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Poornima Jain is Professor Emeritus, DEI (deemed to be university), Dayal Bagh, Agra.

Tarun Joshi is Assistant Professor, Amity University, NOIDA.

Email: poornima@dei.ac.in

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Sociological Interface Amongst Distress, Knowledge and Society

Jyoti Sidana

Abstract: *Power/Knowledge- One of the important sociological constructions given by French Philosopher Michel Foucault- in author's view can be evaluated when 'Sociology of Distress' in India is constructed. Foucault describes knowledge in context of power relations and information seeking. In a simple manner without knowledge, power cannot be exercised and in producing knowledge, claim for power becomes important. French Philosopher Foucault insists that power "is everywhere, not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere". He acknowledges there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject. According to Foucault's understanding, power is based on knowledge and makes use of knowledge; on the other hand, power reproduces knowledge by shaping it in accordance with its anonymous intentions. Power creates and recreates its own fields of exercise through knowledge. If we endorse these views of Foucault then 'Sociology of Distress' everywhere appears that branch of knowledge in which social pathologies like deviance, depression, work life imbalances and phenomenon of suicide etc occur as for products of knowledge/power, at the same time knowledge/power interface with social pathologies gives rise to 'risk society'- a concept constructed by Ulrich Beck. This*

article is an attempt to examine the phenomenon of suicide and of suicidal tendencies-a sub theme of 'Sociology of Distress' in India- by using views of Michel Foucault. Looking at the phenomenon of suicide happening amongst highly educated segments and private sectors, the analysis is the need of present hour.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, Sociology of Distress, Fragmented Personality, Escapist Suicide, knowledge/power, Risk Society.

Introduction:

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has led to an interesting debate about how Knowledge relates to power in the field of Sociology of Knowledge. His sets of arguments at one stage stimulates us to construct the logic that Knowledge and power possess reciprocal nature of cause-effect relationship. For him each historical age reveals the presence of particular forms of knowledge which form 'episteme'. Foucault opines that power is not a subject of 'possession', it is a subject of 'exercise'. Power is not necessarily 'repressive' or 'coercive', it can be 'productive' also. According to the Foucault 'knowledge is power', in other words one who has knowledge can discuss, reason and one who can discuss/reason is powerful in today's context. If Foucault's logic is to be accepted then today's generation which is equipped with modern education and knowledge of advanced technology, they are also powerful and if they are powerful then why have they started running away from life's struggle and challenges. Why even a small failure in life or in exams makes them embrace death. The meaning of power has been taken from controlling others, then why this generation with the power of knowledge has started losing control over itself or rather it has started losing itself.

Many contradictions have emerged in front of us for some time now, such as the daughter of a small farmer has secured first position in the state in Maharashtra Public Service Commission's Group-C examination from Scheduled Tribe category. A labourer's daughter living in Laurigarh, a village in Rewa district, got success in the GATE exam. While a labourer's daughter cleared the civil services exam in

the third attempt and a daily wage labourer's daughter in Tamil Nadu scored 100 percent marks (600/600) in class 12th. On the other hand, a student appearing for his final year graduation in Kota died by jumping in front of a train due to a bad paper (May 9) and a student from Bangalore, who was preparing for the NEET exam while staying in Kota, died due to a bad paper committed suicide by jumping from the 10th floor of the building (May 8), a student preparing for NEET in Durg Bhilai committed suicide by hanging himself from the fan a day before the exam (May 6) and a student from Bundelkhand (U.P.) who came to Kota a month and a half ago and was preparing for NEET, committed suicide (May 11) and in Kota, a student from Patna who was preparing for NEET committed suicide (May 12) under stress. It is a contradiction that for one group or category, education/knowledge is proving to be a boon, they measure the height of the sky, while for another group, education/knowledge is causing their death. The purpose of education is to make a person social, economic, cultural and political capital, to raise voice against oppression and exploitation, not to run away and to be afraid of challenges. Then how and from where this modern generation is learning all this, everyone needs to think about it. Who among education, teachers, family, state, administration, coaching institute is responsible for these incidents?

If seen to some extent, these incidents seem to indicate that possibly the children who get everything easily or who grow up in comforts, do not learn to struggle in life. Those whose every stubbornness has been fulfilled, they have got what they wanted easily, but the fear of failing or not getting success in the examination teaches them to run away from life. On the other hand, the children living life in poverty, who do not even get proper food, drink and clothing, are hoisting the flag of success and are touching the heights of the sky. Possibly this could also be a reason which is making the children of middle-class families escapists or killing the spirit of struggle in them. If this is so, then it is also true that we are becoming a part of a risk society. The surprising thing is that despite all this, teachers, intellectuals, political groups, administration, state and even the parents are not seen taking any concrete steps.

Here another question also arises whether parents and children do not see any other profession apart from medical and engineering. Are only these two professions prestigious in the society or are children being prepared to choose only those professions which offer high salary package. If it is so then it is his delusion because recently an IIT professional told his pain that I am a 24-year-old software engineer. My salary package is 58 lakh rupees. There is no work stress either, living in a city like Bangalore with all facilities, but I am lonely. All my friends are busy in their lives, due to which I cannot even share anything with them. I am troubled by loneliness. I am bored with the same kind of life. Doesn't this statement of his prove that money cannot buy happiness? After this young man, many other people also tweeted almost similar that they are passing through such a life where there is lot of money, comforts, but there is neither happiness nor time to be happy. It is not that the family or the younger generation is unfamiliar with such incidents, does not read or hear but probably everyone's eyes are blindfolded by high status, high salary, and high ambition. Whether there is relationship in life or not, there must be money and status. The consumption of appearances has become so much that we are unable to control our desires and knowingly throw the teenagers and young generation into the furnace of cut-throat competition.

A recent report by The Lancet Psychiatry Commission, as cited in The Hindu, reveals that a staggering 197 million individuals grapple with mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. While economic progress has opened up new avenues, it has also exacerbated societal pressures and personal expectations, leading to neglected mental well-being amidst India's escalating development ambitions. India's mental health crisis is intensified by urban living's pressures, financial uncertainty, and competitive culture. Material success often fails to provide lasting fulfilment, leading to feelings of disconnection and purposelessness. The pursuit of luxury and status perpetuates stress, inadequacy, and social comparison.

Another fact can also be discussed here as it has been seen in many studies that creative people are more mentally healthy and they are

able to solve problems. Because self-confidence and positive thinking are essential conditions for a creative person, this also means that this new generation is not getting separated from qualities like creativity and self-confidence. Whether the digital world has taken away their creativity by popularizing the culture of cut, copy, paste, this is also an important question that needs attention.

Education is not just a transaction of knowledge, but a revolutionary and cultural action. To be educated is not only to make one's place in the society, to get high status and high salary, but to become a human being or a good citizen. And a complete man can be made only when creativity, positive thinking, self-confidence, fearlessness, equality towards all, development of nation and family are part of his personality. Gandhiji advocated that human happiness can be achieved when there is a harmony between what you think, what you say and what you do. Because it is said that a person is a creature made of his thoughts, he becomes what he thinks. That's why it is necessary to have positive thinking and for this it is necessary to learn to face every situation and fight the challenges. Suicide or escapist thinking not only weakens that person's family but also the nation.

Today's education is not producing a fragmented personality or a one-sided personality, if so, and then there is a need to reconstruct the curriculum and teaching method of education. Because the tendency of isolation arises easily in the split personality, they feel themselves separated from the society and start running away from the problems of the society as clearly seen in the above incidents. Today it is necessary that social sciences should play an active role in public discourse, that is, it should actively intervene in the interactions between different types of people.

It may be one person who commits suicide but the whole family is murdered. The question arises that the person is well aware of the effect this step taken by him will have on his family, yet he does not refrain from taking this drastic step. The sad situation is that today's generation has become so weak that it cannot bear even a little pressure. This is the same country where youths like Bhagat Singh,

Sukhdev, Rajguru, Chandra Shekhar Azad faced unbearable tortures, that too not for themselves but for the freedom of the country and to liberate their countrymen. And there is today's youth who got a little challenge or little ups and downs in life and decided to finish himself. Is suicide really the only option for failure? No, not at all. Then why do today's youth and teenagers consider success and failure in life as synonymous with life and death? It is said that no challenge or problem can be bigger than the courage of a man. Man, who has such a developed brain that by using it he made the impossible possible. Gave shape to the whole world as per his wish and requirement. Many unnatural or artificial alternatives have been created for every natural thing available in the world. Moreover, artificial intelligence has also been created, about which it was once said that there can be no substitute for human intelligence. Then what is the reason that a young man who is building a digital innovative developed world gets ready to embrace death after giving up on a small failure. This is really a matter of deep thought and contemplation on which all intellectuals, traditional and modern, academic and political, need to have a collective discussion.

Kota district of Rajasthan state which was once known as education city can now be seen emerging as suicide city. And no wonder most suicides are committed by teenagers and young students. A 19-year-old girl, who was preparing for NEET in Kota, committed suicide recently. She was a resident of Sagar (Madhya Pradesh), staying in Kota for one year, she was doing NEET coaching. And for some time, she was under mental stress due to which she was not even going to coaching. This is the fourth case of suicide in the last 10 days. So far this year 15 students have committed suicide. If the students are to be believed, they say that they study for 15 to 16 hours every day, get 4 to 5 hours of sleep, and the rest of the time is spent in bathing, going to coaching, going to the mess or eating and drinking. In such a situation, neither we are able to entertain, nor are we able to give time to any of our hobbies, because all the time the sword of the weekly test hangs over our head. And after the test, the questions of the parents that how many marks came, why they came less, where do you waste

time, with how much difficulty you are being taught, etc. In such a situation, it is natural for the children to be stressed. Moreover, one has to face discrimination in other coaching institutes as well. Like having a separate batch of test toppers or students with good rank and paying more attention to them and those children being taught by the best faculty of coaching. While the children with weak or low ranks are given comparatively less attention. While everyone has paid the same fees, then why is he treated like this? There is no doubt that such children take steps like suicide due to fear and anxiety about their future.

It is not that the administration does not do anything in this direction. Guidelines are being prepared for these institutions for some time, but the sad situation is that neither people are aware of that guide line nor it is being followed. Some of the major instructions in that guidelines are such as coaching will have to keep Sunday off and will not be able to take test on this day, in case of failure in IIT and medical entrance, other career options will be told, coaching of students. There will be a provision of fee refund in case of dropout, a complaint portal will be created to report problems against coaching, and strict action will be taken against coaching for fooling students with fake propaganda. But it is also a fact that none of these instructions are being followed.

According to the news published in a newspaper, there are more than 60 coaching institutes in Kota (Rajasthan) which prepare for IIT and Medical and more than 2 lakh students take admission here every year, 25000 PGs, 4000 hostels, and 1800 messes or say that there is a coaching industry in Kota. And as we know that any industry has only one objective, to earn maximum profit, it doesn't matter to the industrialists what happens to the people associated with that industry. That's why ever since education has turned into an industry; its purpose has also been linked to earning profits only and only. Statistics show that in Kota alone, 160 students have committed suicide in the last 12 years. But it seems that even these figures could not shake the society, the government and the administration.

Social scientist Jean Baechler calls such suicides as escapist suicides. According to him, in this type of suicide, instead of fighting an intolerable situation, a person decides to kill himself. It cannot be denied that the students are also doing the same. They feel that failure in examination or getting low-income employment is the intolerable condition of their life and there is no other option to avoid it, so they do not hesitate to take the decision like ending the life.

The same another social scientist Steve Taylor argues that whenever a person is part of some kind of stress or pressure, he can develop a tendency to commit suicide. This trend can happen suddenly and can also develop in a long process. Keeping this argument in mind, the question can be raised that in most of the suicide cases of students, it has come to the fore that he was not coming to class for a long time or was under stress. It is not the responsibility of the institutions to identify, understand and try to remove the stress and pressure of their students. Or get information about the children who have been absent from classes for a long time, listen to their problems and give solutions. Away from their family, friends and city, these children come here with the help of these coaching institutes to fulfil their and their parents' dreams, in such a situation there is a need to redefine the responsibilities of coaching, state, hostels and administration. The state cannot be freed from its obligations just by preparing the guidelines, it is necessary that its compliance should also be closely monitored and strict punitive action should be taken for its violation.

Various aspects of modernity, especially the culture of consumerism and conspicuous consumption, have made children confined personalities. The concept of 'conspicuous consumption' means to show one's social status, especially when publicly displayed goods and services are too expensive for other members of a person's class. This type of consumption is typically associated with the wealthy but can also apply to any economic class. While the innovative aspects of technology have connected the children to the world of knowledge and information on the one hand, on the other hand they have separated them from the tendency of struggle, tolerance, harmony and facing challenges. This is the reason that instead of facing even the smallest

problem or challenge in life, they choose the path of escape. The social scientists of the modern era used to believe that the progress in the field of knowledge would suggest the way to solve all the social problems. Then why no solution has come to the fore to stop the increasing trend of suicide among students and youth or it is not considered a problem at all.

Conclusion:

It cannot be denied that without the active role of intellectuals and social scientists, it seems impossible to prevent teenagers and youth from going towards despair, frustration and tension. Along with this, it is also necessary that the spirit of struggle and facing challenges should also be generated in children so that they are not afraid of defeat but try again and again to achieve their goal or pay attention to alternative opportunities. Knowledge is the power that should be used for the wellbeing of society. As rightly quoted by Gary Zukav "knowledge is power, for each level of knowledge you are held responsible for how you use it". It is an accepted fact that human beings can grow, excel, and develop only when they possess formal education. According to Gary "Your life is yours to live, no matter how you choose to live it. When you do not think about how you intend to live it, it lives you. When you occupy it, step into it consciously, you live it". No doubt, knowledge create power and power reproduce knowledge. Therefore, we can't deny this fact that 'knowledge is power' means that a man has education and a complete control on his life by using the strength of knowledge. The ability to acquire knowledge, preserve and pass it on to the future generation makes man powerful. It enables him to control the forces of nature and use them for his benefit.

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Dr. Jyoti Sidana is Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Govt. Arts Girls College, Kota (Rajasthan)

Email: drjyotisdana@gmail.com

The Intersection of Tradition and Modernity in Indian Sociology: A Comparative Study of Blue Pottery of Jaipur and Khavda Pottery of Kutch

#Manisha Swami & Pragya Sharma

Abstract: *Traditional crafts are a cornerstone of Indian sociology, embodying the country's cultural heritage, social structures, economic life, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. They play a crucial role in preserving the cultural diversity and social fabric of India, while also contributing to economic development and global cultural exchange.*

The study of Blue Pottery of Jaipur and Khavda Pottery of Kutch offers valuable insights into the intersection of tradition and modernity within Indian sociology. These crafts are not merely economic activities but are deeply embedded in the social and cultural fabric of their respective regions. They illustrate how traditional crafts can maintain cultural heritage, support community identity, and adapt to contemporary challenges.

The objective of this research is to explore the role of traditional crafts, specifically Blue Pottery of Jaipur and Khavda Pottery of Kutch, within the context of Indian sociology. Tools used for data collection are unstructured interview schedule, observation and secondary sources.

The commercialisation of traditional crafts, both domestically and internationally, has created market opportunities that