

## **CHAPTER VIII**

## **CONCLUSION**

The process of industrialization has brought about several changes in society. Some of them include changes in occupational pattern, a substantial rise in the proportion of population employed in industry, a substantial fall in the proportion of population engaged in agriculture, and a significant increase in the proportion of population working for wage, salary or other forms of contract income. In a traditional society like India, it appears that the traditional value system acts as decelerating devices and has slowed down the process of industrialization. However, all societies are stratified either in terms of traditional value system of hierarchy or class.

Despite the fact that all societies and social groupings are in some measure always stratified, there are a few people reluctant to admit this truth. Social class is a major form of stratification in the modern industrial societies. In contemporary times, the existence of class is also under attack. Many factors contribute to the creation of such a myth of classlessness. In the affluent societies, the people cherish the ideology that the worth of the man is determined not by heredity and ascription, but by what he achieves in his own lifetime by impression of his perseverance and hard labour. However, this attitude makes decline in the importance of the system of traditional hierarchy. But, the system of class is still a major form of stratification. Especially it is a major form of stratification among the industrial societies.

The preceding chapters focused on three major aspects through which class among the workers can be found and analyzed. They are their self identity and identification with other class categories in the workplace, distinctiveness in terms of

class during interacting situations, and their participation in labour unions and the role of labour unions in promoting class consciousness and organizing class actions.

Broadly speaking, the findings show that class is certainly a criterion that influences the workers' relationship and activities inside the mills. Moreover, the workers polarize on class line during various situations in the mills. The evidences also show that the class orientation of the workers is more pronounced than their caste orientation in certain circumstances in which their economic survival itself is under threat. Thus the study also attempted to find out how for the work atmosphere in industry condense the functions of caste and facilitate the ground for the emergence of class among the employees. The following section of this chapter summarizes the major findings and evidences, which establish the polarization of workers toward class.

The ground reality of industrial workforce in India in general and these sample mills in the study area of Tamil Nadu in particular, seem to have created a conducive environment for the emergence of class. The present study also shows that class as a stratifying phenomenon is credible to be analyzed among the industrial workforce in India even in the modern times. The results of the present study also reveals that class is still the binding factor because the workers in both the mill, in varying extents, are oriented to class. Their consciousness and activities are also class oriented.

Moreover, the major factor contributing to the growth of their class orientation is that they have clear collective aim in one way or other. For instance, the private Mill-A is undergoing labour retrenchment. The workers in the mills are compelled by the management to go on voluntary retirement. Therefore, the workers are under the threat of job insecurity. It is also a major common problem for most of them. Therefore, their collective aim is to safeguard themselves from the scheme of compulsory voluntary retirement. It is also the major reason for them to join in unions as they feel that their union leader can work for their job security to an extent.

On the other hand, the workers in Mill-B do not face such a threat of labour retrenchment. But, their demands are largely related to increase in salary, and to get various workers' welfare measures in time. They also have such a common aim that they all should unite together to fulfill their demands. They also wish to fulfill their demands through collective participation by themselves or through unions. Thus, the common aim of a majority of the workers in Mill-A is to protect their job, whereas their counterparts in Mill-B aim to get welfare measures, high salary and the like. However, in one way or another, both of them have common goals which in turn facilitate class identity among them.

There are different indices used to stratify the work population in terms of class categories. Income, occupation, education and self rating are widely recognized indices of class categories. Income, occupation and education are acclaimed as objective indices of class. The present study also used these three criteria for class analysis. This is mainly because of the reason that the respondents from different

educational, occupational and income categories identify themselves with others from similar categories. Moreover, it is also found that these variables are related to each other. Their relationship is largely tripartite. For instance, those having high educational qualification would secure better occupation and in turn the better occupation provides them with more income. Moreover, the better occupation enables them to get access to power in the firm. Hence, these are the major criterions to analyze class in industry.

Self-rating is an identification of workers with a social class. It is usually considered a subjective index of class. It shows that the perception of workers in the private mill about their class relations is different from the perception of their counterparts in the co-operative one. A majority of the workers in the Mill-A identify them with lower class, whereas a majority of their counterparts in Mill-B identify them with middle class. The workers in Mill-A are under the management pressure as it is a private mill. They also regard themselves under a strong control of the management. But, on the other hand, those workers in Mill-B assume themselves that they are under the co-operative sector governed by the direct control of the State Government. The management of Mill-B is lenient to workers as compared to Mill-A. Thus, their attitude of self-rating differs from Mill-A due to the extent of control exercised by the management of Mill-B over them. Hence, the different ownership patterns of the mills are largely responsible for the difference in the workers' self-rating within the framework of class categories.

Moreover, those place themselves in the intermediate class are most typically contrasting their own class position either with that of the lower class or the middle class greatly owing to their attitude towards their occupational status. They are quite confused of their class position. They locate themselves in middle class in terms of their occupational status, but at the same time they locate themselves in lower class in terms of treatment meted by them in their workplace. They neither place themselves in lower class nor do they locate themselves in middle class. They consider themselves as intermediate class. Hence, it is found that the self rating is done by these workers largely by considering their occupational status and treatment given to them by the management. However, occupational status is a widely recognized index of class. But, treatment includes the attitude of the workers. At the same time it is also an important index used by the workers for self-rating.

Awareness about their common problems is also considered as an important aspect of class identity. Persistence of common problems regarding their routine work inside the mill and the awareness of those problems are the major motivating factors for the emergence of class. The practice of discussing their common problems among themselves would facilitate the development of co-operation and common identity among them. As regards this, the study finds a healthy model in Mill-A. The workers in Mill-A is more active and frequently discuss with their co-workers than their counterparts in Mill-B do. The number of workers in Mill-A representing their problems to the unions either covertly or overtly outnumbers the number of their counterparts in Mill-B. In addition to the presence of major common

problem viz., job insecurity, its rural background and union-management relations are also the reasons contributing to it.

It is important to mention here that the rural background of the Mill-A is in several ways, is an added advantage for the development of class among its workers. For instance, it provides ample chances to the workers in Mill-A to unite and interact during informal situations in their villages because most of them prefer informal place for interaction. It also provides them confidentiality. They also have chance to meet their union leaders personally at their home or elsewhere in their village, as some of them are also their village men. This also facilitates warm interaction among them.

At the same time, the rural background of the mill is conducive for the development of class provided that the activities of caste associations are generally absent. However, the locality of Mill-A is free from direct influence of caste associations since the 1980s. But, it does not mean that the extent of caste consciousness among them is negligible. Caste is more pronounced among the workers in Mill-A than it is among their counterparts in Mill-B. Though caste loyalty is more among the workers in the rural mill, it is not up to the extent of hindering their class consciousness/unity.

As for as the workers and the staff are considered, they have separate identities. For instance, workers consider staff as management men. The former do not interact casually with the latter. The interaction between the workers and the staff

is generally formal. The workers do not prefer to contact the staff members for their personal problems. In the rural mill (Mill-A), the workers report that they maintain such a separate identity even during their informal situations in the village.

Staff also maintain their occupational status distinct from the workers in all possible ways. For instance, the staff in both the mills have separate associations apparently, which are almost defunct at present. Even in such situation, they do not want to join the labour unions as they also have a strong feeling that they are management men. Moreover, they think that the act of joining the labour union is infradig on their part. This also shows that staff maintain their class identity by not mixing themselves with the workers. This identity is largely in terms of their occupational status. Moreover, such a difference in their identity provides them with a sense of class orientation in terms of occupational status.

It is striking to note that the class location of *maistrys* in both the mills is ambiguous. Though, they were workers in the beginning, they do not identify themselves with the workers at present because of the reason that they are the immediate bosses of the workers in the shopfloor. Moreover, their relationship with a majority of the workers is not cordial for the reason that they punish or penalize the workers directly during working hours. The workers consider the *maistrys* as the agents of management. Therefore, the workers do not consider them as their men. However, two *maistrys* have membership in two different labour unions, which are pro-management unions.

On the other hand, the supervisors do not consider the *maistrys* as one among them, because the position of latter is next to the position of former in the occupational structure of the mills. Moreover, the supervisors are technically qualified and their salary is significantly higher than the salary of the *maistrys*. Thus, the reluctance of *maistrys* to consider them as one among the workers on one hand and the *maistrys*' inability to equate themselves with the supervisors on the other hand make their position ambiguous in the mills.

In one way or another, the *maistrys* are helpful to the management in implementing its directions at the shopfloor by extracting work from the workers for surplus production. Moreover, their interests are to serve the interests of the management in the social relations of production. Thus according to Marxian view, they do not constitute working class. On the other hand, their income is less than the income of supervisors and other managerial staff. Their occupational status is also relatively low. Moreover, they are under the pressure of management to extract work from the workers. Nevertheless, they have no decision making power in the shopfloor. Thus, according to Weberian conception of class, they occupy the labour class in terms of their less pay, less status and less power in the mills.

The phenomenon of multi-unionism is inevitable. Both the mills have multi-unions, in which some are regarded by the workers as pro-management and the others are anti-management in nature. The numerical strength of pro-management unions is not less than that of the anti-management unions. The reason is that some workers believe that the leaders of pro-management unions can also influence the

management decisions. Moreover, having membership in these unions does not attract any problem to them from the management side.

The main purpose of the unions is to unite workers irrespective of caste difference for a common cause. It is expected to promote class consciousness among the workers in order to make them aware of their position in relation to other classes. Some unions fulfill this purpose, whereas some other unions are prevented by their selfish leaders. In the private mill, the relationship between the unions and the management is largely depends on the numerical strength and ideological background of the unions. On the contrary, the political affiliation of the unions is the major binding factor of the relationship between unions and management in the co-operative mill because these unions draw power in terms of their political affiliation.

Moreover, in Mill-A, the inter-union relationship largely depends on their nature of relationship with the management. For instance, those unions having antagonistic relationship with the management have smooth relationship with one another. On the other hand, those unions having cordial relationship with the management have strained relationship with those unions having antagonistic relationship with the management. But in Mill-B, the inter-union relationship largely depends on the political affiliation of the unions. For instance, the unions of rival political parties maintain antagonistic relationship with each other.

Among the unions, the Communist Unions in both the mills are distinct from the Non-Communist Unions. Especially the CITU occupies first place in terms of its numerical strength in both the mills. It is found that the Communist Unions like CITU and AITUC in both the mills have antagonistic relationship with the management. It is observed that the ideological background of these unions is the major cause of their anti-management attitude.

The role of the management in preventing the development of self-conscious labour class is found to be significant. This tendency is very much evident in the private mill. It lures the leaders of powerful unions. For instance, the management of the private mill provides certain benefits to the leaders of powerful unions to make them pro-management. The leaders of these unions are exempted from doing work and are treated cordially by the management. At the same time, it makes the union leaders themselves alienate from the workforce and creates a wedge between the workers and unions. It also makes the workforce to lose faith in unions. But, the workers in the Mill-A have membership in any one of the strong unions, irrespective of their personal likes and dislikes, so as to protect themselves from labour retrenchment.

In both the mills, the workers' participation in unions largely depends on the activities of union leaders, union-management relation and the efforts of the union in promoting labour welfare. Moreover, the workers in both the mills select their unions based on their influence over the management rather than their political affiliations. Especially, the workers in Mill-A, felt that the suggestions of the leaders of strong

unions would not be ignored by the management. Moreover, they are of the view that the job of a worker can be protected if the union leader opposes the move of sending him on voluntary retirement.

The workers in Mill-B also prefer to join powerful unions having strong influence over the management. But, union leaders of both the mills say that their political affiliation is a major source of power to the unions. At the same time, as far as the workers are concerned, it is found that in both the mills, there is no correlation between their political involvement and union involvement. It also shows that their involvement in unions does not indicate their political inclination, but their class interest and self motivation derived out of the problems faced by them.

However, the labour unions are playing a pivotal role in transforming the class consciousness of workers into class actions. For instance, the study finds a concomitant variation between strike participation and union participation. It shows that an overwhelming majority of the workers having record high participation in strikes are those workers having record high level of union participation. On the other hand, close to a majority of the workers having low strike participation also record low union participation. Generally unions organize strikes and agitations based on requirements. Moreover, all the protests were organized under any one of the union banners.

As far as the staff and workers are concerned, in both the mills, the class consciousness among the workers is more than that of staff. The presence of

common problems, common interest, and their common identity facilitate class consciousness among the workers. Moreover, these factors also motivate them to participate in unions. On the other hand, unlike the workers, the staff have neither common problem nor do they have common interests. In addition to this, the staff have close relationship with the management. Thus, the lack of working class solidarity among the staff prevents the development of class consciousness. It is also confirmed that the staff associations in both the mills are not functioning properly mainly because of the lack of interest on the part of staff themselves. This is the result of their lack of solidarity as a working class and also their lack of participation in unions / associations.

However, among the workers in both the mills, it is observed that the workers in Mill-A are more class conscious than that of their counterparts in Mill-B. The reason is obvious that, as mentioned earlier, the workers in Mill-A develop a common identity based on their common problem of labour retrenchment. Moreover, as the workers in this mill are drawn from neighboring villages, they have ample chances to interact with one another during informal situations at their villages. These interactions, as discussed earlier, also facilitate the emergence of class consciousness among them. But, in Mill-B, the workers do not have such a serious job related common problem. Moreover, they are from far off places. Therefore, they do not have chances to interact among themselves during informal situations at their villages.

In addition to this, as Mill-A is a private concern, its management is very particular in increasing the production and its quality. Therefore, the workers in this mill are assigned specific targets to complete within a shift. This work load also exert pressure on the workers in Mill-A. But, on the other hand, in Mill-B, there is no such a pressure as it is a co-operative concern. Nevertheless, the workers in Mill-A had to demand the management to provide them with various welfare measures. But, on the contrary, their counterparts in Mill-B get the welfare directly provided by the Government as it is a co-operative sector.

Thus, the private ownership of the Mill-A is also a reason for more class consciousness among the workers. Though the workers in Mill-A have more class consciousness, some workers have to record their union participation covertly mainly because of the negative approach of the management towards those workers actively participate in union activities. At the same time, they exhibit their class consciousness, especially during interacting situations. Thus, the approach of the management to the active members of the unions also prevents their union activities.

The study also analyzed class-caste relationship to a certain extent. As discussed earlier, scholars like Beteille, Bhatt and D'souza support that class distinctions emerge as a result of changes taking place in caste system. Scholars like Hutton, Furnivall and Sherring are of the view that caste is stable and at times it reinforces itself. But neither of this contention found full expression in the present study. The study finds that though the caste system is an influencing factor in the

relationship of the workers, class becomes the binding and dominant factor largely determining their relationship in the workplace. Thus, class overtakes caste in several occasions in workplace.

For instance, the workers fall in class line to safeguard their class interests. Caste affinity of workers in both the mills does not hinder their class identity. It is further confirmed by the fact that the workers from both the mills prefer to join strong unions having close relationship with the management. They do not consider the caste of the union leader, but they look for his efficiency and ability in promoting the labour welfare and also in solving their work related problems. Moreover, the workers establish relationship with co-workers from same caste rather than the members of other occupational categories from same caste. They do not have casual interaction with other higher occupational categories even if they belong to same caste. Hence, class overtakes caste in several circumstances.

Moreover, various occupational categories in both the mills get polarized in terms of class during various interacting situations. Class polarization of workers and staff toward class is more pronounced than that of their polarization to caste. For instance, the interaction and inter-dining of the workers and staff are more on class line than caste line. They maintain separate class identity during their interactions. Besides, it is also observed that the wider interaction among the workers also facilitate the emergence of class consciousness. For instance, it is found that their level of interaction is positively related to their level of participation in strike.

In one way or other, class is evident among the workers in both the mills. Common problem in the form of labour retrenchment faced by the workers in Mill-A and common demands for salary increase and other welfare measures in Mill-B are the major factors facilitating class identity among them. Especially, the workers in Mill-A develop fear of job insecurity. It in turn motivates them to have a class identity derived out of their common problem, viz. job insecurity. The workers in Mill-B also orient toward class line during various situations to protect their interests as mentioned earlier. Thus, these conditions of workers in both the mills, in one way or other, also unite them together for class action cutting across caste nexus.

The workers exhibit their class consciousness by involving in the union activities. Moreover, no serious overt caste influence is found in this regard. Though the pro-management unions also have strong numerical strength, it is in no way represent that the workers in those unions have pseudo-class consciousness, because, they get oriented to class line during interacting situations. Moreover, they also participate in strikes and other agitations. At the same time, they wish to avoid confrontation with the management fearing it.

Nevertheless, it is believed that the modern forces in contemporary India, would create an industrial situation in the course of time in which class relations would emerge cutting across caste relations. The reason is mainly that the growing job insecurity among the industrial workforce in the private sector would create a sense of class identity. Moreover, the workers would give priority to their economic

survival rather than their status identity. The present work situations in the industries also make them have relationship cutting across caste.

As for as theoretical applications are concerned, the present study largely depend on Marxian framework to analyze the development of class consciousness among the workers. At the same time, it also relies on Weberian conception of class to analyze the influence of caste and occupational status on class. Moreover, as conceived by Dahrendorf, the power factor is also used to study the influence of management power in the formation of class among the workers.

Hence, the present study reveals various factors facilitating the emergence of class among the workers and staff. It also broke the myth of classlessness, especially in the industrial setting. It shows how the types of ownership pattern and rural-urban background of the mills influence the emergence of class among them. It elaborates the role of labour unions in promoting class consciousness and class actions. In this background, the present study discusses how the workers and staff from the sample mills get polarized to class. It also proves that class is still a potential area to be studied in the industrial societies.