

COMMON KITCHEN AS METAPHOR FOR SOCIAL SOLIDARITY DURING PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The paper is reflection of the pandemic situation caused by corona virus. This paper is based on the observation and experience during the lockdown. After the outbreak of the corona virus from the Wuhan city of China the world faces the serious problem where Nepal is no exception from it. After the Government of Nepal declare the lockdown in March many people, they faced several problems. Moreover, working class people are most vulnerable group from the lockdown. So, this paper tries to analyse the solidarity of the people in the community. This paper examines the social cohesion in the society as the common kitchen run by the local authority. This paper tries to link the solidarity and cohesion aspect in the society in the need. I hope that this paper contributes to link the common kitchen conducted by the local authority with the collaboration and cooperation with the people and the social cohesion and solidarity aspect in the society. Also, this paper reflects about the social solidarity during the earthquake and try to link the solidarity in crisis. Also, this paper reflects the traditional approach of social solidarity and social exchange.

Keywords: Solidarity, Common Kitchen, social cohesion, local authority

INTRODUCTION

The entire globe is suffering from the one of the greatest and dangerous health crises. The outbreak of the virus was from Wuhan city of China in last November and it spreads throughout the world. After the outbreak of the virus the world health organization (WHO) declares the virus as the global pandemic and it was named as COVID-19. World Health Organization suggests to go for the lockdown of the country to reduce the impact of the virus. The government of Nepal declares for lockdown since last week of March. The federal government in coordination with provincial and local government set the modality of the lockdown and all three tires of the government were instructed to manage the lockdown. The health workers, police, APF and municipal security force was deployed for the management of the lockdown in the country. Since the local government is grassroots level structure of the government and it has direct contact and interaction with the people so there is more challenge to the local government.

According to the Constitution of Nepal 2015, the structure of federal democratic republic of Nepal is divided into three tires and also the governing body and authority. The governance system is divided into federal, provincial and local government. Rural municipality, municipality and district assembly are the local government under the provision of the constitution of Nepal (CoN, 2015, Article 56).

This paper intends to explain the common kitchen from the solidarity perspective. This paper tries to generate some idea regarding the common kitchen and importance in the society during the crisis.

Also, the paper tries to explore the importance of social solidarity during crisis. This paper also links the role of each and every member of society in the community to cope with the pandemic situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kageshwori-Manohara Municipality was declared as municipality from the decision of council of ministers on December 2, 2014 previously consisting of 16 wards and later now 9 wards. It was formed merging the then VDCs: Gothatar, Mulpani, Danchi, Bhadrabas, Aalapot and Gagalphedi. The name "Kageshwori Manohara" is named after the historic religious Kageshwori Mahadev temple located at Gagalphedi-1 and Manohara River. Council of ministers declared altogether 276 municipalities all over Nepal according to the Rajpatra published on March 5, 2017 (Kageshwori-Manohara, 2018).

In the Eastern side there is Shankharapur Municipality, West part is touched with Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Gokarneshwor Municipality in the north there is Sindhupalchowk District and the Southern part is Madhyapur Thimi Municipality of Bhakatpur district. The total population of the municipality is around seventy thousand and the numbers of household is around fifteen thousand. The literacy rate of the municipality is around 80%. The total area of the municipality is 27.38 sq. km (Kageshwori-Manohara, 2018).

Renate et al., (2018) Social Solidarity is an element of human association that emphasis the cohesion, social bonds that holds a group together in a single bunch which is based on certain common values and which can easily understand able by all the members of the group or community. There will be various motives and interest behind the solidarity but once the group is associated there will be shared norms values, beliefs, motives and interest. The principle of trust among each other and reciprocity are built stronger in the solidarity.

Gofman, A. (2014) The social solidarity of the organized society is based on the autonomy of the individual, division of functions and power and mutual exchange and mutual relationship between the members of the societies. In societies where there is social solidarity there will not be disappearing of collective consciousness, but there will be some changes according to demand of time and members and becomes more general and constructive and operated in limited sphere and central toward the society.

Beer et al, (2009) Social solidarity can be explained and described but the paper is focused on the grassroots level of the solidarity between the members of the society during the crisis situation. Declining solidarity is caused by the process of individualization and thus progresses with each new generation. It is obvious that individualization is related to erosion of solidarity. Social solidarity is mutual bonds and social commitment. The individualization plays to loosening the ties between the individual and society. Social solidarity is recognized as the foundation of the welfare state, due to increasing individualization towards the younger generation the difficulties are increasing to sustain the welfare state.

Widegrean, O. (1997) The concept of social solidarity is closely related with the notion of the social exchange. Social exchange is the traditional approach of our society. Social exchange is more in practice in non-economic sectors like exchange of goods, labor rather than in economic sector or field.

Klingenberg, E (2020) To reduce the effect of the Corona virus world health organization, suggest to maintain the social distancing, WHO suggest to cancel large gathering, closing schools, offices and other public places. The vulnerable people they need extra attention and extra care so social solidarity will help to protect the older, sick, homeless and isolated people. In additional to social distancing, society should offer social solidarity and interdependence across many peoples which helps to survive disaster and pandemic

Sara, S. (2020) In the context of Nepal, the people and community already showed the example of solidarity during the time of earthquake in 2015. With the contribution of national and internal agencies and people Nepal is in the stage to return to the pre-disaster state, through the contribution and cooperation of creativity, perseverance, careful and sustainable use of resource and hard work. From the earthquake Nepali people are aware about the social solidarity and which is again seen in the time of COVID-19 health crisis. From the literature the social cohesion of the Nepali people can highlighted. I can reflect the time of the earthquake many people including me gone to Sukhmani of Sindupalchowk district to provide the relief materials for the earthquake victims of there. On, the way I can see many people from various part they came to Sindupalchowk to provide assistance to the victims of Sindupalchowk. Also, not only in Sindupalchowk many people travel to different affected part of the country and provide the humanitarian assistance to the earthquake victim. This is one the example of the social solidarity at the crisis. Social solidarity is used to reduce the inequality.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

After impose of the lockdown in the country many peoples they are highly affected and the problem arise in their daily meal. So, the government of Nepal decide to run or start the common kitchen through the coordination of the local level. The Local government in coordination with the ward and other individual they started the common kitchen in various part of the country. Like most of other local level Kageshwori-Manohara municipality also started to run the common kitchen in various part of the municipality. And the managerial responsibility was given to the ward level and ward president who is grassroots level government representative.

Firstly, municipality they coordination with ward and all the political parties and well-renowned individual in the society and started to distribute the card through which they distribute the food package to the people. The card was distributed to the working class people who works on daily wage and manage their two-time meal. And after distributing several packages the municipality decide to cancel the distribution of the package and decided to start the common kitchen for the people who are in need. While distributing package the identification process is biased and many who don't need the help they also get from the municipality and ward.

As per the mandate and policy of the federal government Kageshwori-Manohara municipality they started the common kitchen with the coordination with the public organizations, private organizations, individuals, social clubs, and other non-governmental organizations. So, municipality decided to run the common kitchen and thinking that people who in need and who cannot afford for the meal they will only come to the common kitchen.

In this way the modality of the assistance was changed from providing assistant package to common kitchen. After going through the informal interaction with the ward president he explained that the idea of common kitchen will be more beneficial and more constructive to those people who are in

need or to those working-class people who cannot afford for their meal. If municipality or ward even provide them food and rice they should manage for gas and other things so if ward open and run the common kitchen they will not face the trouble of managing gas and cooking. They can come in time and have their meal. So, with encouragement of the ward president and ward member to municipality they decided to run the common kitchen in several wards of the municipality where there are at least fifty people to take meal. In this approach I like the way they think about the common kitchen and I also thank the mayor and ward president for the decision to start the common kitchen.

And after the launch of the common kitchen for the first one-week municipality assist for the food. And after that ward president he announce for the cooperation and coordination with all the members of the society for the coordination and assistance for the common kitchen launched by the local authority. Then, the members of the society start to declare help and assistance for the common kitchen and like to help those unlisted workers and poor people who cannot afford the food. And people start to assist a food for one day, where there will be around 350-400 people getting service from the kitchen. People they started to volunteer in the kitchen and they actively played the role in the safety and security of the common kitchen.

The health desk was established with the help of the health workers within the ward and the people who came there will be checked before they enter to the kitchen and also, they are obliged to wash their hands. In this regard the social solidarity and mutual exchange can be seen between the peoples.

There is mutual respect as well as to the people they came in the kitchen they are well respected and they are treated as a guest, which makes them happy. Despite of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society all the members of the society they cooperatively work in the common kitchen and the people they enjoy the food despite having different taste. This is one the beauty of the Nepali society and culture there is privilege of mutual understanding, social cohesion and social harmony which brings the people together to serve for the people in need.

As a member of the society, I think that each and every individual should actively participate and contribute for the society especially in the time of need and crisis. The theory of solidarity emphasis each and every individual to show their role, so I also contribute as the volunteer for the cause and serve as a volunteer in the common kitchen as well as other activities of the local government to reduce the effect of the impact of the COVID-19 in the society. The division of labor is one of the most important aspect in the social solidarity so there was also division of work in the common kitchen some people they serve as cook, management, dish washer, security, health assistance and other works. I mainly work as volunteer to serve food to the people. The management was also focused to those persons who are unable to come to the kitchen due to illness, pregnant and disability. So, I also serve for those people and we manage the packing for those people and give it in their home. So, this is regarded as one of the beautiful properties of Nepali society.

In the country like Nepal, government only cannot reach to each and every family and community so the responsibility should be taken by each and every member of the society to assist the vulnerable group. Government itself is struggling in boundary issue, managing health assistance and operating regular administrative activities then government cannot reach to the ground level people so the local government and the private individuals and organizations should equally share the

responsibilities and show social solidarity and assist the vulnerable group. I think that it is not only the duty of the government to work in such a pandemic condition so there should be equal responsibilities of each and every stakeholder of the society and individual to fight against such challenges. So, there is essential coordination and collaboration of governmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals to manage the basis assistance to the needy people in this pandemic situation.

From the practice of the common kitchen the concept of sharing is increased which is one of the important aspects of social solidarity. In the common kitchen many peoples in the society they share rice, vegetables, curd and other food assistance, which is one of the examples of social solidarity.

CONCLUSION

The study of the common kitchen is my reflection of the experience and involvement in the common kitchen started by the local authority with the coordination and cooperation of the people of the society. From the study, the values of the social solidarity can be understood. Social solidarity can be explained as the glue to hold the society together. During the crisis the collective consciousness will guide for the reduction of the negative impact due to such crisis. Solidarity is bonding force of the society through the social solidarity the social and emotional bonding of the working class people and other groups will be increased. Through the sharing of the foods and goods it will help to rise up for the vulnerable group (Social Solidarity, 2016). Thus, the idea of the common kitchen also reflects the social solidarity in the local community. Through the medium of common kitchen many working class people they get benefit and help from the local authority as well as community people which helps to make the stronger relationship between the two social classes of the society.

In the underdeveloped country like Nepal with poor economic condition where government itself is not enough to overcome the challenges there should be public and private coordination and collaboration. Coordination, cooperation, mutual sharing is one of the strongest weapons to fight against the crisis. As a citizen of the country and member of the society I felt that it is the first duty and responsibility of youth like me to fight against the crisis and pandemic. We should not always wait for the government for the assistance. We may have different political ideologies and socio-cultural and economical background but the ultimate motive is to serve the humanity and serve the people, so the helping hand is essential for the social bonding and social assistance.

The role of local authority is not as much as effective as expected by the people so, municipality and ward should regularly monitor the place and encourage more people to participate in the solidarity. Also, municipality should request the business personal to contribute in the common kitchen. The security arrangement of the common kitchen was not reliable. Complaint was done by female about the negative behavior of the male persons who came there for meal and also drunk people make the environment violent so the security arrangement should make stronger and tighten. The crisis relief fund should be managed by the local government. Crisis can occur at any time, since the local authority is grassroots structure so it should be ready for any kinds of crisis. Also, the municipality should create a crisis department in the municipality and arrange each and every crisis and conflict through the mobilization of individual, group and community. There is lack of communication between local authority and community so the gap should be fulfilled through effective dialogue in every time not just in crisis and disaster. So, the humanitarian aspect also should be thinking during the crisis. Food right is basic and compulsory right of the people. No people should be left out of

nutritious food in any condition. So, the approach of solidarity will encourage the humanitarian assistance which guaranteed the basic right of the people. So, through the help of the common kitchen the inequality between the haves and have-not are reduced. The common kitchen is one of the better concepts which reflects the metaphor as the social solidarity.

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