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**The Beggar's Gaze: A Covert Participant Observation of Society's Norms and Values****Sana Javaid**

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Norms and values are key determinants of any society or culture, holding it together by performing latent and manifest functions. Beggary is one of the crucial social problems that indicates the impoverished economic condition of a country. However, beggary is not merely an economic issue; as an integral part of society, it also demonstrates certain realities of that particular society - the norms and values attached to it, the different rituals of culture, and the varying standards by which people behave toward it. With the passage of time, some norms and values have shifted slightly due to acculturation and modern technology. People's way of living is changing, and so are their thoughts. This generational gap is clearly visible in how older individuals and children behave differently toward beggars. On the other side, beggars are also adopting new techniques to earn more, analyzing the situation before begging in order to maximize alms received. This study draws on covert participant observation, in which the researcher assumed the identity of a beggar to examine everyday interactions in public spaces. Guided by the concepts and theories of Bourdieu and Mashima and Takahashi, the study identifies two key themes, courtesy stigma and suspicion towards unfamiliar poverty and the moral economy which illustrate the beauty and bitterness of social norms and values. No prior research has examined beggary through this specific embodied and covert lens; as such, it serves as an important tool for uncovering the norms and values embedded within a given society. This study contributes to sociological understanding of poverty, gender, and class by revealing how social norms are enacted, challenged, and reproduced through everyday encounters with an unfamiliar, stigmatized identity.

Keywords: Participant Observation, Beggars, Alms, Norms, Values, Stigma, Gendered Harassment, Poverty, Social Status, Culture, Perceptions.

Introduction:

Beggary is a worldwide phenomenon but has lost its worth as a major sociological issue. Beggars can't be choosers (Stanley, 1992) or beggars are sometimes the choosers (Hayati and Maniati, 2010) is an old debate. Beggary is an ordinary and monotonous act in many societies; it is

normalized in the mindset of people because poverty is now a part of this world. Overall, it is considered as an impossible task to eradicate completely until the country progresses. According to World Population Review (2018), nearly seven hundred million people are living under poverty line and earn less than 2 dollars per day. Still, it is looked upon as a general problem and not a matter of an individual, so everyone is facing the consequences. Mazumder (2017) strengthening the fact and said beggars are an economic burden and hurdle in the way of progress.

The matter of fact is that despite all this damage, it is worthwhile information when comes to its sociological point of revelation of cultural and social facts about a particular society. Beggary is a handful of rich cultural patterns which gives an insightful perspective of society and people's norms and values. Beggars are not aware that the empty bowl is filled not only with alms but they are collecting the rich socio-cultural material of society that matters in the world of sociology. Defected body parts and certain expressions on face are part of their disguise. Men or women, child or old, every beggar adopted a certain way of dressing and gestures to earn more (Henry, 2009) but neither they know that these panhandlers are actually observing passerby's every gesture and wording and learn to adopt new ways to vacuum them.

Furthermore, most previous researches demonstrated the proper looks of beggars; like men wear winter coats with a bowl in front whereas, woman tows a baby and ask for money. Beggars wanted the attention of others, they purposely uncover their wounds or crippled body even in the winters (Henry, 2009) Pakistan is a country, blessed with all four seasons yet winters are not extended more than three to four months, on the other side, summer is prolong than winters so men do not have to wear long coats neither do they do have enough money to spend for thrift shopping. They are used to survive in few pairs of clothing specifically, traditional kurta shalwar (Long shirt and trouser) and frocks. Secondly, men have different way of begging, young men cannot beg directly because no one encouraged giving alms to a healthy man. They get more advice and less penny. Women are more anxious to help old beggars. Patriarchic society also has some side effects for men as well. A young person has to work to earn is a value of Pakistani culture, instead of begging. On a side this patriarchic culture also gives some margin to women who are bagging even being healthy and fit but not preferred for a fit man unless they adopt a unique way like beg on the name of different partial religious norms.

Norms and values are sociological terms which are followed in every culture but every culture has own kind of norms and values. An act preferred in one society might be disgraceful in other society because their values are different. In simple words "Values are beliefs of something as preferable" (Thome, 2018). In a similar way norms are also different in each and every society, community and sometimes in groups as well. It varies from context to context. norms are rules to support the shared intentional activity. Human beings live in groups and to fulfil the needs, the shared task must be accomplished under a condition for which norms are developed (Copp, 2015). Norms are made to holds its members together. Pakistan is an islamic country, it is a norm to pay greetings (اسلام علیکم) when enters the room or in a group of people.

Qualitative research is an ocean where you find different sort of magnificent subjects and only qualitative research allows a researcher to approach it by using different tools and even

switching techniques to deeply dig out the phenomenon. It gives a freedom of choice to elaborate and describe through picture, videos and words.

Methods and Methodology

Fluid concepts like norms and values or any social problem which needs a deep digging can only be studied through qualitative techniques. It is very difficult to compile results of qualitative research without being indulged into its core. So, after deciding the Universe, which is Islamabad and Rawalpindi, known as twin cities (the one is Capital city of Pakistan and the other is famous city of the province Punjab)

The sampling strategy chosen for the topic is convenient sampling of non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is considered best for qualitative research. Convenience sampling is least preferred as getting much criticism but it depends on the topic and the nature of the study that which sampling strategy best fits into the phenomenon (Waller, Farquharson and Dempsey, 2016).

To study the concept of beggary, technique of in-depth interviews were selected at first stance but afterwards, research shifted its direction to covert participant observation like Pearson (2009) did on supporters of the Blackpool Football Club during his degree of law in 1900s.

In participant observation, a researcher learns and adopts the activities of the group of the study in natural settings (DeWALT and DeWALT, 2002). Analysis of the data is full of texture, still difficult to hold it in few words. Themes were generated after coding the data and layers of interpretation grounding it in theory.

Thematic Analysis

Courtesy Stigma and the Suspicion of Unfamiliar Poverty

First hinderance in the way of field is convincing any male figure of family to go on a field with the researcher in the beggar costume. It was such a hard task to convince her blood relation to accompany her in the field because of safety precautions. Her brother was like,

"یہ کیا ہے؟" (What is this?)

"تم نے ایسے جانا ہے میرے ساتھ؟" (You're going to go out with me like this?)

"نہیں، میں نہیں جاؤں گا۔" (No, I will not go).

"کسی صورت میں تمہارے ساتھ اس روپ میں نہیں جاؤں گا۔" (No matter what, I will not go with you in this disguise).

"یہ کیسی فیلڈ ہے؟" (What kind of fieldwork is this?)

"میں اس بھیس میں باہر جانے کے لیے راضی نہیں ہوں۔" (I am not willing to go out in this disguise).

At this point, norms of a common man were reflected in his behavior. His refusal to go was because of other people's judgment and their reaction, even though they are not related but still the incorporated values make him reluctant. It was an after realization of field that why it is bothering everyone so much. Passer-by were noticing how well-suited person carries a woman like her (beggar) and every bystander looks upon her with weird eyes. It made it obvious that following this norm was seen as an obligation while sitting next to a beggar on a bike in public space was considered disgraceful and contradictory to the values of society. It showed a connection or any suspicious relation with the lower class. It also leads to sabotaging one's own image in people's eye. Just like Charles Horton Cooley's (1920) looking glass self-theory, they are

mirroring their image from others perspective. In traditional Pakistani society, allowing a poor class woman in personal space is directly linked to a sexual desires or physical abuse. A similar reluctance is observed in the behavior of her fellow colleagues who accompanied her on the field. After the field when researcher went to change her look and came back to her fellows, they were like: "تم کیا بن کے گئی تھی اور کیا بن کے آئی ہو۔ اب تم ہمارے ساتھ چل سکتی ہو" (You are totally different, now you can walk with us). They were totally frustrated and felt awkward walking with a person in beggar costume, so they were quite happy after seeing the clean look. The fear of courtesy stigma is evident in both points. Similarly, Erving Goffman (1963) stated that people belonging to stigmatized people have the tendency to absorb stigma through association. He further discussed how family members face consequences based on their association with the one. Even within a neighborhood, people are afraid to contact individuals engaged in socially stigmatized occupations. Her family, brother and even colleagues all knew the real identity but were still hesitant to follow her publicly or walk alongside her because they feared judgment from society that this association could jeopardize their social status.

The Moral Economy of Almsgiving

Every generation has its own values and mannerisms. One day, the researcher encountered a decent, middle-aged man walking with his son, nearly 12 to 14 years old, who stopped to give her money before she even asked for alms. Then she asked: "دس روپے دے دو" (give me ten rupees). He gave her ten rupees, but the expression on his face was clear enough to show that, if he had the opportunity, he would have refused instantly. Moving ahead, a lady coming out of a shop also gave 20 rupees and was suddenly approached by another beggar from behind. It seemed like a sort of competition; if the other beggar could not get anything from the same almsgiver, she would cast a hostile glare at the researcher. One notable encounter happened with a large family. She approached them to beg, and half the members walked away, refusing with a hand gesture. She tried again with the remaining members. She asked a man who looked like the father of the group, but the reply came instead from a 4-year-old girl probably his daughter in an arrogant manner: "جاؤ معاف کرو" (go, spare us). There are many generous and kindhearted people who are also experienced in the field just like a butcher, who gave respect by calling her "Baji" (referred as elder sister in Punjabi culture). 'ہوں نے کم شروع کیا ہے' (I just started my work, came at night), that was a very soft tone. Three boys were having breakfast when the researcher arrived in a beggar disguise and asked for food. They were teenagers but the way one boy asked the shopkeeper to give her money for food because he did not want her to come between the boy's section was another example of mature and chivalrous behavior which exhibited his gentle upbringing. These acts demonstrated the values of people and the effect of socialization. Regardless of age, race or ethnicity but having empathy for others is part of cultural values in many parts of the world. Another interesting incident happened in an upper-middle-class colony, where the researcher rang the bell at one house. An old man came out and opened the gate only up to 3 inches, looking at her in a scared manner, wondering who she was. When she asked: "روٹی دے دو، بھوک لگی ہے" (give me something to eat, I am hungry), he went back inside. Within this time, another middle-aged man entered the street in his car and, before reaching her, asked from the window in a strict voice: "اوے، کون ہو تم؟ یہاں کیوں کھڑی ہو؟" (Who are you?

Why are you standing here?). She replied: "کھانا" (food). He said okay and moved on, then gave her 30 rupees. At that instant, his father came out. The son stopped him: "آپ رکو، میں نہیں آؤں" (no, wait, I will give her, you don't come). He did not want his father to come closer or give her more, but his efforts failed, and his father gave her 50 rupees with a hidden hand (a way of giving alms in Islam). It was the peak time of the coronavirus, so he was overly anxious about his father encountering a beggar in exchange for money.

The old man turned out to be a relative of the researcher, who later found out and amused by her journey. He explained it with love:

"You resembled like a beggar who came to our house in Pindi (Rawalpindi called Pindi for natives). First, I doubted, how did she come here? Does she follow us? Then I presume that you are someone else, but I was very happy to see a beggar come to my door, because no beggar comes to this colony. Even though I did not have money at that time, I went to my wife and asked her to give me 50 rupees. So, I happily gave it to you."

Not every encounter, however, was shaped by hesitation or bargaining, many stood out entirely for their genuine generosity and humanity. Mashima and Takahashi (2007) stated that human beings have a quality of helping people, other than their relatives without any expectation which makes them superior to other species. Many religions consider this behavior at the higher place of virtue whereas in society this kind of behavior known as generalized exchange. The old man's narration showed that almsgiving is an inbuilt value, not only relevant to religion, but also a cultural one. He missed the opportunity to give alms because he had not seen a beggar in a long time, something he was accustomed to. Together, these encounters reveal that almsgiving is shaped by religion, culture, and deeply held social expectation, whether expressed through hesitation, negotiation, or unguarded joy.

Discussion and Conclusion

Norms and values are concepts that prevailed in all society although its nature and altitude might differ context to context. They are rooted so deeply that a person cannot differentiate the part of it in his personality. They are internalized through socialization and individual passing through whole life. They vary in nature and form. These can be dug out by being an active part of it. Beggary is a very common profession in Pakistani society because the rate of poverty has increased drastically, poor class cross twelve million in 1999 according to the report of Asian Development Bank (Iwasaki 2002). Previous literature did not mention that beggary is a concept which reveals some important social aspects of societies. The world is changing day by day with the use of modern technology and so do people's attitude. Their behavior is changing, which impacts on their practice of norms and values respectively. These days religious and cultural values are dominated by new rational values. This change occurs not only in an attitude of an individual but also become a pattern of socialization. That transition is detectable in the behavior of an old man and a kid during a conversation with a beggar. As a Muslim, people love to give charity in Pakistani society and expected reward from Allah (God). Generalized exchange theory described the same concept of giving without counting on the same person but expecting from third unknown source (Molm 2003).

Being a respectable person who upholds his or her values and follows social norms is considered essential. Durkheim mentioned that following the norms and holding values are function for society as (Ritzer 2011) Beggary is known as a profession occupied by socially disadvantaged class, in fact, it is lot more than that. It is a way of life, a standard living of more than half population of the world.

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