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# D P Mukerji on the Middle Class in India

Reading : Chakraborty, D 2010, D P Mukerji and the Middle Class in India, *Sociological Bulletin* 59(2), May-August 235-255

This paper seeks to understand about the origin and composition of the Indian middle class, and their role in modernization of India during colonial and post-colonial times.

# The Origin of Middle Class-I

- For DP, the middle class were the product of colonial economic and educational policy.
- The landlords and the literati formed the new middle class, who were mostly alienated from the language and culture of people.
- These landlords remained detached from both agricultural productivity and responsibility towards the villagers.

# The Origin of Middle Class-II

- Similarly, English education gave birth to a class who supported their colonial masters and were psychologically and socially distant from the masses who did not know English.
- As the new middle class were isolated from the masses, they were termed as a 'spurious middle class' by him.
- DP asserted that because of the rootlessness of the middle class, it would be unrealistic for such an 'elite' to lead the independent India on a genuine path of modernization.

# Role of Indian Middle Class

- Contributed to the consolidation of the British rule.
- They led a successful nationalist struggle against that very regime.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Century social reform movement.
- Launched a socialist struggle.
- They brought about Partition of the country.
- They became the main force behind planned social change in post-independent India.

# Mode of Change

- DP negated the western values of 'individualism' as the basis of class societies, as well as the type of social control inherent in the caste society of India. Instead, a socialist society for him would ensure better development of personalities of all members of society, where 'sociality' would be highlighted.
- Indians would reach this stage under the leadership of middle class. Unlike the Marxist positions, he had not found the emergence of leadership from peasants and workers in the 1950s.

# Concluding Remarks

- Rationalism was the basic approach of DP's philosophy. He gave primacy to reason not only as a tool of understanding, but also to develop personality.
- Being a member of middle class himself, he did not commit the mistake of neglecting Indian tradition, which he studied in terms of both its continuity and change.