333).

Bourdieu talks about the various sections within the petty bourgeoisie i.e. the old petty bourgeoisie and new petty bourgeoisie and explains their vertical and horizontal dimensions in social space. Two major forms variants within the middle classes are: intellectuals and industrial executives. This classification is made on the basis of the dominance of cultural for the former and economic capital for the latter. Interestingly, Bourdieu's notion of middle classes as characterized by 'structural indeterminacy' (ibid.: 345) sounds similar to Wright's conception of 'contradictory class locations'. Middle class positions in the social space are 'collective histories of the occupants' which shape the direction of growth in the future (ibid.: 344). Gradually the petite bourgeoisie moves towards the decline both in terms of economic resources and opinions and thus expresses a 'conservative' attitude, in terms of cultural tastes, songs, traditional values. The new petite bourgeoisie, with young generations in modern professions (which demand cultural capital, high educational qualifications) is more liberal, has 'modern tastes', and possesses large volume of cultural capital. These theoretical approaches reflect the 'cultural turn' in class theory in the backdrop of the decline of the 'economic' model of class. Diana Reay

(2005) studied the 'class thinking' while using Bourdieu's notion of capital and developed 'emotional capital' within the field of higher education. It discussed that how 'middle class families enforces confidence and alleviate stress and anxiety among their children' whereas children form working class background, felt a great deal of stress, anxieties at the unfamiliar field of higher education (Reay, 2005: 919).

iii) '*Social closure*'- Closure theory has provided a new way to explain inter-class relations through the processes of 'exclusion and usurpation'. Frank Parkin (1979) in his theory of social closure describes a new language of class inequalities, for instance, 'institutions of property' and 'academic qualifications' are such criteria of 'exclusion' and 'usurpation'. The concept of *dual closure* is particularly interesting to us for understanding 'middle class' practices in sustaining their positions; their political and ideological positions can largely be explained using these insights. It is on the basis of 'property' and 'credentials' that the middle class constrains the entry of outsiders and applies both 'exclusionary (at both collectivist and individualist levels) and usurpation practices'. Parkin argues that certain groups who are in between the two major classes adopt the 'dual modes of closure' in which they use significantly one type of closure but supplement it with another to strengthen their positions; for instance the semi-professions (teachers and technical experts) who use both credentialist closure as well as usurpation strategies too (Murphy 1988).

### **Middle Classes in Capitalist and Liberal Democracies**

C. W. Mills in his work *White Collar* (1951) described the growth of the middle class (following a Weberian approach), as a consequence of the structural changes in the American society i.e. *increasing productivity* of the economy due to *technological changes* and the emergence of *large scale enterprises, bureaucratic order* and the 'white collar workers'. Mills argued that with the rising agricultural productivity led to the tremendous changes in machinery, development of new seeds and fertilizers and consequently fewer farmers for cultivation. Similarly, industrial sector also signaled the declining number of workers because of automation and high technology and thus rise of other kind of occupations i.e. jobs in trade, service, administration, professional, technical, managerial, sales and clerical sectors etc.

He said that due to capitalist development and bureaucratic order in the American social structure, there emerged a 'new middle class' consisting of industrial employees, people working both in public and private sectors. Thus, for Mills, it was *occupation* rather than property which became the central criterion to define the 'class structure' and thus he rejected Marxist economic determinism. The question of property is not an issue for the 'new middle class' and it is more 'commodity-oriented' rather than 'property-oriented' (Mills, 1969: xv). Mills adds the point that different historical trajectories of working class and middle class explain the difference in social-psychological makeup. New middle class, which emerged in America has no royal history and hence bound to face difficulties in the work conditions. Mills also brings our attention to the fact of what the 'white collar class' does in terms of the content of its work; he writes that

'the shift in needed skill is another way of describing the rise of the white collar workers, for their characteristics skills involve the handling of paper and money and people, they are the masters of commercial, professional and technical relationships. The one thing they do not do is live by making things; rather, they live off the social machineries that organize and co-ordinate the people who do make things'. (Mills, emphasis added, 1969: 65)

Thus, Mills' analysis of the 'work' in which the new middle class engages has similar tones with Poulantzas<sup>27</sup> views on 'work' performed by workers and white collar employees. To draw a comparative analysis of how the older middle class is declining in its employment percentage and the rise of new middle class, Mills provides some data-

Table No. 1

The Labour Force	1870	1940
Old Middle Class	33 %	20 %
New Middle Class	6	25
Wage Workers	61	55
Total	100 %	100 %

Source: *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. New York: OUP. 1969: 64.

<sup>27</sup> Poulantzas further elaborated this idea of different kind of labour to distinguish working class from new middle class in his work *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism* (1975). According to him, the major distinction between working class and 'new petty bourgeoisie' is on the basis of Marx's idea of 'productive and unproductive labour' (Capital Vol. IV and the chapter on 'Theories of Surplus Value'). We can trace Mills' initial and vague classification between working class and middle class into the argument developed in Poulantzas' work.

Mills' data also shows the transformation of the middle class in what he calls a shift from 'property' to 'occupation'. He seems more inclined towards giving 'occupations' more weight in explaining the nature of new middle classes.

Table No. 2

The Middle Classes	1870	1940
<b>Old Middle Class</b>	85 %	44 %
Farmers	62	23
Businessmen	21	19
Free Professionals	2	2
<b>New Middle Class</b>	15 %	56 %
Managers	2	6
Salaried Professionals	4	14
Salespeople	7	14
Office Workers	2	22
<b>Total Middle Classes</b>	100 %	100 %

Source: *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. New York: OUP. 1969: 65.

Mills' work also explains how with the rapid growth of capitalist democracy in America, there has been a change in the social character of the country and that middle class values have dominated American society. Bell (1974) has provided data to explain the shift in class structure, showing that the 'service class' in 'United States has risen to 8.6 million in 1964 from being 3.0 million in 1940's'. Similarly, the Cold War era also reflected the challenges posed by socialist countries to the liberal democracies and thus the 'welfare state was launched by the first world' (Oommen, 2010: 5). This explains the rise of the 'middle classes' and the thesis of 'embourgeoisement' to argue for the decline of class inequalities. But Mills' approach does not provide any insights about how middle classes will orient themselves towards the democratic and political order and what stakes they would have in social movements. Later neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians too, as we have seen in the last section, emphasized class structure and mobility chances but not the contributions of the middle classes to democratic politics, issues of social justice, questions of inclusive growth etc.

Goldthorpe (1982) described the three major causes of the expansion of the 'new middle class' or 'service class': a) growth of organizations in government, private and business sector, b) significant advances in technology and the emergence of new jobs, and c) increased specialization and the 'process' of 'rationalization' (ibid.: 172). Goldthorpe also claimed, on the basis of data obtained from countries such as England, France and Sweden during early 1970's, that it was the expansion of the service class i.e. recruitment into the service sector from various other classes and the increased demand for a service class that had also provided opportunities to the individuals of comparatively low levels of educational and formal qualifications (ibid.: 171). This socio-economic context provides two main features of the middle class— a) 'the middle class constituted a composite intermediate layer consisting of a wide range of occupational interests but bound together by a common style of living and behavior pattern' (Ahmad & Reifeld, 2001: 2) and secondly, b) the 'middle class' had a complicated characteristic of having a 'liberal and democratic value system' but not fully adopting it in the behavior (ibid.).

After the national movements of the erstwhile colonies, the new independent nation-states followed a path of economic development on the basis of their political agenda as framed by national elites and leaderships. Most countries in their post-colonial phases have chosen to be liberal democracies with capitalist models of development leading towards successful economies; there lie the dynamics of social inequalities. With the coming of the post-colonial phase, many countries in the South Asian context have chosen various paths of social and political development. This region articulates the variety of such attempts from the democratic state in India and Sri Lanka, forms of dictatorships in Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar, single-party dominated republic in China, military dictatorship in Pakistan, capitalist state in Hong Kong etc. The emergence of a new bourgeoisie in this region of the world has attracted the attention of many scholars from both East and West. Studies show that 'new rich'<sup>28</sup> have emerged in Asia not as a result of 'urban burghers, merchants and traders' but 'from agrarian,

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<sup>28</sup> Robison and Goodman (1996) have discussed the rise of 'new rich' in the Asian context and the distinction between 'bourgeoisie' and 'middle classes' as it developed in this region in comparison to idea of middle class in West. It also reflects upon the nature of the state in Asia in relation to the development of capitalism and the contribution of middle classes in capitalist consumer culture. For further details see Richard Robinson & David S. G. Goodman. *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonald's and middle class revolution*. London: Routledge. London. 1996: 1-15.



colonial bureaucracies and also from the single party communist rule' (Robison & Goodman, 1996: 4-5). Thus Robinson and Goodman are right when they explain that the central base of this new rich is 'social power and position in the capital, credentials and technical expertise and not state apparatus and feudal hierarchy' (ibid.: 5). But in the Indian context the middle class was very much the product of state apparatus and developmental projects both during the colonial and post-independence periods. What is generally missed in setting the 'socio-political context' and the study of class inequalities is the order of 'neoliberalism'. The impacts of the neoliberal order on social life need to be theorized not only from a Marxist perspective but also from wider sociological perspectives in terms of family life, social relations, issues related to citizenship, questions of 'inclusive development', poverty levels and last but not the least the 'emerging sections' of middle classes.

Similarly in Singapore, Rodan (1996) found that the state was a major generator of the middle class through its apparatus and during 1990's due to a technology-oriented 'service sector' boom. The middle class expanded at a high rate and the upper segment of this class also propagated 'ideologies of meritocracy' and showed their allegiance with capitalist development. Goran Therborn, a Swedish sociologist, also argued that the government policies can impetus to the formation and reproduction of social classes and particularly about the urban petty bourgeoisie (Therborn, 1983). Therborn identifies two factors which can explain whether a class will be able to achieve its objectives, namely- i) internal strength of a class in terms of its sources of power and ii) hegemonic capacity of the class to utilize its sources for manipulating other classes or competing for scant opportunities and resources (ibid.). Whereas, Reinhard Kreckel (2010) has asked whether to conceptualize 'global middle classes' as a critique of the 'container model of society', as it helps in understanding the global structures of inequality. He seems dissatisfied with 'class' and favors a model of understanding global social inequalities not only in terms of dichotomous classes in the international scenario but also 'dichotomy of world regions' (Kreckel, 2010: 125). Sociologists conventionally, Kreckel<sup>29</sup> argues, have been content

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<sup>29</sup> Reinhard Kreckel raises some critical questions of global inequalities based on the data provided by Melanovic (2001), an economist who declines any 'middle ground in world inequalities i.e. more polarization between rich and poor countries, and Walter Muller's (2006) which suggests that a middle ground exists. See

with 'national class structures and international comparisons' (ibid.: 129). Guglielmo Carchedi, a Marxist critique, (1977) points out the *economic identification* of the middle class and argued that middle class performs a *global function of capital* in a capitalist economy.<sup>30</sup>

### **What makes a category 'Middle?'**

Within these debates an important question is, what is it that makes a class/category 'middle'. This question can be answered while explaining the relation between a) location of middle class in the class structure (e.g. relation to the production, ownership of intellectual skills, work conditions i.e. capacity in decision making, supervision, autonomy, domination, employment status) and b) its relation to other classes (access to different forms of capitals (volumes & composition of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital), market situation (possession of goods, endowments), role in the cultural production of identity. Therefore, *the relation approach* as suggested by Marx, Poulantzas, Giddens and Bourdieu is extremely important. They have highlighted that a class can be best studied when seen in *relation* to other classes, state or any other social category. So when we explain middle class (with its factions) in relation to the working classes, it scores high in terms of possession of different capitals (economic, social, cultural and symbolic). This also explains why some theorists such as Dahrendorf (1959) and Marxists think that middle class is closer to ruling class than to working class.

On the other hand, when the middle class is compared with upper class i.e. big capitalists, the bourgeoisie and high professionals it scores low in terms of the possession of the (economic as well as symbolic) capitals. The Marxian notion of 'ownership of property', Wright's notion of assets, exploitation and *control* over others employment and Bourdieu's concept of capitals better suits to explain the middle class in relation to upper classes. While the upper classes own the industries, multi-national corporations, middle class own skills and cultural capital due to its structural location, and thus it is 'middle' and not 'upper' in the class hierarchy.

### **Empirical Studies & Operationalizing concept of 'Middle Class'**

The empirical researches on class in European context have developed different criteria to operationalize middle class. Although the issue is more about what attributes or unit is taken as

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Reinhard, Kreckel 2010 'Middle Classes: Global and national' in Oommen, T K. (ed.). *Classes, Citizenship and Inequality: Emerging Perspectives*. New Delhi: Pearson. 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Urry & Abercrombie, 1983: 60-61.

an indicator of class, it is not void of its theoretical underpinnings. In terms of this choice of conceptual scheme for studying class empirically, neo-Marxists have been more emphatic than neo-Weberians. While the neo-Weberians argue that “class analysis does not entail any commitment to any particular theory of class but, rather to, a research programme” (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992: 382 cited in Breen & Rottman, 1995:454). Nevertheless, the question worth contemplating is how to operationalize class technically. As part of wide research many models have been suggested by sociologists influenced by different schools of thought. In spite of the difference, to operationalize class, all of these attempts emphasize upon i) *conceptual scheme*, ii) *unit of analysis*, and iii) *degree of coverage* (Duke & Edgell, 1987: 446, emphasis original).

Since the 1960's, two kinds of studies and projects had studied class empirically in terms of mobility patterns, income inequalities etc. and both had their different class schemes. One of them is the studies directed by Erik Olin Wright in America, who devised class schemes on his large scale survey (PSID, 1974) according to which occupations were classified following the Marxian notion of *relations of domination and exploitation* (Wright, 1979). Wright is confident about the independence of what he calls the *social relations of the production* (class relations) and the *technical relations of production* (occupational relations) at the theoretical level though they can be related empirically (Wright, 1979: 117). In his analysis of the survey- Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data, Wright operationalized class in terms of following criteria of *authority relations* and *possession of assets* and the questions asked from the respondents are: i) are you self-employed, ii) do you employ others, iii) do you supervise others, iv) what say they have in pay or promotions, v) employed (Wright, 1979: 242-43). This explains the unit of analysis in this scheme is definitely not individuals but the *positions of social relations*. Middle class defined as ‘doubly contradictory class locations’ but Wright operationalized it as ‘semiautonomous employees’ and managers.

Another kind of studies are – the mobility studies within the Comparative Analysis of Social Mobility in Industrial Nations (CASMIN Project) conducted by John Goldthorpe and others in Britain, which devised class schemes on the basis of *employment relations* (Goldthorpe 1985, Goldthorpe & Erikson 1992). Goldthorpe's occupational aggregate categories are based upon British Registrar General's coding of occupation. He operationalized the class on the basis

of job descriptions, employment status which helps in understanding *employment relations*. Thus, groups are brought together having similar employment relations. His schema tends to measure *positions* within *labour markets* and production units rather than individuals (Erikson & Goldthorpe, 1992: 37). Therefore, class is operationalized as the difference between *service relationship* of the middle class and the 'labour contract' of the manual and non-skilled workers.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) based his work on the survey conducted in 1963 and 1967-68, where he used extended interviews and ethnographic observations. He divided different class factions according to age, sex, educational qualifications and social origin. He divided the different (also used National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) classifications of the occupations) class factions according to their objective characteristics and their preferences such as *artistic producers, cultural intermediaries, art craftsmen and small art-dealers, between junior administrative/commercial executives, between private-sector and public sector senior executives and professors* i.e. 'secondary teachers and higher-education teachers' (Bourdieu, 1984: 504-505). Basic information about objective positions, cultural practices, system of tastes, choices was collected through the questionnaire and schedule.

The latest survey by Mike Savage, Fiona Devine and others colleagues, named as Great Britain Class Survey (2013), in collaboration with BBC have showed a more comprehensive way of operationalizing social class. Inspired by Bourdieu's concepts, they have measured different capitals in terms of the following criteria: *economic capital*– household income, property value and savings; *social capital* – social contact to other occupations, number of social contacts. Finally the *cultural capital* as– i) 'highbrow cultural capital' i.e. individuals' engagement with classical music, visits and information about museums, art galleries, jazz, theatre and restaurants and ii) 'emerging cultural capital' i.e. individuals engagement with video games, internet, social networking sites, sports, watching different sports, social gatherings and partying with friends, membership to gyms, rock clubs etc. found seven categories of different classes in present day Britain (Savage et al., 2013: 7–11).

### **Conclusion: Middle Class as social group based on Conditions of Work & Capitals**

'Middle Class' thus has been conceptualized in various ways. The classical frameworks exclude the cultural and social dimension of class and therefore are problematic. Giddens formulated a

theory of middle class, seen in terms of 'market capacities', i.e. attributes such as skills, technical qualifications, manual labour power which confer different bargaining strengths in the market. While Giddens stresses on the fact that the individuals who share similar 'market capacities' form social classes as distinct social groups, he avoids the question of class in political spheres. In this chapter, along with the conceptualization of 'contradictory class locations' (Wright) and Bourdieu's concepts of 'economic and cultural capitals', Giddens' theory of new middle class was discussed. The emphasis was to understand the *social* position of middle classes and not just their economic location. Contrary to the other classes, mainly the upper class and working class, middle classes have expanded due to their mastering of the 'skills', 'technical qualifications', as well as an articulation of an identity in various ways. It restructures class relationships due to its interaction with state, and both capitalists as well as working classes. The debates on classes have highlighted the dichotomy of 'economic' and 'social' aspects within class (as suggested by Crompton, 1995) which is also applicable to the 'middle class'. The recent upsurge of middle class political practices worldwide are an indication of its restructuring to place itself as more 'revolutionary', which legitimizes and strengthens its position (within market and public sphere) as 'representative' of everyman. Thus its role in producing cultural ideologies, knowledge production through intelligentsia and ideology of 'patriotism', 'nationalism', 'development and growth' is crucial because of its ability to exploit the opportunities provided by its location in the class structure. Thus the thrust of our argument is that, though we acknowledge the 'middle class' in terms of cultural discourses, political and ideological relations' (Poulantzas) and the representation of 'life-styles, habits' as ideal; but to understand 'exclusion and exploitation' we need to have empirical studies of its structural location in economic production and historical dimensions simultaneously linked with its 'cultural' values, identity construction. Otherwise this exercise would be merely of what Bourdieu calls 'classes on paper'. Wacquant's suggestions are crucial to remember while studying middle classes

The middle class, like any other social group, does not exist ready-made in reality. It must be constituted through material and symbolic struggles waged simultaneously over class and between classes; it is a historically variable and reversible effect of these struggles...the middle class is necessarily an ill-defined entity...theories of the middle class should consciously strive to capture this

essential ambiguity of their object rather than dispose of it... (Wacquant, 1991: 57)

Thus Bourdieu and Wacquant have succinctly responded to the critics of social class as well as proponents of middle class by problematizing the lack of understanding of complex practices generating inequalities and the deterministic theorizations of middle class respectively.

On the basis of the critical discussion of various perspectives on middle class in this chapter we can conceptualize 'middle class' in the following way. Middle class is the section within the class structure, which is very diverse on the basis of the volume and compositions of the various capitals i.e. economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. *The nature of work situation is broadly skill- and qualification-based, occupied with administrative and professional work conditions. Thus the common, shared class milieu emerging from its work conditions and its relation to class culture i.e. family values, professional ideology, notion of society, provides a sense of belonging to 'middle class'.* Thus, the chasm between 'economic' and 'social/cultural' dimensions has to be bridged in order to explain the class relations between middle class and other classes.

The next chapter would further discuss the role of middle classes in the Indian context and try to raise some important questions about their nature and practices to explain the antinomies of inequalities. The theoretical insights gained from the present chapter as well as from the previous chapter on the concept of social class and middle class in particular will guide the discussion in the next chapter. These theoretical insights will be analyzed in the Indian context to examine how far approaches to the Indian middle class reflect these issues and concerns. Therefore, the next chapter would foreground these issues in the case of Indian middle class, which has emerged with the development of Indian nation state and its composition and character is undergoing profound changes. It would locate the theoretical models on middle class in the Indian context and will try to find how far inequalities have been explained through 'social class'.

## Chapter 3

### MIDDLE CLASSES IN INDIA: DISCOURSES OF INEQUALITIES

#### Introduction

In the budget speech this year, Finance minister P. Chidambaram announces tax free bonds, more flexibility over house loan facilities etc. which is seen as beneficial for *middle classes*. In another instance, news headline of English daily says<sup>1</sup> ‘Aam Aadmi Party taps into *middle class* anger over inflated bills’. These instances speak about a particular section of society which expresses a unique life style, political orientation, religious worldview and cultural tastes. The notion of ‘middle class’ is invoked by social scientists to understand the contemporary socio-political life, also by mainstream political parties to mobilize social groups towards their political and economic policies of development.

These popular conceptions of ‘middle class’ rarely explain the internal dynamics of this class and more often than not slip into moral and ethical evaluations about it. Interestingly, sociologists also have shown a keen interest in studying the composition, size, the nature of this ‘middle class’. Though after the formulation of several theoretical models, sociologists still claim it as ‘contradictory’ (Wright, 1985), ‘ambiguous’ category (Urry, 1973). ‘New Middle class’ has been very popular in public discourses in electronic media since 1990’s, when private channels started. We see in both print and electronic media, public discourses around ‘middle class’. For instance, ‘Kaun Banega Crorepati’ a serial telecasted on Sony channel captured the attraction for the lower middle class; similarly a businessman, Gurukant Desai, who was the main protagonist of the Bollywood Hindi movie ‘Guru’ (2007) also, presents the aspirations and ethics of the new middle class. As mentioned earlier, this popular image of middle class hides more than it explains about the ‘internal diversity’ within the middle classes. The categories like Bengali middle class, Muslim middle class<sup>2</sup>, middle class women, Dalit middle class<sup>3</sup> are rarely

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Aam Aadmi Party taps into middle class anger over inflated bills’. *Times of India*, 17th Feb., 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Margrit Pernau has discussed the emergence of ‘Muslim Middle Class’ in Delhi during nineteenth century. He has shown the relation between the rise of middle class in Muslims and the also the process of modernization and reformation of Islam. For further details, see, Margrit Pernau, ‘Middle Class and Secularization: the Muslims of

examined in detail. The existing interrelation between these social categories highlights the context dependent understanding of the 'Indian middle class'. This interest in middle class is not limited to India alone, as there are current debates about Chinese middle class and German middle class, etc (KAS International Reports, 2011).

The last chapter has explored the concept of 'middle class' i.e. the definitional and theoretical problems and its character within the capitalist societies. Within this backdrop, this chapter is an attempt at further specification about the nature and character of Indian middle classes. It examines how the middle class has emerged in India and what is its social composition. How does the Indian middle class think and what is its imagination about the India. It will explain how different scholars have studied middle class in India. Some have argued that middle class are closer to ruling classes, while some argue that it is not the elites though better than poor.

The first section discusses the emergence of middle class in colonial period. What are the processes of the expansion of middle classes in the Nehruvian phase (expansion of state sector i.e. bureaucracy, white collar employees, teachers, lawyers, service class. In terms of the cultural values, it represents a contradiction of being modern on the one hand in terms of material aspects, using latest technology, imitating western notion of middle class thereby exposing their colonial hangover. On the other hand they are very traditional in their personal spaces, maintaining traditional notions of superiority and performing rituals, caste norms and etc.

The second section deals with the question of size and composition of Indian middle classes. For instance, market surveys, government reports etc. have defined this class according to its consumption capacity, life styles. Meanwhile, it will discuss the two main theoretical models explaining the conceptions of Indian middle class namely i) structural models and ii) cultural models. On the one hand structural models define middle class as consisting of small traders, white collar workers, professionals and intelligentsia in terms of their relation to the production. While the cultural models explain the middle class as a status group, which is

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Delhi in the Nineteenth Century' in Ahmad, Imtiaz & Helmut Reifeld (Eds.). *Middle Class Values in India and Western Europe*. New Delhi: Social Science Press. 2002: 21-41.

<sup>3</sup> Nandu Ram has studied the emergence of the 'New Middle Class' among Dalits and question of affirmative actions in his work. He argued that there was a 'stigmatization' and 'alienation' within this middle class about the community identity. For further details, see, Nandu, Ram. *The Mobile Scheduled Castes- Rise of a New Middle Class*. Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation Press. 1988.



English educated, western in mindset, sets the discourse of modernity, notions of progress, formation of 'class habits around the consumption based lifestyles, worldviews and pattern development etc. Within these debates is also explained how middle class has been changing its structure and habitus.

The third section discusses about the question of 'internal differentiation' of the Indian middle class (on the basis of caste, religion, occupational milieu, age). The studies have shown that middle class since its inception has been dominated by the upper castes, which shaped the middle class discourses. But it is important to discuss how the emergence of middle class in the lower castes and marginal communities has affected the mainstream discourse of the middle class. It analyses the political practices of the middle class to restructure itself and efforts for maximum appropriation of the various forms of capitals. This chapter argues that how neo-Marxists, neo-Weberians, John Urry, Giddens and Bourdieu's work provide sufficient insights to understand the socio-economic discourses of Indian middle class.

### **Middle Classes in India: Their Emergence and Growth**

Social scientists have paid attention to the notion of 'middle class' while explaining the socio-political discourses in India. Middle class has been at the center of the discourses of 'modernization', 'development', 'nationalism', 'communalism', 'anti-reservation protests', 'civil society activism' etc. Raka Ray (2010), for instance, argues for distinguishing the term 'middle class' with its two connotations a) 'representational category' or b) 'ideological construct', from the term 'middle classes' which according to her, is an empirical category (Ray, 2010: 318). While Beteille has argued to use 'middle classes' instead of 'middle class' due to its internal diversity (Beteille, 2002: 75-76). Therefore it is important to understand the historicity of this class and analyze the changes in its nature and composition.

This section explores that how Indian middle classes have been studied since its inception. The notion of middle class as a collective symbol is an important legitimator of class in the India and thus demands critical attention. It is important to recall Goffman's notion of 'collective symbol' which binds together social categories in affirmation of a 'single moral community' (Goffman, 1951: 297). Similarly, scholarly works have suggested that it was educated middle class during the national movement which created a discourse of 'Indian nation'. Following is

the analysis of the emergence of the growth and how their location allowed them to provide collective discourse about 'India'. The recent studies have studied the growth of Indian middle class in terms of three phases: the phase of birth, expansion after independence and growth after economic reforms (see Jodhka & Prakash, 2011; Mishra 2010). This work will study the emergence of Indian middle class in these different periods and contexts; and how different theoretical perspectives can help in understanding it.

#### **i. Colonial Period & Middle Class**

One of the early sociologists, who followed a Marxist approach to study the rise of new classes and the social context of nationalism in India was, A R Desai. In his work *Social background of Indian Nationalism* (1948), he studied the emergence of the Indian national movement and how the middle classes formed alliances with the emerging bourgeoisie of that time. Desai (2004) critically examined the efforts made by British government in the form of education policies<sup>4</sup>; recruiting staff for the political-administrative machinery. Desai writes that 'these modern educational institutions provided clerks for the government and commercial offices, lawyers for the new legal system, doctors trained in the modern medical science, technician and teachers' and hence the emergence of educated middle classes in India (Desai, 2004: 130). The data show that the number of universities increased from 10 in 1921-22 to 15 in 1936-37; Arts colleges in the same period from 165 to 271; professional colleges from 64 to 75 (ibid.: 139-40). Desai explained that how due to the new material conditions<sup>5</sup> the different classes grew in the country and led the national movement for their demands. For instance, 'industrialists demanded freedom for industrialization and protection for indigenous industries'; educated middle class demanded for the 'indianization of services'<sup>6</sup> as the top posts were reserved for Britishers; 'agriculturalists demanded reduction of tax'; and workers better wages and conditions of work etc. (ibid.: 146-47). Thus at one level there is convergence of the educated middle class, professional class and modern intelligentsia in Desai's work. This space of convergence was the development of the

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<sup>4</sup> These efforts include The Charter Act of 1813, Wood's Dispatch 1854, Lord Curzon's Indian Universities Act 1904, (Desai, 2004: 135-140).

<sup>5</sup> Desai argued that due to the 'establishment of new economy' and the introduction of land acts, new relations have been formed around land, thus the creation of two new classes i.e. 'zamindars' and 'tenants', 'land labourers' and along with them developed hierarchies of 'intermediaries such as modern money-lenders, merchants, peasant proprietors' (Desai, 2004:162-165).

<sup>6</sup> The logic being that the state machinery should constitute of the native people and not foreigners. Thus, the national as well as their own sectional interest collated together in this demand (Desai, 2004).

collective 'imagination of India' within the context of *single national economy, single state rule* (i.e. modern professions, economy but Indian culture, identity) *against* the British rule. Middle classes formed associations, created literature, political leaders, progressive social reforms and assimilation of western democratic culture with the Indian culture. In fact, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, in his biographical work *The Discovery of India* (1946) writes his anxiety of middle classes after World War I in following words:

The peasantry were [sic] servile and fear-ridden; the industrial workers were no better. The middle classes, the intelligentsia, who might have been beacon-lights in the enveloping darkness, were themselves submerged in this all-pervading gloom. In some ways their condition was even more pitiful than that of the peasantry. (Nehru, 1985: 357)

Nehru thus was concerned about these English educated and occupational groups which emerged after the introduction of the new economy and who led the freedom movement. The bourgeoisie supported the middle classes in their fight against monopoly of the British in the services and professions. This middle class mainly consisted of upper caste educated men, doctors, lawyers and civil servants<sup>7</sup> as result of the British administrative requirements and the educational policies (see Mishra, 1961; Varma, 1998; Ahmad & Reifeld, 2002; Jodhka & Prakash, 2012). B.B. Misra in his classic work provided a detailed account of the emergence of the Indian middle classes<sup>8</sup>. The historical phase indicates toward the development of industry and factory which opened various modes of works and new groups emerged from trade, industry, education and the demand for managers, technicians, supervisors and professionals was created and thus added to the formation of middle classes in Europe. Whereas in India, the conditions for the emergence of middle classes did exist in India even before colonial rule but the caste organization has been successful in obstructing the possibility of its development. Mostly comprised of 'teachers and bureaucrats', Misra writes that:

The term 'educated middle class' is used here generally to signify the new groups of persons who received higher education through the medium of English and

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<sup>7</sup> During British time bureaucrats in India were called ICS officers (Indian Civil Services) which later renamed as IAS-Indian Administrative Services.

<sup>8</sup> B. B. Misra. *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times*. Bombay: Oxford University Press. 196: 7-9.

engaged in the various recognized professions that grew in modern times as a result of Western education and capitalist economy. (Misra, 1961: 147)

Thus a Weberian conception was of the middle class (on the basis of skills and qualifications) was reflected in the Misra's writing. But even then the implicit link is established with the *state* that the British policies initiated the process of the formation a new class. Misra (1961) writes that this imagination and institutionalization of a middle class social order were not indigenous in origin and was imported into from the West. At that time India was not ripe i.e. as a country with advanced economic development and mature socio-political institutions of democracy. The middle class thus, was more 'a class of imitators, not the originators of new values and methods' (Misra, 1961: 11). Therefore, the socio-economic condition of colonies have been such that 'a intermediate class' i.e. educated technocrats, bureaucrats get an upper hand in public discourses and start shaping the national political culture. Although Misra (1961) was of the view, that the education policy was designed to break the traditional monopoly of upper castes i.e. Brahmins. Whereas the 'middle class' still remained the preserve of upper castes (Misra, 1961; Joshi, 2001; Varma, 1998) and specially Hindus. On the other hand, Claude Markovits, a historian, writes that middle class in nineteenth century India can be explained from an alternative perspective, which takes into account the historical formation of middle class (Markovits, 2002). Thus, 'merchants', 'traders' and 'small scale industrialists' (mostly from bania caste) form the part of the middle class in Markovits' analysis (ibid.: 46). He discussed the differences in the *value systems* of the 'merchant class' and the 'educated middle class'; while the former being more certain about their worldview than later. While both shared the value of ethics of saving, credit, absence of 'conspicuous consumption', 'honour' and austere life (ibid.: 52) Thus, Markovits implicitly inclined toward 'cultural' analysis (which he cautioned against) instead of elaborating the 'definitional aspect' of middle class.

The process of 'nation-building' depends heavily on 'middle class' who was a part of the state (e.g. bureaucrats). It helps in the formation of 'habitus' of this class which reflects in the coming generations' approach, world view towards the national developmental project. The vernacular press comprised of middle class during colonial state was against factory reforms thus clearly indicating its hostility towards the industrial workers (Misra, 1961).

Sanjay Joshi (2001) in his case study of the emergence of middle class in colonial Lucknow, argued that middle class deviated from the ideal-typical patterns of the modernity. Like the middle classes in other parts of the world and Indian middle class have utilized its traditional sources of power and privilege to further extend and develop itself as powerful group. He revealed the 'contradictory political positions' of middle classes in relation to the matters of economy and society and culture' ((Joshi, 2001: 3-4). This helps us in understanding the political and ideological positions<sup>9</sup> (which are complex and contradictory) of the middle class, what Joshi calls 'fractured modernity'. Joshi (2001) problematizes the notion of 'social class' as seen only in terms of 'income and occupation' and instead refers to it as 'middle class project' in relation to modernity of society. Studies show that Indian National Congress was dominated by middle class professionals and thus produced and articulated the 'nationalist ideologies' (Desai, 2004; Mishra, 1961). Thus in the colonial period 'middle classes' have contributed in defining the 'modern' identity of India in terms of its participation in state machinery, educational institutions, modern professions (economic aspect) and simultaneously producing intellectual histories, values, (cultural aspect) about India in general. Thus, these descriptions show how the emergence of 'middle class' is directly linked with state policies and relation with other classes. This cultural imagination of 'modern India' is incorporated into the habitus of middle classes, but the inherent contradiction about what is traditional and indigenous source of identity. This tension within middle class continues in the Nehruvian period also and many scholars have highlighted about it.

#### **ii. Nehruvian Phase & the expansion of the Middle Class**

India started implementing its Five-year Plans from 1950's onwards under the political leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India. Nehru chose the path of 'modernization' of national economy, self-reliance, scientific temper, and parliamentary democracy. Nehru's vision about the modern economy was that the both public sector and private sector must help each other in removing poverty and the other fundamental problems of Indian society. During his regime large number of mega industries, large irrigation works, hydel electricity projects and modern educational institutions i.e. IITs, IIMs, and the central

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<sup>9</sup> As Poulantzas has discussed about the 'ideological and political relations' as also central to the notion of class. For further details see, Poulantzas, 1975.

universities, technical and vocational schools etc. were developed. This pattern of development increased the role of both the bureaucracy and public sector. The first three Five-Year plans emphasized more on agricultural development, food, heavy industries, defense and education. The industrial growth was 7.1 percent during 1950-64 because of the high state investment in public sector industries (Kohli, 2006: 1254). The central emphasis of ‘Mahalanobis model’ led political economy during Nehruvian era was to invest into ‘heavy-goods sector’ and manufacturing (Balakrishnan, 2007). The growth rate of different sectors for the period 1950-51 to 1964-65 i.e. primary sector- 2.6, secondary sector 6.8, tertiary sector 4.5 (on 1948-49 prices) show the pattern of growth the economy (ibid.: 58). Thus during, the 1950’s there was dominance of the primary sector in terms of its contribution to GDP but it decreased towards the 1990’s. National Account Statistics data show that the share of agricultural sector in GDP (at 1993-94 prices), declined from 55.53 per cent in the 1950’s to 28.66 per cent in 1990’s, whereas in the same period the share of industrial sector and service sector increased from 16 per cent to 27.12 per cent and 28.09 per cent to 44.22 per cent respectively (Joshi, 2004: 4175). During this period education system was strengthened and it became the main preserve of middle classes. Studies show the development of educational institutions while presenting the review of the report of the education commission 1964-66:

**Table No. 1: Institutions of Higher Education (1950-51 to 1977-78)**

Institutions	1950-51	1965-66	1975-76	1977-78
1. Universities & other institutions of this level	27	80	119	125
2. Research Institutes	18	39	47	47
3. Colleges of General Education	498	1673	3667	3848
4. Colleges of Professional Education	222	2775	3276	3428
5. Colleges of Other Education	78	1253	1405	1399
<b>Total</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>5820</b>	<b>8514</b>	<b>8847</b>

Source: J P Naik, *The Election Commission and After*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation. 1997: 195.

During Nehruvian period there was massive expansion of public sector and it created a base for ‘white collar’ class as Mills has called it. The data<sup>10</sup> of the expenditure of education in the I Five

<sup>10</sup> Tilak, 2007:876.

year Plan, II Five-Year Plan, III Five-Year Plan was 7.0 percent, 5.8 percent, 6.9 percent respectively. It envisaged a very significant role for the state in Indian economy. The dominant positions of the 'white collar' and civil servants, seems quite similar to the Mills' accounts of middle classes in America (Mills, 1969).

This development can be understood at two levels: first, the institutions (educational and others) as the site of institutionalized forms of 'cultural capital', and production of the various forms of intellectual knowledge, which is consumed and percolated down to the coming generations. Following table shows the increasing number of professionals during the post-independence period.

**Table No. 2** Teachers in Higher Education (1950-51 to 1975-76)

	1950-51	1965-66	1975-76
1. Universities & other institutions of this level	3085	9271	18981
2. Research Institutes	251	389	815
3. Colleges of General Education	15312	58057	128082
4. Colleges of Professional Education	4901	53972	78954
5. Colleges of other education	874	6675	8990
<b>Total</b>	<b>24423</b>	<b>128364</b>	<b>235822</b>

Source: J P Naik, *The Election Commission and After*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation. 1997: 196.

Thus, the Table No.2 shows the growth of the teachers, constituting part of service class within these institutions of higher learning. Their numbers increased from two to three times during the Nehruvian period. This is the supply side of the middle class which further provided opportunities to upwardly mobile lower sections of the middle classes.

Secondly, following Dahrendorf's notion of 'domination and authority' it can be said that this 'service class i.e. bureaucrats, teachers, employees in public sectors' got an upper hand in public considerations, social hierarchy due to its closeness with state and stake in knowledge production. As argued 'salaried employees' in the bureaucracy are closer to 'ruling class' (Dahrendorf ,1969: 55). In this period, bureaucrats<sup>11</sup> coming mainly from upper caste

<sup>11</sup> As Bourdieu argues that the 'bureaucratic field 'predisposes' the 'petty bourgeoisie to practice certain virtues i.e. public service, probity, meticulousness, rigour and a propensity for moral indignation'(Bourdieu, 1981:312).

background formed a major section of middle class. They developed certain dispositions due to their location in work conditions and occupational milieu and benefitted most from these positions of power. Thus, as the process of democratization of economy, education and polity continued the composition of middle class becomes more wide and diversified. These modern education was broadly secular and scientific in orientation and thus spreaded these values and capitals and shaped the dispositions of middle classes. As Therborn (1983) has explained the strategy of getting the social action and resources *institutionalized*, through which a class can obtain the powerful position in their relation to other classes. Indian middle class also captured this moment of increasing public sector i.e. bureaucracy, education and political parties, etc. to raise its economic and political strength. It continuously kept on increasing its accessibility and capital to reach at upper echelons. Its location within the service sector provided it the autonomy to bargain with lower classes as well as to develop cohesion with other factions within the middle class.

Writing about the Post-Nehru phase, Arvind Rajagopal's analysis of emergency<sup>12</sup> shows the shift from notions of strong state to relevance of the private sector as a crucial category in India's political economy. It also highlighted the relation between state and the emergence of new middle class particularly within private service sector and manufacturing sector. In his study Rajagopal emphasized the changing nature of Indian state in post-emergency period, state initiated the process of deregulation and to allow private sector to develop. Rajagopal thus writes about the contradiction of this class:

The state itself creates the conditions for a new middle class formation that in turn distances itself from the state, or from what the state used to stand for. (Rajagopal, 2011: 1010)

Rajagopal identifies emergency as a *marker* of 'two phases of middle class'. Where the former implied a 'hegemonic state', the emergency marked a 'crisis of the state' and the latter phase reflected the 'formation of cultural and consumerist identity' of 'new middle class' (ibid., p. 1011). Thus, Rajagopal (2011) analyses two criteria through which new middle class defined

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<sup>12</sup> Arvind Rajagopal. 'The Emergency as Prehistory of the Indian Middle Class'. *Modern Asian Studies* 2011 45(5): 1003-1049.



itself i) developmentalist state, ii) through forms of consumption and cultural identity 'new middle class' defined itself. The point is that the later phase is not marked by the absence of *relation* between state and new middle class rather the transformation of the relationship. The processes of industrialization and bureaucratization have been crucial in forming of the middle class in India. The state's economic policy during 1980's took a major turn towards more 'efficiency, private productivity, no strikes and lock ups' whereas earlier the focus was on 'poverty reduction, redistribution, nationalization'. This discourse of 'development', 'economic growth' 'new values of work', social life, 'business ethics' i.e. thus creating the 'national image', everyday doses of 'banal nationalism'<sup>13</sup> has been the central to the ideology of 'middle class'.

While discussing the various perspectives to understand middle classes, firstly we will discuss the major writings on middle class as influenced by the Marxian perspective and then the major problems these models had in explaining the middle class politics and identity. Structural models provide an understanding of its location within the class structure. Classical debates between neo-Marxists and neo-Weberians have been imperative in explaining class action and consequences on the basis of class location. After discussing it, we will discuss the cultural model of middle classes in India, which includes the writings on the emergence middle class as a status group and its expansion in the era of neoliberal reforms where it acquires a cultural identity of 'consumer-citizens'. Both the models try to explain one aspect of the middle class in India and ignore other. Explanation for the links between the structural models and cultural models requires a theoretical perspective. Thus the sections will discuss the various insights drawn on the works of Giddens, Bourdieu to understand this dimension of middle class in India.

### **Structural Models of Indian Middle Class: 'Mental/Non-manual Work'**

Major writings by economists during post-independence period addressed class question primarily within the debates on 'modes of production' in rural economy. Class relations are explained within the debates on 'mode of production' among many political economists. These

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<sup>13</sup> Billig has excellent work on 'banal nationalism' which is been 'flagged' every day and yet the notion that developing nations are more essentialists and nationalist in comparison to the advanced nations. This was a critique of US nationalism practiced every day in sports, war times, terrorism etc. This helps in understanding the nationalism consumed and produced by middle classes. For further details, see Michael Billig. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage Publications.

approaches were basically 'structural' in nature and emphasized upon the location of class and class structure. The theoretical insights of Wright (1985), Poulantzas (1975), Goldthorpe (1967, 1982), John Urry (1995); which were discussed in the last chapter are crucial to understand this model. The dominant framework this model presents can be called 'political economy perspective' because of its 'critical' allegiance to the Marxian approach as well as its emphasis on macro classes. A. R. Desai was the first Indian sociologist to talk about Indian middle classes and their role in the rise of nationalism in India. It includes also the 'Kaleckian intermediate regimes model' which K. N. Raj has adopted as well as Markovits' discussion of merchants and small traders.

Ashok Rudra (1989) develops 'intelligentsia' as a part of 'ruling class' which includes two other dominant classes i.e. 'industrial capitalists' and 'big landowners' (ibid., 143). He deploys the criteria of division of labour on the basis of 'mental and manual labour'<sup>14</sup> rather than property to explain the 'intelligentsia' as a class. It comes closer to 'new middle class' analyzed in sociological literature of twentieth century. Thus, the criterion of 'mental vs. manual labour' becomes more significant than the criteria based on 'property' in Rudra's framework. He classified following groups are included:

- I. 'All white collar workers in the organized private sector, from managers and top executives down up to clerical workers (manual workers like sweepers, gate keepers, messengers, drivers, etc., however, are excluded
- II. All office workers in administrative services, from top bureaucrats' right up to lower division clerks (excluding, once again, all fourth-class employees as well as maintenance workers, technicians, security officers, etc).
- III. Teachers (from the school to the university levels), doctors and nurses, lawyers and judges, engineers and architects, etc., whether salaried or engaged in private practice; whether in the private sector, in the government or government financed autonomous institutions
- IV. Writers, journalists, artists and other skilled workers engaged in various

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<sup>14</sup> This distinction between manual and non-manual work to differentiate working class from middle class is specified in the works of Poulantzas (1975), Goldthorpe (1967). Whereas Poulantzas talked more in Marxian terms of productive and unproductive labour to explain the 'petty bourgeoisie', Goldthorpe while differentiating 'wage' from 'salary' to define middle class. Political theorist, Hannah Arendt also discussed the distinction between 'labour' and 'work', she criticizes its use as synonym. For further elaboration on this distinction see, Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1958: 80-90.

entertainment industries, the advertisement business, etc., once again, irrespective of whether they are salaried employees of public or private sector institutions or free-lancers.

V. Professionals, politicians, trade union leaders', etc. (Rudra, 1989: 144)

Thus, according to Rudra the members of this class are also called 'middle classes' and are placed closer to the ruling classes. The reason is its domination in state machinery. On the same lines, Bardhan (1989) also developed a model of 'industrial capitalists, rich farmers and professional class' as three major dominant classes. Thus, 'professionals class', (based on 'market value of education and human capital, skills) as Bardhan categorizes, includes all private and public white-collar workers (Bardhan, 1989: 155). This point is crucial to understand the 'middle class' *vis-a-vis* the upper classes as well as working classes; due to their possession of special skills i.e. to run institutions (bankings, education, media) and produce ideology (ibid.: 145). Rudra also points out that the ideology of the middle class is 'hotch-potch of the modern and the traditional, the radical and the conservative, the rational and superstitious' (Rudra, 1989: 144). This 'contradiction' is similar to Joshi's (2001) analysis of colonial middle class in Lucknow. This contradiction can be seen as a central feature of middle classes in India but is it due to its diverse factions or relation with other classes, needs to be studied.

K N Raj, an economist, has discussed the 'petty bourgeoisie' following Polish Economist, Michal Kalecki's proposition of *intermediate regimes*. Raj (1973) argues that Indian state has followed the intermediate regime after the independence where the state sponsored development has catered the requirements of intermediate sections, which in turn promotes the state ideology, public investment programs as national interest programs. During these times, capitalist class was not that strong which can shape state's policies, rather state remains cautious and increases public sector investment to counter the private investment. Similarly, studies have shown the existence of class inequalities which cut across caste hierarchy, where class is defined in terms of 'distribution of properties of individuals' and the notion of 'prestige class (based on occupational status) is developed (see D'Souza, 1999).

The recent analysis by Rajesh Mishra (2010) provides a neo-Marxist perspective on for new middle class. He defines new middle class as neither a producer of surplus value nor the owner of means of production, while the 'old middle class' was both owner of the means of

production and also a producer of surplus value' (Mishra, 2010: 145). He discussed the two analytical distinctions within the middle class: 'old middle class' and 'new middle class' (ibid.). He emphasizes the relevance of John Urry's framework to the new middle class. It helps in understanding the location of new middle class in terms of technical expertise and also in the production of knowledge (ibid.).

Therefore, the 'structural perspective' (see Wright, 1985; Goldthorpe, 1982; Poulantzas, 1975) focuses on location of 'middle class' in class structure in terms of the nature of work, relation within the social production, 'employment relation' in the labour market. Only few writings from a 'structural' perspective have highlighted that some features of 'middle class' as including those who perform 'non-manual work' e.g. professionals, small entrepreneurs, intelligentsia, technicians etc. Thus, this analysis should be seen in relation to the cultural models of class but very few empirical works have been done following both of these approaches.

### **iii. Economic reforms in India and the rise of New Middle Class**

India started implementing the 'economic reforms' after 1980's. But the neoliberal reforms were launched during 1990's when the then finance minister, Manmohan Singh announced the policy shift, implemented reforms of privatization, liberalization and global trade. This was a major shift from a Nehruvian socialist state and Indira Gandhi's strong state towards the market. The private sector which was subordinate to the state was opened. Political scientist, Atul Kohli argues that the support to economic reforms came from a 'narrow political leadership, technocratic elite, a segment of Indian capital etc.' (Kohli, 2006: 1363). Studies show that the rate of *service sector*<sup>15</sup> grew in an unprecedented manner. It increased from 30% of the GDP in 1950 to 57.3 percent of the GDP in 2009-10<sup>16</sup>. While many economists have questioned the assumption, which relates the recent economic growth to the neoliberal reforms of 1990's;

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<sup>15</sup> 'In the national accounts, the service sector activities include: (I) trade; (2) hotels and restaurants; (3) railways; (4) other transport including tourist assistance activities as well as activities of travel agencies and tour operators; (5) storage; (6) communication; (7) banking and insurance; (8) real estate and ownership of dwellings; (9) business services including accounting, software development, data processing services, business and management consultancy, architectural, engineering and other technical consultancy, and advertising and other business services; (10) public administration and defence; (II) other services including education, medical and health, religious and other community services, legal services, recreation and entertainment services; and (12) personal services and activities of extra-territorial organizations and bodies (Sharma et al., 2007: 3727).

<sup>16</sup> National Accounts Statistic, 2011. See the link, [http://mospi.nic.in/mospi\\_new/upload/nas2011\\_30may11.htm](http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_new/upload/nas2011_30may11.htm). (Accessed at 5<sup>th</sup> May 2013).

instead they trace it back to the developments of 1980's both in terms of GDP growth rates as well as in GDP per capita (Nayyar, 2011; Kohli, 2006). The service sector has increased its number in real workforce in both private and public sector (Sharma et al. 2007: 3727). According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report on Employment and Unemployment Situation in India (2009-10), for every 1000 people employed in rural India, 679 people are employed in the agriculture sector, 241 in the services sector (including construction), and 80 in the industrial sector. In urban India, 75 people are employed in the agriculture sector, 683 in the services sector (including construction) and 242 in the industrial sector.<sup>17</sup> This marks a major shift in the nature of Indian state, which on the one hand sidelined the claims of redistribution of wealth which dominated in the era of Indira Gandhi; while subsumed the issues of poverty and unemployment within the logic of growth (Nayyar, 2011). Thus, it started from the initiation of financial aids from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the economic crisis during 1990's. This financial aid led to the adoption of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (Chandrasekhar & Ghosh, 2002; Patnaik, 2002).

In other words, the dominant understanding of neoliberal reforms has been to explain it as an 'economic policy package' at the 'macroeconomic level' (Patnaik, 2007: 3133). Due to removal of tariff and de-licensing, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has increased in the banking, finance, telecommunication, health and insurance sectors along with the earlier public sector banks and financial institutions (Mukhopadhyay, 2002: 4098). In the Indian market 'software service industry' is the fastest growing industry after the further allowance of FDI in UPA regime. Financial collaboration with Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) was allowed not only by government owned industries but also by private firms. These joint enterprises between the foreign MNCs and Indian companies, firms were the product of the development of competitive market in India within the global economic context (Upadhyay, 2004). It has led to the development service sector at a much higher rate than other sectors of the economy. Therefore, the services sector is increasingly becoming the dominant sector of the Indian economy. As already noted, all the activities in the sector, transport, trade, and finance registered over 2.5 per cent growth rate of employment during 2009-10 (Papola & Sahu, 2012: 20). Two service

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<sup>17</sup> Services Sector - union budget & economic survey, URL: <http://indiabudget.nic.in/es2012-13/echap-10.pdf> (Accessed 10th June 2013).

activities, namely Information Technology (IT) and Tourism have attracted employment opportunities for the new middle class. Information Technology Sector consists of two main segments: namely, Information Technology Services (ITS) i.e. the software services; and Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) also known as Business Process Outsourcing BPO (ibid.). According to the estimate of National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), during 1999-2000 the number of IT software, service professionals was 2,42,000 (ibid.: 21). This increase in service occupations and employment has been termed as 'process of tertiarisation' (Joshi, 2004: 4175). This explains the emergence of 'new' section from the middle class, with the growth of the 'private capitalist ventures'. This transformation of economy as a consequence of new economic policies led to the shift from earlier notion of 'self-reliance' to 'global' as the major feature of professional ethos. It is interesting to note here that rather than explaining this as 'retreat of state', an eminent economist, Prabhat Patnaik suggests to understand it as 'transition from one paradigm of state intervention to another' (Patnaik, 1992: 44).

After 1990's, India has pursued the policies of the economic reforms have intensified the creation of global consumer market in India. Thus the major urban development projects, diversity parks, ecological mobilizations, 'beautification projects', toll plaza, 'flyovers- over bridges', privatization of water and electricity etc. (Baviskar, 2002), reflect the huge impact of the neo-liberal policies on the state practices. Studies have debated whether the reforms have affected the different classes in India and the discourse of neoliberal reforms has portrayed the development of a small section as the growth of whole country. Amartya Sen has pointed out that the ascendance of middle classes in the changed socio-economic context which the Gini coefficient fails to account. He says:

The hold of the prosperous and socially influential middle classes escapes notice in the constancy of the Gini coefficient of income distribution. Through dominance over the media, political pressure groups and even instruments of knowledge, this flourishing, vocal and (in absolute numbers) fairly large class enjoys new powers... (Sen, 2002: 12)

While some other have argued that poverty levels have worsened in the period of economic liberalization. Vamsi Vakulabharanam for instance, on the basis of Indian household consumer

expenditure surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), explained that service sector has shown an increase on the consumption patterns but with the overall rise in 'inter-class inequality' (Vakulabharanam, 2010: 69-70). The negative change has come in the lives of 'urban unskilled/skilled workers, rural marginal farmers and agricultural workers' (ibid.).

In this new phase of development and globalization period, middle classes have been in transition period of the shift from the Nehruvian socialist period to Manmohanic neo-liberal phase. Looking through this context the 'new middle class' can be understood in regard to its *economic and political orientations, social composition, relation with other classes* and the state. The recent studies<sup>18</sup> on the 'new middle class' in India have defined it as *consumer class, individualist, hegemonic* in orientations and with many such adjectives but have not discussed how consumerism and neoliberal order are linked.

Pawan Varma has been of the view that this period of liberalization has greatly benefitted middle class and its size has increased substantially (Varma, 1998). But one another view is that liberalization has positively advanced only a small section of middle classes and this section is called 'new middle class' (Fernandes 2006). While the general perception is about the construction of middle class as prime beneficiary of neoliberal reforms but the reality is far from the singular and homogeneous effect; whereas some small fragment of middle classes may have benefitted from the increased job opportunities in private sector and 'service sector' but the many other public sector jobs have been cut down, lower middle class people have faced problems of 'contract-labour' and 'cut down of scheme of pension' etc. (Fernandes, 2006).

Satish Deshpande opines that 'if there is one class for whom the benefits of globalization seem to clearly to outweigh the costs, it is the middle class, particularly its upper (managerial-professional) segment' (Deshpande, 2003: 150). Thus, these opposing descriptions need to be studied critically to study the relationship between neo-liberal phase and 'new middle class'.

Ashutosh Varshney (2007) has also pointed out that 'India's economic reforms began during 1992-93 when Congress led government was in power and these reforms were continued by National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by BJP, industrial licensing system was completely abolished. Later political alliances United Progressive Alliance-I (UPA-I) and UPA-II have

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<sup>18</sup> See for instance; Varma 1998; Deshpande, 2003; Fernandes, 2006; Updhaya, 2008.

continued these economic reforms. Multi-National Corporations were allowed to sell and purchase the shares of Indian firms and manage their markets, foreign investments were encouraged. As an effect of these policies, number of rich has increased, small 'middle class' as emerged, numbering anywhere between 200 million to 250 million depends on the measure used' (Varshney, 2007: 98). Thus, Varshney (2007) has understood 'middle class' according to 'consumption criteria' and thus, the rise of mobile phones, consumer goods market, digital products, increase in flight tickets, use of mass media etc. are the usual signs of the growth of affluent and vibrant middle class.

Studies have also shown the formation of class dispositions based on the structural location of 'new middle class'. Similarly, Fuller and Narasimhan's study the upper middle class in Chennai and try to capture their class conditions and related world views. Chris Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan (2007) in their ethnographic study of 'Information Technology Professionals' or 'New-Rich Middle Class' in Chennai, examined the profiles of IT professionals and critically analyzed 'middle class' while borrowing insights from Anthony Giddens and Manuel Castells (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007: 121). The study shows that IT professionals (belonging predominantly to upper castes i.e. Brahmins), working in Indian Computer Services, are money oriented, 'high salaries' mean fortune in terms of 'holidays abroad, heavy investment in education, housing'' (ibid., 134). Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital' fits well to explain the relevance of specialized knowledge, technical skills which are required to enter these IT industries. The class conditions predisposes these factions of upper middle classes to more inclined towards following attributes i.e. 'market competition', 'work efficiency', 'concerns for security and confidence about future prospects', 'career ambitiousness', disdain towards government jobs, 'individualistic' attitude, more hopes from private sector professional employment (ibid.: 127-137). The younger generation of this new middle class supports the 'economic liberalization and globalization'.

Similarly, Partha Chatterjee (2008) argued that, middle classes have been strongly influenced by the corporatist capitalist class, and they view state as 'corrupt, inefficient' which needs to be withdrawn from market spaces (Chatterjee, 2008: 57). While, Ruchira Ganguly Scrase's work shows the ambivalence of middle classes towards the impact of neoliberal



reforms, in Kolkata, West Bengal. So, on the one hand, middle classes have accepted the 'reforms as beneficiary and rationalized' it, while on the other hand, they still long for 'safeguards provided by the state' (Scrase & Scrase, 2009). Thus, they explain that the neoliberal development, basing itself on the international institutions, presents its 'discourse as legitimate and hegemonic'. In a study of the middle class in Kolkata, Scrase & Scrase (2009) argue middle class individuals have mixed feelings and experiences of economic reforms e.g. some of the respondents called themselves as 'victims of consumerism' while some 'felt liberated' (Scrase & Scrase 2009). These studies reflect the ambivalence of middle class towards the economic reforms, but they could have looked into their relation with other classes in this context.

While Carol Upadhyaya (2011) shows that 'software industry' professionals are prominent among who propagate the free market led development policies and within this exercise articulate a 'new ideology for middle class' in two significant ways- a) the 'software professionals working experiences' in global firms and the discourses of 'cultural identity and differences' loom large which produces a 'global Indian identity' through the training of soft skills and communications skills; and b) 'new cultures of work' are been introduced such as 'more professionalism in terms of dress behavior', personality development programmes, motivational techniques, more disciplined, 'individualized and entrepreneurial minded dispositions' (Upadhyaya, 2011: 175-176).

Studies have shown 'the first generational reforms focused on reducing fiscal deficits' and the second generational reforms (SGRs) are the 'institutional reforms' in urban governance are embedded in neo-liberal ideologies which are 'aimed at getting the institutions right' for better functioning's (Coelho, Kamath and Vijayabaskar, 2013). Thus, without considering the social and political context of neo-liberal reforms one cannot explain the conundrum that has evolved in Indian metropolitans in the form of 'de-politicization' of state, 'corporatization of governance', and privatization of essential basic services' (ibid.). Thus, these studies have shown the emergence of a 'new middle class' which is based on the culture and ideology of economic reforms but have not discussed how it affects the internal differentiation based on caste and religious lines.

### **Size and Composition of 'New Middle Class'**

As discussed earlier, the shift in economic policy for liberalization has generated the estimates about its size and number increasingly for various purposes. Varma (1998) estimates middle class to be around four hundred million in number. Similarly, Beteille argued that the estimated picture of the size of middle class is within the range of 100 million to 250 million persons (Beteille, 2002: 75). Moreover the occupational division and employment status are two significant criteria to define middle classes in India (Beteille, 2002: 76); which is also problematized some times as income and education and 'cultural capital' contradict the conclusions. Beteille further brings the most crucial point in the discussion of middle classes in India in particular and middle classes in general; i.e. the *internal differentiation* of the middle classes and talked about two classificatory standards- a) on the basis of 'occupation, education and income'; and b) on the basis of 'language, religion and caste' (Beteille, 2002: 79). D. L. Seth (1999) argues that though traditionally middle class has been dominated by upper castes, but due to the process, he termed as, 'secularization of caste', 'politicization' and economic changes and democratic policies of affirmative actions, there has emerged a 'new middle class'. Seth argues that, it is 'new' because it is 'much more diversified and 'de-ritualized' and associated with 'new life styles, consumption patterns, possession of economic assets and also self-consciousness of belonging to 'middle class'; in comparison to the period of independence when only upper castes dominated it (Seth, 1999: 2509).

Similarly, Rajesh Mishra describes that 'while the old middle class consisted of small businessmen, shopkeepers, petty contractors, self-employed, small farmers etc. and the new middle class include managers, technocrats, professionals, computer experts, engineers, scientists, educators, white collars etc.' (Mishra, 2010: 145). But it needs to be studied empirically in what ways this differentiation matters/does not matter to middle class behavior. It is only after the liberal reforms that new jobs which Giddens and Bourdieu talked about, based on skills and credentials start booming and the clear-cut differentiation between middle class strengthened.

E. Sridharan (2011) has measured the size of middle classes based on 'income groups' by analyzing the data sets provided by Market Information Survey of Households (MISH) and

National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER, 2003). Thus the five income groups are:

High (above Rs. 140,000)

Upper Middle (Rs. 105,001- 140,000)

Middle (Rs. 70,001- 105,000)

Lower Middle ( Rs. 35,001- 70,000)

Lower (up to Rs. 35,000) (Source: Sridharan, 2011: 37-39)

Sridharan then divides three ways to conceptualize the middle class:

a. Elite Middle Class- (including high income group, high rich)

b. Expanded Middle class- (higher and upper middle income groups)

c. Broadest middle class- (high, upper middle, middle income groups) (ibid.)

The data provided by NCAER (2003) show that during 1998-99, the elite middle class was only 6 percent, the expanded middle class was only 12 per cent, the broadest middle class was only 26 percent and rest 74 percent remain below these classes (Sridharan, 2011). Satish Deshpande (2003) has shown while referring to National Sample Survey and National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) data (1996) that middle class constitutes a small minority of Indian population. He discussed problem associated with the studying the middle class as 'consumer class' and the theoretical and empirical problems attached with this concept. He pointed out that data based on income or consumption levels cannot be taken literally to define middle class in precisely, thus there is some ambiguity to define middle class, which is holding (in India) small number but very large claims.

Similarly, Jodhka & Prakash (2011) also provide NCAER survey data of the year 2007-2008, according to which there are '126 million households in India, (middle income category) who earn between 3830- 22970 US dollar annually' (Jodhka & Prakash, 2011: 44). Whereas middle class and its new avatar, a product of globalization and liberalization is called New Middle Class (NMC), which is based on 'knowledge production'. On the other hand according to the NCAER report<sup>19</sup>, India has currently around 31.4 million households (160 million

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<sup>19</sup> 'India's middle class population to touch 267 million in 5 yrs', *The Economic Times*, Feb 6, 2011, URL: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-02-06/news/28424975\\_1\\_middle-class-households-applied-economic-research](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-02-06/news/28424975_1_middle-class-households-applied-economic-research). (Accessed at 10<sup>th</sup> April 2013)

individuals) and the income criterion is 3.4 lakhs to 17 lakhs (on 2009-2010 prices). NCAER report also predicted its number to increase up to 53.3 million households (267 million individuals) till 2015-2016. In a recent empirical study on caste-class association, Divya Vaid (2012) has developed the '11-class schema for Indian context' on the basis of Goldthorpe & Breen models of class. She has used the 2004 national election Survey data from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). In the class scheme, one can locate the middle classes in terms of (following Goldthorpe's concept of service class) – low professionals, routine non-manual clerical in both public and private employment (Vaid, 2012).

#### **'Internal Differentiation' within Indian Middle Classes**

This section deals with an issue which has been at the heart of the debates on Indian middle classes. This is the question about the 'internal differentiation' along the lines of caste, religions, age, region and different occupational milieu etc. In Indian context, one crucial factor for the arguments about diversity within the middle classes is the *caste factor*. Although the middle class exists simultaneously in *Brahmins*, *Banias*, and the *Backward classes*<sup>20</sup> as well as among *Dalits*. But the dominant discourse about Indian middle class has very explicit connotations of the upper caste imagination of India. Thus, this 'heterogeneity of agents' trajectories explains the structural indeterminacy of the middle class position (Bourdieu, 1984: 359).

As studies, have shown the middle class during its inception was mainly dominated by upper castes (Brahmins in majority) and towards the end of 1990's and after it, people from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward castes(OBCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) have started entering it. Their entry into these middle class occupations and professions is significantly due to process of affirmative action policy of Indian state. These trends on the one hand further challenged the traditional unity of the middle classes and also on the other hand explained the rise of middle class within across caste groups and communities. Nandu Ram (1988) in his work showed that 'due to 'protective discrimination' and democratic changes, an upward social mobility a 'new middle class' (salaried class) has emerged within scheduled castes' (Ram, 1988:

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<sup>20</sup> This term is being used by Indian state to denote all those non- Brahmin, excluding SCs and STs which were recognized as eligible for benefits. For further details see, Lelah Dushkin, 'Backward Class benefits and Social Class in India: 1920-1970' in *Economic and Political Weekly* 1959 14(14): 661-667.

112). These minority groups have acquired the 'middle class status' but still suffer from 'stigmatized identity' (ibid.: 119).

Similarly Gopal Guru, a political scientist, argues that a *Dalit Middle class* has emerged as a consequence of Indian *state policies of 'education and reservation'* (Guru, 2002: 142, emphasis added). This Dalit middle class is, claimed by Guru, the product of 'modernist values' and has the emancipatory potential for Dalit community. But at the same time this class maintains 'cultural', moral and 'ontological' distance from the Dalit community like the general Indian middle class distances itself from Dalit middle class (Guru, 2002). May be this is the attempt to get entry into general Indian middle class. These description also is based on Weber and Giddens' criteria of (education and credential, skills) middle class and in *relation* to state policies. Similarly, this analysis reminds the Goldthorpe's discussion of service class and its politics which is also true of the middle class in India.

As noticed earlier, the initial descriptions about the old as well as middle class were highlighted its upper caste (mostly *Brahmins*) character (see Mishra, 1961; Varma, 1998; Beteille, 2002; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007). After that many studies also explained the presence of middle class among *Banias*, specially the factions having more economic capital i.e. merchants, small traders and entrepreneurs (see, Markovits, 2002). Rudolph & Rudolph (2011) have highlighted the transition of *Rajputs* in Rajasthan, towards a new middle class with the process of the decline of traditional authority and royal status. Due to the Indian state's policies of land reform and abolishing *jagirdari system*, the 'third generations' of Rajputs have opted for career in public sector services, professional employment (Rudolph and Rudolph, 2011:110-133). Thus, the 'heritage hotel' business and 'tourism' within the old forts and palaces, allows Rajputs to form 'hybrid identities' which blends royal *Rajput* identity with middle class entrepreneur identity.

Roger Jeffery, Patricia Jeffery and Craig Jeffrey (2011) in their article have studied the dominant Jat households in Nangal village of Bijnor district in Uttar Pradesh. Jeffery et al. (2011) have basically developed on the insights from David Lockwood's criteria of class<sup>21</sup> and

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<sup>21</sup> David Lockwood in his work on *Blackcoated Worker* (1958) has analyzed class in terms of *market situation*, *work situation* and *status situation*. Jeffery et al. (2011) have used this criterion of class situation to understand the

on the basis of the class categories formulated by Divya Vaid. They argue that while located within the rural context, these 'rich Jats' lead a 'middle class' status and life style in terms of importance of education for children, reducing family size a fertility strategies (Jeffery et al., 2011: 141-142). Studies have shown the *caste-class association*<sup>22</sup> helps to understand the level and direction of social mobility (Vaid, 2012) but not to analyze social relations among these upwardly mobile groups i.e. sections of middle classes. This reminds the Bourdieu's argument about, how an upwardly mobile new petty bourgeoisie would restrict the size of the family to increase the chances of accessing more volumes of capitals i.e. both economic and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1984).

Similarly, as mentioned earlier, due to the policies of affirmative actions by Indian state, a large scale public employment sector was opened for the backward castes and scheduled castes. This formation of middle class across caste categories explains the presence of various cultural differences among them. As the old middle class has been supporter of caste privileges, religious affiliations whereas the new entrants (OBCs, SCs, STs) have with their different dispositions and class habituses have articulated new ideology and language of 'new middle class'. As the intellectuals (service class) who are producers of knowledge coming from various castes, religious backgrounds etc. have redefined the middle class identity which is more inclined towards state led welfare, state of politics, democratic ideals, more inclusive development

### **New Middle Class and Cultural Models**

The central problem here is to analyze the form and extent of cultural narratives which new middle class tend to generate and which is also crucial for its relation to other classes. The work explains the 'cultural heterogeneity of middle classes as whole shapes the concept of class itself as diminishing possibilities of the 'structural definition of class'. Thus the Gouldner's

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rich farmers' class location. For further details, see David Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness*. New York: OUP. 1989.

<sup>22</sup> For instance, Divya Vaid has analyzed the caste-class association while focusing on 'social disadvantage' and she says 'caste class association is strong at the extremes of caste and while it declines over the time. She uses 'social class' to explain 'employment relations' (Goldthorpe's criteria) rather than 'subjective identity'. For the further data, see Divya, Vaid, 'The Caste-Class Association in India: An Empirical Analysis', *Asian Survey* 2012 52(2): 395-422.

notion of 'new class' and Bourdieu's concept of class habitus<sup>23</sup> are significant to understand the 'middle class identity' as well as the very construction of identity have bearings upon who is 'not new middle class' and in most cases it happens to be 'urban poor'. In the following studies on middle class in India, the major argument is about its 'distinction' in terms of cultural capital, political ideology and value systems and 'classificatory practices' agents make.

### **'New Middle class' 'habitus' and 'Social Closure'**

As according to the cultural models of middle class, which we discussed in the last chapter, certain psychological and values has been identified to define the middle class. In one of such attempt, Varma described some of the crucial attributes of the middle class in India such as 'innovativeness, drive, determination, adaptability and risk taking abilities'(Varma, 1998: xxii) etc. on another way is to provide examples of what is called as 'middle class icons or heroes' to describe the middle class identity. Following is the one instance by Varma:

a man who qualified for IIT in 1962 but could not join because his father, a government servant earning Rs. 500 a month, did not have Rs 150 a month for the hostel. In spite of this Narayna Murthy went to found Infosys, and is today one the richest men in India...these stories are appreciative of their *hard work, determination and dedication*.  
(Varma, 1998: xxv, emphasis added)

Similarly in her study on middle classes, Fernandes (2006) mentions how in the post-reform period, liberalized culture and consumer identity is constructed as the identity of middle class. Thus 'Maruti car' as a national symbol was associated with the consumer goods of the development and progress and the image of middle class in 'Rajiv Gandhi's political regime in 1980's (Fernandes, 2006). Thus his efforts to bring modern technology thus created a vision of 'modernizing the nation' dependent on efficiency, far-sightedness, hard work, professionalism and so on.

Likewise, Dipankar Gupta (2000) analyzed the new image of India as oscillating between different worlds of tradition and modernity. This new image is the image of affluent Indian

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<sup>23</sup> 'The division of classes performed by sociology leads to the common root of the *classificatory practices which agents produce and of the classificatory judgments they make of other agents' practices and their own*. The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification of these practices' (Bourdieu, 1984: 170, emphasis added)

middle class still traditional values and ideology of caste and religion on the one hand and the 'westoxication' i.e. the effect of westernization as 'being modern' which remains 'shallow middle class' once again raises the question of 'class culture', he opines that without the particular set of values and norms, the elite calls itself as 'middle class' just on the basis of consumption and thus comparing themselves with their western counter parts as 'middle class'. He is trying to argue that 'being a middle class' ask for certain values, ideas and world view about the world without which it's difficult to make sense of the 'concept of middle class'. Gupta writes ironically:

The Indian middle class loses its stand-offish demeanor and all its starch when placed next to the middle class of the western world. (Gupta, 2000: 7)

Therefore the life styles of 'middle class Indians' are far short of a 'middle class' culture and that is why they are yet to be 'middle class'. Thus the 'myth of middle class' proposition of Gupta needs to be critically analyzed within the context of neoliberalism and by it as project of the state, 'new middle class' as a section which would further its agenda and also the major market for the goods produced would be the significant context to explain the particular forms of practices middle classes do and its relation to inequality. According to Gupta, being middle class means having 'universalistic, democratic mindset and sense of citizenship'; which 'Indian middle class lacks'. While in articulating the 'world-view' of middle class, *media* has played an important role. Middle class is defined in terms of a value and cultural norms and not merely in terms of 'positions in economic structure'. Thus, the new middle class can be seen as the product of changed economic policies analogous to the old middle class which was the product of colonial policies of administration.

Gyanendra Pandey (2009) also discussed the possible parallel narratives of 'African American middle class' and 'ex-untouchable- Subaltern middle class' while questioning the 'modern, progressive character of middle classes'. He asks, what are the reasons that in spite of being 'middle class' at normative level, one remains a 'subaltern' and thus a split of 'double consciousness'<sup>24</sup>. Pandey's analysis questions the taken for granted characteristics of the 'middle

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<sup>24</sup> For details see, Pandey, Gyanendra 2009 'Can there be a subaltern Middle Class'. *Public Culture* 2009 21(2): 321-342.



class' from the Subaltern perspective. Similar contradictions are provided by Beteille (2001) when he argues for a more objective treatment of the issue:

Everything or nearly everything that is written about the Indian middle class is written by middle class Indians. In writing about or speaking about themselves, they tend to oscillate between self-recrimination and self-congratulation. Those who are opposed to state, attack the bureaucracy for promoting corruption, nepotism and inefficiency, those who are opposed to the market, attack private enterprise for subordinating everything to naked self-interest and rank consumerism. (Beteille, 2001: 75)

Thus Beteille<sup>25</sup> has suggested being cautious about the internal diversity within middle class on the one hand and the diverse views about middle class values. With the reality of 'internal differentiation' of the middle classes, the homogenizing effect created by its 'lifestyles', 'public opinion', 'ideology of consumerism', 'aspirations for upward mobility' are some crucial factors which can be considered in order to understand the construction of middle class identity.

Thus, the social practices of new middle class can be analyzed at two levels- *private sphere* and *public sphere*. Although the above distinction is enigmatic and difficult to sustain, but for analytical purposes it can be pursued to locate certain milieus where the new middle class's practices articulates the inter-class relations. In the *private sphere*, one can locate the cultural environment, family milieu in which children incorporate notions of class i.e. the relation between new middle class and the working class (house-maids, gardener, driver, house cleaner etc.), the practices of new middle class individuals related to sexuality, career, daily routines which includes going for coaching classes, watching programmes shown by private channels, their location of playing, clubs, social gatherings etc. While in the *public sphere*, the focus is again on their relations with other classes (in terms of relation with workers at work hours, at market places), with the state (schemes where the two are in collision and defining the urban

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<sup>25</sup> See further, Andre Beteille. 'The Social Character of the Indian Middle Class' in Imtiaz Ahmad & Helmut Reifeld (eds.) 2002. *Middle Class Values in India and Western Europe*, New Delhi: Social Science Press. 2002: 73-85.

plans, education sector etc.) and their own expression of their identity i.e. in terms of their civil society organizations, which we have already discussed in the section of politics of middle class.

Within the private sphere, the middle class reproduces certain mechanism to translate the accumulated capitals for the coming generation and to articulate its location. One of the crucial mechanisms is the *language*. Thus in the British rule, the introduction of *English language* as the language of governance and education led to the creation of a class which is 'native in body but British in taste and language' (Varma, 1998; Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Upadhyya 2008). The middle class is also conceptualized within the frame of 'consumption' as a criteria to measure income levels at one hand and particular forms of 'culture' associated with such groups e.g. idea of leisure, self-fashioning. Bourdieu (1984) has pointed out that the true basis of differences in the area of 'consumption' is the opposition between, what he calls '*tastes of necessity*' and '*tastes of luxury*' (Bourdieu, 1984: 177). This explain also how after the new economic policy of 1991, consumer market of western products was created vis-à-vis the formation of 'new middle class'<sup>26</sup> as 'consumer class' in the urban landscape.

Sanjay Srivastava (2009) also in his ethnographic work on relations between 'cultures of consumption' analyzes the making of 'moral middle class' through two cases- a) Akshardham temple as urban space; b) Delhi government's 'Bhagidari scheme' for RWA's. His work reflects again the relation between state and middle class projects of self-fashioning through the establishment of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) at Akshardham temple complex, NDA(National Democratic Alliance) arranged land for it and which was termed 'legal' by judiciary. He exposes the 'middle class' imagination of social spatial patterns in urban areas which has problems for poor who are seen as 'illegal' and 'encroaching' into public parks and a blot in 'beautification' of world class city. Srivastava then questions the 'naturalized' notion of 'new middle class' and says:

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<sup>26</sup> These examples help us in understanding the formation of New Middle Class habitus as Bourdieu talked about the distinct feature of new petty bourgeoisie, explains the examples these studies show. He writes that 'the emergence of this new petite bourgeoisie, which employs new means of manipulation to perform its role as an intermediary between the classes and which by its very existence brings about a transformation of the position and dispositions of the old petite bourgeoisie, can itself be understood only in terms of changes in the mode of domination, which, substituting seduction for repression, public relations for policing, advertising for authority, the velvet glove for the iron fist, pursues the symbolic integration of the dominated classes by imposing needs rather than inculcating norms (Bourdieu, 1984: 154).

It is in this sense, perhaps, that we might speak of a “new” middle classness that brings together the various strands of a new consumer culture, relations with the state and with religiosity, the discourses of clean and unclean urban spaces, and, as I discuss below, certain anxieties about the relationship between consumption and “true” Indian-ness. (Srivastava, 2009: 341)

It explains the formation ‘new middle class habitus’<sup>27</sup> in Indian context out of the transformed notion about social space in urban areas. While studying the ‘software industry IT’ and its relation to new economic policies, Upadhyaya (2008a; 2008) studied the forms of ‘cultural codes’, new ‘commodity images, and narratives that were constructed around the ‘new middle class identity’ linked to ‘consumerism’; consumption of identity of ‘Indian culture’ especially in NRI(Non- Resident Indians) and the image projected in Bollywood movies. Thus, the construction of idealized ‘Indian identity’s flatted with the ‘image of New middle class’ within these discourses of consumption, life-styles, social mobility in private sector etc. which has also resulted in shifting the questions of ‘poverty’, slum dwellers and street vendors etc. on the back ground (Upadhyaya 2008). What Upadhyaya is describing is the similar ‘life styles’ which are the products of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1984). David Harvey (2005) suggests that neoliberalism produces a discourse of ‘work ethic’, ‘notion of efficiency’, ‘productivity’ through pervasive sources. Similarly, Stuart Hall (1988) points out the projection of hegemonic ‘common sense’ in promoting capitalist relations and work ethics. Following the above two views, Scrase and Scrase (2009) also write:

We found that notions of efficiency, privatization and deregulation are rapidly becoming central motifs in the everyday language and practice of environments such as the workplace. (Scrase & Scrase, 2009: 106)

Brosius (2010) has discussed in her work about the impact of economic liberalization and how a ‘new middle class’ which has new life styles, images, media and newer sites to understand changes in Indian economy and social life. She has studied cultures of leisure, aesthetics,

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<sup>27</sup> It is pertinent to recall Bourdieu’s notion of unconscious unity of class. He says ‘and finally it is an immediate adherence, at the deepest level of the habitus, to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias which, more than declared opinions, forge the unconscious unity of a class’ (Bourdieu 1984, p. 77).

cosmopolitan identity, ways of exclusion specifically taking the case of Akshardham Cultural Complex, religious site located in New Delhi projected as 'showpiece of global city' and 'evening places for affluent to have fun and celebration'.

Nita Mathur (2010), in her empirical study on young girls and boys belonging to 'new middle class' in New Delhi, found that 'conspicuous consumption' of commodities, branded goods, 'shopping in malls', using credit cards' etc. are the core 'attributes' of the 'agency' of this class, which are reframed as 'status symbols' in the era of globalization (Mathur 2010: 216-217). Mathur demonstrates further this shift as:

The growing presence of shopping complexes, jewellery and garment marts and multiplex malls in metropolitan cities- as also increasingly in smaller towns- is prominent and indicates that people's interest is now more focused on being surrounded by premium and luxury international brands. These shopping spaces also offer attractive entertainment opportunities including gaming zones, cinema halls, national and international cuisines. (Mathur, 2010: 219)

On the other hand, within the family or 'domestic sphere', middle class is produced through particular forms of practices. Seemin Qayum and Raka Ray (2011) have studied the Bengali middle class *domestic sphere*. They argue that class is produced not only in the public sphere but also through the 'domestic practices' in the homes. *Cultures of servitude* (italics original), as they call it, retain the class relations of 'domination' and 'subjugation' i.e. the servants employed in the middle class households (Qayum & Ray, 2011: 246-67).

Discussing the shift from 'feudal' to 'modern' time and spatial aspects of 'servant' in the middle class homes, Qayum and Ray (2011) explained three characteristics of this shift, namely: Servants as essential component of an average middle class household in Kolkata, loyalty being replaced by wage contract, and finally distinct middle class cultures (ibid., 259-265). This work also can be seen as an extension of the proposition about definitional problem of middle class in terms of 'non-manual/mental/intellectual/skills based' work. This thesis is extended from 'work place', 'public sphere to the 'home' too where they avoid doing manual labour, rather prefer supervising them (ibid., 250-251).

Thus, the 'domestic labour' constitutes as significant element of the middle class culture. The above discussion foregrounds the central argument of this chapter that, it is in the context of socio-economic context (economic reforms), the nature of Indian 'new middle class' can be understood from the point of view of both '*class location as well as social identity*'. This approach challenges the either/or dualism of earlier objective/subjective models of middle class.

#### **Political Practices of Middle Classes as *Distinction*<sup>28</sup>:**

The visibility of new middle class in public sphere in understanding the political culture as well as capacity of this class to push for its interests has intensified; still there exist various contradictions about the 'political' nature of new middle class. Studies have also reflected upon what Goldthorpe & Bourdieu hinted 'the ideology & class habitus' of middle classes respectively. In his study, Ghanshyam Shah (1987) has analyzed the protests and agitations by middle class i.e. mainly composed of upper castes, started beating up SC youth during 1981 as their rising economic status and protested against their reserved seats in medical colleges (Shah 1987, p.157). The recent studied and surveys have shown that middle classes have played significant role in shaping Indian politics. For instance, the trend during 1999 when middle classes political orientations towards Hindu Nationalist politics was reflected in the emergence of BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) led NDA(National Democratic Alliance) as ruling party of the country.(Jaffrelot 2000; Yadav 1999). Also importantly, the ideological influence of liberalization on middle classes seems to be *conservatizing* if we analyze the political orientation of during the rise of BJP led National Democratic Alliance<sup>29</sup>. Studies have shown the low rate of voter turnouts for middle classes in urban areas and thus this behavior is usually attached as 'apolitical' attitude of middle classes in India. But the question is can we define 'politics' only in terms of voter turn outs or election data. Rather than claiming from voter turnout one can also take into account the new middle class's relation with to state and political parties, it is here the

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<sup>28</sup> 'Distinction' as discussed by Bourdieu (1984) is the strategies by different classes and particularly new petty bourgeoisie to differentiate itself from the other classes. This differentiation is articulated in terms of 'cultural capital', places of residence, art and aesthetics, 'tastes', food items, shopping, symbolic capital etc. which takes attention to the differences in fields incorporated within the respected habituses.

<sup>29</sup> Zoya Hasan has studied the rise of Sangh Parivar during 1980's and the social base it received from them middle classes, she found that 'anti-colonial nationalism' faded after independence and the religious nationalism gains in especially in post-emergency regime in Indian politics. For further details see, Hasan, Zoya 2002. 'Changing political Orientations of the Middle Classes in India' in Ahmad, Imtiaz & Reifeld, helmut (eds.) *Middle Class Values in India & Western Europe*, New Delhi: Social Science Press 2002.

intervention of 'civil society' in whatever forms become crucial. The question we need to ask is whether 'identity politics' be understood in some kind of relation to the middle class politics in India to which Harriss called as 'new politics beyond political parties or trade unions'<sup>30</sup>.

Baviskar (2002) has also focused on this *exclusionary* politics of urban space and contestation by middle class and the recent uprising of what she calls *bourgeoisie environmentalism* as an ideology which claim only 'middle class's claim over urban space for recreation, safety, health and leisure' etc. and neglects the issues of 'displacement' of working class, whose homes are demolished with one court order.

Interestingly, Partha Chatterjee (2004) offers fine-tuned conceptual lenses through which to see a contemporary world of popular politics by distinguishing 'civil society' from 'political society'. His distinction rests on considering 'civil society' as a preserve of 'middle classes' and its expressions through 'associations' whereas the political society is a preserve of subaltern or 'population groups' and how the Foucault's notion of 'governmentality' can be applied to understand popular politics of Indian state. But this conceptualization is problematic on two points; first is, to argue that middle classes are 'civil society and not 'political' tends to ignore their political influence and exercise of power through institutional means though non-electoral. Second, if we separate these two spheres then how does one understand the entry of sections from the lower castes and marginalized groups into middle classes through affirmative actions and service sector?

John Harriss (2006) in his ethnographic research in Delhi, Bangalore and Chennai, explains that how 'middle class' tend to mobilize their community for the new ways of 'problem solving' i.e. 'infrastructure', 'spatial problems', on the basis of 'modernist' 'rational politics', direct contact with government, whereas the 'urban poor' resorts to 'political parties' for the problem they face.

Leela Fernandes (2006) has analyzed the political practices of 'new middle class' from selectively using Bourdieu's conception of 'classificatory practices' as well as using interpretive understanding of the liberalization as the major shift in the national political culture where the

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<sup>30</sup> John Harriss has analyzed the middle class activism by civil society as different from working class politics and often the former goes against the later. He seems ambiguous about the implications of middle class politics for the status of democracy in India. See, John Harriss, 'The onward march of the new 'Great Indian Middle Class'. *The Hindu* August 15, 2007.

urban middle classes are the central figure. Thus by studying the consumption as a way of expression in the era of globalization and historical processes of the 'new middle class identity' Fernandes distinguishes old middle class from the new middle class, and how in the process of identity formation the boundary problem and hegemonic presence of middle class in public sphere is reflected. She has argued post-liberalization effects such as new strategies in labour market, private sector employment, changed educational strategies and new forms of civic associational life in urban neighborhoods are the places where 'newness' of the 'new middle class' is expressed and it shapes the discourses of inequality (Fernandes, 2011). Thus, Fernandes discussed the anxiety of the lower middle class in relation to the changes in the labour market.

Surinder S. Jodhka & Aseem Prakash (2011) aptly captured the 'contradictory worldviews' of different sections in the middle classes and thus different kind of political engagements of these sections. They pointed out that:

The upper caste middle-class talks about *efficiency through market competition and privatization of public agencies, transparency and accountability* of the governance apparatus. Interestingly enough, sections of the middle-class from the historically deprived social group also invoke the *frame of universality*. However, instead of efficiency, merit and competition, the universal values they try to push are of *justice, equality, representation and rights through affirmative action*.

(Jodhka & Prakash, 2011: 54, emphasis added)

Studies have shown the middle class politics in terms of their interests represented by organizations i.e. RWA's in metropolitan areas and their negotiations with the state<sup>31</sup>. The upper middle class's interests and agendas regarding the stakes in urban capital are well articulated by 'elite RWAs', the 'middle class mobilizations' via RWA's, are also crucial to point out its

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<sup>31</sup> For instance, the study of Resident Welfare Associations (RWA being a collective organization of middle classes to represent their interests) by Kamath & Vijayabaskar (2013) shows the diversification within middle classes reflected through different and 'contesting' agendas of RWA belonging to upper middle class and RWA belonging to lower and mobile middle classes. They have studied these dynamics of conflict and contestations over 'government projects for infrastructure etc. within middle class RWA's in Bangalore city during 2006-2007. See Kamath, L & Vijayabaskar, M. 2013. 'Urban reforms and the Middle Classes' in Coelho, K., Kamath, L., M. Vijayabaskar, (eds.) 2013. *Participolis: Consent and Contention in Neoliberal Urban India*. New Delhi: Routledge. 2013: 151-173.

relation with the 'state' (Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009; Coelho, Kamath and Vijayabaskar, 2013). Thus, it is relevant to recall what Ray has suggested about the 'middle class politics':

By claiming to speak for the nation, this category performs the cultural task of concealing inequality. It is this ideological role of articulating hegemonic values and beliefs that distinguishes "middle-class" politics. (Ray, 2010: 319)

Baviskar (2011) also studied the hegemonic notion of 'social and spatial order' where middle class systematically excludes the poor by constructing a discourse (exclusionary practices) around the issues of 'hygiene', 'order', 'safety' while taking three cases of 'cows, cars and cycle-rickshaws'. Baviskar writes:

I interpret these conflicts as instances of bourgeoisie environmentalism, the (mainly) middle-class pursuit of order, hygiene, safety and ecological conservation, through the public sphere. I argue that middle class activists mobilize the discourses of 'public-interest' and 'citizenship' to articulate civic concerns in such a manner that constitutes a public that excludes the city's poorer sections. (Baviskar & Ray, 2011: 392)

By way of discussing these various forms of political engagement of middle classes one can decipher the underlying logic of 'distinction' and 'formation of a collective identity' of the middle class as against the poor, which further stabilize the unequal distributions of resources and 'capitals'. Thus the political practices of the middle classes may be seen within the perspective of class theory as suggested in the previous chapter. Bourdieu would call these acts as 'classificatory practices' and Parkin as 'social closure' to monopolize the opportunities provided by the modern state and socio-economic environment. While the political practices of new middle class can be differentiated from the old middle classes. The following studies will draw on the changes in the politics of new middle class in the context of socio-economic reforms and democratic politics.

### **Nationalism as both Structural and Cultural Field**

Another theme which dominated the middle class discourse is, *nationalism*. Since its inception, middle class has interesting relation with the theme of nationalism. Economic and cultural nationalism is the mainstay of 'new middle class' of India. A. R. Desai's classic work following



Marxist approach explained how the Indian nationalism was carried by middle classes. Partha Chatterjee's work also reflected that how during anti-colonial struggles, educated middle class has played a crucial role in national movement (Chatterjee, 1986). Similarly, Fernandes (2006) also comments that Indian middle class has been a propagator of nationalist imagination since its birth. She explains that:

The claims of the national representativeness of the new middle class are part of a longer historical trajectory in which the middle class has claimed to be a central agent in the definition of Indian national identity and in the definition of the relationship between nation and external global processes. (Fernandes, 2006: 32)

It is well discussed features of middle class all over the world that middle class are the conservative class and support status quo because it is occupying a position which is satisfying to its needs and thus any such attempts by working class and workers to press for distributional claims would be countered back by Middle class in within the argument of 'meritocracy'.

Christopher Jaffrelot & Van der Veer (2008) have argued that with the development of 'nationalist' culture along with the growth of public institutions, bureaucracy, jobs of lawyers, doctors etc. have been responsible for 'middle class' values and attributes similar to those Hindu upper caste cultural traits. Rajagopal (2011) discussed the 'economic nationalism' and 'Hindu nationalism' after the emergency period and the rise of 'new middle class'. He points out:

The growth and influence of this class illuminates the intersection of a new kind of *economic nationalism* with a resurgent *Hindu cultural nationalism*, i.e., *the support for market-led economic reforms* joined to the view that the perceived failure of Nehruvian developmental policies could only be redressed by declaring Hindu majority rule. (Rajagopal, 2011: 1045, emphasis added)

Thus, the study of Hindu Nationalism and communal characteristics became the major theme to locate the political practices of Indian middle classes (see Donner, 2011; Mazarella, 2005; Joshi 2001). On the other hand, the political mobilizations of the middle classes in India are also their expression of Indian nationalism. The interesting question is how within this discourse the issue of caste discrimination and poverty is clothed or disguised. Whether it is the mobilization against

corruption or against crimes on women or the middle class projects to transform the urban space; one theme which unites all these variant forms of mobilizations is, Billig's notion of 'banal nationalism'(Billig, 1995). It is this idea of 'India' which binds through the discourse of nationalism both structural and cultural linkages merge together different sections of middle classes and which produce certain dispositions of new middle class. Hence these dispositions are the product of strange fusion of these structural positions and ideological and cultural formulations of the idea of nation articulated by Indian middle class. It is here in this complex combination of both structural and cultural elements that the habitus of Indian middle class is formed.

#### **New Middle Class, a Synthesis (both Structural and Cultural Models): Conclusion**

In this work, we have discussed how various modes of theorizing the Indian middle classes emphasize different aspects of reality. Our approach has been to critically analyze at one level the significant insights of Marx, Wright, Poulantzas, Goldthorpe, Giddens and Bourdieu to explore the various ways in which the concept of middle class is continuously resituated within the debates of inequality. On the other hand, it points out that the rise of middle classes in India and how it has influence the socio-political life. The recent studies on 'new middle class' have emphasized mostly the *cultural* aspects i.e. issue of identity, status symbols, middle class-values etc. but have ignored the question of its *structural* location. Class inequalities have structural, organizational and institutional nature particularly within the context of economic reforms. With the theoretical additions of 'social closure' into the above framework, one can locate the domains of 'exclusion', 'differentiation' in the class relations. These crucial aspects have been marginalized in 'cultural' centric explanations. The latest phase of the formation of 'new middle class', as one section of middle classes within the context of the liberal democracy and neoliberal state is distinct social phenomenon. Thus the framework developed in this chapter argues for a both 'structural and cultural model of social class to study the new middle class in the context of neoliberal social order and democratic form of politics. Thus when the studies emphasize middle class in relation to state i.e. new middle class in Delhi, through RWA's participation in local governance tend to shape the discourses of unequal imaginations of urban spaces (Srivastava, 2009; Coelho, Kamath and Viajaybaskar, 2013) or the studies on the nexus between 'new middle

class and judiciary, public sphere through mobilizations as well as 'judicial activism' (Deshpande, 2003; Baviskar, 2011; Fernandes, 2006) define the 'hegemonic notions' of 'citizens' over the poor. These studies tend to take for granted at 'middle class' at the 'structural level' or in terms of material conditions of class formation.

Thus, the new middle class i.e. consists of 'professionals and managerial employees in the service economy and the 'old middle class' (white collar employees, bureaucrats, small proprietors) form the 'Indian middle classes' instead of a homogeneous 'middle class'. This internal differentiation is furthered on the basis of differential capitals i.e. caste, occupational milieu, parents class, gender, difference in generation etc. It can be argued that this differentiation is also important because of large section of this class (as Goldthorpe's and Bourdieu's work show) entering into it with different 'habitus' and 'embodied class' make it further complex. But the characteristics feature of its one section which is stable and consistently maintaining its position and the second generation is also entering into the 'middle class positions' i.e. professionals, bureaucrats and private and public sector jobs that have some kind of similar sense of being (habitus) a part of middle class.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the meaning system which justifies the present state of material and symbolic inequalities and also eulogizes the rise of 'new middle class'. This meaning system in Indian context is provided by neoliberalism. It is this section of middle classes, which propagates the legitimation philosophy for the middle classes. The new entrants into the new middle class adapt to this meaning system in order to be assimilated and accepted within it rather than seen as 'outsider', 'unadjusted' and remain alienated. It is this aspect of middle class which is crucial to its culture and is part of their habitus which further reproduces the unequal relations and positions. The 'discourse of culture' is implicitly shaped by neo-liberal regime (as Harvey, Wacquant argue). This ability of 'new middle class' to produces the *common sense*, consent for the programs of politics, civil society, project of development, growth, etc. backed by neoliberal state.

Similarly, the 'social closure' approach explains how this faction of middle classes accumulates its resources, capitals and institutionalize them as process of exclusion for lower sections of middle classes. This exclusionary process is part of every class in order to strengthen

the class boundaries and distinctions. New middle class thus as engaged in service sector, strengthened by the economic reforms and liberalization, articulates the class notion of development and free market economy and 'meritocracy' (Shah, 1987; Baviskar & Ray, 2011; Fernandes, 2006; Harriss 2006). Similarly, the value system, norms, ideology and sociodicy (Bourdieu) propagated by 'economic reforms' form the reality for 'new middle class' and thus their identity is articulated as 'sufficient', 'consumer class', 'self-guided', 'future oriented', 'global aspirations', 'proponents of growth'. Last but not the least, there is an excellent insight provided by Bourdieu and Wacquant's work on middle class. It would be fruitful to look Wacquant's insightful passage from his article:

*The emerging agenda for the sociology of middle class is.....to engage in historical and comparative investigations of agents situated at various points of the 'middle' zones of social space can or cannot be assembled,...into a collective resembling something like one or several 'middle classes'. For this, it is necessary to study dynamically the whole set of relationships that link them to those groups situated above and below them, paying special attention to the types of organization and strategies other classes develop, as well as the role of the state in classificatory struggles. (Wacquant, 1991: 58, emphasis added)*

Still, in so far the argumentation has been of the view of middle class been theorized at dialectics of the location and political, ideological as well as symbolic practices together defines the dimensions middle classes in more detail manner. This conception of social class in general and middle class in particular explains the antinomies of inequalities which are more intricate within the context of economic reforms and discourses of nationalism.

## CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, social class has been approached to study the material as well as status inequalities. The continuing debates have contributed tremendously to explain the forms and nature of the social relations organized around class inequalities. The concept of middle class has been studied in relation to inequality discourses and various theorizations of class. The broad framework on middle class is analyzed on the basis of insights from neo-Marxists, neo-Weberians writings as well as Bourdieu and Giddens's works. It has expanded the horizons of conception of class. After these conceptual interconnections and the subsequent insights, the next section provides the understanding of class inequalities in the Indian context. The continuing theme in the three chapters is social class and its linkages to social inequality mediated through 'middle class'. Thus, the conceptual analysis of social class and their problems with opposing tendencies within class theory provides a context for understanding the category of middle class.

The first chapter is the analysis of numerous theoretical models of social class dealing with varied issues and concerns. The debate can be understood as unpretentious question as to how class divides society. If class has very vital part in the stratification of the society, it is imperative to know what the class implies to. Arguments were examined in relation to each other, they entail some fundamental questions. It probed whether class implies an objective position within the relations of social organization or it is related to experiential dimensions. Both of these master contradictions facilitated the discussion about 'structural' and 'cultural' model of class. The framework suggested in this dissertation, conceives of classes as positions and locations within the distribution of different capitals, which confer some people control over the lives of others. In addition to it, locations within these capitals tend to shape the subjective dispositions of individuals. From the macro models to the micro, and finally to the recent theorizations by Giddens and Bourdieu, the first chapter suggested the linkage between these contradictory approaches. By combining the objective material positions defined in terms of capitals, power endowing assets with the class dispositions, consciousness the connection is established through Bourdieu's model of class to Giddens' notion of class structuration. The second chapter maps the various debates emerging out of diverse theoretical schools and explains the rise of middle classes in capitalist liberal democracies. It raises questions about the theoretical background as

well as the problems of operationalizing middle class. Based on the framework of the chapter first it analyzed the 'structural' as well as 'cultural' models on middle class. In other words, it tries to discuss the question that why a class gets what it gets. Accordingly, the question is discussed whether middle class is about a structural location between the two contending classes or it is about a cultural attitude towards life, a certain value system which it delineates. It can be argued without any reluctance that most of these theorizations suggest that 'middle class' is theoretically complex, contradictory and inconsistent category. Historical evidences describe about its part as both modernizing as well as a strong adherent of the status quo. It has been explained that middle class brings changes for its own growth and still benefits from the traditional forms of unequal relations of servitude i.e. religion, caste, race, gender etc.

Henceforth, the third chapter builds on this argument and tracing the historical context from colonial to the present phase of liberalization, how middle class has been analyzed significantly either from 'economic' conception of middle class and later writings have inclined more towards 'cultural' model of middle class in India. This work also looked into the synthesis of this analytical distinction between 'economic' and 'cultural' model of class and which can better explain the dynamics of middle class politics, social movements, and democratic struggle within various classes.

This work has analyzed in detail the various aspects of class inequalities and the debates to theorize social class. The crucial dimensions of subjective and objective, empirical and theoretical, relational and gradational, micro and macro etc. have been explored which can be distilled in studying the middle class practices in terms of 'social closure' and Bourdieu's theoretical position on habitus and field. The theoretical model which needs to be developed to explain the nuanced practices of the dynamic middle class, in the above discussion, moves closer to a synthesis approach. Thus, the notions of 'exploitation', 'social closure of exclusion & usurpation', 'class habitus', 'objective class' can explain more closely and clearly the dynamics of 'class inequalities' without invoking the 'ambiguity' which many criticize as problem in operationalizing class. Similar concerns have been expressed and analyzed in the work of Charles Tilly (1998), who emphasized upon how inequalities are produced and reproduced through 'organizations'. Tilly has followed collectivist approach and emphasized upon the study

of inequalities at relational level. His four mechanisms through which inequality operates—‘exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation’ can be contextualized to explain the class practices and the resulting inequalities. Tilly’s notion that beliefs and ideologies (fluid and ad hoc in nature) may reinforce produce inequality secondarily, but structural factors are the primary ones. Along with it Tilly’s work also suggests that mentions few new bases of inequalities such as financial capital, information, knowledge production and media, which are controlled by a certain classes in the society. Therefore, it helps in case of explaining the discourses of the middle class, (with its location) which allows hoarding of the opportunities on the basis of economic and cultural capitals. Through ‘opportunity hoarding’, concept formulated by Charles Tilly, one can explain the actions of a class (middle class in our case) to utilize the maximum sources without sharing it with other classes. It relates Wright’s notion of control over physical assets and control over the ‘investments and accumulation process’. Bourdieu’s notion of capital and class distinction also revolves around processes of the ‘opportunity hoarding’. ‘Social Closure’ theory as developed by Murphy too highlights this feature of class to maintain its position intact from any threat. This common ground of class practice is best understood within this mosaic of different theoretical models. Thus, this argument of class as positions with different forms of capitals explains the nature of conflict among different classes. Related to this understanding of class, is Goran Therborn’s notion of resource inequalities, which refers broadly to ‘unequal possession of resources within a particular social system i.e. wealth, education, land, skills etc. (Therborn, 2001: 452-453). In our case, this form of inequalities is applicable to explain the class inequalities e.g. the unequal access to resources like property, credentials, production of knowledge, value production, cultural values and norms and institutional forms of class.

These issues about the central criteria of class forced us to re-examine our understanding of the Indian middle classes in different historical phases. These arguments indicate towards another important issue in the debates on social inequality. Methodological debates between *individualist* stand and *collectivist* stand. Whereas class inequalities when explained in the above discussed way inclines towards ‘collectivist perspective’. Thus, rather than individual attributes, inequality is explained on the basis of social context, class upbringing, community background. Hence,

these different ways of analyzing class contributes to a fuller understanding by identifying different causal processes at work in affecting the micro- and macro- shades of inequality in capitalist liberal societies.

In order to arrive at the arguments and over all structure of the dissertation mentioned above. It was necessary to critically examine and understand how the concept of social class has been theorized conventionally and recent models on it. Thus, 'class' explains the whole gamut of unequal relations and distributions of capitals. Arguments in this dissertation question the 'economic' conception of class and discuss the alternatives as pointed out by Giddens and Bourdieu. After reconceptualising it in the first chapter, it was necessary to reframe the analyses around the concept of 'middle class' which is not simply as the 'locations between' other classes but a definite class itself.

The debates of 'manual' versus 'mental', 'productive' and 'unproductive', 'intermediate between capital and labour', 'wage' and 'salary' etc. have contributed significantly to our understanding of middle class. But again as mentioned earlier, the dichotomy between 'economic' and 'cultural' models of middle class was the central theme emerged from the reading of the classical as well as recent works. The attempt was made thus to bring together both the economic and cultural conceptions of middle class. Two approaches provided this ground where economic and socio-cultural aspects can be understood in relation. Firstly, Giddens' model of class structuration Bourdieu's work has explained how the middle class differentiates itself from working classes and dominant class on the basis of cultural capital. While neo-Marxists have argued that this class due to its 'contradictory location' takes non-class positions both ideologically and politically. It is this contestation that provides diverse interpretations of social class in general and middle class in particular in Indian context.

Theoretical perspectives articulate that middle class can be characterized as 'non-manual' job, where cultural capital i.e. knowledge production, skills, is central. Though this theorization has certain limitations but it definitely provided insights to understand and explain the nature and character of the middle classes in India. The popular discourse around 'middle class' reflects on various themes such as democratization of Indian society, creation of a consumer class, increase



in the number of employment engaged in service (public & private) sector, huge increase in professionals in urban areas. With the onset of neoliberal reforms, the consumer culture has been a major area to explore the social identity of middle class. The various studies have tried to grapple with communal politics and middle class, studying domesticity, religiosity and family norms in the relation to middle classes; studying the new entrants i.e. individuals as well as communities adopting the middle class life-styles and status, their negotiation with 'middle class culture' etc. Thus a whole range of studies have reflected upon these various issues interlinked with the 'middle classes' and new theoretical approaches are being explored to explain the discourses of inequality, power relations, domination in urban spaces. The chapter three also argues that we can understand Indian middle classes and its historicity in terms also as a part of 'project' by Indian state, which India shares with all liberal capitalist democracies. In this socio-cultural milieu this class performs its function for the smooth running of industrial sector, service sector. The difference is while the earlier educated middle class was employed in public sector (government institutions such as education, industry and most important bureaucracy) during post-independence era and thrived on it. Whereas after 1991's economic policies of development 'new middle class' thrives on the private capital invested in service sector, is global in character and which has a good taste of consumerist culture. Thus cultural embodiment provides reflection into its structural location within capitalist production. Politically, it is this class which speaks the language of 'citizens' through 'civil society' to articulate a singular narrative around economic and political nationalism, which clothes internal differentiation and contradiction. This articulation of itself as modern, progressive and global in nature this class also attempts to come out of its cultural rootedness into tradition and hierarchy.

Having discussed some of the concluding findings of this dissertation, it is worthwhile to contemplate about the limitations of this work. First, a more comprehensive and analytical work would be done if it could have been located within an empirical setting or field. This dissertation has emphasized more on the conceptual rigour and debates on social class and middle class rather than their historicity in a particular country or location. Although some references have been made via the theoretical discussion but it was not the primary concern. Second, this work could have been more specific in terms of taking particular community, caste or ethnic group and

then analyzing the historical growth of middle class within that social group. In other words, it has not touched upon the issues of 'intersectionality' in this work. A large scale work is needed at the empirical level to highlight the questions related to intersectionality i.e. caste-class, class-gender, class-religion etc. It has studied the emergence of Indian middle class at general level.

It requires an empirical work to capture both economic and cultural aspects of class rather than overlooking one at the cost of another. This work suggests some fundamental questions for the further research. Thus it asks to deal with, how the structural location can be understood of the new middle classes and related with its cultural practices. Regarding the imperative of 'internal differentiation' of the middle classes, further research can elaborate that what is the relation between differentiation on the basis of caste and the differentiation on the basis of occupational milieu and work conditions. Within this internal diversity how are the social distinctions played out in relation to the economic and political nationalism. It is interesting to study that, in spite of the increasing attempts to strengthen their respective social positions how different factions of middle classes relate to the idea of 'India'. For instance, if 'new middle class' defines itself in relation to consumption, how does the continuing 'service class' employed in the public sector articulate its cultural distinctions. It is essential to study the various forms of restructuring of middle classes as an impact of the new economic policies and social and cultural context of the present day India. One can study how does the idea of 'India' is linked today in terms of both structural position within the economy and the discourse generated about it. Thus, the link between economic capital and cultural capital has to be operationalized at an empirical context.

While in pre-industrial societies, social inequalities were justified as stemming from natural or divine order; in the era of capitalism and neoliberalism, social inequalities are covered with the production of knowledge system. Right from Marx to Weber and Bourdieu, this aspect of meaning system of unequal social relations and unequal distribution of power is critically studied. Post-independence it was assumed that process of modernization will facilitate the creation of conditions for the emergence of a modern Indian middle class, where hierarchies of ascribed kind and communal tension would lose its hold over the public sphere. Contrary to the expectations, the middle classes remain the preserve of upper caste for a long time and still continue to be. Though lower castes, other religions have entered this class. The present day

'new middle class' tend to formulate new cultural values, ideology of competency, 'merit', 'efficiency', 'growth', 'development', 'freedom'. This form of cultural worldview is inevitably related to the banal forms of economic and political nationalism as well as codes of 'social closure'. Thus the combination of structural location i.e. service sector and managerial and professional relationship via knowledge production about the idea of 'India' through 'development' as during colonial times it was the idea of 'India as free nation' which worked as justification for their upwardly mobile class status which justifies their own dominant position in the social structure. The source of this ideology comes from socio-economic order of the day. This context provides a link to understand the material and symbolic forms of inequalities in relation to the discourse of Indian Middle class.

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