Conclusion

Though it is difficult to accommodate every detail in a nutshell or say a conclusion, yet an attempt has been made to summarise the findings of the work in this section. In our endeavour to find out the truth, we are often confronted with even more complex questions, which surround the possible answers to our quest. This work is no exception to this fact. The study in question has been focussed on the question whether the urban middle classes support the concept of economic reforms or not and to what extent their support wields political influence. Also it tries to find out whether the political parties are inclined towards the urban middle classes on this issue. This modest attempt has figured out some of the questions and as mentioned earlier, many questions have come to the fore in this effort for example how far the occupation/vocation of the subjects determines their support for economic reforms. Some of these questions have been mentioned in the section ‘Further scope of the study’. However in order to sum up the argument we need to have a look at each of the chapters in this work.

Thus the first chapter of the thesis after introducing the middle class as a social category makes an attempt to present a review of literature relating to the debate about its nature. The chapter then focussed on the evolution of the middle class in India while tracing its origin to the colonial period. The focus here has been on the gradual growth of middle class in the subsequent period and the factors responsible for it. The chapter argues that while it were the affirmative policies and the process of modernization that led to the growth of the middle class in the early years of India’s independence under the shadow of statist model of development planning, it has been the economic transition in the nineties in the form of liberalisation and privatisation that has led to the expansion of the urban middle class. Besides the processes of economic modernisation in the form of industrialism and urbanism, the massive efforts on the part of the state to create an extensive welfare system introduction of government run colleges, educational grants, introduction of medium of instruction in the Indian languages, processes of modernisation breaking the link between caste and occupation—all contributed to the expansion of middle class also.
Arguably, the market oriented economic reforms has led to much impressive growth rate in the last twenty-five years or so making India the second fastest growing economy in the world. First sign of shift, which was visible when Rajiv Gandhi took over as head of the government, became clear in 1991 with the introduction of world bank/IMF inspired economic reforms. After registering a 6 per cent average annual growth rate initially it went up to over 8 per cent annually. The relatively developed states like Gujarat and Maharashtra registered even higher growth rate. The growth was propelled by the massive increase in the form of foreign direct investment that came mostly in the manufacturing industries, infrastructure, and energy and service sector. The availability of English speaking skilled professionals especially in the information technology sector made India a soft power even leaving behind China in the service sector. The growth has been propelled by the massive expansion especially in the service sector aided by information technology and communication sector as well as in the manufacturing sector. Infrastructure has also been in the focus generating employment as investments have come both from the state and corporate sector. All this has helped in the process of the growth of the middle class in a rapidly urbanising/industrialising India making it the third largest middle class after China and the USA. What is notable about this class is that in the recent elections have witnessed a rise in its participation in the elections. Moreover, the fact that the ‘middle classes control the press, especially the English language press, and have a preponderant presence in the corporate sector’ allows them to influence the policy debate.\(^{235}\)

Chandigarh, a post-colonial modern city has definitely gained much from the neo-liberal economic reforms as the city already has been a predominantly middle class city of highly educated professionals who were beneficiaries of the development planning model as controlling the levers of state power in two of the richest states in India enabled them to become the ‘rentier class’, to borrow a term from Pranab Bardhan (1985). Now with the initiation of the technology park and the arrival of the Information Technology

(IT) sectors along with the private banks and insurance agencies catering to the needs of the three states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh due to the strategic location of the city as well as its political importance, the middle class population boomed as reflected in the growth trend in the last decade in the city. In our study there has been an attempt to shed light on the life and times of this ‘post-modern’ city with focus on economic and occupational base of the city as it has evolved especially in the last two decades or so. This has helped in attaining first objective of the present research work i.e. to identify and situate the middle classes in the city. It has been argued that Chandigarh has witnessed significant growth in the size of middle class that can be attributed to a number of factors. The growth in middle class population, apart from growth in general population can be attributed to the increased migration trend across the whole country. As the migration on account of employment is a visible phenomenon among many major cities, Chandigarh can be cited as one of the prominent examples where inflation in middle class size has been witnessed that can be attributed to a significant growth in the service sector. This has been attributed to the original design of the city as it has been anticipated and planned as a non-industrial city. The presence of skilled human capital already available in the city and further boosted by the influx of the professionals, the IT (Information Technology) and BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) sector and other such services which do not require robust manufacturing base has seen enormous growth on account of the opportunities being offered by the ‘economic reforms’ process. Many a footloose software industry houses have seen light of the day in Chandigarh. This has been helped by the professionally educated ‘white collar job aspirants’ with language skill who are found in abundance in the city that boasts of many reputed technical institutions besides good schools. The recent growth of educational institutes around the city has also enhanced this availability. Also easing of norms and regulations by the government and enhanced investment opportunities have ensured that those capable of investing and having entrepreneurial quotient venture into this activity. Also the entry of big players likes Infosys, Quark, Dell and Wipro in Chandigarh and its neighbourhood has led to a rush of professionals towards Chandigarh from all over India. The growth

of middle class in Chandigarh thus became self-sustaining on account of more and more players entering in Chandigarh and the administration being in favour of this influx for the sake the growth of IT sector. The fact that the bureaucrats primarily govern the Union Territory did help in facilitating the faster pace in the policymaking and implementation.

The present study has suggested that the above factors can be held responsible for the growth of middle class in Chandigarh especially after the initiation of neo-liberal economic reforms in 1991. What has also helped in the growth is the development of the service sector in the neighbouring cities of Panchkula and Mohali (part of Tricity). In addition to this, there has been growth of industrial townships like Baddi and Derabassi around Chandigarh. Development of Baddi in Himachal Pradesh as an Industrial township can be attributed to the investment incentive and concessions offered by the hill state with the help of the centre in promoting the cause of industrial growth in Himachal Pradesh.

The second chapter made an attempt to explore the link between economic reforms and the urban middle classes in the democratic politics of India. The chapter began by underlining the role and significance of the urban middle classes in democratic politics. It explains as to why and how middle class has been a main beneficiary and therefore ardent supporter of the economic reform process and the extent to which the urban middle classes have come to dominate the political scene especially in the post-liberalisation phase. Further, the continuation of the process of economic reforms as a matter of policy in an incremental manner, irrespective of the party/party-alliance in power at the centre, was also discussed. Here the main focus of the work was to ask whether the middle class provides a crucial support base important for the furtherance of the economic reforms and if so, do the political parties propagate or implement the reforms in order to convince the middle classes which now arguably wield far more influence in electoral terms than ever before in India thanks to the unprecedented boom in the print/electronic/social media.

The subsequent chapters in the thesis make an attempt to answer some of these research questions while focusing on field insights collected with the help of a range of mass and elite interviews conducted in Chandigarh city. The third chapter carried forward the study for the purpose of attaining the second research objective that was to know the
overall orientation of middle classes in India especially its urban segment towards economic reforms. For the purpose middle class respondents were interviewed and their responses were recorded in order to understand their views on economic reforms for the purpose of interrogating the research problem as to how far the middle classes support economic reforms.

The fourth chapter dealt with the second research question namely to what extent the middle class support for economic reforms is crucial for the two coalition making parties in order to relentlessly pursue economic reforms despite the domestic constraints? It has been inferred from the study of the manifestoes of the two mainstream coalition making national political parties i.e. Congress and the BJP that there has been a significant presence of middle classes’ economic concerns veered around the ongoing market-oriented reforms that find ample space in the manifestoes of both parties released on the eve of elections. City based study revealed that the middle classes do hold special significance for the political parties and their leadership. On the basis of the interviews of the political leaders it could be easily inferred that the political leaders in the city recognise middle class as vigilant and vocal section of the electorate whose concerns and aspirations could not be ignored. Significantly these leaders’ observations can be said to have larger implications as some of them have been union ministers and also have been active at national level in their respective parties.

To reiterate, one of the major objectives of this study was to establish/identify the relationship between middle class’ economic preferences and the political response of taking middle classes into confidence/consideration. The present research has focused attention on these research questions and tried to figure out this relationship. The study has tried to find out how far the middle classes support economic reforms and how this issue of economic reforms is linked to electoral choices of middle class. The study tried to analyse the catalyzing role of the urban middle classes in the relentless pursuit of economic reforms by the political class in democratic politics of India. It has tried to find out the extent, direction and the pace of economic reforms as determined or influenced by the choice of the middle classes. While exploring the concerns and choices of middle class the research has delved into the broader concerns and issues of national importance, which comprise the crux of middle class insecurities.
In the pursuit of testing the first hypothesis i.e. to gauge the middle classes’ support for the economic reforms and also in its endeavour to understand the political and economic concerns of middle class in urban India, the study has touched many a questions and issues which demand urgent address by the political establishment. It has brought into fore the awareness on the part of the subjects, which underlines the fact that the middle class subjects are alive to the half-hearted approach and mal-intended practices on part of the political parties even as they vouch for being votaries of reforms in their manifestoes as they fear electoral backlash. This also established the fact that how really the subjects are fed up with the ongoing saga of non-performance, insecurity, and dishonesty.

It has been observed on the basis of field studies that although different components of economic reforms appeal different people within the middle class depending upon one’s occupation, background and education, however, there is a near universal consensus among the middle class segments over the overall objective of the economic reforms. It is obvious that each policy reform has had some benefits for some sections of the society. However, the research has indicated that most of the middle class subjects believe that economic reforms have helped in the progress of the country. Middle class subjects did agree that the economic reforms have benefitted the middle class in particular. There has been an understanding about the slowness of reform process due to the electoral/democratic constraint as a large segment of the urban/rural poor do not seem to be in agreement with the adoption of market economy as they fear that it would adversely affect the state’s efforts to ensure the redistribution of wealth.

There were some subjects, however, who conceded that economic reforms have reinforced the income disparities. Considering middle class is different from the category of the common man, many a respondents denied that the economic reforms have benefitted the common man. Consensus was found in the case of major components of the on-going economic reforms. Supporters of privatisation and disinvestment are the supporters of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), FDI in retail, FIIIs, liberalisation and free market economy. During the focussed group interviews and discussions following the interviews, many questions were raised about economic reforms. Discussions revealed
that the urban middle classes believed themselves to be on the forefront of representing a viewpoint that influence the national agenda in a significant way.

The field research revealed the middle classes’ support for the concept of economic reforms. They agreed that economic reforms are beneficial for the progress of the country and they should be pursued further. Majority of the middle class subject admitted that the level of success of reforms under a regime did affect their electoral choices especially during Lok Sabha elections.

It has been established through field study that there is a difference of opinion within the segments of middle class on different components of economic reforms. For instance, the middle class employed in public sector have different views on privatisation and FDI. During interviews they supported overall economic reforms but when we talked of privatisation they were not supportive. The general argument among the dissenters was that the public sector provides security, which is not assured in case of privatisation. Public sector serves the interests of middle class thus the most of the public sector subjects explicitly rejected the idea of privatisation.

On the other hand their views were also different on the issue of FDI. Majority of the middle class subjects hailing from public sector out-rightly rejected the idea of FDI. Dis-investment was also not favoured by them. It was observed during the discussions that the rejection of FDI was due to their sense of insecurity, as they did not want FDI to affect the sector in which they were employed. It was further observed that income does not necessarily influence the perception of middle class towards economic reforms. The income, fortune and wealth within the middle class criterion have made relatively little impact over the perception of subjects towards their political choices. One reason for this may be the parity with regard to learning and education. An MBA may be earning 4 lacs per annum and another MBA may be earning 8 lac per annum or even more however their self-perception and aspirations did not change much. The same proposition applies to an IT professional and similarly to a private teacher and so on. Economic background of the subjects influenced the preferences and choices. A person from an agrarian background may be against taxing of the agriculture income irrespective of his rational posture in other matters concerned with economic reforms.
Talking about a major component of economic reforms, privatisation was supported by the majority of the respondents. Support to privatisation was aggravated by the common belief that there was a failure of administrative and political machinery in meeting the economic and social targets related to growth, development and welfare. The urban middle class respondents blamed the under-development and non-performance to the ‘do it all myself’ attitude of the Indian state after independence. They however admit that with the ushering in of economic reforms, a lot of change has taken place. The rise of the private sector is a development for the better future. In line with the objective of fiscal reforms and in order to broaden the tax base for the same, majority of the urban middle class subjects agreed that the agriculture income should be taxed. The subjects did believe that the tax base needed to be broadened in order to save the professional middle classes from the cascading burden of the taxes. Middle classes seemed to be fed up with the prevailing high tax regime and supported tax reforms. Since they are taxpaying people so they were also very much concerned with the state’s responsibility of service delivery and provide good governance in the country. Understandably, the city-based middle classes having agrarian background were not found to be favouring this argument.

De-licensing and free-market economy have been favoured and advocated by an overwhelming majority of the middle class subjects. Moving further, although the majority per se supported de-subsidisation, nevertheless discussions that followed revealed that there was no absolute favour or disfavour for this measure. Discussions highlighted the issues underlying de-subsidisation, the need for subsidy or desubsidisation in various sectors. It has been learnt that most of the middle class subjects are against the subsidy in power sector. On the other hand there is a wide support for subsidy in health and agriculture. Also in agriculture, most of the middle class subjects favoured direct subsidy to the farmers. It has been highlighted that the indirect subsidies are seldom targeted effectively. Moreover, education and health are the sectors where subsidies are required even in the pro-reform era. All higher education should be subsidised so that there is opportunity for everyone to afford it. Broadly speaking, the subjects disregarded complete subsidisation and favoured rationalisation of the subsidy regime along with termination of the populist subsidies.
On the basis of the interviews, one can infer that the majority of urban middle classes do believe that economic reforms have helped a lot in the progress of the country. Talking about FDI, again a majority of the subjects supported FDI although many a subjects cited its limitations too. Most of the subjects accepted FDI with plugging of the loopholes to minimise the limitations and maximise the efficacy. As affirmed by the majority of the subjects, the middle classes believe to have benefitted in terms of financial wellbeing, plethora of consumerist choices, increased job opportunities, better salary packages and the like. Middle classes further believe that new economic policies have led to a larger role for the markets and have reduced the governmental controls, thus leading to opening up of the opportunities.

The middle class has been found to be favouring the parties/ candidates who advocate economic reforms though they term their support as a support for the development agenda. As such development has become an euphemism for neo-liberal reforms, the urban middle classes realise that there is an increased emphasis over the significant aspects of the economic reforms nowadays across the mainstream parties. There is also an attempt by the political parties to communicate the same to the middle class constituencies.

The urban middle class respondents based in the city were found to be more or less supportive of the market economy. During the interviews, the subjects were specifically asked questions such as whether they supported economic reforms or not and whether they favoured furtherance of the economic reforms and so on. Such questions in most cases elicited positive responses from the subjects.

Most of the subjects argued for further need of greater economic reforms and also faster implementation of the existing reform policies. It was observed during the interviews that middle classes believe that economic reforms have not been applied to the fullest extent. The reforms as applied have been only in response to the exigency arising out of the circumstances or only the reforms, which do not cost votes, have been preferred. Application of reforms in half-hearted terms may amount to invite the limitations over the advantages. The respondents interviewed also felt that there was an urgent need for fiscal reform measures in order to rationalise the taxation structure. Further, all the processes related to liberalisation and privatisation, according to the
subjects, was need of the hour so that a helped environment for more investment and growth in the country could be created.

Pace of economic reforms as criteria to decide vote has not been fully denied rather it has been cited as one of the various factors on which a voting decision rests. According to the subjects what matters most is the political will to reform. Voting for the Indian electorate being a rational-emotive issue, the middle class subjects significantly didn’t decline the emotive element in voting decisions. To say that only economic concerns dictate the electoral choices of this class would be incorrect.

Urban middle classes believe that there has been a recent emphasis over various components of economic reforms. Such concerns have been highlighted by the parties as achievements by the party in power and as goals by those in considered to be in waiting. Middle class has mostly favoured the contracting out of the governmental services in the pursuit of better service delivery and an enforcement of accountability. However great care and a systemic check over the misappropriation has been strongly recommended.

The economic reforms mean differently to the different components of the middle class depending upon the perceived benefits of a particular reform. There is also a difference in the extent to which various sections support a particular component based on their background and means of livelihood (read occupation, education and income). The overall support of the middle classes towards economic reforms arising out of the accrual of benefits from the reforms has been established by the research.

The research findings based on the primary data supports the argument that the urban middle classes in the city are reasonably aware as far as the economic reforms are concerned. It has been explored that public sector middle class subjects are not opposed to the idea of economic reforms. However, some of the components like FDI, Privatisation and Contracting out which are perceived as imminent threat to the social security of the public sector employees do not find favour with them. That is why the public sector subjects oppose the idea of isolated policy initiatives. Otherwise, the economic reforms are welcomed by large part of the middle classes as idea and also as a policy.

The findings also revealed that the effectuation of the reforms by the political parties do affect the electoral choices of middle class. Although it is not the only factor in
deciding their vote, yet majority of the middle classes admitted that they vote for the
party which advocates the economic reforms and of course the pace of reforms is one
criterion to decide their vote. The research in question has explored that the middle
classes in Chandigarh city are aware of the economic reforms. They support economic
reforms on the whole but there is variation of views on certain component of economic
reforms. Their personal interests play important role in formulating their opinion
although they have rational opinion about certain components of economic reforms.

Thus in the pursuit of answering the second research question that how far the
middle classes’ support to economic reforms is crucial for the political parties to remain
committed to pursue reforms despite its apparent political cost, it has been observed that
there are many factors behind the implementation and continuation of reforms by
political parties leading the country such as financial compulsions, international
obligation and issues related to national development, yet no policy can be a success
unless and until it is supported by the subjects of the country. Economic reforms have
proved beneficial for the middle class in many ways, like creation of job opportunities,
increasing the competition, and providing free market economy. So the middle class
support for economic reforms can be held responsible for continuation of economic
reforms among other factors.

The second hypothesis that there is a significant presence of middle class
concerns in the manifestoes has been tested through content analysis. For this purpose the
manifestoes of the Congress and the BJP released over the past few parliamentary
elections have been studied and analysed. It has been observed that the manifestoes of
both the parties contain the concerns of middle classes in an elaborative manner. For
instance, both the parties promise to keep economic growth higher, more job
opportunities, better higher education facilities, high quality infrastructure, better banking
services, accountable and corruption free administration, e-governance, growth of
SME’s, and to promote entrepreneurial services.

It can be inferred from the study that an unsaid consensus has emerged in both the
parties on the issue of economic reforms. The detailed study of manifestoes and electoral
behaviour of the middle class has highlighted the fact that earlier BJP was unclear on the
issue of globalisation especially opening the market for global capital due to its support
base among the local mercantile and business community but it has gradually changed its stance in order to fall in line with the felt temporal exigencies. BJP realises that the demands of the emerging/aspiring middle classes particularly include the demand for faster growth, development through the route of faster economic reforms. It could not afford to defy this important segment of Indian society, which had remained the vote bank of the party throughout. The party lost support among the middle classes particularly after the communal holocaust of 2002. Thus the focus of the party was shifted towards economic growth, reforms and globalisation in sync with the changing times. Middle class concerns also surfaced during the campaigning and also in the subsequent manifestoes of the party. It addressed the neo-middle class concerns during Gujarat legislative assembly elections in 2013. The earlier rhetoric of ‘India Shining’ targeted the educated and aware sections (read middle classes) and the more recent marketing caption of ‘Vibrant Gujarat model of development’ and ‘Good Governance’ or the promise to bring back ‘happy days’ being propagated by the party in its campaign during 2014 elections seems to be intended for the aspiring middle classes’ consumption.

On the other hand, the congress party, which has always been considered pro-poor and pro-minority, has also come to know the significance of the middle class. The party has always taken the credit for the economic reforms of 1991, it has also consistently promised further reforms. The hydra-headed monster of corruption and the inapt handling of the popular urban middle class protests in this regard marred the party image across the nation as evidenced in the unprecedented electoral debacle of the party in 2014 elections. Issues like Inflation and corruption in the last two consecutive terms of the party gave its mentors sleepless nights and restless days. As a last ditch attempt the party returned back to its populist ‘welfarist’ agenda but also underlined its commitment to address the middle class concerns like combating corruption and bring back the economy on rails.

On the basis of content analysis of the manifestoes, it can be inferred that the middle class concerns are reflected in the manifestoes of both the political parties and consensus has emerged between them on the issue of economic reforms with the minor differences on the ways to adopt certain components of such reforms. Although all the issues like economic growth, development, higher education facilities, better job
opportunities, better infrastructure are concerned with the overall growth and
development of the country and it offers something to every section of the society, yet
this consumerist middle class being educated, ambitious and the most assertively vocal
section of the population, is directly influenced by these matters.

The extent of the significance of the middle classes in electoral arena has been
analysed by interviewing the political leaders and councillors from the city belonging to
the national parties that dominate the political landscape of the city namely the congress
and the BJP though other parties’ leaders were also interviewed. The political parties’
representatives provided insight regarding the role of middle classes in influencing the
electoral agenda. As mentioned earlier, the political leaders interviewed agreed that
Chandigarh is predominantly a middle class city in its demographic outlook.

It was also observed while interviewing the leaders that they put more emphasis
on middle class voters during elections, as this class is the major constituent of city
electorate. So it is not the clout of the class based on their cultural capital or their access
to the media or the corridors of power or their ability to articulate their aspirations but
their sheer numerical weight in the city also matters with the political parties, a factor that
may not be the case with most part of urban India dominated by the slums and shelter­
less people living in an ‘unintended city’. Being highly educated and informed segment
of the electorate, the middle class is more capable of understanding the problems as well
as raising their demands before political representatives. This fact has been observed after
analysing views of the leaders interviewed. The inference brought herein has helped in
answering the question that how middle class is important for political parties during and
after the elections and how the leaders are keen to address the collective claims and
concerns of this class.

It can also be inferred from the study that the parties and leaders address the local
concerns of middle classes during local elections whereas during the election for the Lok
Sabha the issues regarding economic reforms are far more highlighted in the election
agendas of the party than during the campaign as there has been an awareness that a large
segment of people mostly marginal do not approve of the reforms as they have been
carried out. The political elites interviewed for the present research purpose admitted the
importance of middle class in the sense that this class played significant role in decision-
making as the most vocal section among the electorates. It has also been observed that the leaders as well as councillors from both the parties were well aware and supportive of the core concerns of middle classes in the city which include housing, infrastructure, corruption free administration, better public transportation system, e-governance and the like.

The fact that the leaders themselves belonged to the middle class was an important factor. As was observed during the course of study that almost all the leaders claimed that they belonged to the middle class and thus they understood the middle classes better. Also identification with the middle classes was considered as a potent tool of connecting with the masses.

The fieldwork also revealed that that the city based urban middle classes considered themselves as major beneficiaries of the on-going reformist agenda. The subjects interviewed did believe that the plethora of employment opportunities and expanding economy was a direct consequence to the economic reforms initiative. It was therefore natural that the urban middle classes strongly recommended furtherance of economic reforms.

This symbiotic relationship has been recognised by the political parties and the elite whose increased emphasis on development and reform has been manifested in the parties’ campaigning and political agenda. Of late the party spokespersons and the leaders have started directly addressing the middle classes. The political elites have admitted to their recognition of and the consequent inclination towards middle class.

To sum up, the urban middle classes’ support for economic reforms acts as a catalyst in sustaining the reforms by the political parties. The politics of the urban middle class veers around the politics of development currently dominated by the reformist discourse. Although this study explores the views of urban middle classes on economic reforms only in the limited space of Chandigarh city yet the findings of this research may be considered as having general implications for other similar urban spaces in the country as one can take the middle class of the ‘happening city’ of Chandigarh as representative sample of globalising and liberalising India’s middle classes.
Limitations

During the course of the research work many a limitations in the study in question came to our notice.

First, the middle class being heterogeneous section of society, it was difficult to identify and measure it based on a single criterion. There is no universally accepted definition of the middle class in the relevant literature and this added to the problem of identifying this class. Looking for some standard criteria so as to suit the requirement of the study was in itself a challenge. The present research takes into consideration, the income criterion of National Council for Applied Economic Research and Education criterion of Centre for Development Studies. In addition to this, occupation was added as third determinant as it suited the requirement of the study and also has been followed by some renowned scholars working and publishing on middle class.237

Second, the universe of study selected by the researcher that is Chandigarh is a unique city in its structure and composition. Thus one may argue that the findings of the research conducted here may not be generalised in the other cities of the country. However in our view the urban middle class in Chandigarh has acquired a composite nature in the recent years as the city has developed in different phases over the past six decades attracting pan-Indian middle class professionals. This has been explained in the first chapter, which explains the growth and expansion of middle class in Chandigarh as the city expanded and took the present shape.

Third, during the data analysis it was observed that there could be further categorisation of middle class on the basis of income and occupation within the group. We also could not take into consideration the social background of the middle class238, as the middle class no longer is homogeneous in terms of its social and spatial origin either in the city or in the country. The state led policies of affirmative action and protective


238 Social basis of the middle class has been discussed by DL Sheth (1999) ‘Secularisation of Caste and the Making of New Middle Class’, Economic and Political Weekly, August 21.
discrimination have ensured the expansion of the middle class in terms of sociological origins of the middle class subjects.

**Further Scope of the Study**

The study has raised some new questions such as how far the occupation/vocation of the subjects determines their support for economic reforms and how their level of income or the pay package determines this fact. Also how relevant is the background of the subject for their perceived support or reluctance towards a specific reform measure and so on. Further research could be carried out on gauging the middle class response towards individual components of economic reforms such as fiscal policy and taxation reforms, FDI, Agriculture, exchange rate and monetary policy. There is a scope to further explore those components of economic reforms, which have not been fully implemented so far such as agriculture subsidies, and labour reforms. The views of middle class on such issues may prove to be beneficial in policy formulation. Here the differing response of the middle class about privatisation, curtailing the government jobs, withdrawal of subsidies can be linked to the social background of the middle class so as to test whether the middle class social origin does influence his economic choices or not. The recent assertion of middle class in Indian politics and the outcome of the general elections for 15th Lok Sabha has further underlined the importance of the study on electoral behaviour and modes of assertion of urban middle class in a rapidly liberalising India as Narendra Modi, the Prime ministerial candidate was projected as the person who would bring faster growth. There is a need to see whether the perceived apathy of the middle class in electoral terms has truly been overcome and whether the middle classes actually voted in larger number for the BJP and for its better reformist agenda and promise in comparison to other parties in contention.