

Book Reviews

Arthur J. Vidich 1995: *The New Middle Classes: Life-Status Claims and Political Orientations*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd. pp. 405+12.

The book under review is designed to provide a theoretical orientation and historical perspective on the rise of the middle classes in modern civilization, and to portray the social and political roles these classes have played and continue to play in the United States over the past century, with particular reference to the American class structure and political economy. It reveals both the genealogical development of sociological thought about the middle classes and the substantive content of these classes 'life-styles, status claims and political orientations. The work stresses empirical studies and puts forth neither a theoretical interpretation nor a conceptual taxonomy; rather, it delineates the emergences and the social and political significance of the new middle classes in relation to the classes above and below, that preceded them.

The book is divided into four Parts, the Part-I deals with the 'Emergence of the New Middle Classes: Theoretical Problems and Historical Changes' consists four chapters. In the Part-II focuses upon 'The Status Sphere and The Psychology of Classes. The Part-III concentrates, however, on 'The Middle Classes in the United States'. In the last part 'The New Class System in the United States : Life-Styles and Political Orientation' is discussed (chapter 13,14,15,16 and 17).

In chapter 1- "The Discovery of the New Middle Classes", Val Burris's reviews and evaluates the entire spectrum of classical literature on the middle classes including that of Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein, Carl Dreyfuss, Theodor Geiger and others. Burris also shows the genealogical connections between these earlier discoveries of the new middle classes and such later students of the subjects such as C. Wright Mills, Daniel Bell, Alvin Gouldner and James Burnham. Burris provides not only a summary of the literature on the new middle classes but also an estimation of that literature's most critical historical moment. In chapter 2- "The New Middle Class" Emil Lederer and Jacob Marschak have carefully analyzed the occupational, organizational status, political and personal identity problems of the middle sectors of German society at a time when the rumblings of fascism were already being heard. They perceived in raw detail of the political implications of middle-class occupational insecurities. Hans Speier in Chapter-3, "Middle Class Notion and Lower Class Theory" presents a general empirical framework for the understanding those social, status and economic factors that separate blue from white-collar workers. Speier points out the uneradicated differences between the social and psychological predispositions of the new middle classes. Speier also analyses new-middle class prestige aspirations and their concomitant status defensiveness as they manifested themselves in specific industries and occupations, providing what are virtually ethnographic portraits of higher and lower administration, foremen and workers, technicians and engineers, typists, secretaries each at different levels of the respective hierarchies. Speier came close to providing a complete description of the inner differences and

complexities of these classes, an accomplishment that since that time has not been repeated in the studies of the middle classes. In the Chapter 4- "The Growth of the New Middle Class", Anthony Giddens illustrates the process of the development of the new middle in Germany, France, England, Japan and United States and follow unique trajectories that are guided by each country's culture, economic and political uniqueness. With respect to the United States Giddens concludes that even within the so called new middle class proletarianized white-collar workers there is no evidences of political radicalization or acceptance of status equality with blue-collar workers.

Hans.H.Gerth and C.Wright Mills in Chapter 5- "The Status Sphere" explain the relationship between status claims and the grounds upon which such claims can be made. They point out that prestige involves two persons-one to claim it and another to honor the claims, and the reasons others honor these claims, includes property and descent, occupation and education, income and power. In Chapter 6&7: "The Foundations of Social Rank and Respects" and "Bureaucracy and Masked Class Membership" Hans Speier points out that the claims to rank and social respect advanced by the white collar workers can be understood in terms of the plurality of social valuations based on noble birth, wealth, education, religious denomination and 'race' compete with one another by which the order of social ranks is given. The prestigious organization may lend status, such forms of borrowed status, however, may conceal or mask the actual economic status of those persons whose social prestige is enhanced by this process of borrowing. Speier explains that such practices lead to multifarious forms of hidden class membership and result in the otherwise unexpected neutralizations of social and class conflicts. In Chapter 8- "Economic Class, Status and Personality" Joseph Bensman and Arthur J. Vidich analyze the changing patterns in status structures as they relate to both changes in forms of capital and fluctuations of economic values, all of which tend to occur in the inflationary and deflationary business cycles. They describe three possible directions: up, down or stable of movement for classes, and individuals and how the social psychology and world views of classes and individuals are affected by economic change.

In chapter 9- "The New Middle Class-I" C. Wright Mills illustrate the shift from the dominance of the older middle class to the growth of the new middle classes in the immediate post-second world war era. In chapter 10- "The New Middle Class-II" he discusses the social and political direction likely to be taken by these new classes. In chapter 11- "The Transformation of the Black Middle Class" w Arthur S. Evans Jr. presents a description and analysis of the old and the new black middle classes. In his view, the new black middle classes are the product of recently acquired occupational opportunities in white-collar administrative and bureaucratic organizations. He finds that there is a difference in their orientation as these new ones find themselves socially distanced from the black ghettos communities. In chapter 12- "Changes in the Life-Style of American Classes" Joseph Bensman and Arthur J. Vidich discuss the massive growth of the new middle classes and the emergences of their brand of political liberalism based on economic advancement, occupational success and class ascendancy. They also examine the varieties of life-styles created by the middle classes

In last part of the book the New Class System of United States is discussed. In Chapter 13, Joseph Bensman and Arthur J. Vidich explain "The New Class System and its Life-Styles". Here, they examine not only the case of the middle classes, but also of the upper, upper-middle, lower-middle working and poverty classes because they believe that the politics and political psychology of the middle classes must always be seen in relation to the classes above and below them

Their life-style depends upon individual preferences, priorities and economic to support them. In Chapter 14- "Liberalism and the New Middle Classes" they describe the political orientation of these newer middle classes in such settings as small rural hamlets, University towns, suburban communities and urban enclaves where the liberalism of these classes had become a dominant force. In Chapter 15- "The New Conservatism: Political Ideology and Class Structure in borrowing. Speier explains that such practices lead to multifarious forms of hidden class membership and result in the otherwise unexpected neutralizations of social and class conflicts. In Chapter 8- "Economic Class, Status and Personality" Joseph Bensman and Arthur J. Vidich analyze the changing patterns in status structures as they relate to both changes in forms of capital and fluctuations of economic values, all of which tend to occur in the inflationary and deflationary business cycles. They describe three possible directions: up, down or stable of movement for classes, and individuals and how the social psychology and world views of classes and individuals are affected by economic change.

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shrinkage of economic opportunity. His arguments are applicable to the current economic situation in the United States as he explains and portrays the actual and possible reactions of the various classes to declines in America's historic abundance and to the increasing dependence of the American economy on an internationalized and more competitive world economy.

Thus, the book presents a comprehensive picture of the problematics of middle class both at the theoretical and empirical levels. It also enables one to understand the nature of processes taking place currently in the class structure of United States of America in the recent past. Although, it is basically written for the students of Sociology, Psychology and Social work but it is also useful for those who have some general interest in the problematics of middle class.

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Chaudhary, S. N. 1999: *Power Deependence Relations: Struggle for Hegemony in Rural Bihar*, New Delhi: Har Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd., pp.293, Price Rs. 495.

Sociological interest in the problematic of political power is as old as the discipline itself. Weber's famous essay "Class, Status and Party" and his conceptualization of the power and authority provided a strong basis for political sociology and sociology of social stratification. Since then the concept of power and its various facets have been examined by a number of social scientists in context of developed and developing societies both at micro and macro levels. A number of issues have been raised by the social scientists during the course of their studies in this fertile area of research. The book under review raises some of the fundamental queries in relation to power structure at theoretical level in Chapter 2, 3 and 4 and then in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 the patterns of power relations in a north Indian state, namely, Bihar are analysed first in historical perspective broadly in colonial and post-colonial era. The book also takes a note of current political processes in rural Bihar and also addresses the questions related to the future of other Backward classes dominance in the state. The present work seems to be an extension of author's earlier work *Community Power structure: Search for an Alternative Paradigm* (1993) both at theoretical and empirical level. The author has confined his analysis to three major resources of power-land, education and politics. He analyses the nature of relationship between land and caste since 1793, the year of permanent settlement in Bihar. He then examines the interface between caste and education from 1835 onwards the time when first educational survey was conducted in two districts of Bihar. The relationship between caste and politics is although examined from 1937 onwards. He finds that during colonial period there was a domination of upper castes on most of the sources of power viz. land and other sources of rural economy, politics, education, bureaucracy, high ritual status etc. He pointed out that although the changes in the patterns of rural power structure started to appear during the colonial rule but in post independence period process of change got momentum with the abolition of Zamindari system and land emerged as one of the important power resource and the dependency of lower castes on upper castes decreased. The transfer of significant amount of land from the upper castes to upper backward castes reduced the economic dominance of the upper castes. Similarly, protective major for SCs & STs and later on for OBCs in the field of education empowered these section of society to move upward in occupational hierarchy. It was further enhanced by their conscious efforts to grab political power at different level in a democratic set up in different combinations of different castes at different levels. The dominance of some