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“RELIGIOUS SHRINE”

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‘As a religious shrine is a social space’

Firstly, what is Social? **Social** is related to human society and its members living together or enjoying life in communities or organized groups. An extended ‘social group’ having a distinct cultural and economic organisation is called **Society**. Society is the state of being with someone or an association of people with similar interests. Now the study and classification of human societies is referred as **Sociology**. Sociology is all about compulsion of living together, to study the patterns of social interaction, culture and social order of the society. According to **Karl Marx** culture, morality, kinship, education, politics, religion and law all have emerged from different institutions which connect with the society that means, they can be considered as emerged from social institutions. Same as religious place is also a social space or a social institution which is attached with different elements like morality, ethical values and morals. It is a social institution because it took into account the social behaviour of individuals who are the members of a society.

This paper is related to a visit to religious shrine and a detailed account of that religious shrine in social context. This study is based on a survey or an observation done by me on that particular religious shrine after several visits. As a religious shrine is also a social institution so I have done a field study after taking into consideration the behaviour of individuals of a particular society.

I visited a religious shrine named as “Hinglaj Mata KaMandir” situated in Pali, Rajasthan. I made several visits to that shrine and observed many things as explained below:

I woke up at 6 o’ clock and decided to have first visit to that shrine .My mother told me to take bath then only go to that place because that is a pious place or sacred place. According to the idea of interruption given by **Emile Durkheim** that one who believes in god has considered the ‘space interruption’ by the sacred things. The same was said by my mother that this place was a

sacred place so go there with holiness. Then I took bath and breakfast, ready to go there at 7:30 am. That place was a few kilometres away from my home, so I went there without any vehicle. In between when I was about to reach I saw the series of shops which were full of religious things that were used in the worship of deity. So many people were busy in purchasing all those things. They all were believers of god. I started to note all the information in detail. I proceeded further and saw some pilgrims came from far places to visit that shrine and some were from nearby places. I reached the shrine, a huge board was there on which the name of shrine was mentioned at the entrance gate I saw that all were removing their footwear before entering into the shrine because that was a sacred place and a board was there outside the gate that read – ‘footwears are not allowed inside’. So I also did the same and entered the shrine, while climbing upstairs I noticed some people were walking on the upstairs on knees. Then, I finally reached up and sat down, I started to observe all the activities which were going on. At 8 o’ clock aarti started. The panditji has started to worship the god with the help of that holy things like flowers, mala, sweets, etc. and drums and bells made a rhythmic sound with the tune of aarti of Hinglajmata. After the completion of aarti people started to take rounds around the shrine which is called as ‘ferri’. Then panditji gave ‘Prasad’ to all people present there. Some sat there for a few minutes and some immediately left the place after completion of aarti. All took the aarti and I took the Prasad, bowed down before the deity and left the inner area of shrine. I returned to my home after watching all the activities that took place around and outside of that very shrine. After that I made a list of questions to ask the ordinary visitors when I will go on second visit to that shrine.

The second day, I got ready for visiting the shrine after taking bath at 8:30 am. I took my register and pen and left the home. I also took some flowers and sweets for worshipping. On that day I reached there after the aarti was over. I approached the panditji directly named- ‘Mitharawalji’. Panditji at that place is called ‘mehant’ or ‘mathadhesh’ by the people. He was unmarried and he will do nine days navratra every year without eating anything at that time he did continuous puja of hinglajmata. I asked him so many things about the shrine he told me that here the mehant who will do the puja every day has to be an unmarried man. Only bhramahchari or unmarried can do the worship and the reason is that which I asked from him, there was an ‘akhandjoth’ inside the shrine which was only worshipped by an unmarried man. Then he told me about the history of the shrine that this place is almost 25 to 28 years old. This place was famous in religious way

because of some strange things that happened at the place. There was a deity mentioned by the mehand named – ‘Lakharawalji’ according to him they are entrusted with many powers like he (the deity) could take any disguised form, he could fly in the air and he was the one who took that ‘akhandjoth’ from the main mandir of hinglajmata situated in Pakistan to the that religious . And that joth was really full of divine powers and a ‘akhanddhuna’ was also there. The mehandwas there for last 25 years. Approx. 2 o’ clock I talked to the panditji, and then I decided to go home back.

The third day, before the third day visit I decided to take interviews of visitors to that shrine, mostly ordinary visitors on the next day.I was fully ready with an inquisitive mind which was full of questions. I left my home at 6am. When I was on the way to shrine the people were buying some things for worship and some are planning to donate some money in the charity fund of that place. This can be related to what **Karl Marx** (German sociologist) said in his pamphlet of The ‘*communist manifesto*’ which was published in 1848 that law, religion, morality, kinship, culture all have emerged from various institutions which have economic base. He linked history of all disciplines with economic basis, that all changes which have taken place in the past are result of the changes in economic conditions. Economy makes the base of society. When I reached at the entrance gate of shrine the same people did the same activity which was seen by me earlier, walking on their knees. I asked a man about that firstly he told me his name Deelip Singh,a farmer from a nearby village came there daily. I asked him why do you do this? He answered me that ‘meinemannantmangihui h ekisiliyehaaatahu me, thode time pehle mere bête ko koi bimarihogyithijiskathik hone ka chance bahotkamtha or jb se mneissmata se yehmannatmangikimre bête kothikkrdo me yhahameshaaanga puja k liyeapnegutnopechalkejbtkmannatpurinahotohabhikaffiaaram h uskeisiliye me rojyhaaatahu.’ He told me that we called this mata as ‘maii’ and also many miracles took place here. I asked about festivals taken place there he told ‘harmahinekisuklapakshbiijkayhamelalgta h or maikiakhandjothbhijalti h’. I proceeded upstairs and found that panditji was doing the preparation for the evening aarti. All people were standing in a proper line for taking aarti. Theaarti got started and all joined their hands in front of maii for fulfilling their wishes. All were completely indulged into the aarti of maii. After the aarti got finished all bowed down before maii. Prasad was distributed to all, at the time of taking all folded their hands in bowl shape and put another hand below the first one. This was the way of taking Prasad(charnaamrit) in that

shrine. Then when some people sat down, i also joined them and started to take interviews of local people or daily coming people. They talked about their beliefs in maii. They said to me that “*schedil se koi mannatmangta h toh to maiijarurpurakrti h*”. or *hum sab maiikodil se mante h . Hum sab mil k yha puja bhikrte h ‘aasadkonavmiko tab yhaekmelabhilgta h*. But drunkard people are especially not welcomed in the premises of that shrine. A person told me a story that some months earlier, an alcoholic person entered into the shrine and started to address the pandit with abusive words and also told that ‘*ye maiikuchnhihoti sab dhong h*’. There was a beehive in the shrine which is called as “*maiikisena*” by the local people. That alcoholic person was attacked by these bees badly. Then he has to appologise before the mata. Earlier both men and women were not allowed to go near the ‘*akhanddhuna*’. But now men are allowed to go but women are not. In shrine except near the *akhanddhuna* no gender segregation. All are equally allowed. Anyone can come to the place no discrimination on the basis of caste also. There was a hall in addition to the shrine where the ‘*satsang*’ was taken place. In this activity many people were contributed money for that i saw a list of donators there. At the time of *satsang* ‘*gaav k sabhi logo kokhanakhilayajata h wha*’. There was a kitchen also. People were very enthusiastic for telling me about the *chamatkars* of their maii. Like, just outside the kitchen, the beehive was situated as There were so much smoke coming out of kitchen still the bees would not bite anyone after getting annoyed by the smoke. I asked about the process of worship, They told me that “*yhaekrothchadhayajata h ghee kagur k sath- rothek roti jesa hi hota h thoda size me badahotahh*”. There is no timing for opening and closing of that shrine. It was open for anyone at any time. The “*AkahndJoth*” which was interior to the shrine no ladies are allowed to go near that.

Now a German sociologist, **Max Weber** talked about the ‘social action’ and different types of social actions through interpretive means. That means his study was based on the understanding German word – ‘*verstehen*’) the purpose and meaning or we can say that subjective meaning that individuals attach to their own actions. According to him sociology is the interpretive study of social action and causation of its course and consequences. An action is to be considered as social action when three ingredients are completed i.e. the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behaviour or action, and that subjective meaning should take into consideration the behaviour of others, it should oriented in its course that means direction to one’s action. Here many actions of people are considered as social action. When they were doing aarti, children

following their parents, coming to temple regularly etc. Now how they are social actions? As Weber mentioned that social action is of four types: instrumental rational, value rational, effectual and traditional social action. I am going to explain all the four types with the help of one example. If a person comes to visit the shrine daily, he has attached a subjective meaning to it. He visits that place because he thinks that if he went there daily, his wish was fulfilled now here he went there for attainment of his 'rational pursued' and 'calculated ends'. No emotionality was attached but goals are rationally calculated this is called as instrumental- rational action. Now if he visited the shrine because it was a good thing to go there. it is value rational social action as it is determined by a conscious belief for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious or other form of behaviour independently of its prospects of success (unlike in instrumental rational social action). Third type effectual social action is said to exist if an individual visited there because he loves maii, here his actions are determined by his love and affection for maii. Fourth one traditional social action, the actions which are determined by 'ingrained habituation'. That means the actions of our ancestors which are followed by us in the form of tradition like we go to a particular temple where our ancestors used to go so we are also following the same tradition. Another concept of Weber 'social relationship'. A relation is said to be a social relationship when there is a consideration, subjective meaning and mutually oriented possibility among the behaviour of individuals. When all the people used to gather at the shrine at the time of aarti there was a consideration and individual attaches a subjective meaning to that and also mutually oriented possibilities were there so it can be termed as social relationship.

As i mentioned above some frameworks or rule of conduct of that very shrine. Now i m going to relate it with the concept of an American sociologist **Harold Garfinkel**. He talked about 'ethnomethodology' which means methods people use for understanding and producing the social order in which they live. He gave law of frame breaking, there are frames of behaviour and rules of conduct in each culture of society same as to the shrine. There are some frames of that shrine which no one is allowed to break.

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist. He was known for many concepts and one of them is "collective consciousness". And this term was introduced by him in his *Division of labour in society* published in 1893. According to him religion is a force which leads the compulsion of living together and it is not the result of an individual's behaviour but born out of a collective



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{7}



{8}



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{1}.Front portion of the shrine (Hinglajmaiikamandir)

{2}. List of donators (that money used for the works of shrine)

{3}. Earlier no one was allowed inside but now men are , ladies are not allowed near the dhuni.(Not absolute gender segregation)

{4}. This is used at the time of aarti for rhythm.

{5}. Themathadhish or mehant of that shrine (panditji).

{6}. This the place where ‘akhanddhuna and akhandjoth was situated’.

{7}. This beehive is called “maiikisena” by local visitors (they protect the shrine from external disturbance).

{8}. This is the “roth” which is used for worshipping the maii.

{9}. This is the hall where ‘satsang’ was taken place.