SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Social inequality gives rise to social classes. In order to discuss the origin of social classes, we have first to understand the existence of inequality in society. Inequality of the modern world is manifested in the division of society into innumerable social classes. Concept of class is as old as Greek Philosophy and as a social phenomenon it exists in almost all societies.

Unequal distribution of wealth, power and property leads to the formation of various strata in society. In a social system, the capacity of men differ from one another in reaching their respective goals. This capacity of men can be defined as 'power.' Again, different persons have different ways or sources for accumulating wealth or earning their income. The problem of social inequality has two aspects, a distributive and a relational aspect. The first refers to the ways in which different factors such as income, wealth, occupation, education, power, skill etc., are distributed in the population. The second refers to the ways in which individuals differentiated by these criteria are related to each other within a system of groups and categories.

However, income cannot be taken as the sole criterion for differentiating one group of people from the other. A person's status cannot be judged on the basis of income alone. Those who are in business line may earn more than those who are in professional line. Again, 'education' also cannot be considered as the only factor of social inequality. People with higher education may have limited sources of income.

There is an interlinkage between social inequality, social stratification and social class. Existence of one is impossible without the other. In the Western World, a different type of stratification system existed. "In the Western World, the different forms of stratification or institutionalized systems of inequality have been, in chronological order, estate systems, caste systems and class systems. The estate system of western medieval feudalism was supported by a system of legal categories and rights expressing and supporting the sense of important social differences. The levels from high to low included the clergy as the first estate, the nobility as the second estate and the common people as the third estate".  

Existence of social inequality is a common feature of all human societies except primitive societies, which display classlessness. These societies were characterised by harmony. Whatever they got was distributed among themselves. Collective and Co-operative production from nature by man was prevalent in such societies. As property was limited, it could not create differences of wealth. Man was the owner of means of production. Process of interaction between nature and man was symbolised by the 'Concept of labour'. When 'Capital' became an important factor in the means of production, the concept of private property came into being. With 'Capital', man purchased more and more resulting in the introduction of private property. Unequal distribution of property and introduction of 'division of labour' were some of the factors which resulted in inequality in society. Patterns of inequality or the system of stratification vary from country to country.

With the establishment of the institution of private property, people became unequal and this can be said as the beginning of class society. Concept of private property continued to dominate the system of social stratification for a longer period. The assumption of an original state of equality and the
explanation of the origin of inequality in terms of private property, remained unchallenged from Rousseau to Lorenzovon, Stein and Karl Marx.\textsuperscript{3} Rousseau, Miller, Stein and Marx put emphasis on 'Property' as the main cause of inequality. But some non-Marxist writers of later part of eighteenth century emphasized the importance of another factor in addition to property i.e., division of labor. By the beginning of twentieth century, "Division of labor" dominated the discussion about the formation of social classes.

Division of labor reinforced social inequality. "The division of social production into its broad categories leads to the creation of private property and splits society up into haves and have-nots, rulers and ruled, exploiters and exploited".\textsuperscript{4} Social division of labor led to the formation of professional groups. In industry or in educational institutions or in other government services, each worker performs only a special task which is meant for him. This is possible with the division of labor, which destroyed the unity among people and created inequality in society.

RISE OF CLASSES

The tribes living in primitive society did not experience the existence of social classes. They worked to earn their livelihood in order to survive. They were not concerned with establishing their superiority over others. Some sort of equality of rank prevailed among them. When these tribes acquired military strength, they started conquering their enemies, thereby establishing their superiority over others. Initially, these conquered enemies were either killed or tortured. But subsequently, they were enslaved by the conquering tribe. These slaves were deprived of all privileges and rights. Socially, they were alienated. They were compelled to work for their masters. System of slavery gave rise to a privileged group who depended on the work of slaves.

"Along with the emergence of slavery, there also appears an aristocracy of some kind, which lives upon slave labour".  

Marx referred to four types of mode of production in the context of Europe:

1. Primitive Communism,
2. Slave based mode of production,
3. Feudal mode of production,
4. Capitalist mode of production.

In the first stage of human society, people did not have the idea and the means of accumulating wealth. It was a communist society but primitive. In the second stage, slave became the central factor in mode of production. When civilization marched on and reached the third stage, King became the head but he had some feudal lords with him. The owners of land were feudal lords. In every mode of production, there is an urge for increasing production which resulted in improvement of forces of production. New forces of production are not in harmony with the old relations of production. With the change of each mode of production, there is a change in the ruling class, and a new society is established. The fourth stage is the stage of capitalism which is the result of industrial development. Under capitalism, exploitation prevails due to the existence of antagonistic classes.

In the medieval society, nobility or royalty was at the top of social hierarchy. But government power was vested in the hands of the nobles. Ecclesiastical supremacy prevailed at that time. In those societies, conflict arose between feudal lords and serfs. Serfs were bound to soil and they were exploited by lords. The commodities, which were produced by serfs, were taken away...
by lords. There still existed 'theaow class' consisting of slaves who could be sold or pawned. Feudal lords were at the top and serfs were at the bottom of social hierarchy. Another group consisting of household servants, soldiers and handicraftsmen formed an in-between class.

Around eleventh century, the artisans along with some small tradesmen became powerful and independent and did not remain under the control of feudal lords. This in-between class which emerged independent of the control of feudal lords and kings in the towns, organized themselves in guilds.** The guilds became the basis of economic structure of medieval period.

Modern classes have evolved from the class structure of medieval period where feudal lords were at the top and serfs at the bottom of social ladder. In modern society two distinct classes can be found—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Owners of means of production are known as the bourgeoisie. Workers who live on the wages by selling their labour power are known as the proletariat. The bourgeoisie of eighteenth and nineteenth century were the direct offspring of the town workers and handicraftsmen of medieval period.

* a slave.
** a medieval association for mutual aid.
Industrial Revolution brought a change in the class structure of medieval society along with the change in the socio-economic sphere. Prior to industrial revolution, society was simple and there was self-sufficient village economy. After Industrial Revolution, men started coming to the towns to work under the capitalists. The capitalist class occupies higher status in society. Proletariat, the workers, stand at the lower stratum of the society.

Social classes arise out of relations of production. Some are owners and some are workers in the system of production. Status of a man in society depends on his relation to the system of production.

"Classes are that which permit one section of society to appropriate the labour of another section, if one section of society appropriates all the land we have a landlord class and a peasant class, if one section of society owns the factories, shares and capital, while another section works in these factories, we have a capitalist class and a proletarian class."

Social classes are not legally sanctioned groups.

"They are not constituted or supported by any specific legal or religious rules, and membership of a particular

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class confers upon the individual no special civil or political rights.\footnote{T.B. Bottomore, *Classes In Modern Society* (London, 1965), p. 17.}

**APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION**

Many theorists have attempted to formulate general theories of class formation. There have been two major attempts to formulate theories of social stratification. These are the 'conflict' or 'dialectical approach' and the 'functionalist approach'. Karl Marx, Lewis Coser, Simmel, Ralf Dahrendorf and some other writers were the exponents of conflict theory when the people living in the society came into contact with each other, ideas, values, cultures are exchanged among them. Conflict arises when there is exchange of ideas or cultures.

In the nineteenth century, theories of social classes were formulated along with the gradual development of modern social sciences. Concept of class is articulated by some ideologies, among which Marxism occupies an important position.
Existence of inequality in societies was recognized by some writers even before eighteenth century. But they could not find out the root cause of such inequalities. Though social inequalities were recognized, no theories were formulated. Classes and class struggles were recognized long before Marx formulated his theory of class. Therefore, Marx renounced any credit for discovering the existence of class. He remarked:

"No credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle of the classes and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of classes."  

That classes and class struggle exists in society was known to Livy, Machiavelli, Adam Smith, Sismondi, Thierry, Guizot, Thiers, Carlyle and many other historians, economists and sociologists.

In all societies, basically two classes exist oppressor and oppressed. In the agrarian sector, these are the landholders and the peasants. In the industrial sector, there are the Capitalists and the Proletariat. Conflict arises between these two groups.

9. Ernst Fischer, p. 64.
"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, Patrician and Plebian lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."  

Marx talked about the existence of two mutually antagonistic groups involved in the process of production. One group differed from the other on the basis of their relation to the means of production, i.e., ownership or non-ownership. He also identified some other classes like landlord, petty bourgeoisie etc., on the same criterion i.e., relation to the means of production. To Marx, concept of class is pertinent to all levels of analysis. Marx used the term class in different senses. Sometimes its defining feature is the role a group plays in production, sometimes it means common mode of life, including culture and tradition, sometimes again it refers to source of their income.  

Marx's notion of class was connected with class conflict. Hostile relationship between different groups results in social conflict and finally brings a change in the society. Marx defined the concept of class through system of production and social development through class conflict. Marx believed that class societies passed through a particular phase of historical development and would be succeeded by socialist or communist type of society, which represent classless society. Class societies were also preceded by classless societies of primitive type.

Land was the main source of production in the past. Due to the alienation of land, some people are landless and some are landowners. Landless labourers work as wage labour for earning their livelihood. Under feudalism, the most important relationship was the ownership of land. In capitalism, ownership of capital is most important.

In Marx's writings, the phrase which is more capiously used is 'modes of production', which consisted of two elements— (1) forces of production and (2) relations of production. Forces of production included
equipments, tools, technical skills or in other words science and technology which is used in production.

Relations of production means the relationship of different classes of society to the means of production. In 'Capital', Marx outlined three main classes. These three classes are different from one another on the basis of their relationship to the means of production.

"The owners merely of labour-power, owners of capital, and land owners, whose respective sources of income are wages, profit and ground rent, in other words, wage labourers, capitalists and land owners, constitute then three big classes of modern society based upon the capitalist mode of production." In the system of production, some are owners of land, some are tenants, some employers, some employed. When the social structure of production is examined minutely, it becomes apparent as to who is dominated by whom.

Marx was primarily concerned with the development of classes and role played by various classes in bringing changes in the social and political sphere. He did not give a systematic analysis of class. In the third volume of 'Capital', he started clarifying the

concept of class but he died before finishing the chapter. In this unfinished chapter, he tried to give a formal analysis of class.

A class can be considered as a class only when the people of that class become politically conscious and organize into a group to defend themselves against the attack of opponents. Here the distinction between 'class in itself' and 'class for itself' is important. When there is lack of political consciousness in a group, they form a 'class in itself'. But when they develop political consciousness and when there is some unity among the people of the group in furtherance of their class interests, they form a 'class for itself'. Marx first distinguishes the proletariat as a 'class in itself', an aggregate of individuals who are in the same economic situation, and then tries to show how it becomes a 'class for itself', i.e., how its members become aware of their common interests and political aims.13

Though Marx's theory occupies central place in modern social thought, its main drawback is that it

discerns the polarization of society into two classes i.e., capitalist class and the working class. Of course, he did not deny the existence of other classes. Marx put more emphasis on social class and class conflict. He showed that social transition is possible only through class struggle. He underestimated the influence and importance of nationalism.

Marx's concept of class on the basis of relation to mode of production cannot be considered to be correct. It fails to explain many social situations, viz., survival of traditional social organizations, viz., the caste system cannot be explained with it. There are many castes in society, especially in Hindu society which are not based on economic differences. The Brahmins, though not generally wealthy, occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy. The Vaishyas are the wealthiest class but they occupy a lower position in the social ladder. Those people who indulge in manual labour are looked down upon by the society as belonging to an inferior class. White collar jobs carry with it greater prestige but do not yield greater income. Besides wealth, there are various other factors like occupation, education etc., for determining the status of people.
Non-Marxist sociologists have also attempted the study of working class, middle class and upper class as distinct groups. But the class theories, which were developed in the post-Marxian era, aimed at revising or refuting the Marxist theory.

Max Weber was the first Sociologist who tried to refute Marxist theory of social stratification. He criticized Marx on the ground that Marxist model is too simple to deal with complex social stratification. Weber's definition of class is wider in scope than that of Marx. He viewed ownership and non-ownership of property as an important factor which leads to social inequality. He put emphasis on the importance of 'value' which is a combination of many factors and economic factor is only a part of that. Those who possess property and those who do not possess property form two distinct classes. Each class can again be further subdivided into various other classes on the basis of what type of property they possess. Possession of property is an important factor for determining class.

Weber's social stratification system was based on three things viz., class, status and power. He
defined 'class' as a group of people who have the power to distribute goods and skills for earning money. He described 'status' as the prestige received by individuals, and 'power' as the ability of person for achieving goals in social systems. A distinction between 'class' and 'status' was made by Max Weber.

Status of a person is judged by evaluating honour or prestige of occupation. Sometimes it is evaluated on the basis of one's family descent. Status refers to a person's position in society. Individuals who have same status and same style of life form status groups. Nobility and other top ranking officials enjoyed high esteem in the medieval period. The status groups of modern era have originated from them.

To Weber, both class stratification and status stratification exist side by side in a modern society. The third group in Weber's analysis of stratification consists of those people who always seek power.

Max Weber distinguished three orders of stratification: (1) the economic or class order based upon class situation defined in a way similar to Marx, (2) the social order based upon the distribution of social honor or status, (3) the political order based upon the distribution of power".16

Weber includes in his definition of class not only those aspects of class which are related to means of production but all cases where there is a market situation. According to Weber, market economy is based on Capitalism. This finally gives rise to class status. In the market for material property, owners or possessors of property can acquire highly valued goods. On the basis of that they are better placed in society. To Weber, social inequality arises from the unequal distribution of honour or status. Privileged property classes live from property income.  

In theory, Weber talked about keeping separate the three orders of stratification viz., the economic, social and political. But in practice, it is never possible. Since there is an interrelationship among all those orders, they can never be kept analytically separate. No group is cohesive.

While ideas of Marx and Weber have been quite influential in social and political thought, the functionalist approach also occupies an important place. Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Malinowsky,

Redcliffe-Brown and Robert Merton were some of the exponents of this theory. According to the functionalists, stratification is an innate aspect of society. Division of society into various strata is immutable. Work is expected according to ability of persons. A person gets salary or reward for his work depending on the type of work which he does. Advocates of this approach explain class through functional differentiation. The function of a particular social usage is to contribute to the functioning and development of the total social system.

In explaining social stratificational situation, the term 'function' refers to the role of organic processes which contribute to the maintenance of a living organism. Redcliffe-Brown follows organic analogy in visualizing society. He compares animal organism with social organism. According to functional theorist, all parts of the social system work together with sufficient degree of harmony without producing any conflict. The theory of functionalism as propounded by Malinowski and Redcliffe-Brown is based on three main principles. To them (i) All social and cultural items have some role to play in society, (ii) These functions are positive in nature, (iii) Therefore, these items are absolutely necessary for.
the survival of a social system.\footnote{16}

Different groups existing in society perform different roles and according to the functional theorists, those roles are positive in nature which finally contributes to the maintenance of the social system. Hence, role performed by each of the groups becomes indispensable. Here the functional theorists contradict conflict theorists. Conflict theorists visualize development of society in terms of conflict of interest and antagonistic relationship among various groups while functional theorists visualize development of society in terms of positive and integrative function of various groups. "The Marxist theory emphasizes conflict between large and stable groups, with strong community sentiments, while the functionalist theory emphasizes the integrating function of social stratification based upon individual merit and reward."\footnote{17}

Merton's theory of functionalism is based on ideas of earlier thinkers like Malinowski and Redcliffe-Brown. He tried to modify the earlier views on

\footnote{16} Robert K. Merton, \textit{Social Theory and Social Structure} (New Delhi, 1968), p.79.
functionalism. Merton was of the view that any postulate should be open for further research. Every assumption should have 'heuristic value' i.e., capacity to explain further phenomena. His analysis is important because he tried to explain every statement with empirical situation. Whether cultural items uniformly fulfill functions for the society viewed as a system and for all members of the society, is presumably an empirical question of fact, rather than an axiom. 18

Merton raised the question that whether cultural item, uniformly fulfill, function for the society or not. Cultural items are believed to perform integrative function. Degree of integration is an empirical variable. It varies from society to society. Sometimes it is even different within the same society.

Further, if cultural item plays only integrative role then divisions in society would not have existed. Therefore, social groups may or may not have integrative function based on harmony. Social stratification, whether it is caste or class, according to this approach, is based on the notion of division of labour. 18, Robert K, Merton, op. cit., p.80.
labour which leads to solidarity. But division of labour
may not necessarily be based on harmony. It may be based
on antagonistic relationship too. Cultural items
functional for one group may be dysfunctional for
another group; e.g., Religion, a cultural item may not
play an integrative role.

Neither the conflict theory nor the functionalist
theory is sufficient for explaining empirical reality.
Indeed, most functionalist or conflict theories of
social stratification too do not fulfil the strict
scientific norms of a theory. 19

The recent trend among the Sociologists is to
analyse theory of social stratification on the basis of
a pluralistic conceptual framework by taking into
consideration both conflict and functional theory as two
sides of the same reality. Since neither of these two
theories has the universality which they claim, it is
difficult to rely on any one of them.

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19. Y. Singh, "Sociology of Social Stratification", in
ICSSR, A Survey of Research in Sociology &
MIDDLE CLASS - A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Middle class is a very enigmatic word. Though its meaning is obscure, it is frequently used in social sciences. Different writers have given different opinion on the meaning, implication and dimension of this term. The concept of 'middle class' is extremely loose and ambiguous, because it carriies the popularized sociology of 'social stratification' with it, in which groupings of individuals are ranked on various dimensions like income and social prestige.20 Middle class of society is ideologically heterogenous group. This group of society undergoes change frequently. In the medieval period middle class was a homogenous group comprising mainly tradesman. Modern middle class consists not only of tradesman but also includes doctors, lawyers, technocrats and many other white collar workers. It is a heterogenous social order consisting of different functional and occupational groups.

The middle class of the society is comprised of those groups who are not required to produce surplus value i.e., they are not manual labourers. They have to

20. Dale L. Johnson, "Class relations and the Middle Class", in Dale L. Johnson, ed., Class and Social Development: A New Theory of the Middle Class (New Delhi, 1982), p.50.
work as supervisors, technocrats or managers in the system of production. 

"...the middle class is made up of technical, administrative, and professional employees who are not, in the main, hired to produce surplus value as such. Their places in the social division of labor are to perform functions appropriated from deskilled workers, to exercise coordinative and developmental activities as delegated by managers, or to supervise the labor of workers who do directly produce surplus value".21

In almost all societies, three broad segments can be found - one class very rich, another poor, and a third in the middle.

"There are three major classes dominated by capitalist mode of production — the working class, the middle class (petty bourgeoisie) and the capitalist class in terms of their class determination, Poulantzas arrived at this understanding of class determinations that — (a) the productive managers and the top engineers are in the capitalist class (b) workers and technicians in the sphere of production are in the petite bourgeoisie class and (c) those who labor in the capitalist mode of production are the working class".22

Classes are arranged in a hierarchy of upper, middle and lower depending on the degree of control.

21. Ibid., p.90.
over wealth, political power etc. Boundary of social classes can never be precisely defined. Class is considered as an open system, where individual has freedom to move freely from one class to another which is known as 'social mobility'.

The division of society into 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat' was not however the final division of society. Existence of an in-between strata or the middle class obscured the capitalist-working class dualism and brought a change in the system of social structure.

Middle class has been divided into two groups—'old' and 'new' middle class. The old middle class possessed a little land and capital and performed labour on its own, but the 'new middle class' does not perform manual labour. This group comprises office workers, supervisors, managers etc. The nineteenth century writers including Marx, talked about old middle class which consisted of small independent producers and professional men. The new middle class of twentieth century comprises employees in public services and in business establishments and office workers. The old middle class took no direct part in the capital accumulation process. They were also not politically
conscious, but the new middle class take active part in capital accumulation process. They are politically more conscious and form political organizations to articulate their interests.

Middle class has again been sub-divided into various sub-classes in terms of their income and standard of living like upper middle class, middle class, and lower middle class. However, there is no clear cut definition of these sub-groups. The middle strata is that strata of society which is neither privileged nor unprivileged. This strata consists of literary groups, professionals and trading elements. Small shopkeepers and farmers also belong to this category. Middle-class people participate in the decision making process of the country through some political organizations. They also play an important role in electing their political leaders.

In the western society, especially after the Industrial revolution, the classes were divided into upper, middle and lower classes, on the basis of their economic strength. Karl Marx however, talked about petty bourgeoisie which is used interchangeably with modern middle class. Karl Marx did not put much
emphasis on the role of middle class because in the early years of capitalism, modern middle class did not take a well defined form. He talked about that type of middle class comprising small producers and craftsmen only.

Marx and Engels used the term 'middle class', but not in consistent ways. Both Marx and Engels did not make a systematic distinction between different sections of the middle class, especially between the 'old middle class' comprising small producers, artisans, farmers and peasants and the 'new middle class' comprising clerks, supervisors, technicians and government officials. When capitalism developed, then petty bourgeoisie consisting of artisans shopkeepers etc., gradually decayed. In its place there arose the 'new petty bourgeoisie' consisting of mainly office workers, managers of business establishment and civil servants.

"In countries where modern civilization has become fully developed a new class of petty bourgeoisie has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeoisie society".

Though Marx's social thought centered round mainly two classes i.e., bourgeoisie and proletariat, he did not totally neglect the existence of an in-between strata.

"Marx did not deny that between capitalists and proletarians there are today a number of intermediate groups—artisans, petite bourgeoisie, merchants, peasant landowners. But he made two statements. First, along with the evolution of the capitalist regime, there will be a tendency towards crystallization of social relations into two groups and only two the capitalists on the one hand, and the proletarians on the other. Two classes and only two represent a possibility for a political regime and an idea of a social regime."

Marx referred to several social classes like the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, lumpen proletariat and rich, poor and middle peasants in his writings. In

"Marx distinguished the following classes: the feudal nobility, the bourgeoisie, the petite bourgeoisie, the upper and middle peasantry, the free lower peasantry, the slave peasantry, the agricultural labourers and the industrial workers. In The Class Struggle in France, the list is as follows: financial bourgeoisie, Industrial bourgeoisie, Petite bourgeoisie, Peasant Class, Proletarian class, and finally what he calls the lumpen proletariat, which more or less corresponds to what we call the sub-proletariat."

26. Ibid., pp.164-165.
In the early stages of industrialization in Britain, there were on the one hand 'Petty bourgeoisie' class comprising petty producers, and big bourgeoisie' consisting of big industrial capitalists. The big bourgeoisie controlled large scale capital whereas petty bourgeoisie controlled small scale capital. "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". 27

It is relevant to discuss middle class in India against the backdrop of the emergence of middle class in England.

MIDDLE CLASS IN ENGLAND

In ancient times, different types of social stratification existed in Europe, like Knights and slaves. However, the middle ages witnessed the existence of feudal lords and barons. New classes appeared in modern bourgeois society. 27. Ernst Fischer, op. cit., p.69.
In England, origin of middle class can be traced back to the advent of traders as a separate group of people in fourteenth century. In England in the fourteenth century the emergence of the trader as a separate social and functional category formed the first step in the rise of a middle class. Introduction of capitalist mode of production resulted in the emergence of middle class. Industrial revolution helped in the crystallization of the middle class. In the course of time along with traders, manufacturers emerged as a separate group. Middle class originated in trade and industry and later on in other fields like education, legal system etc. Economic and technological changes led to the emergence of middle class.

Establishment of colonies and trade with colonies encouraged commerce and trade and finally broke feudal system. With the discovery of America, precious metals were imported from there. Manufacture and the movement of production in general received an enormous impetus through the extension of intercourse which came with the discovery of America and the sea-route to the

East Indies. The new products imported thence, particularly the masses of gold and silver which came into circulation had totally changed the position of the classes towards one another, dealing a hard blow to feudal landed property and to the workers. World market was established by modern industry. The market led to the development of commerce. This development led to the extension of industry and growth and development of the industrial bourgeoisie. "The discovery of America, the rounding of the cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie." 30

Under feudal social structure, production was the monopoly of guilds. But with the expansion of new markets, guild masters were replaced by manufacturing middle class. "The feudal system of industry in which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle class." 31 This manufacturing middle class performed intermediary role between owners of the means of production and workers.

31. Rubel, p. 137.
INdIAN MIDDLE CLASS

Middle class emerged in India during British Colonial Rule. Emergence of middle class in India as well as in Assam, cannot be understood outside the imperialist context. It emerged in India during Colonial period with the establishment of legal and educational institutions by the British. The intention of the British colonials was to intensify their economic exploitation in India. Their advent led to a change in the then existing political and economic system of the country. The Britishers transplanted into India their own administrative and legal institutions.

"Ideas and institutions of a middle-class social order were imported into India. They did not grow from within. They were implanted in the country without a comparable development in its economy and social institutions."

Initially, the Britishers left the administration in Indian hands through 'dual system'. Gradually dual system was abolished and company brought under its control almost all aspects of administration. The British rule in India was mercantile in character, and it aimed at fulfilling the interests of its merchants.

Introduction of new revenue system and private property in land, brought into existence landlords and peasants. First group of landlords came into being in the year 1793 along with the introduction of permanent Land Settlement. It was introduced by Lord Cornwallis. Under this system, zamindars and revenue collectors became landlords and they had to give 9/10th of the rent to the state which they received from the peasantry. They kept only 1/10th for themselves. The Britishers made the Indians to pay taxes. Those who acted as tax collectors in Pre-British society, turned into landlords during Colonial rule. The change which was brought by the British in the then existing land system, made the intermediaries or revenue collectors the owners of land. Earlier on, a village as a whole, paid to the state a specific portion of its produce, but the Britishers introduced money payment system.

They established courts for settling disputes among various groups, which in the Pre-British days was done by Village Panchayat. With the establishment of Civil and Criminal Courts, a new middle class group comprising lawyers (Waqil) emerged. Writers, publishers and printers emerged along with the setting up of Indian Press. Thus, during colonial era educated middle
class and middle class in Commercial and Industrial sectors evolved. Creation of an educated class was a part of their colonial policy, which they thought would help them in running the administrative machinery. Establishment of educational institutions resulted in the evolution of a group of educated people who, aimed at grabbing positions in offices or in big establishments. Educated middle class in India refers to that group of people who got the opportunity for educating themselves through the medium of English. Bengal was the first presidency in India to get exposed to the Western influence. Therefore, the group of educated people first came out in Bengal and later on it spread over to other areas of the country. This group took active part in all sorts of political movements, including nationalist movement.

Almost all the leaders of nationalist and other reformist movements in India belonged to educated middle-class group. "The new middle class of educated Indians had by the 1880's begun to emerge as an alternative to the aristocracy". During colonial era middle-class groups included lawyers, office clerks,

teachers, writers, traders, journalists, and professionals.

In the thirties of the nineteenth century, various political organizations like the 'Zamindar Association of Calcutta' (1838) and the 'British India Society' came into being. Indian branch of this society which was known as 'Bengal British India Society' was also formed by some Bengali educated people. An Association comprising the educated landlords was formed in 1851, which was known as 'British Indian Association'. All these associations and organizations were formed by the middle class of the society. In the absence of political parties, at that time these associations acted as a link between the colonialists and the Indian masses.

The earlier organizations encouraged higher education and had a moderate attitude, but the associations which emerged in the 1870's differed from earlier organizations on the ground that these organizations had a reformist attitude. By 1870's, the Indian middle class became politically conscious, especially the Bengalee middle class (the baboos) or the bhadralok (respectable people), consisting of the
higher castes of Bengal. The upper middle class, and highly educated people had a tendency to collaborate with the British. But the lower middle class, on the other hand, demanded independence. The lower middle class with their revolutionary attitude, participated in the party politics of the country in a different way than that of the upper middle class, which had a collaborative attitude. Middle class played an important role in national movement.