



PATERNALISM AND ECOLOGICAL MODERNITY: A CASE STUDY OF COMMON PROPERTY RESSOURCES OF DEOMALI VILLAGE, AJMER, RAJSTHAN

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ABSTRACT :

The study is primarily aimed at providing theoretical understanding of management of common property resources (CPR) in Deomali village, inhabited by pastoral community known as "Gujjars". The basic contention is that with strong traditional paternalism, it is incidental to think in terms of its relevance in modern age and negotiation of inhabitants with external world and avoiding any sort of brokerage of traditional authority. The study will make sense of social structure and future challenges and it will offer a new kind of ecological modernization paradigm with classical sociological theories underpinning.



KEYWORDS : *Traditional paternalism, Common Property Resources, Ecological Modernization Paradigm.*

INTRODUCTION

At the outset, it is required to give the idea of social set-up of Deomali village and rationale for the selection. Deomali village is located in Ajmer district of Rajasthan and it is famous for its belief that all houses in the village are made up of medieval style. As far as demography is concerned, according to 2011 census, total population of the village is 1205 and numbers of houses are 290. The population is of Gujjar ethnic origin and practice pastoralism. The charm of the village lies in its peculiarity due to singular construction as ordained by traditional authority, known as god Devnarayan. The people of Deomali village are locally known as "Bhopa". They usually officiate as local priest and act as messenger and carrying discourse of Devnarayan. As the traditional authority is very much strong and new challenges of modernity is being posed, its continuance describe the resiliency of the social structure and we need a sociological framework for better understanding and framework for the future. The belief is that any kind of contravention of rule set up by traditional authority will invite wrath, misery and suffering. All the resources of the village is under the name of god Devnarayan and there is no joint or private property but can be referred as common property resources in its functional aspect. Common property resources are characterized by non-exclusion and subtractibility. The problem is due to total absence of private and joint ownership of resources or notion of property. This lead to exclusion from government programmes and loss of entitlements such as Bank Loan, and other aspects relating to property. Now, It is incidental to dwell upon the social structure of the village with the help of sociological underpinnings and highlighting its significance in wider social milieu.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The study shall primarily dwell upon the social structure of Deomali village and how we can make sociological sense of practices prevalent in the village. God Devnarayan as traditional authority is impacting the lives of people and thereby part and parcel of village life. As the practice of building house with locally available stone and mud or 'kuchha' houses rather than 'Pakka' houses is basically ordained by the god Devnarayan. It is imperative to make social structure of the village because the only 'pakka' dwelling is of god Devnarayan and rest of the houses in the villages are 'kuchha'. The stark contrast is very much evident. Durkheim definition of religion is like "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them". There are, thus three fundamental elements to every religion: sacred objects, a set of beliefs and practices, and the existence of a moral community. Of the three, perhaps the most important would be notion of the sacred, which is the point around which any religious system involves and inspires moral community. The sustenance of the system is rooted in social reproduction of the systems which highlights its social significance. The distinction can be easily visualized in the social set-up of Deomali village whereby 'pakka' dwelling is regarded as sacred and forbidden and only reserved for the god Devnarayan and rest of the village live in 'kachha' houses which are distinguished as profane and it is in regular practices. Apart from that, there are basically notion of "interaction" and "representation" in the social structure of Deomali village. It is interactional in the sense that it is shared belief that any contravention of rules will lead to human suffering. It is representational in the sense that we can clearly visualize the manifestation of the beliefs. So, we have tried to make sense of the social structure from Durkheimian perspective.

Now, there is need to shift the locus of the debate to common property resources and pastoral practices and its relation to livelihood. As, local resources are very much relevant from the point of view of livelihood. As consequences, it has implication for traditional paternalism and requires some adaptation to enhance local livelihood opportunities. In our social set-up of Deomali, livelihood is basically singularly predetermined by the membership to the community and this ascriptive determinant of livelihood may have implications for social mobility in the face of impact of modernity. One may choose to enhance livelihood option from education and migration. Livelihood capabilities of people are very much restricted by limited ownership of tangible assets (stores and resources) and no claim and access on individual basis. Historically, gujjar community practices pastoralism as may be conditioned by geographical condition but institutionalised in indirect way by ownership of property in the name of god Devnarayan. We can make parallel through weberian approach on religion whereby religious ethics have implications for economic life of the people. As the scenario across India, there is weakening of traditional authority and privatisation of common property resources and leading to brokerage of traditional paternalism. Earlier, entitlements were sufficient from common property resources and people were contributing as such voluntarily. But with the emergence of multitude of entitlements, the tension in the society is compounded by brokerage of traditional paternalism. In contrast, Deomali is showing a different and successful story of negotiation with the external world and so its peculiarity.

Ecological Modernization Thesis and its Relation to Human Suffering

An eco-modernist manifesto will tell to synergise the the notion of modernity and ecological crisis. Its parallel can be made through an ecologically degraded area whereby traditional institutions were very much resilient and have many aspects in common with ecological modernization thesis. Deomali village presents a peculiar example of how traditional authority can provide sustainable basis. As the experience of the village shows, people have adapted to modern facilities but retaining its traditional housing structure. Notwithstanding all these adaptations, population is constraint on their social mobility. As historically evident, scarcity and solidarity are two basic challenges of social life. There is need for some adaptations and improvisation in the social system of the village and ecological modernization thesis tries to synergize state, private, society and environment. As a result, social mobility will be unfettered and so optimism will be

sustained.

Ecological Modernization Paradigm

In the last two decades, the connections between religion and ecology have been manifest by explosive growth in theological writings, scholarship, institutional commitment, and public action. Theologians from every religious tradition—along with dozens of non-denominational spiritual writers—have confronted religions' attitudes toward nature and complicity in the environmental crisis. This confrontation has given rise to vital new theologies based in the recovery of marginalized elements of tradition, profound criticisms of the past, and new visions of God, the sacred, the earth, and human beings. Religious morality has expanded to include our relations to other species and ecosystems, and religious practice has come to include rituals to help us express our grief and remorse and also to celebrate what is left. Further, dialogues on how traditional religions viewed nature and how these views should be reinterpreted or altered in light of the environmental crisis now join criticisms of economics, technology, energy policies, science, transportation, agriculture, taxation, and education.

The New Environmental or Ecological Paradigm (NEP) is widely acknowledged as a reliable multiple-item scale to capture environmental attitudes or beliefs. It has been used in statistical analyses for almost 30 years, primarily by psychologists, but also by political scientists, sociologists and geographers. The scale's theoretical foundation is, however, seldom discussed and not comprehensively specified. This article explores the environmental ethics that underlies the scale, analysing which ethical positions on human—nature relations the scale seem to match. A classic democratic argument is that every individual (human being) is considered to have interests which, in turn, they also have the right to pursue. Goodin (1996) argues that this line of reasoning is applicable to a wider community of beings. Consequently, if natural entities have inherent worth, they can also be argued to have interests, and according to established conceptions of democracy, interests call for equal consideration in the democratic decision-making process. This clearly does not mean that each living organism should be guaranteed certain rights, such as rights to life and development. Ecocentric theorists rather discuss basic guidelines for deciding what to do if/when human and non-human rights come into conflict. For instance, animals or ecosystems should enjoy freedom from harm caused by humans, unless the interference is justified by the need to satisfy some vital human need.

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