

## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### AIMS

The central objective of the following thesis is to interpret the structure and organisation of labour in the town of Bhilwara in the Indian State of Rajasthan in the context of social change. The scope of the thesis is not just confined to an isolated description of labour organisations, trade union activities, or the role of caste occupations in social stratification. It also researches historical, geographical, economic and associated factors which have led to the investment of industrial capital in Bhilwara and the subsequent emergence of wage labour. Research into this latter group of influences is necessary not only in the interests of obtaining comprehensive factual information on the central theme but also to broaden the horizons on which to base interpretation.

While the study is intended as a contribution to the sociology of development, its findings should be analysed in relation to other branches of contemporary sociology. Similarly, while portions of the published material which has inspired this study have been drawn from the sociology of development, the resources of other branches of sociology such as social change, social stratification, political sociology and urban sociology will be utilised and, at the same time, find mutual enrichment from the results of this enterprise.

## RURAL SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In 1977, Ashok Rudra published a series of articles on the class structure of India's rural society.<sup>1</sup> Rudra's basic premise was that rural India is divided diametrically into a class of big landowners and a class of landless labourers. Between the two extremities is a spectrum of intermediary social classes with some aligned in interests with the big landowners and others aligned with landless labourers. Shortly after the articles' publication, the author undertook an investigation of Bhupalgarh, a rural village community within Bhilwara District, for the purpose of evaluating the plausibility of Rudra's hypotheses and methodology.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding the impossibility of a single case study either substantiating a theory of nation-wide application or serving as a critique of Rudra's theory, the Bhupalgarh study concluded that a class structure had evolved in that community in a pattern similar to that expounded by Rudra.

Before land redistribution in favour of hereditary cultivators, and before associated economic and social reforms were introduced in post-Independence Rajasthan, society in Bhupalgarh was structured and organised in ways characteristic of economic conditions which would be expected to prevail prior to the emergence of large-scale capitalism, e.g. land tenure was inalienable, a wage labour market was virtually non-existent, commodity production was largely confined to simple reproductive agriculture, surpluses were wasted on conspicuous decoration, and commodity markets were closed. Bhupalgarh's contemporary social structure was dominated by a small group of large

landowners whose economic ascendance was attributable to an optimum exploitation of capitalist conditions of production which had displaced a former order which compared very closely with European feudalism.

The Bhupalgarh study also sought to trace the events and circumstances which not only led to the displacement of a pre-capitalist economy but had impeded the emergence of a full-scale capitalist economy (even in embryonic form) until relatively recently.

The study's conceptual schema was Marxist in origin, the primary constituent elements being the economic interpretation of history, the conviction that social change emanates from change in relations of production and the corollary that the structure of a given society is a reflection of conflict between identifiable social classes which in turn derives from contradictions in relations of production. The findings of the study were also interpreted in the light of the "Baran-Frank"<sup>3</sup> thesis on the behaviour of global capitalism in order to demonstrate how the belated growth of capitalist growth in Bhupalgarh could be historically related to the development of capitalist relations (in scope and in level of complexity) operating globally in which British imperial power was a significant and integral component part.

## URBAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Merely because a vast majority of India's population lives in rural areas pursuing agriculture is insufficient reason for regarding the social structure of the rural sector the national archetype. Even to

the casual observer, there is abundant evidence to disclaim the existence of an absolute dichotomy of Indian society into rural and urban: Indian cities continue to proliferate in number, population size, and in mensurable area; rural-urban immigration occurs; and rural communities become increasingly dependent on urban trade, urban markets, urban consumption, urban amenities, and sometimes urban commodities as basic as foodstuffs. Cities and towns accommodate indispensable transport depots, agencies of law and order, banks, public health facilities, political seats, educational amenities, and concentrations of capitalised industry. Travel "daily up-down" from a village to a nearby town is commonplace enough for villages on urban fringes to be called colloquially "bedroom" villages.

Inhabitants of

/cities and towns whose populations exceed 100,000 account for 20% approximately of India's population.<sup>4</sup> When considered in relation to the economic, technological, educational, industrial and intellectual resources concentrated in them, cities offer a wider range of opportunities to stimulate diversification and change, not just within themselves but also within rural communities which become linked to them in various ways. Conversely, although the greater proportion of the Indian population is distributed in the rural sector and is undergoing social change, the impetus and pace of change is more likely to originate in the urban sector, where social structure and in particular class structure, has been (and continues to be) more complex and developmentally more advanced than the rural sector.

Pursuing this same point, although significant political revolutions of the 20th century have involved peasant participation to no small

measure, no modern revolution has been exclusively peasant. Even though Indian society is predominantly rural-based, it need not follow that sources of modern social change in India originate always in India's rural population. Accelerated social and cultural development has always been a distinctive characteristic of the modern metropolis and agents of social change affecting India's large rural populations have never been uninfluenced by developments within the relatively small urban sector.

The factory floors of industrial urban milieux have been the physical arenas of conflict between workers, management and proprietors as the industrial age has enveloped economies which were previously subsistence-based. As wage labour has expanded, factories have become the nurseries in which labour has learnt political articulation. Furthermore, whereas peasantry is dismissed as a reactionary force in orthodox Marxism, the proletariat has a decisive historical role to fulfil as a class.

In summary, an appreciation of Rudra's theory on the social structure of India's rural sector must be qualified, first, insofar as rural society ought not be regarded as exclusive of the urban and, secondly, as a consequence, the influences from the urban sector and nature of interplay between the two needs to be carefully ascertained in any consideration of a theory of social structure which is intended to have application over the entire subcontinent.

#### RUDRA'S METHOD

As mentioned earlier, the Bhupalgarh study was Marxist-inspired whereby social change in the village was explained in terms of historical change to class structure in emulation of the analytical methodology.

adopted by Rudra in his articles. Rudra's schema provided for intermediary social groups between the two that were in immediate diametric opposition and identifiable as "classical" conflicting social classes.<sup>5</sup> The interpolation of intermediary groups was necessary on account of Rudra's strict adherence to contradiction in relations of production as the pre-eminent criterion for identifying social classes.

Within the rural sector of India, peasants may simultaneously in any given year cultivate their own land, sharecrop, lease land on monetary exchange for cultivation, and labour for wages. Hence (as was found in Bhupalgarh) the proportion of "pure" capitalists who cultivated their own land for profit to the exclusion of other occupational pursuits and the proportion of "pure" proletarians who laboured for wages in either cash or kind could both be comparatively small.<sup>6</sup>

There is no reason why the application of Rudra's analytical model of class analysis to the urban sector could not reveal a similar structural pattern, i.e. (in very simple terms) a quantitatively small class of "pure" capitalists, an equally small class of "pure" proletarians, and a range of intermediary social classes each of which could be identified according to the balance of members' private interests in profitable enterprise and dependence on wages for the hire of their labour utilised in productive enterprise.

#### **WHAT IS LABOUR?**

Identification of productive workers has been the bane of Indian demographers since the census of the Indian Empire of 1901 when a

serious attempt was made to identify the size and distribution of the economically active proportion of India's population: in a country with a small industrial labour market, the measurement and definition of productive labour occurs in conditions dissimilar to those pervading in advanced industrialised countries. Hence, statistical comparisons of productive labour have been rendered difficult by the problem of isolating employed wage labourers from capitalist entrepreneurs, the under-employed from the economically inactive, and the seasonally self-employed. Least of all, it has been impossible historically to isolate individuals actively participating in what one might euphemistically call the "unreported economy" or unorganised economic sector.

Until 1961, the Census of India used the concept of "gainful worker" to obtain data on occupations. This particular concept is useful in classifying numbers of persons pursuing, for the most part of the census period, one of a possible number of broadly defined discrete categories of identifiable occupations. While the "gainful worker" concept readily enables a distinction to be made between, say, an industrial labourer and an agricultural labourer and, again, a worker in a clerical job and one in household handicraft, the concept fails to measure, with any degree of refinement, such dimensions as levels of workers' underemployment or unemployment, and levels of earnings either from self-employment or wages. It also fails to distinguish either paid from unpaid family workers or pursuit of more than one category of occupation.

The "gainful worker" concept was dropped in favour of "workforce", a concept which attempts to "nett" the days on which an individual was

engaged in productive labour, be that labour as one of self-employment or employment in the service of others, thereby reducing a Westerner's understandable propensity to regard a "worker" as a wage labourer to the exclusion of any other possible economic pursuits.<sup>7</sup> Rudra's methodology of class analysis extends the "workforce" concept. As in the case of the agrarian sector, Rudra's basic critical factor in delineating class in the industrial sector is the degree of individuals' control over or <sup>their</sup> private ownership of property (be that land, housing, factories, technology, machines, labour, crops, goods, chattel, or even a possession of a job itself) especially kinds of property which are instrumental or potentially instrumental as means of economic production.<sup>8</sup>

## BHILWARA

This present study attempts to apply Rudra's schema to an industrialising commercial urban community. On the one hand, the application of Rudra's conceptual principles of class analysis to an urban context will enable their further validation as intellectually elucidative instruments of inquiry and interpretation. The application to Bhilwara seeks to describe and explain change in the social life of a community, one aspect of which has been precipitated by the intrusion of various modernising agents into what was, until Indian Independence, a relatively stable homogeneous township.

The location of the study (like that of the earlier study Bhupalgarh) has been chosen because of the author having friends conveniently domiciled there rather than as the determined result of an elaborate process of random selection. Bhilwara cannot claim to typify any

social, historical, geographical, ethnographical or political characteristics either of Rajasthan State or, least of all, India. The study's findings, quantitative and descriptive, could not provide a generality appropriate to every industrial centre of the country and there is no intention that they should.

The object of using Bhilwara for the purpose of field observation is rather one of, first, marshalling background material which bears on the town's social conditions present and past; secondly, inter-relating this material with observations on organisational development of Bhilwara labour; and thirdly, organising and interpreting critically and historically the information in a way which can show not only why labour is organised in the way that it is but behaves in the way that it does. To restate the purpose more simply, the ultimate intellectual challenge lies in portraying and explaining labour organisation in Bhilwara as a sociological vignette.

## HISTORICAL BHILWARA

There are facets of Bhilwara's economic, political and social history which distinguish it from other cities not only throughout Rajasthan but even among the state's Mewari-speaking belt. First, although Bhilwara formed part of the erstwhile princely state of Mewar, it owes its existence today neither as a fortification of a petty feudatory nor as a religious shrine but as a commercial market established by an East India Company agent. Secondly, capitalised manufacturing industrialisation did not occur at Bhilwara until 1938 when a textile mill was established (which, incidentally, was an indigenous Indian enterprise) and remained

one of the few modern industries of Mewar before the state's dissolution in 1947. Thirdly, it was a centre of local struggle for national independence which found extreme expression in both a communist organisation and a nationalist one dominated by reactionary religious orthodoxy and business interest. Fourthly, despite the otherwise feudal character of Mewari society and relative recency of the town's industrialisation, civic polity and economy have been dominated by trade and usury since Bhilwara's inception. Lastly, in relation to neighbouring princely states, Mewar's economic and political structure differed substantially: a diffusion of power shared with the nobility contributed in one way to the state's economic backwardness but, by contrast, its historical defiance of Mughal incursion accorded Mewar precedence in the protocol of the Rajput states, a status which was significantly influential in diplomacy between Mewar and British India. And, while on the same theme, although discriminatory political and economic policy of the imperial power directly impeded Mewar's economic development, successive rulers' xenophobia toward outside influences of any kind was an equally significant contributory factor.

## MODERNITY AND CULTURE

In comparison with developments social and economic which occurred in British India, changes in Bhilwara has been as dramatic as it has been recent: public health utilities, electricity supply, conduited water, industrial undertakings, public credit facilities, magistrates' courts, public transport facilities and educational amenities, while not in abundance, are available in such sufficiency as to stimulate, on a scale unknown before, geographic, demographic, economic, and

social mobility within the town and its adjacent localities. Culturally, Bhilwara bears no resemblance to other towns in the vicinity. As the Preamble's parody suggests, the architectural themes of Bhilwara are utility and function in congruence with the pursuit of manufacture and commerce. Bhilwara boasts nothing of the aristocratic luxury of lakeside palaces belonging to Mewar's capital, Udaipur.

Bhilwara is not protected by crenellated granite bastions such as those which protect Chittorgarh, the ancient Mewar capital situated just 35 km to the south, the perimeter of whose walls is the longest of any fortress in the world. The peculiar synthesis of Mogul, Hindu, Jainist, British and, latterly, Sindi architecture, customs and culture which is characteristic of Ajmer, just to the north, is alien to Bhilwara. Nine kilometres to the west is the town of Pur, now a veritable "suburb" of Bhilwara and linked to it by an industrial area, an industrial estate and labour colony but nowhere at the heart of Bhilwara is the picturesqueness and cultural finesse of Pur to be found.

Socially, Bhilwara shares characteristics more common to Indian cities undergoing rapid growth. Migration and natural increase has brought about a steep increase in population. The abundance of illegal traffic in contraband, rickshawdrivers, street hawkers, child-brides, idle gangs of goondas and dadas is in no small part attributable to a high incidence of youth unemployment and under-employment.

Poverty in Bhilwara has become increasingly evident with the growth of busti dwellers, begari occupying roadsides and railway yards, the dwellers themselves taking itinerant coolii work. With a

narrowing of difference in standard of living between urban and rural poor throughout India, the appearance of bustis and begari comes as no surprise.

### BHILWARA LABOUR

The number of workers in Bhilwara who are in receipt of wages and dependent for livelihood exclusively on those wages is unlikely to be overwhelming. Even though the industries established in the town tend to be relatively labour-intensive for a number of reasons, the extent of industrialisation is insufficient to employ wage labour in any substantial quantity. Even in the rural sector, of an estimated 8% of dwellers in receipt of wages, the proportion which is dependent exclusively on wage income for sustenance is likely to be very small.<sup>8</sup> Population increase in India has been absorbed to a significant extent by the rural sector but, in the case of Bhilwara, it is unlikely that landlessness in the rural sector surround the town is reaching a point of saturation whereupon the rural-urban drift would result from desperation on the part of the rural poor for relief. In these circumstances, it would not be surprising if interests in heritable land-holdings and their produce contributed significantly to the economic livelihood of Bhilwara labourers.

As India has yet no basic wage as understood in Australia, the unavailability of funds to sustain strikes, lay-offs or intervals between periods of irregular labour hire need not mean inevitable destitution if one remembers that peasant agriculture is vulnerable only to natural disaster and, furthermore, has an innate capacity to operate economically through exchange in kind, without the necessity of monetary exchange.

Despite the expectations among leaders of the national independence movement in Rajasthan (and in Mewar State in particular) that political freedom would also herald the uplift of women, the abolition of caste, the eradication of illiteracy, the right of labour to organise, the replacement of an aristocratic order with that of panchayati raj, and so many other virtues of Gandhian social philosophy, these reforms, while enshrined in statute books, have materialised in limited, if not peculiar, ways: notwithstanding Bhilwara's strong historical connexions with early trade-unionism in Mewar, and the growth in the number of registered trade unions in Bhilwara District, trade unionism today is neither a cohesive movement nor remarkably influential. The female worker participation rate has shown a positive decline with males progressively encroaching on traditionally female occupational areas. Even at the self-employed artisanal level, the nexus between Hindu caste status and socioeconomic status in contemporary Bhilwara society is impossible to overlook: oppression of the arbitrary exactions of feudal overlords has subsided in favour of arbitrary exactions of public officials and the "unreported" economy, and, while local growth in literacy has been substantial, educational opportunity continues to favour the privileged urban Hindu.

#### LOCAL INDUSTRIALISATION

Except for the central district of Ajmer-Merwara, which was administered directly by British authorities, industrialisation on a noticeable scale appeared in Rajasthan not until the mid 1930s. The belatedness of this development is attributable to a unique conjunction of historical, political, geographical, social and economic circumstances

to which Bhilwara has been drawn. Industrialisation was confined mainly to two fields, textiles production and mining. In the former case, some enterprises found themselves financially crippled barely after a decade of operation and technologically obsolete within two. By virtue of the inferior quality of minerals produced, combined with inadequate managerial skills, inadequate technical skills, poor technology, and poor service amenities, mining too has had a precarious history the consequence of which Bhilwara society has not been immune. These circumstances alone have hampered the growth of a labour force exclusively dependent on wages for sustenance.

While Union Government five year plan assistance has stimulated industrial growth, this has occurred largely on a small-scale basis whereby industrial legislation applicable to medium and large-scale concerns exempts those with minimum manpower and minimum factory horsepower capacities. This historical process too has not been conducive to the cultivation of a base of wage labour possessed of a strong sense of social identity.

International politics also has a contribution to make insofar as foreign embargoes on aid to the operation of a Canadian-built nuclear power station at Kota, east of Bhilwara, have led to unstable circuitry and, consequently, spasmodic supplies of electricity to Rajasthan's industrial centres, including Bhilwara. Inevitably, loss of production, shut-downs, lay-offs, and diminishing availability of profit reserves for future expansion impairs industrialisation results and, in turn, so does the formation of an industrial labour force. The problem may be further exacerbated by arid Rajasthan's recurrent seasons of drought

whereby an insatiable demand for electrical pump irrigation in the rural sector to ensure local food production has led to the frequent diversion of electricity supplies from the industrial to the agricultural sector.

#### BLUE AND WHITE COLLAR WORKERS

There is a popular claim that, despite expansion in India's secondary and tertiary economic sectors in the wake of industrialisation, there has been hardly any emergence of "white collar" unionism. Observation in Bhilwara would tend to question this claim. Indeed, the bureaucrats of the town, from the corps of gazetted officers to the peonage, would not only count as a majority of workers in receipt of salaries and wages but, in terms of political acumen and economic power, they would be the best organised and articulated.

The non-emergence of white collar labour is belied by the influence of present and former senior civil servants on radical political organisation at the national level and the most casual of surveys made at the local level. In Rajasthan's capital, Jaipur, there lives a prominent trade union official occupying a commodious residence in the city's spacious outskirts. He is leader of the state's electricity board employees and operates from an efficiently organised office crammed with volumes on labour law case reports which, as a qualified industrial advocate, he is able to utilise effectively. He has served as a delegate to ILO-sponsored international labour conferences held abroad (including one in Australia) and, as a profitable sideline, owns and manages a modest farm in adjacent Ajmer District.

The circumstances of this official contrast sharply with the plight

of a shop steward in Bhilwara's oldest textile mill. As an illiterate he must rely largely on his own self-developed wit and resources in handling negotiations. He has pursued this same employment since before the end of World War II and while his wage income of Rs 850/- as a master-spinner is both adequate and more than his subordinates can hope for, his saving capacity is eroded by contingencies of lay-off, needs of the destitute within his caste, and dowry to enhance his daughter's marriageability. His residence is a twenty-year old chall of two rooms owned by the employer and shared with up to six others. Only is one social characteristic shared with the union official in Jaipur - both are members of scheduled castes, a status previously so depressed as to be beyond the pale of Hindu society but, where given circumstances arising from modern social change has facilitated the upward social mobility of the Jaipur official, the condition of the Bhilwara counterpart has improved but marginally.

## RECAPITULATION

These forgoing sections are intended to outline aspects of Bhilwara's industrial and social development and, in doing so, to illustrate briefly a unique interplay of various historical geographical and other circumstances out of which local labour organisation has evolved. Besides providing preliminary illustration of the thesis' methodological theme, the remarks, as a secondary purpose, serve to accentuate the magnitude of difference which may separate the path of development of a familiar industrially advanced Western society and that of a less developed Oriental one.

The factors alluded to thus far as influences on labour organisation in Bhilwara are not exhaustive and will be added to and elaborated on as the thesis progresses. This interval also affords opportunity to touch on other considerations bearing on the thesis.

## LABOUR LITERATURE

Published literature on the sociology of contemporary labour in India's industrial sector is confined largely to statutory government statistical abstracts and legal commentaries on labour legislation and cases. Historically, apart from personal philosophical reflections and memoirs of notables such as pacifist Independence leader M.K. Gandhi and former President, V.V. Giri (material which must be viewed in a national and political context), literature is confined again to government publications as the result of official inquiries, for instance, into workers' health and conditions in either textile factories or tea plantations.

Geographers, political scientists, economic historians, demographers, economists and other students of other branches of social science, appear to have recognised sociological implications of industrial development in India but sociologists themselves have remained aloof. By way of example, Laxmana Rao in his comparative study of electoral voting patterns between residents of the old commercial town of Raipur in Madhya Pradesh and its new industrial neighbour, Bhilai, recorded a plethora of information on demographic mobility of workers, sources of recruitment, worker participation, occupational mobility, trade union organisation, political alignments, social stratification, cultural

differentiation and related descriptive data.<sup>9</sup> To take yet another example, while critical refinement of the "gainful worker" concept and its utility for the purpose of census collection and public economic policy are the objects of J.P. Ambannavar's study, he devotes his last chapter to concluding comments which have decidedly sociological overtones.<sup>10</sup> Of special note is the possibility of a curtailment of popular political participation if labour intensive industry were to subside and be replaced by super-efficient capital intensive industrialisation.

One of the first systematic case studies to be published in the field of Indian industrial sociology was N.R. Sheth's The Social Framework of an Indian Factory in 1968. This study was something of a "milestone" in that it challenged seriously a previously held popular view that the institutions and values of agrarian-orientated traditional Hindu society could be seen as impediments to the efficient development and operation of a modern industrial plant. (In collaboration with P.J. Patel, Sheth has since produced a bibliographical Industrial Sociology in India.)<sup>11</sup>

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences has produced research into labour leadership but, because of methodological flaws, the findings are of specious value.<sup>12</sup> These findings indicated that trade union leaders (in Maharashtra state) were drawn from superior Hindu castes even though workers were drawn traditionally from inferior castes. The methodology employed in the investigation took no account of the process of "Sanskritization" which sensitive observers who are informed of the researches of M.N. Srinivas among South India's Coorgs are aware operates but in few areas of modern Hindu society.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the investigation also exemplifies a preoccupation with caste as an

index of social stratification (a perceptual defect from which the Indian sociology of change is still prone to suffer). Jaspal Singh surveyed leadership among trade unionists of industrial centres in the Punjab from which extraordinary findings emerge.<sup>14</sup> For example, Singh ascertained that many leaders were inexperienced in the trades whose members they represented. Immediate economic gains were workers' pre-eminent objectives in joining trade unions. The organisation of unions, according to Singh, lacked sophistication and efficiency yet he arrives at an almost contradictory conclusion by asserting that the unions under study were agents of social change!

Child labour, bonded labour, labour abuse, strikes and labour conditions are regularly reported in the daily press and copiously documented in the popular weeklies. The trek of rural Sripuram villagers to towns and cities in search of wage or salaried jobs and the impact of village emigrants' remittances on social life of Sripuram is dealt with at length by Andre Beteille in his classic Class Caste and Power.<sup>15</sup> The Ramaswamys' Industry and Labour endeavours not only to update and collate earlier treatments on labour in India's industrial sector but to provide distinct sociological perspectives in which labour organisation and industrial disputes can be evaluated.<sup>16</sup> While the Ramaswamys' collaboration must be welcomed, their work is still a broad introductory survey of the subject.

Aloysius Fonseca, S.J., has written a treatise on wages policy in India from the point of view of an orthodox economist.<sup>17</sup> Natural determinants of the location of industrialisation have preoccupied geographers' researches.<sup>18</sup> Occupational health and safety have preoccupied students of social welfare and law.<sup>19</sup>

More poignant appreciations of the significance of labour to Indian social structure have arisen in David Selbourne's Eye to India,<sup>20</sup> a political post-mortem of Emergency Rule and Prem Shankar Jha's India: A Political Economy of Stagnation.<sup>21</sup> From Selbourne's book, the fact that trade union leaders were prime targets for arrest and detention by police reflects the political significance which organised labour had accrued when Emergency Rule was imposed. Jha's own thoughts are actually Rudra-inspired and, using Rudra's interpretation of Marxist class analysis, Jha deliberately has attempted to place Indian labour in a specific sociological context. Although unique insofar as his is the most concise and most recently published intellectual contribution on the subject, Jha's discussion of social structure exceeds no more than a solitary chapter and hence his ideas still lay in want of expounding and empirical substantiation.

Biblab Dasgupta's ILO-sponsored survey Village Society and Labour Use is of indirect relevance to this study but not without implications.<sup>22</sup> First, it dissects the working day of various categories of agriculturalists thereby giving practical refinement to notions of productive worker and labour efficiency. Dasgupta's theory that progressive commercialisation of agriculture would decrease the demand for rural labour is also consequential.

Tom Bottomore once saw Marxist sociology in need of empirical invigoration which could derive only from extensive small-scale research. Indian labour, as an object of intellectual enterprise, is disabled not just by a paucity of systematic research but by a developed conceptual perspective as well.<sup>23</sup>

More generally, Ian Gough has produced a critique of Marx's theory of unproductive labour as well as a monograph The Political Economy of the Welfare State which addresses issues such as the integration of trade unions with the state as well as the status of bureaucracy as a social class.<sup>24</sup> On the same theme, but in a legal perspective, Eugene Kamenka and Alice Erh-Soon Tay have made contributions on the implications of the dissolution of private law in the wake of expansion of public law and the bureaucratic institutions which administer it.<sup>25</sup> These implications include the impact of this dissolution process on individual freedom, especially that of labour.

Though now a decade old, Michael Barratt Brown's The Economics of Imperialism not only provides comprehensive criticism of the Marxian connexion between capital and imperialism but his detailed commentary and evidence on Rosa Luxemburg's thesis of a dual economy produced by an artificial international division of labour.<sup>26</sup>

As this thesis also examines social change as it relates to labour in an urban context, publications such as the compendia Marxism and the Metropolis (William K. Tabb and Larry Sawyer, Editors)<sup>27</sup> and Towns in Societies (Philip Abrams and E.A. Wrigley, Editors) have been welcomed.<sup>28</sup> The former collection represents an explanation of the impact on urban social and spatial structures alternative to the mainstream theories of interplay between sociocultural pluralism and market forces. The latter collection has a similar object but, while questioning the universality of Marx's assumption of a specifically urban contribution to history, the role of the urban sector as playing a positive role in the process of economic growth is nevertheless the central point of focus and the Marxian hypothesis that the progress of the division of

labour was founded on separation of town and country is put to empirical test.

Source material, be it theoretical or empirical, is diffused throughout the social sciences and varies in terms of intellectual quality and analytical rigour. While the theoretical principles of established authors on underdevelopment generally, social change, or specifically on Indian society such as Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, may serve as navigational aids and methods, the area of the sociology of Indian labour, if not substantially uncharted, is mapped-out in but a fragmentary way spread over a variety of projections.<sup>29</sup>

#### CAPITAL FORMATION AND THE NATIVE STATES

A limited literature on the sociology of Indian labour per se is compensated for by a recent re-evaluation and re-interpretation of classical Marxist works on the nature of imperialism and the role of trade unions as the vanguard of the working class. Capital investment is a prerequisite for industrialisation just as industrialisation is a prerequisite for the development of a class of wage labour. Economic imperialism in capitalistic industrial development incurs more often than not condemnation of socialist critics. A 1981 sociological critique of Lenin by David Lane demonstrates how clearly Marx and his early interpreters recognised the necessity of foreign capital to effect capitalist and industrial transformation in a pre-capitalist society and only in the context of pragmatic revolutionary propaganda was imperialism projected as an "ogre".<sup>30</sup> Historically, in relation to India, foreign domination, politically and economically, is seen by

schools such as that of Barrington Moore's as precipitating a distorted process of capitalist and industrial development.<sup>31</sup> While "merchant adventurism" is the commercial philosophy of foreign corporate investors in India even today and while even British socialism's complicity in impeding India's industrial development has been recently made evident by V.G. Kiernan, there is the argument of Bill Warren that, generally, imperialism has impelled the formation of indigenous capitalism rather than impeded it.<sup>32</sup>

The topic of imperialism together with the various contributions made to it are relevant to the subject of the thesis insofar as the supply of foreign capital affects industrial growth in Bhilwara and as the "uneven development of capitalism" within India (or even Rajasthan) influences local development. Historically, the recency of industrialisation among the erstwhile native states of India must, by sheer weight of evidence, be seen as a "calamitous" result of British imperial rule. However, the Indian states have long been neglected academically, a lacuna which again has been filled at an opportune time by a collection of essays edited by Australian Robin Jeffrey.<sup>33</sup> While Jeffrey's collection lacks a specific study of economic development and capitalism, it is invaluable in providing detailed knowledge of how imperial policy towards the states was formulated and the social character of the bureaucracy by which policy was implemented.

To no small extent, Jeffrey's omission of economic change is remedied by Bjorn Hettne's work on industrialisation and modernisation of what was the most progressive of the native states, Mysore.<sup>34</sup> Because of Bhilwara's location in the former Mewar State, the township's historical and social development is in no small consequence, a result

of its extremity at the end of a chain of power relations which, within the Indian subcontinent, originated with the British Crown Representative and devolved hierarchically down through a treaty prince and his feudal nobility.

Again, while only of peripheral concern to the thesis' topic, Daniel Headrick's The Tools of Empire is nevertheless of modest significance. His chapter on Indian railways is of cursory importance to Bhilwara since one of the earliest rail arteries to be constructed in central India passes through the town. It is nevertheless of methodological significance to the application of classical Marxism insofar as it demonstrates that Marx's abortive prediction of indigenous industrialisation occurring in the wake of the introduction of subcontinental railway locomotion was a misapplication of his theory rather than its invalidation. Headrick's book is also an effort to rectify an imbalance in which historiographers have tended to favour human decisions as the interpretative cue to historical explanation in modern times over key technological discoveries and applications.<sup>35</sup>

William Barber's British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858 is not of direct relevance to labour history nor to the history of the Indian states but it excels in identifying practical problems, especially those domestic to British commerce, which British economic analysts from Stuart to J.S. Mill had to reconcile with intellectual polemics.<sup>36</sup> Of particular interest to this study is Mill's own solution to the debate of his day over the proposed "merger" of the East India Company's commercial monopoly with territorial sovereignty.

Eric Stokes' The Peasant and the Raj deals historically with peasant

rebellion in British India rather than in the states.<sup>37</sup> However, Stokes is also of significance for two reasons. First, given the prominence of agrarian agitation in Mewar politics until Independence and the close association of later agitators with Bhilwara, Stokes' material provides a basis for comparative analysis of peasant agitation's impact on social change in British India. Secondly, given the extent of the nexus social and economic which is likely to exist between Bhilwara labour and the adjacent agrarian sector, Stokes' analysis of the evolution of the Indian peasant's class status, his capacity to contribute to economic growth, is of interpretative consequence to findings of this study.

## METHOD

The author's earlier dissertation devoted a considerable effort to the justification of the dialectical method over that of other sociological perspectives generally as well as in specific relation to the topic.<sup>38</sup> Much of what was presented then in support of the Marxist approach to the study of Indian society is repeated in the successor and an exegesis of the subject is offered in the next chapter.

Classical Marxism has suffered shortfalls in its application to ancient India as well as to modern India. It is paradoxical that, although the intrusion of Western commerce and technology did not propel an immediate embourgeoisement of indigenous Indian society, it is conceivable to employ Marxian analytical principles to explain how the sophisticated operation of capitalism in other parts of the globe could inhibit the growth of Indian capitalism and thereby protract

the continuation of pre-capitalist conditions.

In fact, the principal objection to structuralist-functionalist analysis for instance is the diffusion of dependent connexions between social change at one level of community and change in another. While tracing the consequences of the behaviour of global capitalism for a small Indian regional township would be a task too exhaustive and ambitious for this thesis, such an integration is logically, if not technically, feasible.

The dissemination of the "Baran-Frank" thesis on the behaviour of global capitalism has prompted a rigorous review and a consequent reinterpretation and reapplication (such as Rudra's) of the essential principles of Marxist social theory.

The capacity of the Marxist approach as understood by Baran, Frank and Rudra to trace decided economic and historical links between the global and the local and to produce a fruitful understanding as to how such links arise and operate in the process of social change is where the Marxist methodological strength lies.

## THESIS ORGANISATION

Chapter 2 is devoted to the thesis' theoretical foundations and, as an extension of the preceding introduction on method, the polemics surrounding the status of Marxism as legitimate sociology. The chapter also demonstrates the way in which the author's theoretical position has directed the choice of field research strategy, the collection of data, together with its subsequent presentation and interpretation.

Chapter 3 presents the results of the fieldwork and data gathered from secondary sources.

Analysis and interpretation proceeds in Chapter 4. In this chapter the results of other research especially that bearing reasonably directly on the problem are compared. An evaluation of methodological and research techniques used in gathering the data are evaluated for their productive as well as their procedural validity.

The conclusions drawn from Chapter 4 are evaluated in Chapter 5 for their status as empirically determined knowledge and their implications for the further development of sociological theory.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DIALECTICAL METHOD

#### WHY MARXIST?

In his Contemporary Social Theories, Sorokin classified the theories of the "greats", Durkheim, Simmel, Cooley, Weber and Marx, as "sociologistic" because this school of theorists gave sociology logical precedence over all other branches of social science or, conversely, all human behavioural phenomena had social origins.<sup>1</sup> Although Sorokin recognised the pretence and error associated with any claim to explaining the behaviour of collective humanity entirely by sociological principles, "sociologism" has not only survived rival schools, the implications of man as a social creature are increasingly appreciated among natural and life sciences. Within the "sociologistic" school, two traditions have emerged. One, the structural-functionalist, which derives from the thought of Durkheim and Weber, and a second stemming from Marx which, although fundamentally structural, stresses conflict between structures rather than conciliation.

This chapter's object is to present in an integrated fashion, first, a rationale for adopting a Marxist stance towards the analysis and interpretation of the material under study, secondly the principal concepts involved and, lastly, the difference between Marxist and structural-functionalist understanding of social structure. The exercise is important for more than reasons of methodological elucidation. Not only have Marxism and structural-functionalism been ubiquitous in the history of the sociologistic school, they have been antithetical despite attempts to converge them.

Structural-functionalism perceives change as the manifestation of adaptive processes which serve to stabilise and integrate the structure of a given independent social system. On the other hand, Marxism conceives change emanating from contradictions and conflicts between oppressive and oppressed social classes, a dichotomy into which the negotiation<sup>of</sup> social relations vis a vis the means of economic production can be analysed. This mode of analysis is vicariously referred to as the "dialectical" or, given that the mode itself represents an expression of a particular set of historical social circumstances in which the analyst is immersed, the "political economic" method.

#### THE RISE OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

A critical comparison of these two theoretical perspectives is also essential on account of the relatively recent emergence of development as a field of specialised interest for sociologists. Given that "development" of discrepancies in the wealth of nations was a preoccupation not only of the founders of political economy but virtually every eminent economic thinker who was connected with the East India Company, it is paradoxical that, apart from anthropological researches, economically underdeveloped countries per se have been neglected as a serious subject of sociological interest until the last decade.

Even though the mechanism of capital sums' international transference aroused intellectual curiosity during the post-1919 exaction of German war reparations by the Allies, sociologising on the impact of concentrations of wealth in the context of the twentieth century began with the writings of Baran and R. Palme Dutt (who themselves

failed to "qualify" as authors of respectable discourse in established centres of sociological and economic learning).<sup>2</sup> Interest did not start to escalate until the distribution of development aid well after World War II.

Before World War II, explanation of change and differentiation between given societies relied on the application of the classical principles of Durkheim and Weber, for whom cultural ideas, values, and norms were the cues by which patterns of social structure and analysis of change within that structure could be assembled. Talcott Parsons' Theory of Social Action was published in 1937 as an effort by Parsons to lay solid a theoretical foundation of the discipline of sociology untrammelled by historicism of Marx and Spencer and unkindled functionalism oftentimes characteristic of the Durkheimian school.<sup>3</sup>

A reappraisal of Marxian sociology as an awareness of the shortcomings of Parsons' theory occurred in the wake of Raoul Prebisch and Celso Furtado's attentions on the social consequences of Latin American countries' economic dependence on foreign investment (especially from the United States) in the post-World War II development of those countries.<sup>4</sup> The incisive contribution of Prebisch and Furtado was their notion of "central" and "peripheral" patterns of concentrations of global economic development, a concept which Frank enriched and expanded into "metropolitical" and "satellite" capitalism.

## PARSONIAN SOCIOLOGY

However, one must be fair to Parsons insofar as his approach to the explanation of social change in terms of integration, adaptation

and equilibrium began not with the question as to how change occurs but how societies remain stable and endure at all. He also sought to objectify the social order without undue sacrifice to methodological collectivism, functionalism, historicism, and reductionism and, therefore, emphasised the activity of the individual. "Theory" to Parsons was a heuristic and hermeneutical device of a highly abstract order. Indeed, Parsons frequently employed the term "frame of reference" synonymously with that of "theory".

The salient uniqueness of Parsons' sociology lies in four main themes:

- 1) individual personalities, societies and cultures can all be analysed as self-equilibrating systems and described in terms of a common conceptual framework, that of action systems;
- 2) action systems contain four subsystems, performing functions of pattern maintenance, integration, goal-attainment, and adaptation;
- 3) as social action systems, societies evolve towards greater functional specialisation of structure, e.g. modern political and economic institutions largely correspond with the analytical subsystems 'polity' and 'economy' which perform the goal-attainment and adaptation functions;
- 4) social structure is analysable into four components (values, norms, collectivities, roles), and the institutionalisation of certain core values, through the normative regulation of collective activities and individual role performances, primarily determines the stability and functioning of societies.<sup>5</sup>

In relation to the sociology of development, differentiation and adaptation are the key concepts in Parsonian theory. Notwithstanding his aversion to historicism in sociology, Parsons' theories provide two distinct types of evolutionary social development both of which are characterised basically in terms of cultural development and sophistication.

On the one hand, Parsons postulated a process of general evolution in which the individual organism, by way of fulfilling putative biological and psychological needs, acquires social personality through interaction with one or a number of discrete or interconnected social systems. On the other hand, conceived a typology of societal systems which, while intending to be of synchronic and diachronic application (and consequently, free of historicist connotation) nevertheless echoes of historiographical "epochs". These types are Primitive (of which aboriginal society would be example), Archaic (such as Ancient Egypt), Historic (such as China and India), "Seedbed" (such as Ancient Greece) and Modern. The criterion which Parsons used for distinguishing one type of society from another was, first, the degree of differentiation observed in terms of attainment of rational sophistication in economics, science and technology as well as the development of a written language and codified legal system. A further criterion was the extent to which the society concerned succeeded in adapting to:

- 1) more autonomous parts of subsystems;
- 2) a greater specialisation of parts; and
- 3) a utilisation of effective means of integrating the systemic whole.<sup>6</sup>

That sociology has evolved beyond Parsons is true and, therefore, the

criticism of Parsonian theory has no doubt reached a point of surfeit and further critical presentations would hardly be novel. However, conventional Western modernisation theory as applied to underdeveloped countries utilised conceptual instruments which share an intellectual nexus with modernisation as a construct of the Parsonian paradigm. For this latter reason and also, more immediately important, on account of the significant influence either Parsonian sociology or that of its precursors has borne on research and interpretative strategies of students of social change in India (Rajasthan especially), a critical review of Parsons is necessary. This exercise involves the examination of three aspects of Parsonian sociology, viz, first, the internal logical weaknesses of the theory, secondly, its weaknesses as applied to the area of underdevelopment, and thirdly, the implausibility of direct convergence of structural-functionalism with Marxist sociology.

In his recent critique of Parsonian sociology, Stephen Savage, after analysing the internal logic of the discourse of Parsons' work, concludes "Parsonian theory is not a coherent body of concepts on which to base a social theory".<sup>7</sup> The demonstration of contradiction between action and social systems theory is the highlight of Savage's evaluation. An illustration of this point is Parsons' treatment of social change.

Although Weber focused on meaning within the individual's psychological perception as a factor instrumental in the generation of social change and also in the process of verstehen as a heuristic and hermeneutical procedure of sociology, the reverse impact of social and economic conditions had not escaped his attention. However, in structural-functionalism meaning per se is the pre-eminent catalyst

of social change. Yet, the idea of a self-sufficient self-generative societal system integrated by shared values and beliefs would seem to exclude the possibility of spontaneous or sustained intellectual activity the premises of which were in conflict with or a threat to prevailing norms.

There is also a teleological element implicit in the idea of rituals, norms and similar cultural apparatus functioning to facilitate the integration of social systems, an idea the plausibility of which is betrayed not only by the distinction that theoreticians of structural-functionalism make between manifest and latent functions and dysfunctions but also an inability to consistently apply the distinction. The roles of "coercion" and "oppression" are serious chinks in the theory of equilibrium as are its inabilities to explain the "efficiency" of social systems especially as to whether or not systemic "efficiency" may be equated with systemic "survival".

Parsonian social systems theory takes account of external influences and changing physical environments as potential agents of change in a given system. The application of the "social system" concept to a given society rests on the presumption that the physical boundaries of that system coincide with those geographical boundaries unique to that society's existence as a de jure sovereign nation-state. Structural maintenance of that society as an identifiable independent social system derives sui generis from distinctive perceptible needs intrinsic to that system. However, cultural diffusion in modern times has originated not just spontaneously from within delineated national boundaries but, on an unprecedented scale, diffusion arises from a multitude of sources extending across national boundaries.

## PARSONIAN SOCIOLOGY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

A further criticism of Parsonian theory is that it lacks empirical verification: the study of societies has been cast aside to permit solely theoretical analysis of society and social action. As in the case of orthodox economics applied to the Third World, Parsonian theory in its quest to establish an explanatory model has eschewed special interest in social history (save that of antiquity): "long-run" macrosociological evolutionary trends, especially those operating in ex-colonial territories, have been conspicuously ignored. In fact, as late as 1969, the wisdom of Prebisch's doctrine on economic development was under attack by American conservatism for inciting controversy and dogmatism: the doctrinal offence which Prebisch had committed was to link contemporary economic needs of select Latin American countries with their historical economic conditions.<sup>8</sup>

In relation to its application to the developing countries, Parsonian theory overlooks the supranational character of social reality. Parsonian theory has produced no sociology of transnational corporations. Neither does it elucidate reasons for the existence of extra-territorially generated political elites in particular countries of the Third World. As late as 1969, United Nations Research Institution for Social Development (UNRISD) had adopted, among other items urbanisation, literacy rate, social mobility, nuclear family, secularisation, political democracy and free enterprise as indices of development, a matrix which was virtually a mirror of Parsonian criteria of modernisation.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding the ethnocentrism inherent in such an approach, the serious defect of structural-functionalism as applied to Third World sociology is its disinterest, first, in exploitation which can and does

occur in international relations especially in the realm of aid and, secondly, in the extent to which economic wealth (and modernisation) of nations is invariably commensurate with their degree of participation in the global system of distribution and production.

#### MODERN SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDIA

In the case of India, post World War II empirical sociology has provided rich observational material which has been of limited explanatory value. The structural-functional perspective has found expression in the pivotal significance which has been attributed to the institution of caste. Moreover, they have focused entirely on rural communities.

One of the first was Bailey (1958) who studied change in the power structures of a village of highland Orissa stemming from politico-legal, technological and economic innovations which occurred after Indian Independence in 1947.<sup>10</sup> Traditional caste expectations had advantaged (economically and politically) some castes at the expense of others. Caste obligations had, to some degree, changed and new patterns of social mobility had been precipitated. Change, in Bailey's evaluation was basically an adaptation to administrative change at national and state levels.

Beteille's study of Sripuram in Tamil Nadu (1965) was in a similar vein.<sup>11</sup> Again, using a Weberian-inspired conceptual framework, Beteille traced a transition in power relations and social stratification following an erosion to the traditional economically, politically and religiously dominating Brahmin landowners and the sociopolitical mobility among non-Brahmins which emerged <sup>as a</sup> consequence.

Reinterpretation of caste ideology by non-Brahmins through emulating Brahminical ritual and behaviour was observed among the upwardly mobile groups and used to their political advantage. This point had been taken a step further by Silversten (1963) who, in a study within the same area, began questioning the value of Hindu caste as a comparative social category when, in some instances, it was assuming a decided political character.<sup>12</sup>

The inadequacy of approaching caste as a mutually exclusive category anchored in ideological and religious origins alone has been admirably summarised by Kathleen Gough:

I suggest that in all these cases, castes' role in the economy, and the power-relations which these give rise to are the prime determinants of their rank-fixing relationship. Neither in the present nor the past can the ritual ranking of castes be understood without reference to the political economic system in which they are embedded.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding Weber's recognition of the essence of occupation in the operation of the Hindu caste system, sociologists of the structural-functional school (especially disciples of Dumont) and even Marxists sympathetic to Poulantzas, tend to resist any suggestion which might bring into question the consensual cohesive character and logical rational integrity of orthodox Hindu caste belief.<sup>14</sup> After presenting an argument for evaluating caste as an instrument of exploitation, Menchner was attacked for reducing ideology to an epiphenomenon "with a consequent loss of socially constituted meaning" even though those who best understand the rationality of caste are those who occupy the better status in the caste hierarchy and are economically (and politically) the more dominant!<sup>15</sup> (Hindu connoisseurs of the

exquisite subtleties and minutiae of caste practice are those usually who have most to gain from it!)

Two prominent students of social change in Rajasthan have been Brij Raj Chauhan (1967) and Anand Chakravarti (1975).<sup>16</sup> In both instances social change was approached as a "parapolitical" phenomenon. Both evaluated change in terms of a transition from one system of institutionalised authority to another but, again, caste dominated the analyses. Conflict cases contained in observational data have tended to overlook exploitative elements in village social life which derive from inequitable distribution of economic resources of tangible, not to mention intangible, kinds. Both authors failed to take issue with quite profound questions as to the reasons for negligible political inquietude of Rajasthan's rural population compared with that of Tamil Nadu and Bihar not to mention the expanse of sumptuous public housing in Jaipur, a contrast to the perpetual poverty which is endemic to any number of Rajasthani villages especially, too, when improved irrigation facilities and improved agricultural technology are at hand.

That one is dealing with culture, politics and economy which are distinguishable universally as typification of what might broadly be defined as "a peasant society" is presumed by the reader of Chauhan and Chakravarti's work. The limitations of their studies stemmed from a propensity inherent in Weberian and Durkheimian theories and their methodologies to ignore connexions between local social change in the context of wider more comprehensive social relations. The tools of structural-functionalist analysis are of nomothetic value insofar as they are applicable equally to a study of an industrial urbanised affluent community and to one of a destitute agrarian peasant community

but any dependent connexion which might exist between the two is diffused.

## CONVERGENCE THEORY

Kingsley Davis and Pierre van den Berghe have independently put forward propositions in support of a theoretical convergence of Marxist sociology and structural-functionalism.<sup>17</sup> Space hardly permits a complete exposition of Marx's sociological thought but, for the purposes of this critique of the convergence theory, the seminal features of his thinking may be grouped as follows:

- 1) /people enter into definite relations that are independent of their will;
- 2) in every society there can be distinguished the economic base (infrastructure) and politico-legal institutions (superstructure);
- 3) the mechanism of historical movement is the contradiction, at certain moments in evolution, between forces of production and relations of production;
- 4) into this contradiction a struggle between an oppressed and oppressive class is introduced;
- 5) the dialectic between forces of production and relations of production implies a theory of revolution;
- 6) in the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure social reality is opposed to social consciousness; and
- 7) each stage of human history is characterised by a mode of production of which there are four, viz. the ancient, the feudal, the Asiatic and the bourgeois.<sup>18</sup>

In his argument for an amalgam of the two schools, van den Berghe unwittingly exemplifies the antithetical character of structural-functionalism and Marxism.

The key to correct understanding of structural-functionalism, according to van den Berghe, is a conceptually emphasised dynamic equilibrium and integration which he upholds legitimately account for change "albeit a minimisation thereof". Moreover, van den Berghe contends that a minimum of integration must be maintained for any social system to exist but not withstanding the utility of the "equilibrium" model in this particular respect, the model still cannot account for:

- 1) reaction to extra-systemic change;
- 2) the possibility that social systems can, for long periods, go through a vicious circle of ever deepening malintegration;
- 3) the observation that change can be revolutionary (both sudden and profound); and
- 4) the generation of change within a social structure itself through internal conflicts and contradictions.<sup>19</sup>

Van den Berghe then appeals to the dialectical method to fill these lacunae. Having been inspired by Dahrendorf's axiom that unequal authority derives from economic factors and by postulating four areas of convergence between structural-functionalist and Marxist theory, van den Berghe argues for a synthesis of the two. His four postulated points are holism, the dual role of conflict and consensus, evolutionism, and employment of "equilibrium" (i.e. a conceptual emphasis on inter-dependence of parts of a social system).<sup>20</sup>

However, in a response to van den Berghe's "synthesis" argument published by Frank, it is easy to appreciate that these purported convergences between functionalism and Marxism are no more than superficial resemblances.

On the point of holism, Marxists appeal to it "to explain the whole - and, thereby, the parts". That any social system is a "given" rather than viewed as a consequence of change is a critical shortcoming of structural-functionalism. It manages only to explain the parts of wholes but not in relation to any global whole.<sup>21</sup>

With regard to van den Berghe's second purported area of convergence, the dual role of conflict and consensus, Marxism varies from structural-functionalism in that Marxism distinguishes degrees and kinds of social conflict in a way such as to realise the plausibility of complex patterns of conflict in ways so that contradiction might stand in the face of cohesion and disintegration in the face of interdependence.<sup>22</sup>

On the point of evolution, it has already been pointed out earlier that change does not emerge in the Marxist sense from within a social structure but determines the social structure of the moment: change in Marxism is a "vortical" rather than "cyclical" process and involves utter transformation of social structures.<sup>23</sup>

The Marxist answer to supposed convergence on the employment of "equilibrium" lies in a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Hegel-Marx dialectic. In dialectical theory, disequilibrium is an inherent attribute of a social structure at any given time. "Equilibrium" in the sense of an ultimate interdependence among "parts" is

completely alien to the very basic premise of the dialectical method, i.e. historical materialism.<sup>24</sup>

While Davis and van den Berghe have argued for a convergence between Marxism and structural-functionalism at a formal logical level, there is also a movement which advocates another but equally untenable form of synthesis based on traditional communality. For instance, it is somewhat paradoxical that Paul Harrison in his Inside the Third World should illustrate so superbly how very basic material conditions (e.g. climate, epidemic, mass illiteracy) should cyclically intertwine and react to exacerbate the condition of already economically disadvantaged countries.<sup>25</sup> However, in his sequel, The Third World Tomorrow,<sup>26</sup> Harrison has written in praise of the professedly new "small is beautiful" approaches to development such as those espoused by Gandhi, President Nyrere of Tanzania, Michael Lipton, and the late E.F. Schumacher.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Peter Lloyd's Slums of Hope? and more recent A Third World Proletariat? provide vivid and informative observational data on social characteristics of life on the fringe of Third World cities.<sup>28</sup> Yet, Lloyd sees change occurring by way of "palliative" rather than "curative" process and, like Harrison, Lloyd is more inclined to anticipate social improvement emerging by way of small-scale activities initiated from within shanty-town communities themselves.

A superb critique of this new orthodoxy has been published by Gavin Kitching who has postulated (with startling identity on points of detail) how this line of orthodoxy is a reproduction of populist reaction in 19th century Europe to industrialisation.<sup>29</sup> In short, the

threat of industrialisation (in what Marx called machinofacture) has produced similar reactions whenever and wherever it has been felt. Not only does Kitching discerningly reveal these parallels but also he effectively criticises the populist presumption that improvement in the material conditions of life is compatible with the retention of a social order in which independent peasants and artisans predominate.

### MARXIST SOCIOLOGY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

It would be erroneous to conclude that a demonstration of structural-functionalism's conceptual obsolescence automatically supposes that its Marxist rival is irrevocably the doctrinal victor. An admirable feature of the academic sociology of Western Marxism has been its capacity to cultivate a tradition of "auto-criticism" and an appraisal in this vein is virtually a ritual in sociological research as de rigueur as a Hindu bibliophile's prayer to Ganesh. However, classical Marxism has been proven demonstrably weak in some aspects of its application to contemporary as well as ancient India.

To begin, Marx predicted that the advent of railways in colonial India would precipitate a pace of industrialisation which would supplant a feudalistic social order based on agriculture: a multitude of intervening circumstances militated against the materialisation of such a development. The Asiatic Mode of Production has also been problematic in its application to India's antiquity.<sup>30</sup>

The "naturally evolved" equitable division of labour which Marx perceived as the structural mainstay of Indian agrarian society appeared to take account of Indian geography but neither of historical migratory

invasions which heralded the subjection of aboriginal inhabitants nor of the peculiar ideology of casteism which reinforces the Hindu division of labour.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the ahistorical character which Marx attributed to pre-colonial India tends to contradict the fundamental dialectical logic which propels Marxism. For instance, the relatively late date of the Manusmriti<sup>32</sup> (the Hindu scriptural canon on caste "theology" and practice) and the imposition of religious proscription on emigration, possibly when Hindu emigration from the subcontinent was at its height, suggest collectively that there were aspects of social conflict in ancient India which were qualitatively different from conflict that was simply generated by dynastic conquest and rivalry.

Furthermore, exogamous marriage and religious pilgrimage are aspects of traditional Islam and Hinduism which would mitigate tendencies inherent in village life towards insularity and social isolation. Even before colonial paramountcy over the Indian native states was established the states' internal patterns of political organisation were, in many cases and in many respects, in parallel with a "classical" European manorial system rather than uniquely Asian.

## MARXISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Another general area of difficulty in Marxist sociology is the historical transformation of one mode of production to another. While the economic or material interpretation of history is a fundamental premise of the interpretative process, the role of non-economic factors in the transformation of one mode to another (especially the feudal to the capitalist) has proved problematical.

To what extent, for instance, was Protestantism instrumental in nurturing the growth of capitalism? Although Marx may have misconceived the origin of the division of labour under the Asiatic mode of production, the structural autonomy of non-economic factors in class determination is a view to which even Marxist Maurice Godelier (a virulent critic of Dumont's "culturology") is nevertheless sympathetic and also Poulantzas who, in his analytical method of structural change, would see the economic level having a determining influence "... only in the last instance".<sup>33</sup>

The most recent vindication of Weber's Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism thesis has been attempted by Gordon Marshall using as his case study Scottish industry and commerce between the Reformation (1560) and the Union of the Crowns.<sup>34</sup> Marshall contends that the Marxian interpretation of the relationship between Calvinism and capitalistic growth, i.e. the pre-eminence of economic conditions, collapses because it ignores completely the relationship between legitimation, the nature of the "actors" accounts of their activities, and the grammar or vocabulary of motives:

The Marxist interpretation rests on the questionable assumption that individuals are propelled or compelled unthinkingly and mechanically by their class interests to act in a particular manner and, having acted, that they then proceed to initiate a search for an appropriate means of legitimating their behaviour. Legitimation cannot be assumed to be on an ex post facto process. Social actors are aware of the fact that their actions are social and therefore that they may be called upon to justify them. They require a vocabulary of motives to do so.<sup>35</sup>

Again, recently Professor Mochio Morishima, to explain the rapid economic "success" of Japan over the last century, has advanced a

theory that Japanese Confucianism (rather than the Meiji restoration) produced the Japanese ethic - not strictly Calvinist and capitalist - but equally frugal and clearly capable of similar economic successes.<sup>36</sup> As early as 1962, Robert Kennedy Jr sought to validate, at least in part, the most salient and abstract features of Weber's thesis to explain how the commercial and industrial successes of India's Parsi community might be attributed to tenets and social values of Zoroastrianism.<sup>37</sup>

In his study of social change in Bhupalgarh, the author made copious observation of the ways in which the village's commercially buoyant artisans and merchants were able to intellectually manipulate aspects of Hindu doctrine on caste observance which served to entrench their socioeconomic dominance.<sup>38</sup> This same kind of observation recurs in the documentation of the author's fieldwork in Bhilwara.

Marshall's work represents perhaps the most comprehensive and sophisticated study accomplished to date on the "Protestant Ethic" thesis but, on Marshall's own admission, "There is no better testimony to its significance than the existing literature on Weber's thesis".<sup>39</sup> However, while the Protestant ethic might have sanctioned personal virtues of frugality, thrift, industry, productivity, investment and profit, it was also accompanied by a progressive secularisation of business and commerce in the sense that ecclesiastical institutions were less able to interfere with business practice (for instance, usury ), and expropriate surplus wealth for endowment of benefices, cathedral building, tithing, holy wars, etc.

The theory of secularisation is one which Tawney espoused and would seem the more plausible given that the institution of private

property was not necessarily a post-Reformation development.<sup>40</sup>

As F.J. West has pointed out, neither Marx nor Engels were competent mediaeval historians and the constituents of feudalism as an epochal mode of production were not necessarily identical to the "manorial system".<sup>41</sup>

It is possible to adduce from his writing on India (and also Ireland) that Marx had an alternative perspective on colonialism which took notice of its stunting retarding effects. What Marx did not possess was a notion that capitalism as a whole should be viewed, not as a process or pattern of processes but as a relation of unequal partners of whom one developed at the expense of the other. This is a theme vicariously developed by Barrington Moore and Frank.<sup>42</sup> If interpreted using populist imagery, this theme may inject a purposive element into "underdevelopment" so that one might be led to proclaim in a sanguinary but emotionally satisfying way, "Poor countries are poor because they are underdeveloped by the rich"! The populist appeal of such a doctrine and the consequential naivete with which some of its exponents are prone to promote it is further reason for a prologomenal "auto-criticism" of Marxism as it is to be employed within this thesis.

To deal with broad issues first, what claim can be made epistemologically in favour of Marxism? The issue of holism is perennially contentious. Critics of sociological theory often levy the charge that explanations in terms of social collectivities are essentially abstractions and that relations within these collectivities are reducible ultimately to the participating individuals themselves.

Argument about the relative advantages of methodological and epistemological individualism and holism in social science is as old as Hobbes. Sir Karl Popper, for instance, has seized on holism as the roots of twentieth century totalitarianism.<sup>43</sup> Political considerations aside, neither psychoanalytic nor behaviourist schools of psychology would deny the significance of social factors in individual personality formation. Likewise, it would be implausible to claim that a sociologist invoked no psychological assumptions in devising explanations. However, this action, rather than logically reducing sociology to psychology, merely implies another contingent relationship.

This leads into a second and highly tangled area of controversy namely the Marxist notion of "historical law" and, by implication, the Marxist notion of science. A first complication is the limited agreement which even Marxists themselves hold by claiming that there are historical laws and a second is the extent to which a claim in support of historical laws is intelligible. Nicholas Lobkowitz has provided a convenient comprehensive summary of what he sees as the Marxist position on historical laws:

- 1) all specific empirical social laws are historically limited;
- 2) general social laws which constitute the framework of social science are historically varying;
- 3) some historically limited social laws are tendential; and
- 4) laws that neither historically varying nor tendential are of no use to social science.<sup>44</sup>

Again, Popper has dismissed the concept of a historical law based on these four premises as preposterous and the essentials of his objections are reducible to these four points:

- 1) the evolution of the species or of human history as the sequences of organic or of socioeconomic formation are unique events, in which case one cannot distinguish what is merely a fact from what is lawful;
- 2) the notion of a developmental law is an illegitimate extrapolation of the physical notion of a "law of motion": a physical law never entails predictions about real facts except in connection with statements about what the present facts are - a developmental law, on the contrary, presumes to be a prediction, i.e. to anticipate qua law future development;
- 3) notions such as that of the law of history confuse laws with trends;
- 4) the very notion of scientific law entails that such a law is ahistorical.<sup>45</sup>

In response to the issue of the historical limitation of laws, Lobkowitz uses the example of Marx's famous law of progressive pauperisation of the proletariat. In a sense, this law is perfectly atemporal: it would hold whenever and wherever there is accumulation of capital, i.e. under the conditions of private property, the national income is reinvested in production. But this condition is nevertheless historical insofar as it occurs only in capitalist societies which are only a few centuries old. Moreover, the assumption implicit in Popper's position in which the conditions specified in the antecedent of a scientific law must be such that at least, in principle, they may occur at any time, is reasonable in the case of some aspects of nature (e.g. astronomy) but not in the case of others (e.g. biology).<sup>46</sup>

In the case of the claim that there are no developmental laws, Lobbkovicz submits that virtually any law can be construed as developmental. It would not seem unreasonable to expect that the basic form of a social formation such as capitalism lasts long enough to make predictions about its future development meaningful. With regard to the uniqueness of the history of mankind, Marx never mentioned a law of human history as a whole, as if this unique history were the only exemplification of that law; he wrote of developmental laws not of capitalism, but of capitalist societies.

However, a serious difficulty does arise in distinguishing laws from trends when comparing tribal society, say, in South America, Australia, and Africa and finding that development has followed an identical course but, in Marxian comparison of the development of England, France and Germany, it may be argued each society mutually influenced the other. There is also the insurmountable problem that Marxist explanation permits no reliable predictions. However, the untenability of historical laws is a problem common throughout all branches and schools of history and historical explanations can rarely be more than sketches. Nevertheless, the intellectual utility of historical laws lies perhaps in their postdictive, rather than predictive, capacities.

Lobbkovicz also invokes Hempel's distinction between explanation sketches and pseudoexplanations. While a scientifically acceptable explanation sketch is incomplete in that it needs to be filled-out with more specific statements but, at the same time, it clearly points in the direction where these statements are to be found. A pseudo-explanation subsumes phenomena under some general idea which, in

principle, is not amenable to empirical tests and, therefore, cannot indicate in which direction concrete research should turn.<sup>47</sup>

At this point in time, the actual relevance of a line of empirical research to Marxist theory and the attempt, on the researcher's part, to formulate various axioms or aspects of Marxism in falsifiable form to make them empirically testable militates against collapse into pseudo-explanation. Popper's insistence on the subjection of theories to critical tests as a method of verification would render a particular theory false if that theory were to be found inadequate on the basis of one particular test. As Kuhn has convincingly pointed out, theories in general are usually not given-up until an alternative theory turns-up which compares in explanatory power to the one in difficulty. Marxism is a challenge to social science: it offers an alternative, first, to a haphazard search for empirical social laws and, secondly, to an idea of social science that sees its ideal in the physical sciences, a branch of knowledge which legitimately ignores what social science probably cannot ignore, namely, history.<sup>48</sup>

## MARXISM AND IDEOLOGY

The question of Marxism's historical limitation raises a further epistemological issue, namely, that of whether or not, from a Marxist orientation, sociology as a discipline is distinguishable from Marxism? To state the question conversely, is there an epistemological "break" between "bourgeois sociology" and "scientific Marxism"? Is sociology a "value free" science? Does Marxism contain a theory of knowledge able to distinguish "fact" and "value"?

Literature in the sociology of knowledge has long demonstrated that scientific progress, both natural and social, is bound-up inextricably with the behaviour of social institutions of one kind or another. Although the Marxian notion of superstructure implies quite obviously and unapologetically that intellectual values and systems (including Marxism itself) are inevitably expressions of class ideology, the path to a solution to the epistemological dilemma is more elusive.

Within Marx's own writings, the main emphasis is put on the conflicts within society and the structural changes which result from these conflicts; and there is an underlying scheme of the progressive development of mankind. At the same time, as thinkers the ilk of Davis and van den Berghe contend, the theory does include some partial accounts of social solidarity and of the persistence of social forms. Marx's theory presents "conflict" and "equilibrium" models of society in juxtaposition: first, in a way in which conflict predominates social relations within the total society while solidarity and consensus prevail in many of the subgroups (especially social classes) in society; and, secondly, that in one historical period (the only one experienced up until now) conflict is predominant but, in another - located in the future - solidarity, cooperation and consensus will prevail.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the two models are irreconcilable, quite apart from errors which the "conflict" model may contain in the actual descriptions and explanations of societal conflict or class solidarity. (However, given the "levels" and nature of conflict which Simmel uses as illustration, it is not implausible that Simmel's notion of conflict facilitating social solidarity is capable of subsumption

by the Marxist notion.)<sup>49</sup>

Moreover, as the second view of Marxism eliminates conflict entirely in the hypothetical classless society of the future, it would seem also that conflict was unknown to the condition of human society before the extension of the division of labour and accumulation of private wealth. Nevertheless, the reflections of the late Chandra Jayawardena on Marshall Sahlin's Stone-Age Economics suggest that there are quite plausible reasons as to why, "materialistically" speaking, this should be so.<sup>50</sup>

It may be furthermore asserted not only that Marx himself never sacrificed positive science to metaphysics but also presumed that an entire sociological schema was never completed in his lifetime. Moreover, in all branches of science, it is virtually impossible to construct methodological approaches, techniques and instruments of investigation without such construction having been previously inspired by a particular body or line of theory.

The implications of determinism and ideology require scrutiny at this point. Once determinism enters a particular theory of economics, politics, psychology or sociology, there is, by implication, not only a loss of autonomy just of moral judgments but of all judgments. Marx's theory of ideologies, while excluding science from the realm of socially determined ideas, makes moral notions wholly ideological in the sense of reflecting the interests of social classes. Although Marx also expresses what appear to be absolute moral judgments, his thought on a universal ideal of morality is obscure. Bottomore suggests that, at most, an interpretation of Marx's ethical conceptions as being both

rationalist and historical is possible and plausible, i.e. an interpretation recognising some basic and permanent human needs which ought to be satisfied and which can be expressed in some coherent moral ideal and, yet seeing these needs as assuming different forms in different historical states of society.<sup>51</sup>

"[This] view," Bottomore continues,

permits a further problem in the theory of ideology to be resolved, namely, that although the theory appears as thoroughly as relativistic, it does<sup>52</sup> nonetheless permit unbounded dogmatism ...

which occurs in the following way: all moral ideas are class ideas

and thus are relative but (sociologically) the working class is the modern ascendant social class and its moral values are superior and consequently should prevail. Criticism of working class aspirations and means of attaining them can only arise from other class positions and are therefore de passe.<sup>53</sup>

Marx himself never dismissed any serious theoretical view merely on the grounds that it expressed a non-proletarian ideology. If Marxist sociology exhibits ideological bias it occurs nowhere other than, first, its adherence to the tradition of empirical testing (e.g. Marx's projected enquete ouvriere of 1880) of working class conditions and, secondly, investigation of the proletariat by the proletariat through a combination of factual elucidation and heightening of class consciousness.<sup>54</sup>

## INDIAN CLASS ANALYSIS

By virtue of capitalist development assuming such a wide spectrum of forms, an agrarian populace may equally emanate a socially specio-graphic image. In classical Marxist words, "they [peasants] do not form a [social] class".<sup>55</sup> In India where, for complex historical reasons of global dimension, capitalism has had a distorted growth, the task of defining peasantry, as it exists under contemporary conditions, in terms of the classical Marxian concept is equally as complex. In the absence of a dominating large-scale urban-centred industry together with the persistence of labour-intensive cultivation, Indian rural peasantry exists in various degrees of relative immobility.

Although the abolition of serfdom and the institution of private ownership of land may be socially sanctioned, it need not follow that, in form and practice, untied peasantry will necessarily differ from serfdom. Moreover, as Marx himself predicted, the emergence of private ownership need not be accompanied immediately by the generation of an economically and politically articulate buoyant bourgeoisie.<sup>56</sup>

Even though a peasant cultivator may compete with his neighbour for local resources such as land, irrigation or credit, the gemeinschaft cultural character of village life, facilitates mutual economic and psychological support: the cultivator may simultaneously be landowner, rentier, labourer, tenant, and share-cropper. While a cycle of plowing, sowing, irrigating, harvesting and threshing may dominate the daily and seasonal life of the cultivator, he can retreat into subsistence farming when adverse conditions affect a market crop.

This kaleidoscope of peasant society has inspired its students to construct typologies of peasants using classifications of landlord, rich peasant, middle peasant, landless labourer, etc. Lenin and Mao Tse Tung both approached the peasant stratum using similar categories. One of the more recent attempts at social typology of this kind has been that of Gough but, as with its precursors, her model finds validation only in particular circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

For this reason, Rudra's approach to the structure of rural society represents an original reinterpretation of Marxist principle. Because Marxian definitions of the constituents of a mode of production and social class are themselves too incomplete for rigorous application, the discernment of social classes in Rudra's schema is guided by evidence of class contradictions. In other words,

men 'who in the social production enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will' define various 'social groups' but only such 'social groups' constitute 'classes' as are subject to contradiction of interests arising from the way they are related to the means of production ... the distinction between such classes as say rich peasants and poor peasants is not as clear-cut as in the same way as in say the case of industrial capitalists and industrial proletariat.<sup>58</sup>

"Mode of production" is abandoned by Rudra in favour of "relations of production" but, in doing so, Rudra raises the problem of how his approach to capitalism in a specific country might integrate with Frank's thesis of capitalist development without necessitating the embrace of a world-wide spatial reference. Such an integration is logically possible but only partially so in practice, given the sheer magnitude of exhaustively identifying in detail every ganglion of linkage not to mention the enormity

of the analytical and interpretative process which the task of complete integration would entail. Rudra's attempted solution to the problem is to appeal to pragmatism whereby, he contends, that, for the purpose of practical sociological heuristics (and for radical, practical, revolutionary strategies), it is sufficient to obtain a "correct" class analysis (i.e. to obtain empirically correct characteristics of the different features or traits (e.g. relations of dominance) of classes taken in their dynamic setting) whether or not one can conceive all factors within the analysis constituting a mode of production such as capitalism or feudalism.<sup>59</sup>

In differentiating features and forms associated with capitalist and pre-capitalist relations, Rudra uses not specific criteria but broad "indicators". A critical distinction is made between capitalism and precapitalism in that the capital utilisation process differs just as the capital generation process. The characteristic differences between the two sets of relations, Rudra identifies as:

Capitalist relations:

- i) a surplus is extracted from 'free' sellers of labour-power in a commodity or resources production process;
- ii) a surplus is realised through exchange;
- iii) a surplus is re-invested giving rise to a continued process of accumulation of capital and ever-expanding reproduction;
- iv) the pursuit of profit leading to changes in the organic composition of capital and a continuous process of technological advancement.

Pre-capitalist relations:

- 1) a surplus is extracted through extra-economic coercion of 'unfree' labour;
- 2) a surplus is appropriated directly (and usually for local circulation and consumption) without intervention of any market;

- 3) a surplus dissipated in luxury consumption as well as in different unproductive investments, leaving stock of productive capital unchanged and production in a cycle of simple reproduction;
- 4) technology remains unchanged. <sup>60</sup>

This is the rudimentary methodological framework which was deployed in relation to the analysis of social life observed in the Bhupalgarh case study and which is used again in the case of Bhilwara. <sup>61</sup> Social change is assessable by using a two-dimensional conceptual matrix comprising

- 1) the demise of precapitalist relations of production and the emergence of capitalist ones;
- 2) the genesis (or likely genesis) of a developing class conflict which, in the wake of unrivalled concentration of wealth at one extreme and pauperisation at the other (with progressive elimination of intermediary strata), can be expected to attain sharper definition.

Other associated variables by which the evolution of labour organisation in Bhilwara may be evaluated are the functional division of labour, the growth of wage labour, the political organisation of labour and other institutional change evidential of the emergence of a proletarianising social class.

As it stands, the schema is adequate but still sufficiently imprecise as to warrant elaboration. First, the "spatial" reference cannot be conveniently glossed over for the sake of political revolutionary strategy. Colossal contrasts in the contemporary international division of labour moderates the place of Indian and, more particularly, Bhilwara labour within the development of a transnational proletariat. Consequently,

these contrasts mitigate any tendency towards viewing India in national isolation.

In the present international division of labour, more than three-quarters of the Third World's exports are primary products and nearly two-thirds of its imports are manufactured goods ...

By contrast, rich countries have diversified into many branches of trade, each one of which provides an insurance policy against problems in any of the others ... Only a few developing countries have succeeded in diversifying enough to make themselves less vulnerable to ups and downs. [Among these countries are] Singapore, Korea, Brazil, Mexico and India ...<sup>62</sup>

The necessity of viewing the revolutionary movement of the working class as one transcending national boundaries and stages of economic development has underlied traditional Marxism. Moreover, the uneven character of the development of capitalism in a global or imperial context was the subject of Lenin's first major empirical analysis of economic development in Russia. Frank's position on the issue of capitalism as a globally organised system may be concisely expressed in the following quotation:

My thesis is that underdevelopment as we know it today, and economic development as well, are the simultaneous and related products of the development on a world-wide scale and over a history of more than four centuries at least of a single Integrated economic system: capitalism. I suggest that the experience with mercantilism and capitalism should be understood to be part not only of a single historical process, the development of capitalism, but of the development of a single integrated system, the capitalist system which came to attain world-wide scope.<sup>63</sup>

Frank's vision does embody a specious conflation of several different social classes into one, e.g. Brazilian landowners, the Indian bourgeoisie,

and the great imperialist bourgeoisie would collectively represent fractions of a single class. However, what is useful in his thinking is the grasp of a hierarchical structure of world imperialism and the integration of precapitalist conditions into that framework. Equally important is Frank's ability to conceptualise the internality of imperialism: in parallel with external integration of an imperially dependent national economy, there is disarticulation and reintegration under imperialist hegemony. (As already mentioned, substantiation of many of Frank's propositions requires an international and historical economic knowledge of encyclopaedic proportion. Furthermore, Frank's own researches have been confined predominantly to Latin America and his approaches to development are not without their critics, even among Marxists.)

The extract of surplus value from labour power in a commodity production process is an important feature of Rudra's first index of capitalist relations. The distinction between productive and unproductive labour is a vital one in Marxist contributions on contemporary capitalist society, e.g. those of Poulantzas.<sup>64</sup> From the standpoint of capital, only that labour is productive which works for the self-expansion of capital by producing surplus value. All workers collectively engaged in production within the capitalist sector are productive on this basis. This leaves two distinct groups of workers who were thus categorised by Marx as unproductive. First, workers in the sphere of circulation for example commercial workers, salesmen, advertising agents, many workers in the retail trade and so forth. Though they are employed by capital in just the same way as productive workers they help realise the value embodied in commodities, they do not in any way produce it.

The second group of unproductive workers comprises those workers who are not employed by capital at all and therefore do not produce either value or surplus value. Workers in nationalised industries and other state trading enterprises are excluded from this category if they produce commodities for sale and in the process realise surplus value. This leaves all state workers who produce services and goods that are not sold, hence do not assume the form of commodities: these groups of labour are exchanged with revenue, not with capital. In these sectors money is not advanced to purchase labour power and means of production which are then put to work to produce a commodity which can be sold for a sum in excess of the original values embodied in its production. Instead, the outlays of labour and equipment are financed usually by taxation and the end product is simply 'consumed' directly as a use value: no surplus value is generated.<sup>65</sup>

It should be noted here that this concept of unproductive labour has nothing to do with whether the output produced is a good or a service, nor with its inherent usefulness or desirability. A capitalist firm may employ workers to produce services which realise surplus value for it in just the same way as the production of goods. Similarly, a useless or positively harmful product will embody productive labour if produced in the capitalist sector to realise a profit, whereas many health, social and welfare services meeting basic needs are unproductive if they do not realise profits and surplus value. No moral evaluations of any kind ought to be implied in using the concepts of productive and unproductive labour.<sup>66</sup>

The purpose of the distinction is to explain the origin and extent of surplus value within capitalism and to understand the process of

capital accumulation and growth. Succinctly, the greater the surplus value generated by productive workers, the greater the potential rate at which capital can expand. It is a greater potential rate, because the surplus value can be utilised in ways other than purchasing more labour and equipment to produce yet more surplus value.

The generation and utilisation of capital in the Marxist understanding is not a straightforward process. While the economic or materialist interpretation of historical change necessitates the logical precedence of economic factors, non-economic institutional structures and superstructural factors have significant roles in the generation and utilisation of capital. (As mentioned earlier in this chapter, for the likes of Godelier and Poulantzas, non-economic considerations are of poignant relevance to the determination of social structure based on class.) Marx himself wrote:

Relations of production must necessarily express themselves also as political and legal relations. Within the division of labour these relations are bound to assume an independent existence vis a vis the individuals.<sup>67</sup>

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control, at the same time, over the means of mental production, so that in consequence of the ideas, those who lack the means of production, are in general, subject to it.<sup>68</sup>

And, as Schumpeter points out

Social structures, types and attitudes are coins that do not readily melt. Once they are formed they persist, possibly for centuries, and since different structures and types display different degrees of this ability to survive, we almost find that actual group and national behaviour more or less departs from what we should expect it to be if we tried to infer it from the dominant forms of the productive process.<sup>69</sup>

Associated historically with the development of wage labour has been the development of trade unions whose status in traditional Marxist thought has been ubiquitous, if not perjorative! Marx himself left no detailed analysis of the place of trade unionism in capitalist society. Underlying his work is the idea that trade unions are "schools of socialism" and, on this theme, he wrote:

Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance - combination.

In the course of time such organizations of working men meet ever-increasing resistance from their employers who 'in their turn unite for the purpose of repression'. Hence the workers are gradually forced from their original position. 'The maintenance of the association becomes more necessary to them than that of wages ... Once it has reached this point, association takes on a political character.'<sup>70</sup>

Marx gradually modified his views and perceived the Communist Party assuming a superiority as the "vanguard of the working class".

Lenin too held a pessimistic view of trade unionism and regarded the trade union struggles of his time as economic ones which were geared to improve conditions of labour (and pay). Hence, these struggles were forms of bourgeois rather than socialist politics and, alone, they were obsolete in securing any improvement in the working class as a whole.<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, trade union activity was organised on a basis of either trade or craft which consequently had the effect of dividing workers into strata or segments that, in turn, militated against the

formation of a class consciousness.

Trade unionists may play a part in the historical process by organising successfully for economic reforms which reduce the number of capitalists facing them, but they need not intend to achieve this nor need they be aware that it is a consequence of their action. Strikes which result in a shorter working week or in an increase in wages which the employer finds difficult to pass on to the consumer, may not be designed to cause the firm to search for new ways of maintaining his share of surplus labour by forcing less efficient or less ruthless competitors out of business, but insofar as this occurs, polarisation without pauperisation is intensified. Political agitation which leads, say, to measures to prevent destitution or unemployment, may equally be carried on without the further understanding that an accompanying result is the amassing of the control of more and more capital in fewer and fewer hands.

Such trade union activities, economic and political, are not revolutionary in the class-conscious sense of that term, unless they are informed by the clear understanding that a new social system, structurally different from capitalism, is the inevitable outcome and it should be emphasised that, as a political movement, trade unionism must have this sense of the inevitability of history, if it is to qualify as an arm of the proletariat. Insofar as class consciousness amongst trade unionists exists, it will take the form of economic and political agitation to change the power structure of economic life in this general direction.

It should be clear that, as a matter of empirical fact, trade union

leaders and trade union members often carry on economic and political struggles without this further end in view. It should also be clear that one of the tasks of those intellectuals who, in Lenin's sense, form the revolutionary leadership of the working class will be to demonstrate to trade unionists that their achievements are precarious and indeed that they can achieve even better results for themselves and their fellows by following the more radical program. If the Marxist notion of the transition from capitalism to the next epoch is valid, moreover, it should also be true that intellectuals will succeed in this the more the employers in a given industry embark upon policies to make their businesses big. According to Marx, the "class movement of the proletariat" would be led by the "proletarians created by big industry" who would "carry the whole mass along with them".<sup>72</sup>

At the economic level, the Marxist approach to industrial relations consists in emphasising that the industrial scene is marked by bodies of capitalists and workers, sometimes unorganised, sometimes highly organised, struggling together to maintain their relative positions in the power system whereby the products of necessary and surplus labour are distributed between the two classes. It is converted to the political level whenever either side to the struggle seeks to influence the state machinery to intercede on its behalf.

Provided that all the endeavours of workers in their organisations (whether they are motivated by trade-union consciousness only, or by Marxist revolutionary class consciousness) tend towards the conversion of capitalist enterprise into state, municipal or cooperative enterprise, they will be playing the part in history which the Marxist

interpretation asserts they will play. The real test of this interpretation is whether it is falsified or supported by fact. Hence the task of the sociologist who wishes to make genuine scientific use of the Marxist intellectual apparatus for sociological purposes, is to find ways of converting this form of analysis of the relationships between capitalist employers and their employees into testable propositions about the behaviour of members of identifiable trade unions employed by identifiable business organisations.

An historical correlation between economic dominance and prestige in the Hindu caste hierarchy predominantly has tended to characterise socially the Indian subcontinent's Hindu population. Moreover, in those parts of contemporary India where cultural Westernisation or intellectually radical Hindu movements have not yet penetrated, ideology and rules of caste may impinge significantly on economic and social obligations, impose social and economic discrimination, and influence economic, social and political cleavages.

A systematic exposition of the theory of Hindu caste as a national institution of social hierarchy intelligibly valued by its practitioners is essential to an investigation such as this and is conveniently provided by Dumont in his treatise, Homo Hierarchicus.<sup>3</sup> Basic constituents of caste and its history may be gleaned from Dumont's work, Basham's equal classic, The Wonder That Was India<sup>74</sup> and, most recently, from Beteille's Backward Classes.<sup>75</sup> At the end of the Rg Veda period (900 BCE) the fourfold division of Indian society was regarded as fundamental, primeval, and divinely ordained. The first three castes (varnas) were the Brahmin (priest), Kshatryia (warrior) and Vaishnya

(merchant/artisan). The dvija or "twice-born" superiority (a birth into the world and a birth into caste status) of members of these three varnas was denoted by their investiture with a sacred thread. The fourth varna was the servile labourer vicariously called shudra. Beyond the pale of caste were untouchables called pariah. In addition to a common dharma or general norm of conduct, there were specific dharmas for members of each varna.

In later Hinduism, relations between classes and social groups were governed by rules of endogamy (marriage among members of a group), commensality (food only to be received from and eaten in the presence of members of the same group), and jajmani or craft exclusiveness and occupational obligations.

As a general rule, prestige and status within the caste hierarchy derives from the pursuit of a "pollution-free" existence (i.e. free from ideologically "soul-polluting" contact with dead animals or humans, meat, excrement, untouchables and intoxicating liquor, and maintaining spiritual purity through regular ceremonial bathing and tonsures). "Scheduled castes" are those castes whose members have pursued traditionally "polluting" occupations such as cobbling, tanning and butchery, and which have been gazetted as "scheduled" in terms of the Indian federal constitution.

## FIELD RESEARCH

Fieldwork associated with this investigation occurred in two stages. The first stage occupied the period 15 November 1980 to

3 January 1981, during which a preliminary survey was made of Bhilwara's geography to ascertain the number, location and physical size of the town's industrial establishments. Opportunity was also available in which to ascertain briefly the physical conditions under which workers laboured and lived. The location and functions of government agencies in the town was sought. Initial introductions were established with resident officials and workers.

Having spent four months in nearby Bhupalgarh two years previously and having had to visit Bhilwara a number of times then, the author had already a substantial exposure to Bhilwara's environs and the predominantly Mewari cultural heritage. It would be pointless for an aspiring sociologist to study the behaviour of quite foreign people merely by observation for he or she would know so little about the culture of the people that he would have difficulty in understanding why the people were doing what they were doing.

Consultations with dissertations on local labour welfare held by the library of Manikya Lal Verma (MLV) Government College, Bhilwara, indicated how unreliable and inappropriate the application of conventional survey instruments would be when the population concerned was largely unskilled, illiterate and highly suspicious. It was obvious that rapport between the writers and the labourers had in all cases been a strained one. Nearly a decade past, Srinivas drew attention to the allergy of psychologists to "the dirt and dust of [the villages of] India". Bhilwara is not so different and it comes as a surprise to see how appalled Indian students and their teachers become at the suggestion that they familiarise themselves with "grass roots" living, be it life in either a workers' housing colony or life in an agricultural

village.

Another factor inhibiting to communication had been language. Authors of the library dissertations had invariably been conversant in Hindi but not in Mewari. Given that most of the casual workers in Bhilwara were recruited from the rural sector, they would have been estranged immediately at the sound of Hindi. (The author did not overlook the fact that the most prosperous medical practice in Bhilwara was conducted by a Mewari-speaking doctor.)

The second stage of field work was undertaken between 15 December 1981, and 21 April 1982. During this period, the author resided in a bungalow on a new housing estate situated at the centre of Bhilwara's industrial quarter and only a half-kilometre distant from the business centre. The location was in comfortable cycling distance from the municipal boundaries, all local sources of information, informants, respondents, public functions, public processions, cinemas, recreation grounds, and religious shrines. The author was ably assisted in interpretation by a second-year university Arts student, fluent in both English and Mewari.

While a substantial amount of factual material researched in this investigation was available from published sources, the period of residence as a participant observer permitted opportunity to fill gaps and lacuna which publications and other documentary sources did not cover. Given the extent to which official corruption can exist in India, it was important to ascertain under what circumstances official corruption might take place and the form in which it could take. Structured interviews selected on the basis of systematic samples

would have had serious limitations. The opportunity of visiting homes of people with a wide range of backgrounds, on open invitation or through introduction, sharing meals, informal dialogue, chai and various confidences enabled access to knowledge about individual and group attitudes and aspirations which would not otherwise have been possible. Similarly, some information from one source could be corroborated or questioned by information from another source.

Having numerous contacts through workers whose place of original domicile had been either Bhupalgarh or one of its satellite villages and being assisted by a Mewari speaker, introduction to the "shop floors" were made with reasonable ease. As Bhilwara is now a fast-growing urban centre, it is doubtful whether a sole researcher could again be able to circulate in Bhilwara so widely and with such familiarity.

Being so obviously a farengi (and angrezi at that) it was hardly possible to be unobtrusive. The participant observation technique oftentimes implies an identification with a regular participant in the community or group under study and a commitment on the observer's part to a clandestine role. In the case of Bhilwara, the reason for the author's presence was made known and no subterfuge or ethical compromise was necessary. In any event, "participation" as an "actor" within the group under study may only be cosmetic and not involve a critical convergence of interests between those of the group and those of the observer.

The author's status as a foreign student was inclined to threaten some individuals on initial contact but, as it was realised that the author's concerns did not compete with theirs, dialogue was apt to

improve. Obvious associations with members of minorities such as Muslims, Harijans and charmars as well as police, factory managers, and hospital staff together with my purchases of vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods from the market diminished identification in the eyes of the public with any particular social group.

Despite the technique's long history in American, European and, indeed, Indian research as a "mode of involvement" in social organisation, it has always been difficult to provide extensive or coherent accounts of the actual research procedures employed.<sup>76</sup> This is due in part to the subtlety of the practice of participant observation and, in part, to complexities of the subject matter under study: participant observation has been regarded therefore more as a craft than a technique, the essential tools in this case being a retentive memory and a daily diary.<sup>77</sup>