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Book Review

Shukla, Shweta 2023: Globalization, Ideology and The Middle Class. Meerut; ETDR Publications, Hardbound, pp. 132+viii.

Globalization, in general, and cultural globalization, in particular, have become well-trodden subjects of social scientific research for the last three decades. However, some aspects of connections among class, ideological forms, and globalization are yet to be explored to unravel the dynamics and spread of globalization. The book under review is based on an empirical study of the relationship between globalization, culture, and ideology among the middle classes in a substantive context of Lucknow, India paying special attention to the youth of the middle classes who belong to the Gen-Z of 21st Century but also are considered to be the carriers of the globalization. The book attempts to provide a socio-theoretical reflection on key elements of ideology, culture, and tradition. The process of globalization has been analyzed in the context of its patterns of communication, cultural elements, and ideological issues. An effort has been made to find out the impact of such dimensions of globalization on the youth of a developing city like Lucknow. The study also attempts to explore the cultural basis of globalization by identifying the major global ideological standpoints, discourses, and values as different from the traditional, modern, or western values, along with the material aspects and the cultural practices with regard to professional, relational, institutional, and societal aspects. The instruments of cultural productions & interactions (means of communication, media networks) have also been investigated.

The author argues that the ideology and culture of globalization are embedded in the nature and uses of communication – the global means of communication or the ‘new media’ and a particular kind of technology involving the use of computers, smartphones, etc. The ‘new media’ has become a big market in society, and the youth are the biggest consumers in this market. It is very logical and obvious, as the process of globalization is a contemporary process; it therefore has a direct and rational correspondence with the youth section of society. Moreover, to examine if the ideological practices and culture of globalization are being adopted by society or not, then it mainly rests on this section of society. It would be obvious that the professionally educated, trained youth adopt it at a faster rate than the other sections. In addition, if one wants to know the ideology and culture of the middle class, it is necessary to analyze the youth. The youth represent both the class and the process.

The author argues that the middle-class youth as represented by the respondents of her study 'portrays a form of diversity in their profile and background. Rooted in the traditional social structure, they are shaping their independent socio-economic status along the new lines of political economy. They are no longer stuck to the traditional occupational categories rather have been adaptive to the new employment opportunities (p.117). On the one hand, the youth wishes to play safe and secure demonstrating a conservative outlook but on the other, it is ready to take up new challenges and professions of the global economy beyond the boundaries of the city or nation. She concludes that the present middle-class youth's life worlds backed by the traditional forces are being shaped by emerging global trends. Ranging from their dressing pattern to their eating habits, leisure time, and communicative patterns they display change and resilience. The emerging patterns of change are in correspondence to the global forces where the traditional ethos of familial, caste, and national ties are still alive. Their socio-cultural background reveals that the educationally qualified professional youth is not homogeneous but rather amorphous (p.119-120)."

The book under review meticulously examined the process of cultural globalization in a globalizing city, namely, Lucknow, empirically. Her findings suggest that instead of homogenization, globalization is creating a hybrid culture among the youth in India. The middle class is eager to adopt the new consumer culture created by globalization but also looking positively at its economic impact on new professional jobs in order to improve its income and status. The book is very useful for students, teachers, and researchers working in the field of globalization and new media.

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