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**C H A P T E R - I I**

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON**

**WHITE COLLAR WORKERS IN INDIA**

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## CHAPTER - II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON

### WHITE COLLAR WORKERS IN INDIA

The last Chapter dealt with the industrial development of Kolhapur with particular emphasis on the development of engineering industry in and around the city. As the present work deals with the office workers in engineering industry, in this Chapter an attempt is made to present a brief review of literature on white collar workers in India.

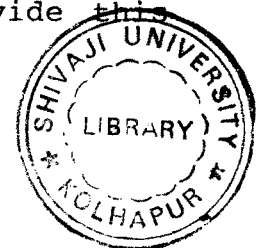
### THE CONCEPT OF "NEW MIDDLE CLASS" :

Theoretically there has been a continuing and lively debate regarding the position and prospects of "New Middle Class" which is mainly composed of white collar job-holders.

Historically speaking, Marx recognised three categories i.e., workers, capitalists and land owners in the third volume of Das Capital : at that time there were no empirical reasons to mention the white collar group. Kautsky was aware of the expansion of new middle class, but he considered it relatively unimportant since this non-bourgeois middle class would both sociologically (in class position) and psychologically (in class consciousness) become more and more like the proletariat. Again, A. W. Ijzerman, though retained

A. W. Ijzerman, though retained the formula 'Manual Workers + Office Workers = Proletariat', acknowledged the existence of deep-rooted psychological differences between the two categories. Kruijt continued this line of thought by empirically establishing that there is a cleavage (dichotomy or segregation) between them in many areas, such as home, education, clubs, way of life, work, religion and marriage. He views blue and white collar workers as two distinct worlds that rarely touch, scarcely know each other and lead their own lives. This theoretical development was taken to its ultimate conclusion in 1952 by the American Sociologist Peter Drucker. In direct contradiction of Kautsky, he described how not the office workers are being absorbed by the proletariat, but how, on the contrary, the manual workers are conforming to the pattern of the new middle class. For Drucker, this new class dominates the social structure, with 'employeehip' determining the norms and behaviour of the working population.<sup>1</sup>

According to Mark Van de Vall, the term 'new middle class' in itself implies that the employees belonging to it are neither manual workers nor entrepreneurs. It covers a whole range of ranks and jobs from Typist to Manager and from Policeman to Secretary of State. It is customary to divide this group into lower intermediate



define the term white collar workers. They have noted that "one major definition we found to be quite inadequate divided jobs between those who used their brains and those who used physical strength. This distinction, tenuous at the outset, is rendered almost meaningless by changes in work methods and production techniques and the advent of computerisation. In any event, most jobs require a combination of brain and muscle power and far too many, other than the limited categories of philosophers and tube tunnellers, are too difficult to classify. A second method attempted was the 'functional job content' approach. This involves listing certain functions such as administrative, design, analysis and planning, supervisory, managerial and commercial, with sub-functions within each function. The rationale behind this system is that those were the functions at one time performed by the entrepreneur and that as the size of the concern grew so responsibilities were delegated. Apart from the irrelevance of the delegation argument and the growth of public-sector and non-industrial commercial or other productive sectors, the major defect is again contained in the nomination of the functions and sub-functions themselves and the grey areas so formed. A third method, the so-called eclectic method, is based on whether the employee works in a mechanical or bureaucratic environment, but has to define which is which in a laboratory, or what, say, to do with the site managers in the building

and higher levels. Mark Van de Vall includes employees whose work is exclusively or primarily white collar in nature, everyone performing routine clerical work, simple service or junior supervisory tasks in the 'lower level' of the "new middle class".<sup>2</sup>

**THE CONCEPT OF "WHITE COLLAR WORKERS" :**

The white-collar terminology arose from the notion that certain employees worked in an environment which was so clean that the white-collar could easily be worn without the fear of it being soiled or ruined, whilst for the majority of employees in a dirty environment, this was treated as natural condition.

Many definitions, some more complex than others, have been offered, but none as yet has managed to overcome the attendant exceptions and anomalies thrown up by the definition itself. The basic trouble is obvious : it is a status concept, very much in the eye of the person concerned, not the beholder, leading to sociological ramblings and omissions. To add to the confusion, some jobs seem to fall into a permanent grey area and defy attempts at basic or simple classification. Policemen, the Armed Forces and Musicians are examples of groups of workers whose status is indeterminate.<sup>3</sup> Clive Jenkins and Barrie Sherman have critically examined some attempts to

industry - the solution to these problems is not stated. A final method of classification is proximity to authority. This argues that the man or woman sitting behind a desk has authority imparted by that desk, but then so does an articulated lorry driver looking down from a lofty driving cabin - so far as the physically lower family car driver is concerned.<sup>4</sup>

According to S. M. Pandey, the term 'manual' or blue-collar generally refers to those categories of workers who generally wear work-cloths, work for longer hours, enjoy relatively fewer privileges, and are paid according to working hours, days or the amongst of work done. We may call them as 'Non-White Collar Workers'. They usually come from very low income groups, mostly driven from their villages due to their poverty. Their formal education is limited, their wages are low, their chances of promotions are restricted.

The concept of 'non-manual' worker is loose, and the distinction between manual and non-manual work is more traditional and conventional rather than literal. The term 'white-collar' may be more appropriate for the category of so-called 'non-manual workers'. It denotes a different type of social group, whose deviant work-behaviour and way of life signify their deep rooted divergences in their socio-economic background, levels of education, manner of

speech, social customs and ideology as contrasted with the non-white-collar category.

The work-tasks performed by white-collar workers and their physical conditions of work have also traditionally been contrasted with those of other workers. They have been engaged and paid over relatively longer intervals, enjoying longer holidays and other privileges. The attitude of the management towards white collar workers has been far from being hostile. All these special attributes of white-collar workers make them different in terms of their - willingness to unionise, their attitude towards the use of strike-weapon to fulfill their demands, and their attitudes to their work, employer and unions.<sup>5</sup>

#### STUDIES ON WHITE COLLAR WORKERS IN INDIA :

There are various sociological studies of management personnel as well as of blue collar workers. However, the category of office workers in industries has not - received adequate academic attention by the sociologists in India. There are very few sociological studies dealing with white collar workers in India.

Concerned primarily with the directions of change in the behaviour pattern of white-collar workers, and some its causes, S. M. Pandey notes that 'the behaviour pattern of white-collar workers has undergone a radical change in

recent time. This is evident from their increasing use of direct militant action; their increasing political involvement; their emphasis on common collective action, and their concern with wider social, economic and political issues. Among the more important factors, responsible for this change in white-collar behaviour are ; loss of prestige and discriminatory treatment in the hands of the employers, mounting inflationary pressure which has shattered the illusions of white-collar workers, increasing amount of educated unemployment, threat to job-security; and declining promotional opportunities. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the behaviour pattern of white-collar workers has become identical with the non-white-collar workers either in form or in extent.<sup>6</sup>

Goil's paper is mainly and largely devoted to the study of white collar unions and their problems in M.P.

Goil notes that, generally speaking, unionism in areas with predominantly white collar employment in M.P. has lagged behind the country as a whole.

The unions were asked to give the factors which, they felt, had helped in the growth of unionism among white collar employees in the latter years and also those that stood in the way of such growth.



Growing number of white collar employees and rising prices, among others, were pointed out to be most important contributory factors to the growth of such unions in recent years.

The main difficulties that were mentioned were , indifference of the employees, employer's opposition, union and leadership rivalries and, in some cases, restrictive administrative provisions.<sup>7</sup>

S. D. Punekar's study is based on a survey of white-collar unions in Greater Bombay. 21 Unions of white-collar employees were selected by purposive sampling. The paper attempts to trace the genesis, growth, finances, nature and functions of white-collar unions, and their affiliation patterns to the all-India level, Punekar observes that, the white-collar unionism is a recent development. The oldest union in the sample was started in 1928 by the Father of Indian Trade Unionism, N. M. Joshi. The remaining 20 unions came into existence after 1931. Most of them were started immediately before or after Independence. Their growth is due to the expansion in employment. Except for one, all unions were financially well off. Their main sources of income are membership fees and donations. The items of expenditure were mainly establishment charges and litigation expenses. Most of the unions were started to obtain better earning and better administrative facilities.

Hence the usual issues on which white-collar unions have fought have included better pay scales, more fringe benefits, internal promotion, rational salary structure, and almost absent, except for some co-operative societies, canteens, libraries, and recreational facilities. In most cases, such work is entrusted to the employer or to the joint committee. Members have been dissatisfied with the neglect of welfare work by their unions. The method of collective bargaining is usually followed, but in a haphazard manner. The first normal step is preparation and submission to management of a charter of demands, usually with monetary demands. If this charter is neglected by the management, direct agitational methods are resorted to. Employees of Government had certain limitations about their unionism so far. Government service conduct Rules placed many restrictions on their organisational activities. They could not resort to agitational activities easily because of their responsibilities towards law and order. Lately, however, Government employees unions have increasingly taken on the agitational approach. In many cases strikes, or threats of strikes, have led to negotiation, arbitration, and often to agreements. Litigation has become a common method of white-collar trade unionism, though a few unions have claimed success without litigation or strike. In short, white-collar unions have two main methods - agitation and litigation. Though, on the whole,

the white-collar unions are independent, some political influence is evident because of politicians placed in advisory roles. In many unions - insurance, commercial, engineering, nurses, etc. - outsiders are Presidents or Advisors. Nevertheless, it is claimed that, inspite of association with outsiders, unions of white-collar employees are independent, at least in their internal affairs. As white-collar unionism - particularly of its militant kind - is of recent origin, the management attitude has not been crystallised. The usual attitude is one of opposition to this break from the traditional pattern of staff-management relations. The white-collar gentry was mild and law-abiding. When they took to the militant, agitational approach, managements took to victimisation, and hostility. However, with the growing strength of unions, the futility of this attitude was evident. In most concerns now, trade unions have been accepted as representative organisations of employees.<sup>8</sup>

R. C. Goyal observes that, in post Second World War period, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of non-manual or white collar workers in India in the last two decades. The tremendous growth of industries increase in the number of banks, insurance companies, commercial offices and establishments and the increase in the number of Government and semi-Government offices have

all contributed to the phenomenal growth. The number of persons engaged in non-manual occupations in 1951 was about 23 millions. In 1961, however, this figure has gone upto 28.7 millions indicating an increase of more than 5.7 million.

The figures indicate a pattern of quick growth over a period of ten years in the number of white-collar workers. But more impressive have been the growth of trade unionism among white collar workers and the increase in the membership of some unions among white collar workers.

Chances are that due to rapid changes in technology, innovations, and spread of automation, the proportionate increase in the white-collar work force will be much larger and more rapid. Similarly looking to the trend of unionism in the last 10 to 15 years it can also be predicted that the rate of growth of unions and membership in white collar workers will be much more rapid as compared to other groups.<sup>9</sup>

Ramnathan G. has studied leading trends in the social attitudes of clerks in Bombay City. He has studied the pattern of life, dress, manners, leisuretime activities etc.<sup>10</sup>

Punekar and Savur's study deals with Management-white collar relations. A cross section of the white-collar employees have been studied by adopting the method of random

sampling. Eleven large scale establishments from both the public and private sectors were selected. The authors note that, the white collar worker is essentially a family man. Alienated from his work life, the family is the immediate and only context in which his sensibilities operate. It is only here as a father, brother or son, that he lives a psychologically active if not an absolutely satisfactory life, for the work and family life cannot be absolutely compartmentalized, when they are both linked and controlled by the economic conditions. In his work life, he is - habituated into a mere automaton but is shaken into awareness when he comes to grips with life in his home. In the resolution of the crisis of consciousness lies the future of the white collar workers, the so-called middle class, the backbone of our society. The general picture of the white collar employees is that the vast majority consider work as a source of 'livelihood'. A good many of the white collars, in a few organizations, state that they are - 'interested', in their work. Most others express their discontent.

The analysis reveals that the quality of relationship between the two groups is not harmonious. It is not emotion but lack of emotion that prevents a complete - rapprochement between the two groups. A close analysis has revealed while collar's ignorance of both their company's

aims and objectives as well as the personnel policies. This picture of union-management relations is in a sorry state.

In relation to unionization, the fundamental barrier for the white collar is his status consciousness, his contempt for the illiterate blue collar, and the imagined belief that unionization is a typical blue collar activity. In order to differentiate himself from the blue collar, the traditional lower class or the working class - the white collar, the literate group which prides itself as the middle class, tries to identify itself with the management. For the psychological satisfaction of identification with the management, the higher middle class group, he is prepared to a large extent to sacrifice economic gains through unionization.

Although the white collar man attempts to create a sense of prestige for his salaried position, this is fast crumbling due to levelling of skills, rationalization, routinization, and mechanization of his work. The growing impersonality of his job with the rise of literacy, when his job is neither scarce nor envied, white collar ceases to have any correlation to status; therefore, Punekar and Savur find in their sample extensive unionization but - without any intensive desire. A great part of the weakness

of our industrial relations stems from lack of uniformity as well as from inadequacy of labour legislations.

A part from this, what is a great fear to collective bargaining procedure is ministerial intervention and their interim settlements that they bring about. By this system of political intervention, the whole machinery of industrial relations stands discredited. Psychologically, then, the workers lose their faith in their union leaders and their unions and the whole labour movement gets weakened. Apart from inept leadership and apathetic attitude of the workers, the misfortunes of the working class, white or blue collar is partly due to unsympathetic role of the Government and to the slow erratic "growth" of our economy.

Another heavy weakness of the trade union movement is to be found in the function of the unions themselves. Punekar and Savur sample reveals that none of the unions were in the true sense of the word, political or revolutionary unions of the European socialist variety.

It is now almost established fact that trade union movement has inept leadership. In the advanced system of collective bargaining, what is needed is hard headed, ruthless bargaining manoeuvres which are often carried out by professional negotiators. The utility of

professional, outside leaders or negotiators cannot be denied but its weakness must also be recognised. The weakness of dependence on outside leadership lies in the fact that members become more cowlike and natural leaders are not thrown up. Only inside leaders would know the immediate problems of the group. Lack of trained leaders to some extent may be due to paucity of funds. Training in union skills is necessary before one can enter into the arena of power relations, out training also implies finance. Finance is necessary to protect its workers during strike periods or its militant members from being "Fired". Many of the union members are apathetic. This is not to deny that they do not realise the utilitarian aspect of unionisation. A vast majority want the unions to continue their work, but into which they evidently do not wish to be seriously involved. In other words, they wish to preserve their ancient "middle class" values of respectability, but at the same time wish to get the advantages that unions reap for them. If this is not a mass opportunistic behaviour, it may only be explained that economic needs jostle with the old psychological attitude creating the ambivalent white collar.

Thus, the above brief review of available and accessible literature indicates that, the studies on



white collar workers in India are very few and most of the available studies have focussed their attention on white collar unionism. Therefore there is an urgent need to undertake full-scale studies on white collar workers in India. focus?

The next chapter deals with the methodological aspects of the present study.

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