

Major-Sociology(HUL 271)

1. Reflect on the role of khap panchayats in Indian society with reference to the following sociological concepts from the work of Emile Durkheim: collective conscience, social solidarity and social fact.

Ans: Khap means a group in general, Khap panchayat is kind of a quasi-judicial which governs on the principles of traditions and old age customs. It is a union of villages, as suggested by its name, that pronounces harsh punishments on the basis of things mentioned above. It is a non elective body hence it is kind of an absurd thing which exists in villages of UP, Rajasthan and some parts of Haryana. The members of the Khap Panchayat consolidate their power and position by covering a large area like many villages, and set their own rules. The function of traditional caste and family systems, this Indian traditional institution engages in dispute resolution and the regulation of members' behavior.

I would like to briefly talk about Emile Durkheim and his work. He was a French sociologist. Emile Durkheim developed theories of social structure that included functionalism, the division of labor, and anomie. These theories were founded on the concept of social facts, or societal norms, values, and structures. Functionalism is a concept with three integral elements.

If we talk about khap panchayat with reference to Durkheim's work in collective conscience, social solidarity and social fact then we can have a great idea how khap panchayat is an evil within the society in my opinion.

Collective Conscience and khap panchayat: Durkheim believed that society exerted a powerful force on individuals. According to Durkheim, people's norms, beliefs and values make up a collective consciousness, or a shared way of understanding and behaving in the world. The collective consciousness binds individuals together and creates social integration. Whereas in khap panchayat exactly the opposite thing is implied and a certain tradition and old aged customs are forced on individuals who are moving growing through the society norms reasonably and for betterment. In the khap

panchayat system individual beliefs and values are murdered brutally and hence modern thinking and approach is suppressed. We can take up the *example* of a couple, both the man and women of different cast, getting married. The khap panchayat will be interfering since it is not aligned with the traditions and they will announce harsh punishments on the couple. This example shows that not only individual norms are killed but violates fundamental right to choice and dignity as well.

Social Solidarity: Durkheim's argument is that there are two types of social solidarity, how society holds together and what ties the individual to the society. These two forms mechanical solidarity, which characterizes earlier or traditional societies, where the division of labour is relatively limited. If we look at the khap panchayat with the reference of social solidarity then we can categorise it under Mechanical solidarity. Since it doesn't give much heed to individual sentiments. We can consider the previous example here as well. The old ideas are imposed on the young people and they are not allowed to make decisions on their marriage.

Social Fact: According to Emile Durkheim a social fact consists of collective thoughts and shared expectations that influence individual actions. Social facts represent a category of facts with distinctive characteristics which are external to the individual endowed with the power of coercion by means of which they control him/her. The majority of people in the village which forms the society and set the collective sentiments and norms. This majority of people force their ideas on an individual. We can take the example of women's rights are vetoed and women are suppressed hence they don't oppose much to this. Their individuality is snatched and given no recognition to be a part of the society. We can also look at another example of how khap panchayat with their customs by aborting female children altogether sets a mindset in individuals that they need to bear a boy child to continue their clan or family and having a girl child will put an end to that. So husbands specifically force the mother to abort or kill the girl child.

2.Drawing on your understanding of any two social institutions, reflect on how they contribute to order in society and reflect on the nature of their embeddedness across different societies. Give examples in support of your answer.

Ans: Social Institution are a set of system of behavioural and relationship patterns which are interwoven therein enduring their persist and they are all pervasive and present everywhere in our social lives.A social institution consists of a group of people who have come together for a common purpose.There are seven different types of social institutions such as family,education,religion,economy,work,government and health care. Some sociological methods focus on examining social institutions over time, or compare them to social institutions in other parts of the world.

Two specific social institutions that I would like to highlight upon are family and religion.

Family: At first if we look at it,it may seem that it only influences only individual but that is not the case.It also influences society or a group of people in many ways and contributes to order in society.Family is the primary agent of socialization, the first institution through which people learn social behavior, expectations, and roles.It is indeed a much needed institution in the society because there is where an individual starts gathering knowledge.Families differ widely around the world, they also share certain common concerns in their everyday lives.First we will see how families differ across different countries and societies.It can be differed in many ways like size of the family where a nuclear family is a family composed of one or two parents and their dependent children, all of whom live apart from other relatives and an extended family is a family unit composed of relatives in addition to parents and children who live in the same household.It can also be differed by type of marriages,residential pattern,power and authority.These differences are very evident if we consider different countries.For example in India people generally are closer to their relatives unlike in other countries like The US where people focus on their individuality and take care of the uttermost closed ones.If we take the example within India then we can say people in cities live with small families while in rural areas or small cities people live in a joint family.

Families play a crucial role in contributing order to society.Family system creates a sense of unity at an early age among members which paves the way for social cohesion

and in a broader sense promotes national unity. The qualities of sharing and caring by senior family members automatically lead them to think of a secure future for their children by making savings. This in turn helps in strengthening the national economy. Also family can shape the world view, foster and reinforce the value system of the individuals and therefore, consequently, be the warp and weft of a sustainable, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world.

Religion: This is one of the most important institutions and plays the major role in society. Throughout the world, there exist religious institutions providing formal and informal resources, supports, and opportunities to children and families in their midst. The significance of these roles can be especially pronounced in areas where governments fail to protect children and families within their borders. India can be a very good example for religious institution where it shapes society to a great extent. It divides as well as brings people close. For instance a man belonging to the muslim community finds a Dargah at a place where there is not much people he knows from his community in the area. But because of the Dargah he will get to meet people of the same religion. If we talk about how it divides then we can take the example of riots that happens due to the involvement of religion sentiments.

Religion is also an example of a cultural universal because it is found in all societies in one form or another. Religion is a matter of faith that is beyond objective evaluation hence it mostly unites people and is there in every society.

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