It is not the purpose of this paper either to find faith with the Marxian viewpoint or to show up its differences with the Gandhian method of bringing about social change through constructive work and satyagraha, to which the author is personally committed. The author has only tried to present the Marxian viewpoint with regard to caste as faithfully as possible.

But the conclusion that he arrives at is that the Marxian system is as much an idealistic system, an instrument of social reorganisation, as the Indian system of four varnas happened to be in the past. One may, of course, claim that Marx worked for 'human emancipation, while Mann worked for preserving the rights and privileges of Brahmins. That is, however, an argument which can be modified and controverted from the social historian's point of view. That exercise, however, need not be attempted here.

The point that is sought to be made is that class in the Marxian sense is an intellectual instrument of action, and not a pure description of social phenomena into which Weber tried to convert it. It is necessary to draw a distinction between the way in which Weber and Marx have used the term class.

Weber tried to discover by means of comparison and analysis how some societies were actually stratified into classes. One part of a community might be distinguished from another by differences in the level of consumption, or in the distribution of economic or political power, or in some other way. After having examined various ways in which classes were marked off from one another, and also how they had evolved in course of time, Weber tried to find out a suitable definition of the term class, so that the widest range of observed phenomena might be covered under it with precision.

By contrast, the intention of Marx was something more than a scientific description of a particular kind of social phenomenon. After having examined the history of many societies, he came to the conclusion that all of them were divided into privileged and unprivileged classes; although the dividing line might be obscure in many cases. The real difference between classes lay in the manner in which one class laboured and produced wealth, while another, which exercised private rights of ownership over the means of production, lived more or less on the toils of the labourers.

In their own time, Proudhon, Tolstoy or Gandhi also held that, all over the world, men were divided into those who toiled, and the rest who lived on the toils of others, and were therefore thieves. (For Gandhi see Bose 1962a, PP 1-125).

It is interesting that the ideal distinction of Marx, Tolstoy or Gandhi into producers and non-producers is never neatly defined. There may be a hundred ways in which the dividing line may be rendered obscure. Even labourers may be divided into sub-classes, distinguishable from one another by the proportion between what they produce and what they consume, or by the power which they exercise over their fellowmen, which helps them in gathering for their own interest and use, varying fractions of the surplus value produced by the toilers. In addition, the same sub-class may function as 'exploiter' in relation to one below it, and 'exploited' in relation to another above it.

According to Marx, it is this distinctness which is responsible, to some extent, for the persistence of many of these stratified societies all over the world. This is true as much of the present age as of the past. Marx saw through, or he felt that he saw through, this camouflage placed over class differences. His reading of history led him to the conclusion that progress has taken place through a succession of class conflicts. Every conflict does not necessarily lead to victory of the labouring section of mankind; but it may be guided to that end. At least, that was the view strongly held by Lenin who thought that the moral responsibility of this leadership lies with the True Party which represents the interests of the proletariat.

Both Marx and Lenin, therefore, held that anything which masks real class-contradictions should be unmasked, class-consciousness accentuated, so that class-conflicts may come nearer home. Indeed, even defeats are not useless. Every conflict can, at least, be utilized for augmenting class-consciousness by laying bare the involved contradictions. This line of action has to be intelligently pursued, and with determination; because it leads to a shortening of the process of progressive evolution which is already taking place in human history. The revolutionist's task is to render the process of social change more economical and more efficient. He thus helps consciously and participates actively in the process of 'natural' change. The polarity of interests has to be heightened by him before progress can take place with rapidity as it ought to in the present age of science.

Marx was thus not so much interested in describing what was happening in the world. This he did occasionally; and then he played the role of a social philosopher rather than that of a revolutionary in action. For him, the primary duty of a philosopher is not merely to understand, but to change. Marx thus used the concept of class as an operational instrument rather than as a descriptive term which would cover a wide range of camouflaged and un-camouflaged class antagonisms.

It is, therefore, not fair to say that Marx now and then contradicted himself in his use of the term class. To say that Weber is logically more consistent, and thus an improvement upon Marx is also not quite correct. One was interested in classifying social phenomena, the other in fashioning an intellectual concept which would pierce through obscurities, and serve as a tool of action. In the use of the same term, Marx and Weber thus stood widely apart from one another.

**Caste : The Four Orders**

It is possible to look upon the Indian concept of Varna in the same manner as Marx's class, i.e., as an instrument of social re-organisation rather than as a description of historical facts.

The Brahminical peoples were confronted in the past by the presence of many communities with whom they came into contact either in peace or in war. Such communities were frequently marked off from the Vedic people by sharp contrasts of language, beliefs or social customs. Brahmins had already developed a system of preserving the text of the Vedas by relegating sections of it to the keep-
A Siemens valve transmitss FIRST MARS PICTURES

A transmitter valve the length of a matchstick played an indispensable role in the USA's Mariner IV space project. It kept scientists on earth informed of Mariner IV's exact location in space. It transmitted the first pictures ever of the planet Mars. This vital component was specially manufactured and developed by Siemens.

Photos from 230,000,000 kilometres in space
5:10 a.m. Indian Standard Time, 19th July 1965. This was the historic moment. After 299 days, hurtling 230,000,000 kilometres through space, the capsule approached the mysterious planet to give us the closest-ever look. Within a few hours the priceless photographs were seen on television by millions the world over. Mariner IV had achieved one of the greatest triumphs in space exploration.

15,000 meshes per square centimetre
The grid tube in the valve had a plane control-grid of gold-doped tungsten wires; each wire 1/100 of a millimetre in diameter. These wires formed a network with 15,000 meshes per square centimetre. Such a delicate design called for the most thorough testing possible. A 500-hour test was part of the rigorous selection programme. In addition, each sample valve was X-rayed and minutely examined both before and after the test. A major challenge to Siemens engineers, the valve was built to endure all the conditions of a long space flight. Special manufacturing and design techniques were employed—the latest at the time.

A product of unrelenting precision, the transmitter valve (called the RH-Gc) provided yet another link between Siemens and scientific progress.

POWER FOR PROGRESS—THROUGH SIEMENS
ing of specific lineages. This system had worked perfectly, and it can be imagined that its success led them to transfer the pattern to the economic organisation of society as well.

The rule was established that separate communities or jatis should be in charge of separate technological processes, or of services like priestcraft, trade, defense and so on. They were theoretically to be in enjoyment of monopoly in respect of their allotted function in each regionally distinct area; and there was to be no competition between such groups. Yet, a sufficient amount of resilience was introduced into the system by means of ‘alternative rules’, or aixid-dharma, from fairly early-times. Manu has recorded this elaborately in his Institutes (X, 74 ff).

Legislators like Manu had in their time, to examine the situation arising out of the economic and social mingling of many jatis. Some of these were evidently of foreign origin; while others arose out of progressive differentiation of occupations, and as a few among them tired to rise high in social status by concealing their birth and adopting the ways of castes ‘superior’ to them. (See, for instance, Mahabharata, Shantiparvan, ch 65). In order to bring a system into this chance conglomeration of jatis, social legislators tried to reduce them ideally into a scheme in which only four Varnas were recognized.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the classification into Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra was not confined to the world of men. Soils, temples, gems, gods and even the stars were actually classified into the same four orders. (See Bose 1963, 45-47; Tagore 1879.)

Manu believed in the possibility of transmission of character-types from parents to children: and he also held that a person or a community or hiti eventually drifts into the occupation for which it is temperamentally equipped by heredity. If the origin of a jati is not known, it can be found out by reference to the ideal order in which the Brahmin is contemplative, selfless, devoted to learning; the Kshatriya is fond of fighting or ruling; the Vaishya interested in trade, and the Sudra in service. By applying this four-fold scheme, he claimed to find out the origin of every jati; and then he assigned each to one or other of the four Varnas by means of some other rules.

The Manu Samhita in its present form is considered to have been written between 200 B C and 100 A D*. The following quotations illustrating Manu’s Theory of Heredity are from Sir Willian Jones’ translation entitled “The Institutes of Manu according to the Gloss of Kulluka” (Calcutta, 1794):

1. 31 Learn now that excellent law, universally salutary, which was declared, concerning issue by great and good sages formerly born.

1. 33 The woman is considered in law as the field, and the man as the grain: now vegetable bodies are formed by the united operation of the seed and the held.

1. 34 In some cases the prolific power of the male is chiefly distinguished; in others, the receptacle of the female when the sexes are equal in dignity, the offspring is most highly-esteem’d:

1. 37 Certainly this earth is called the primeval womb of many beings; but the seed exhibits not in its vegetation any properties of the womb.

1. 38 On earth here below, even in the same ploughed field, seeds of many different forms, having been sown by husbandmen in the proper season, vegetate according to their nature.

1. 40 That one plant should be sown, and another produced, cannot happen: whatever seed may be sown, even that produced its proper stem.

1. 69 As good grain, springing from good soil, is in all respects excellent, thus a man, springing from a respectable father by a respectable mother, has claim to the whole institution of the twiceborn.

1. 70 Some sages give a preference to the grain; others to the held: and others consider both held and grain: on this point the decision follows:

1. 71 Grain, cast into bad ground, wholly perishes, and a good field with no grain sown in it, is a mere heap of clods:

1. 12 But since, by the virtue of eminent fathers, even the sons of wild animals, as Risyasringa, and others, have been transformed into holy men revered and extolled, the paternal side, therefore, prevails.

1. 59 Whether a man of debased birth assume the character of his father or of his mother, he can at no time conceal his origin:

1. 60 He, whose family had been exalted, but whose parents were criminal in marrying, has a base nature, according as the offence of his mother


X. 8 From a Brahmans, on a wife of the Vaiṣya class is born a son called Ambastha, or Vaidya, on a Sudra wife a Nisada, named also Parasava.

X. 9 From a Kṣatriya, on a wife of the Sudra class springs a creature, called Ugra, with a nature partly war-like and partly servile, ferocious in his manners, cruel, in his acts.

X. 40 These, among various mixed classes, were relegated to the ‘lower’ orders. Caste was thus class; and this is a fact which has been emphasised by many historians in the past, as well as by sociologists like Bhupendra Nath Datta. M N Srinivas and Narmadeshwar Prasad in more recent times.

We must, however, remember the fact that class antagonisms within the caste system failed to generate a sufficient amount of opposition ami revolt among the subordinated communities. Narmadeshwar Prasad has tried to account for this by saying that the Brahmins successfully prevented reaction and revolt by the creation of a widespread ‘myth’ about their own holiness and infallibility, by a belief in the Law of Karma and transmigration of the soul, and so on. M N Srinivas is of opinion that the concern and value attached to ritual purity is so deep-rooted among Hindus, and the belief in Karma so pervasive, that both the privileged and un-privileged remain content with the status and role into which they have been born. So much so that there is no desire to rise and revolt against gross inequality.

Srinivas also says that the ‘upper’ classes have succeeded in retaining their positions of advantage, not only by extensive indoctrination of the ‘lower’, but also by usurping positions...
of authority in other ways. In the past, they did so by ownership of land and an alignment with the ruling powers. In the present age, the same upper castes have taken advantage of modern education, and progressively 'westernised' themselves so as to join the ranks of the new ruling class. This they do by joining the administrative services, or by alliance with one or other of the political parties as they come into power. The 'upper' castes have thus adapted themselves to change, and still form the upper class; while those who are below, because of poverty, lack of education and modern education, and progressively upper castes have taken advantage of 'sanskritization' or 'westernisation'.

In the opinion of the present author, however, these hypotheses as explanations of the continuity of caste through the ages, in spite of political or cultural upheavals, do not appear to be wholly adequate. In case, there are several other elements which help in creating a positive sense by loyalty among the subordinated classes, even when some of them know that they are suppressed. These possible causes are enumerated below:

(1) In an economy of relative scarcity, particularly when there were swift changes of rulers, the rules of caste were devised in a manner so that various communal groups were woven together into a network of mutual interdependence.

(2) Competition was positively discouraged. An artisan or priest could seek the protection of the king, or of the local college of Brahmins, or even of the caste—or village-panchaynt if he was threatened by competition by anyone who infringed upon his preserves.

(3) Each caste was left free to pursue its specific regional or communal customs in an atmosphere of comparative freedom and equality. In other words, cultural autonomy was thus guaranteed to each of the federated communities.

(4) If class differences brought about a growing inequality of income, as they were likely to do, the evils of increasing polarization were effect by the custom of 'conspicuous expenditure'. Anyone who spent lavishly in benevolent acts, or even in sheer exhibitionism, was applauded more than one who hoarded. A practice was likewise built up in connection with birth, marriage or funerary ceremonies in which even the poorest householder had to make gifts to priests, scholars and the indigent. The more lavishly one spent, even by incurring debts, the more approbation one received.

These elements in the culture of the people mitigated, but did not obliterate, the evils and strains resulting from class-differences within the caste system. And, it is the belief of the present author, that it is this fact, which might either be labelled as a camouflage or a conscious limitation of the growing ills of caste's productive system, which prevented the progressive polarisation of class-differences. The latter could have led to vassal war in India; but actually did not on account of the various safeguards thus built into the social structure.

**Marxian Class and Caste**

According to the Marxian way of thinking, this ingenious system helped the Brahmin-Kshatriya or upper class leadership to preserve itself intact through centuries. This was achieved by not allowing the contradictions in the distribution of power between class and class to develop as it did in the West.

The contradiction between technological progress and growth of population could not, however, be solved by this ingenuity. People remained poor, famine was followed by famine; and caste persisted because it gave a feeling of security even under the most straitened circumstances. Under the exigency of famine or natural calamity, people turned either to their joint families, or their own kinsmen or caste-men for protection or support. Ancient governments were frequently powerless to cope with such calamities, except by an extensive system of doles or gifts.

The remedy, according to the Marxian, lies in tearing aside the arrangements in the superstructure of caste, which prevent the 'natural' sharpening of class-antagonisms. That alone can lead to the victory of the organised proletariat under the guidance of the True Party.

**Comments**

It is not our purpose in the present paper either to find fault with the Marxian viewpoint, on show up its differences with the Gandhian method of bringing about social change through constructive work and satyagraha, to which the author is personally committed. We have only tried to present the Marxian viewpoint with regard to caste as faithfully as possible.

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The point which we have been trying to build up is that class in the Marxian sense is an intellectual instrument of action, and not a pure description of social phenomena into which Weber tried to convert it.

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