

**Religion and Women Participation**  
**A Study of Sri Sathya Sai Centre Lauhakilthali**

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**Submitted by**  
**Umesh Khadka**  
**TU Regd. No.: 14533-95**  
**Symbol No.: 333**  
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**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences**  
**M.Phil Program in Sociology**  
**2024**

**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

This is to certify that Mr. Umesh Khadka has completed this thesis work entitled, **Religion and Women Participation (A Study of Sri Sathya Sai Center Lauhakilthali)** as a partial fulfillment of M.Phil in Sociology under my supervision and guidance.

I therefore, recommend this dissertation for the final evaluation and acceptance.

---

Dr. Chiranjibi Acharya  
Supervisor

Date:

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences**  
**M.Phil Program in Sociology**  
**2024**

**APPROVAL LETTER**

This thesis entitled "**Religion and Women Participation (A Study of Sri Sathya Sai Center Lauhakilthali**" was submitted by Mr. Umesh Khadka for the final examination by the research committee of the M.Phil. Programme in sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Philosophy in Sociology.

The research committee hereby certifies that this dissertation is found satisfactory and accepted for the degree.

**Research Committee**

Dr. Chiranjibi Acharya .....  
Dissertation Supervisor

Dr. Lok Ranjan Parajuli .....  
External Examiner

Dr. Dinesh Prasain .....  
Internal Examiner

Dr. Youba Raj Luintel .....  
Head of the Department

.....  
Member (FOHSS)

Date:

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## ABSTRACT

The study “Religion and Women Participation: A study of Sri Sathya Sai Center Lauhakilthali” is a focus on theoretical concept and perspectives of spirituality, and women participation in spiritual organization.

The research problem of the study is how women devotee are participating and using their agency in the organization. And main objectives of the study were to identify the cause of women participation in religious organization and to assess the status and role of the women in the organization.

Therefore, to meet this objectives, mostly primary and qualitative data were used. Primary data were collected through in-depth interview, participant observation and case studies. Sample size of the study was 19 which were purposively selected.

Respondents are familiar to the word dharma. The birth place of dharma is the heart. What emanates from the heart as pure idea, when translated into action will be called dharma. If you have to be told in a manner that you can understand, one can say, do unto others as you want them to do unto you. That is dharma. Dharma means avoiding actions which would hurt others.

The fundamental purpose of religion is human transformation. “When the individual is good, the family becomes harmonious, when families are harmonious, the society is stable. When societies are stable, the nation thrives; when nations thrive the whole world is transformed. Hence transformation begins with the individual.”

In this organization woman coordinator is compulsion in structure with great respect. It is the inclusion with prescribed role and status. Saint Valmiki described woman as the embodiment of devotion and sacrifice who has the access to the inner most apartments while the embodiment of knowledge male has access to the audience hall of the mansion. Bhagwad Gita says that women has seven qualities, fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intelligence, steadfastness, and forgiveness while man has only three.

Religious mindset of women made them participate in religion. The status and role in organization is respectable. The activities of organization for developing skill and good company made them participate. The importance of devotional singing which is easy and favorable is the main reason of participation.

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction Conceptualization of Religion**

The word Religion is derived from re-ligare (Latin), which means being bound to, i.e., being bound back to one's source, which is God. From the origin of time, man has sensed that his life has depended on a force more powerful than himself, viz God, and he is the creator, the preserver, and destroyer of all creation. This has resulted in a search for this transcendent force to understand the variety in creation. God is to be omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is love and truth. He is the father of all creation. All the creatures are his children. Viewed superficially, the diversity in the created world may confuse. However, this confusion disappears when man learns to see unity in diversity. All religions have propounded the theory that all human beings are beloved children of the same god. Despite the apparent differences between the religions, their basic tenet is their insistence on man's brotherhood and God's fatherhood. We see religion in many forms when we look back at the outset of modernity and the secularization movement. Moreover, we see a variety of approaches that seek to reconcile religion with modernity and modernity with religion. At the beginning of the so-called secular age, we do not see the absence of religion but its abundance - and an abundance of modern developments for how to accommodate it, even while those very approaches were being informed by religion (Cladis 2006). Mark S. Cladis (2006) mentioned in his 'history of religion in the modern age' that the main argument is: humankind suffers from a radical rift between the self and the world.

According to MacIver, "Religion, as we understand the term, implies a relationship not merely between man and man but also between man and some higher power." (As cited in Cladis 2006)

Emile Durkheim states, "Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relating to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden."

According to Ogburn, "Religion is attitudes towards superhuman powers."

According to A.W. Green, “Religion is a system of beliefs and symbolic practices and objects, governed by faith rather than by knowledge which relates man to an unseen supernatural realm beyond the known and the controllable.”

H.M. Johnson states, “Religion is a more or less coherent system of beliefs and practices concerning a supernatural order of beings, forces, places or other entities.”

According to Malinowski, “Religion is a mode of action as well as a system of belief and a sociological phenomenon as well as a personal experience.”

According to James G. Frazer, “Religion is a belief in a power superior to man, who is believed to direct and control the course and nature of human life” (quoted from Rao 1990: 446).

According to Karl Marx, “Religion is the sign of oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people”. (1844)

Thus, different intellectuals define religion according to their views. Still, agreeing upon a generally accepted elucidation that will satisfy everyone is very tough because religion is complex.

Religion, a matter of belief and practice, is a universal social phenomenon that seriously concerns almost every living human being. Religion is commonly acknowledged as a faith in a mystical force, the Ultimate Being, and its connection with the environment. As humans are social creatures, they are regarded as inherently religious. Additionally, religion is widely recognized as a potent mechanism for social regulation. It is considered one of the earliest institutions of mankind and is found in all past and present societies.

On the contrary, religious practices are all aspects of religious behavior which are characterized by peculiar acts or practices, observances, and performances executed under the umbrella of religion, such as moral principles or morality, socio-religious norms, ceremonies, magic, rites and rituals, taboos, superstition, etc., where the believers consider it an obligation or feel indebted to it for their lives as they have faith in it.

All religion has a single aim, but in history, we could find the origin of a different religion with a different name. The progenitors of these religions are a man with supernatural power and great personalities. Still, according to the place, time, and social situation, they preached out the truth in their style or way, and these teachers were appropriate according to the thinking of that time. Everyone gave before their natural thought. There is only one truth, but the scientist described it differently or given different names. (Sai Sandesh, 2004)

The spiritual revolution of Hindus, the respect and abidingness of Yahudi, and the Kindness of Buddhism aroused against miss practices and the sacrifice of innocent animals. Buddha and Mahabir emphasized moral character with truth, love, and non-violence and right conduct. They established rules and regulations: Ahimsa Parma Dharma” non-violence is a pure religion was their motto.

Lord Jesus introduced at a time when men were cruel; they took no part in others, problems and misery. He developed the highest form of morality and love and especially helped the needy and described religion as helping others in difficulty and sorrow.

Likewise, when the moral character was devalued, and people ran after wealth and became more materialistic, Mohammad Pegambar was born. At the time, people lost religious truth feelings, so Islam was introduced with strict rules and regulations. The full dedication was important with the basis of the omnipresent god as the Sun God.

Sikh is the latest one, and Guru Nanak is the commander. It tried to solve the Hindu-Muslim conflict and erected it based on producing love and respect between each other. It ignores idol worshipping and gives prior tolerance and forbearance to other religions. Similarly, it ignores Muslims' orthodox or bigoted feelings and emphasizes the world as a brotherhood (Sarathi 2005).

There are twelve classical religions (Jagaanath 2013). Among them, major religions are. Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslim, and Christianity. Marx has taken religion as the opium of the masses. However, the founding father of sociology founded their theory on the study of religion. Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and even Habermas brought theory from the study of religion.

All religions appeared before and after Lord Jesus Christ's birth and death in 700 years, respectively, except two religions. One is Hindu Sanathan Dharma, which was started from the starting whose date is still unknown, and the other is the Sikh religion, which started in the 15th century (Cladis 2006)

All religions teach one basic discipline the removal of the blemish of egoism from the mind and of running after trivial joys. Every religion teaches man to fill his being with the Glory of God and evict the pettiness of conceit. It trains him in methods of detachment and discrimination so that he may aim high and attain liberation. Believe that all hearts are motivated by the one God; that all faiths glorify Him alone; that all names in all languages and all forms man can conceive denote the one Supreme Being; His adoration is best done utilizing love (Sathya Sai Baba 2011.)

### **Religion and Women**

The founding fathers of sociology and religion have close relations, and often ghost of religion prevails in sociology. Max Weber says many of his metaphors and phrases have come down to sociology as if unalterable and carved in stone. One such phrase is his comment that he was 'unmusical' in religious matters. This reflected not so much a rejection of religious sensibilities but a singular incapacity to feel these despite his intentions otherwise. In such matters, Weber felt himself a 'cripple,' but one whose sociology of religion assumed 'the ineradicable (Flanagan 2014).

The woman is a derivation and, as such, is included in man. Men are granted the power to define, interpret, judge, and represent the world on their terms, while women are to be defined, interpreted, judged, and represented by men.

Hinduism is the world's oldest religion. In Hinduism, Kali, Durga, and Laxmi are goddesses. The feminine force is taken as power Shakti. Shakti is the source of empowerment. On a conceptual level, Hinduism ensures spiritual equality between men and women. In Brahma Kumaris, Prajapita put women in front of the line. Women are the messengers for change, Baba's messengers (Jagadish 1981).

Hinduism is often practiced socially; however, some are individual (Halve 2005). Because some Yogais practice spirituality rather than religion. In Hinduism, Vedanta

philosophy, Vedas are created for both male and female sages. We can see the egalitarian aspect in Hinduism; however, when males took power and women had to stay to care for their children, that male bias started in all spheres. In Gandhian thought, Celibacy was not only for the sexual meaning but also for controlling senses (Howard 2013). Gandhi created women's inclusion and stressed morale issues for gender equality and women's emancipation. And Gandhi's view on the Hindu law books and women's status mentioned in law books was disgusting in a moral sense.

The ancient Greeks, who worshipped gods and goddesses, were convinced that men were the measure of perfection and women were fundamentally imperfect. The philosopher Aristotle holds that women are naturally lacking in intelligence and rationality. Their bodies lack the necessary warmth that makes for human intelligence. Being natural fools, women do not deserve to be citizens who could participate in public affairs. They are to leave these matters to their men, who could represent their interests better.

Men do not have the same sense of sacrifice that women have. They pretend and show off, but the women take it up from the start to the end. Hence, Valmiki described women as embodiments of sacrifice and devotion while men as the embodiments of knowledge.

The Bhagavad Gita says that women have seven qualities, whereas men have only three. The seven outstanding qualities of women are keerti (fame), shree (prosperity), Vak (speech), smriti (memory), medha (intelligence), dhriti (steadfastness), and kshama (forgiveness).

Buddhists and texts argue that women's innate nature is bad. A Jataka tale states that women as a sex cannot distinguish truth from falsehood and lies from truth. They are unstable as the sand and cruel as the snake. Another Jataka text holds that women's passions are insatiable (unable to satisfy), for they act according to their inborn nature. Thus, women's very nature demands that men control and discipline them.

Christianity maintains that God created man first and the woman next (from man's rib); therefore, man is the exemplary human. In contrast, a woman is a secondary and dependent being.

Islam too, believes that men were created to rule over and manage the lives and affairs of women. Like Hinduism, Islam also associates women's bodies with impurity. Going to the toilet on a journey, being sick, and touching women are all considered equally impure. Those who have done any of these things are urged not to pray until they have washed clean.

### **Religion and Women's Participation**

Longwe (1990) defines this as women's equal participation in decision-making, policymaking, planning, and administration. It is a particularly important aspect of development projects, where participation means involvement in needs assessment, project formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Equality of participation means involving women in making the decisions by which their community will be affected in a proportion that matches their proportion in the wider community.

Valmiki described the woman as the Bhakti Swarupini (embodiment of devotion). Man is described as Jnanaswarupa (embodiment of knowledge). The wise men have access to the audience hall of the Divine mansion. But the woman devotee has access to the innermost apartments. The pre-eminent status accorded to women is blazoned all over ancient literature.

In the present, there are many organizations run by females with great dedication and zeal for the benefit of the people, but when comparing, it seems low in numbers. They mainly participate as members and followers but fail to lead according to their presence and population.

### **Social Construction of Gender**

Sex, whether male or female, is about physical differences between sexes, while gender, masculine or feminine, is about behavior, demeanor, or psychology characteristics. Biologically and socially, there are similarities and differences between males and females. The two sexes are more similar than different. Gender is not merely a system of classification by which males and females are biologically sorted, separated, and socialized. It is also an axis along which power, hierarchy, and inequality, among others, are distributed, explained, and rationalized. Sex and gender, therefore, are essential components of gender politics.

## **History of Spiritual Organization**

Sri Sathya Sai Organization is a spiritual organization. It is a non-governmental organization that is dedicated to spiritual progress. It gives priority to character building and discipline maintenance. The activities are performed to cultivate the heart for pure and selfless love. The advent of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba calls for the re-establishment of Sanathana Dharma (the eternal and universal religion of righteousness) people in increasing numbers from all parts of the world irrespective of their nationality, religion, caste, color, and creed. It is also concerned with multi-dimension aspects of society. This movement of the devotees is highly appreciated, and the participation of female participants is noticeable.

The organization aims to establish unity of all faiths and to propagate through example and precept the principal of truth SATHYA, righteousness DHARMA, peace SHANTI, and love PREMA. This organization thus teaches them to wake up to the awareness of divinity inherent in him and, thereby, enable them to help to build a new order of love and peace, unity, and harmony among mankind. With the expansion of the organization and the progress of its service activities, the charter was granted to it by BHAGAWAN BABA on 14th January 1981 to inspire and guide its office-bearers and members in steering the organization towards the right goal (Sathya Sai Baba, 1999).

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The emphasis given to the celebration of Essworamma dibas and Mahila dibas (19th of each month) and the compulsion of the women coordinator (Mahila Samyojak) as an executive member in the organization shows the inclusion of females. The respect and compulsion of women in the organization may be the reason for women's participation. The status and role of women in this organization are also mentioned but not bounded. Swami manifests different sign and wonders, which is simply called miracles, and most of them believe in these miracles and wants them to happen with them too. Many females bear so many obstacles and household problems and even joy too. They want to share and express it with others, and this organization may suit them.

There are equal opportunities for both men and women in this organization. The established Sai organization in this state-3 plays a special and important role in the society's religious, social, cultural, and moral activities, and participation is increasing daily. What part of the organization is attracting female participation is the subject matter of the study.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The basic objective is primarily devoted to studying and documenting the religious participation in Sri Sathya Sai Organization Lokanthali concerning their beliefs and practices. The study is exploratory and descriptive, which is expected to reveal further details about the religious beliefs and practices over all the existing information. It is anticipated that this endeavor will function as a point of future reference and prove advantageous for those with an interest in the field of religious studies

The objectives of this study:

1. To identify the causes of woman's participation in religion.
2. To assess the status and role of women in the organization.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Sri Sathya Sai Center is trying to make people attached to the spiritual world of different age groups. This organization has a global link because of its affiliation with Sri Sathya Sai Sewa Organization Nepal. To make the study more specific, this organization is selected. It would be able to represent its activities globally. It also aims at understanding their myths, rituals, festivals, social activities, and religious faiths. On the other hand, the study also focuses on some factors and influences responsible for women's religious participation.

The Query arises, is the traditional belief system in religion the root cause of woman's participation? The dynamic world is always changing, but why does a female always occupy the changed phases? In statistical data, the globe is occupied by females a few percent more than males. The question is who the decision maker is and who holds the authority in this organization. This is the sector where females are free to involve,

and males also like the involvement of females compared to the other sectors of society like politics and business. Males and females are interested in females being in this zone, but why do most authorities rely only on men? Many religious institutions represent female goddesses, but authority is with the male. So, the study of this organization will help to understand the effectiveness of the religious belief system and its status and role.

There are different categories of participation, but the ratio in gender context varies. The definitions, theories, and belief system of the past is still effective. Some of the predictions failed, and some of them came to be true. Among them, the rise of capitalism will lead to the fall of religion in the modern era has been challenged by the rise of different sects, movements, and religious institutions globally. Capitalist countries compete to flourish their religion in the name of different activities. People today are being modern, but religious belief is attached to them. The increasing number of religious institutions and activities shows that the belief system has been deeply rooted in society, mainly in females.

### **1.5 Organization of the Study**

In this study, there are five chapters. In chapter I there is the Introduction part of the related subjects of the research topic. Chapter II covers the review of literature from different scholars. Chapter III discusses Research methodology where different tools and techniques are applied. In chapter IV, the demographic data of respondents of the organization are presented in descriptive form. At last, chapter V ends with Summaries and the study's conclusion.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 The Sathya Sai International Organization (SSIO)**

Present in 119 countries, the Sathya Sai International Organization (SSIO) is a non-denominational and uncharged voluntary organization. Its members belong to diverse religions but share a mutual objective: to internalize their inherent divinity by implementing the values of love and service embraced by their spiritual guide, Sathya Sai Baba.

At the organization's core is the individual who believes in supposing personal responsibility for ethical transformation through selfless love and service. The membership is free and open to all. Typically, individual seekers of love and peace, drawn by the experiences of friends and family members, come to their local or regional Sathya Sai centers to participate in weekly group spiritual singing together with other holy and spiritual activities and to volunteer in regular service activities such as giving food to the needy, organizing health camps and medical services, and other forms of public volunteerism.

The premise of Sathya Sai Centers is that they provide a space for a spiritual meeting of like-minded individuals, a communion of good-desiring people of all faiths. In such a space, sincere seekers, students of spirituality, and service-minded volunteers gather for spiritual singing, devotional spiritual activities, and to study the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba. The goal of participation is ultimately the transformation of self and society into a place of selfless love, where recognizing the divinity innate in humanity becomes possible. The living ideal of the SSIO is cultivating unity with family, community, nation, and world.

The SSIO consists of about 1824 Sathya Sai Centers. Center activities are coordinated by voluntary organizational leaders who work at regional, national, and international levels according to the broad guidelines and ideas envisioned by the organization's governing bodies, the Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and Prashanthi Council. The most important aspect of the organization is the fact that every day, somewhere on this planet, a man, woman, or child who desperately needs rest from some problem like hunger or illness, and equally, need some kindness and love, gets both from

volunteers of the Sathya Sai Centers. For members of the SSIO, service is not a mere gesture, but something that is rendered willingly, sincerely, wholeheartedly and with the great joy and love. The Organization helps sustain, in thoughts, words, and actions, the legacy of love created by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The International Satya Sai Organization and the all-India Sri Sathya Sai organization were officially formed through a charter granted by Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba on 14th January 1981.

In 2010, after receiving approval from Satya Sai Baba, the Sri Satya Sai World Foundation formed the regulation committee to review the guidelines currently in the USA in the various geographical zones of the world and develop one set of regulations applicable to all the countries outside India.

Introduction Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization (India), through its Spiritual, Education, and Service wings, has undertaken several nationwide initiatives and programs with the motto “Transforming Self to Transform the World.” Under the Spiritual wing, reading Sai literature, participating in sadhana camps, retreats, meditation, study circles, devotional bhajan singing, etc., form the regular activities. Under the Education wing are Bal Vikas, rural adult education, youth counseling and guidance, and vocational training from the regular activities. Service wing, with a registered strength of seva dal and youth, serves selflessly and silently with the feeling of oneness toward every individual, community, and humanity. Selfless service opportunities being Narayana Seva (feeding the hungry); medical camps; blood donations camps; conducting veterinary camps for the rural livestock; maintaining order during festivals in local areas; educating street urchins; skill training to women from weaker sections of society and rural youth; providing drinking water and sanitation facilities for rural hamlets; etc. Additionally, they are also participating in (disaster relief across the country and in national mission life “Swachhta.” There are 3000 samithis and 5200 bhajan mandalis, and 500000 registered devotees. There are 165000 volunteers, 81000 males, and 84000 females.

The purpose of the International Satya Sai Organization is to promote in its members ever-increasing faith in God and recognize the inherent Divine Nature of human beings and all of God’s creation. ([www.sai.org](http://www.sai.org))

## **2.2 Sri Sathya Sai Center Lauhakilthali**

The first established registered Sai organization in state-3 ka was established in the name of Sri Sathya Sai Center Kathmandu on lease at kalikasthan with a few members started with devotional singing and (Satsang) spiritual discourse sessions and other service activities which were highly attractive to spread the message as well as lots of followers were participated and the space became small for them. Many of them started family Bhajan sessions, and later, they started to register their own Bhajan group in different locations. As a result, there are 51 centers and groups up to now. The registered member in Sri Sathya Sai State Committee -3 ka is about 5705(male-4133 and female-1572). In the whole of Nepal, about 13197(male-2273 and female-4593 among the reported data), but unregistered followers are also in large number. This center was registered in 2056-4-9 B.S. in the name of Sri Sathya Sai Center Lauhakilthali-1. The area code number is 9. The total number of members is 146 (male-55 and female-91). The main thing about the Sai organization is that only the name and place differ, but practices, norms, values, rules, regulations, and charter are the same. This center follows all procedures actively and is designed according to the format described. (Introduction of organization, [www.sai.org](http://www.sai.org))

## **2.3 The Code of Conduct**

Every member of the organization must undertake Sadhana (spiritual discipline) as an integral part of his or her daily life and abide by the following Code of Conduct: -

1. Daily mediation and prayer.
2. Devotional singing prayer with the members of family once per week.
3. Participation in the educational programs conducted by the Organization for the children.
4. Attendance at least once per month at group devotional programs conducted by the Organization.
5. Participation in community service and other programs of the Organization.

6. Regular study of Sai literature.
7. Putting into practice the principle of Ceiling on Desires and utilizing any savings thereby generated for the service of mankind.
8. Speaking softly lovingly with everyone with whom he comes into contact.
9. Avoid talking ill of others, especially in their absence.

#### **2.4 The Ten-fold Path to Divinity**

1. Love and serve the motherland, do not hate or hurt the motherland of others.
2. Honor every religion; each is a pathway to God.
3. Love all men without distinction; know that mankind is a single community.
4. Keep your home and its environs clean; it will ensure health and happiness for you and society.
5. Do not throw coins when beggars stretch their hands for alms; help them to become self-reliant. Provide food, shelter, love, and care for the sick and aged.
6. Do not tempt others by offering bribes or demean yourself by accepting bribes. 7. Do not develop jealousy, hatred, or envy.
8. Do not depend on others to serve your personal needs; become your servant before serving others.
9. Observe the laws of the state and be an exemplary citizen.
10. Adore God, abhor sin.

(Source: the charter of the Sathya Sai Organization)

The office bearer committee includes the group Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Spiritual Coordinator, Education Coordinator, Service Coordinator, Youth Coordinator, and Women Coordinator. All the members are free to nominate for other

posts, but the women coordinator is compulsory in case of sex identification. This shows the importance of women's participation in the organization. Others remain active and general members. Office bearers are selected in mutual understanding. No election is entertained. All of them must follow these nine codes of conduct and tenfold paths to divinity.

## **2.5 Sri Sathya Sai Organization and the Glory of Womanhood**

### **2.5.1 Feminine Aspect Is the Foundation of the Peaceful World**

The feminine aspect is the foundation of a peaceful and happy world to be raised. When women are true and brave, kind and compassionate, virtuous and pious, the world can have an era of peace and joy.

From ancient times, the feminine aspect has been worshipped in various ways. The Veda declares that where women are honored and respected, their divinity is present with all its potency. Unfortunately, today, men consider it demeaning to honor women. This is entirely wrong and is a sign of ignorance. It is imperative for men to comprehend and acknowledge the exalted position of women and accord them due honor and reverence. Causing women to experience sorrow and tears should be avoided at all costs, for a household where a woman is unhappy is destined to fail. Men must ensure that women receive dignified treatment and a life of esteem.

### **2.5.2 Cosmos Reflects the Feminine Aspect**

This visible universe comprises three gunas (sattva, rajas, and tamas). This is the reason for describing the cosmos as stree. The word is made up of three consonants "sa," "ta," and "ra." Sa signifies the sattvic nature of women. It also represents the triple aspects of experiencing divinity, salokya (vision of the divine), sameepyam (proximity), and sayujyam (emergence). Ta signifies the Tamasik quality. However, this tamasic attribute is not synonymous with laziness and indolence. It encompasses traits such as modesty, kindness, and humility. This implies that women initiate their journey with traits such as humility and modesty to serve their families and communities with the correct attitude. There is a saying in Andhra Pradesh: "Judge a house by its mistress." Ra represents the raja guna. This does not mean pugnacity and

querulousness. This attribute indicates the willingness of women to make sacrifices, including giving up their lives, if necessary, to safeguard their dignity and that of their families. Many examples of women fought bravely and gave up their lives to protect their husbands and honor. "Stree" thus represents the combination of all the three gunas. This comprises qualities like modesty, bashfulness, fear, and patience. Every being born in the world has feminine qualities. Merely based on the physical form, a distinction is made between men and women. The three qualities in the term stree are found both in men and women. (Sai baba ss 6/96, p. 157)

### **2.5.3 Woman as a Griha Laxmi (Goddess of Prosperity in the Home)**

A woman has been extolled in ancient scripture and classical poetry as "griha lakshmi," the goddess of prosperity in the home. She is "dharma Patni," the husband's companion in fulfilling the duties and rights of married life as a householder. While learning from home science, you may be trained in making the home happy and full of harmony and health. You may have to learn also how to steer clear of hatred, malice, greed, anger, anxiety, pride, and other obstacles in the way of inner peace. It is not enough if the home budget is balanced. The wife and the mother must learn the art of having a balanced view of life, which will not be affected by triumph and trouble, gain or loss, victory or defeat. This balance can be achieved only by reliance on God, faith in the indwelling god

### **2.5.4 Symbolic meaning of Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati**

The significance of Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati must be rightly understood. These three represent three kinds of potencies in man. Ichchaa shakti (willpower), kriya shakti (the power of action), and jnana shakti (the power of discrimination). Saraswati is manifested in man as the power of speech (vaak). Durga represents dynamism (the power of action). Lakshmi is manifested in the form of willpower. The body indicates kriya shakti. The mind is the repository of ichchaa shakti. The atma is jnana shakti. Kriya shakti is derived from the body, which is a material. The power that activates the body, which is inert and makes it vibrant, is ichchaa shakti. The power that induces the vibration of ichchaa shakti is jnana shakti which causes energy

radiation. These three are represented by the mantra “OM BHUR BHUVAH SUVAH.” Bhu represents bhu loka(earth). Bhuvah represents the life force (also meaning conscience of man), and suvah represents the power of radiation. All three are present in man. Thus Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswathi reside in the human heart.

Men are prone to exhibit rajasic attributes like anger and hatred. They are menacing manifestations of Durga. The extolling of the divine is song and poetry, and their pleasing vibrations indicate the power of Saraswathi. The pure qualities that arise in men, such as compassion, love, forbearance, and sympathy, are derived from Lakshmi. When people worship Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswathi externally in pictures or icons, they prefer physical forms to the subtle potencies within them. The unfortunate predicament of man today is that they fail to acknowledge their inner strengths and develop reverence for them, instead seeking external pleasures and being drawn towards physical forms. It is essential to comprehend the connection between the material and the spiritual aspects.

### **2.5. 5 Worship of a Girl (Kanya Pooja)**

Nature is the feminine aspect of the divine, reflected in females. The wheels of the world will stop spinning without this female aspect. The young girls represent the latent divine qualities, such as love, sacrifice, compassion, etc. thus, in Indian culture and scriptures, women and mothers. A pious mother is the foundation of a healthy and happy family, strengthening the nation. If children are not raised righteously and lovingly, they will become a nuisance and menacing social problems. A society cannot become Dharmic (righteous) without a Dharmic (righteous) wife and mother. To establish and promote Dharma, upbringing young girls by cultivating human and moral values is essential. For the golden era, as envisaged by Bhagawan Sai Baba, the role of young girls and mothers will be paramount. Baba conducted the Kanya (young unmarried girls) puja (worship) function at Prasanti Nilayam to underline the importance of the feminine aspect of the divine. A properly educated and virtuous girl is a great asset on which a nation can draw a check for the welfare of society.

### **2.5.6 Foster Three Mothers**

The data maata (biological mother), the Loka maata (the mother who sustains the universe), and the Gayatri mantra (the mother who saves you from bondage and ignorance), all three deserve devotion and worship.” Sai baba SSS vol iv p. 281

### **2.5.7 Role of Mother**

“The Mother is the homemaker, the child's first teacher, the person who lovingly transmits the culture of this ancient land to its heirs in their most formative years. The mother and the father are the first examples of social behavior the child sees and learns to imitate. They should teach Bhakthi and Prapatthi (adoration of God and surrender to the Highest); they should be embodiments of Shanti and Prema (equanimity and love). Thus, they should aid in the spiritual awakening of the child.

Baba counsels, “The mother should look after the children during the early years instead of placing the child in custody and care of babysitters and servants. The mother must set an example by making the shrine the heart of the household. She must enforce discipline over the children in personal cleanliness, humility and hospitality, good manners, and acts of service. She must persuade the children by example and precept to revere elders and to allot some time both in the morning and evening for prayer and silent meditation.

### **2.5.8 Nation and Mothers**

“Everyone has a mother as the source of his life and body. So, the mother must be strong in mind and body, steeped in culture and good character, sanctified by holy thoughts, and full of love and dedication. Good mothers make a good nation. They must be repositories of Thyaga, Yoga, and Bhakti (Detachment, Discipline, and Devotion). These three cardinals must prompt every activity of theirs,”.

“If you want to know how advanced a nation is, study its mothers; are they free from fear and anxiety, full of love towards all, trained in fortitude and virtue.”

### **2.5.9 The art of making a home**

Once, in His discourse to the girl-students at His College, Baba said, “Woman has been extolled in ancient scriptures as well as classical poetry as Grihalakshmi, the Goddess who brings prosperity to the home. She is the Dharmapathni, who accompanies the husband to fulfill the duties and rights of the householder’s life. In addition to keeping the home happy, healthy, and harmonious, you must also learn how to steer clear of hatred, malice, greed, anger, anxiety, pride, and other obstacles

in the way of inner peace. It is not enough if the home budget is balanced; the wife must learn the art of having a balanced view of life, which will not be affected by triumphs and troubles, gains or losses, victory or defeat. This balance can be got only by placing one's faith in the in-dwelling God."

#### **2.5.10 The Ideal for Women**

"Women should live up to the idea of a faithful wife and a loving mother. According to the Indian belief and ideals of marriage, husband, and wife form the right and left halves of the same body respectively; they are complementary parts of the same unit." A woman is neither meant to surpass man nor to be trampled under his foot. She should stand as his equal, his companion in the joys and sorrows of life. Ref: "Sathya Sai Speaks," Vol. – VI, Chapter – 12

#### **2.5.11 The Gentle Art of Sacrifice and Service**

"Learn to adjust your likes and dislikes to those of others; learn the gentle art of sacrifice and service. Try to appreciate the viewpoints of elders. They have greater experience and a greater sense of responsibility; they may have greater forethought and know more about people and things than you, who are fresh entrants in their household.

The husband's family, which you enter after marriage, is a good training ground; it is a field of spiritual practice. When people find fault with you, do not fly into a rage. Examine your conduct and discover your faults; self-examination is the first step to self-improvement and peace. Do not exaggerate the faults of others; on the other hand, magnify your faults and strive to get rid of them fast. Consider your friends and well-wishers all faultfinders, for they give you warning signals in time." Ref: "Sathya Sai Speaks," Vol. - III, Chapter – 24.

#### **2.5.12 Mother – man's Primary Wealth**

"The mother's lap is the first educational institution for every child. It is his first temple; his mother is his foremost God. Mother is every man's primary wealth. Every person must recognize this truth. Everyone should cherish their parents as

embodiments of the Divine. The father and the mother are inseparable, like the word and its meaning. The mother and father may be physically separate, but spiritually, they are one.” Ref: “Sathya Sai Speaks,” Vol. – XVI, Chapter - 24

### **2.5.13 Women and the Community**

Stressing the role of women in building society and the nation, Baba says, “Women have a very crucial role in individual and social uplift. They are the makers of the home, the nation, and the world. They are the mothers who shape the generation to come. So, they must enshrine in their hearts the spiritual urge towards Light and love, wisdom and bliss.”

### **2.5.14 Women and Education**

“To save at least the next generation, women must be educated in a well-planned manner and endowed with the wisdom, fortitude, and faith that can equip them for the great responsibility that rests upon them...Girls who are studying in college today will become mothers tomorrow. It is, therefore, necessary that they should equip themselves with the culture, learning, and wisdom that they will need in the future.

We consider women as Grihalakshmi, Dharmapathni, and so on. A woman must maintain her house. She is not only the housewife but also depends on the glory or otherwise of the whole country. That is why we say this is our motherland. It is in this spirit that we refer to our country as Bharatmatha. We also find that women are given the first position when associated with their consort, as in Sita-Rama, Lakshmi-Narayana, Radha-Krishna, and Parvathi- Parameshwara. Ref: “Sathya Sai Speaks,” Vol. XIII, Chapter – 10.

### **2.5.15 Illustrious Mothers**

“The Puranas and Shastras (Indian scriptures) stress the role of women as mothers and extol the mothers who instilled high ideals in the minds of the children of the land. The Vedas speak of Maitreyi and Gargi as great scholars and spiritual heroines. Gargi was well revered in the assembly of Vedic pundits for her mastery over abstruse

problems of spirituality. In recent history, we have the mother of Chatrapathi Shivaji who raised him on the epics and Puranas and brought him up as a brave representative of the best of Hindu Culture." Ref: "Sathya Sai Speaks," Vol. IX, Chapter – 13.

#### **2.5.16 Ladies' Day Should be Observed Every Year**

If the nation must prosper, improvement must start with the parents. Without peace and harmony at home, the nation cannot have peace. The message should be disseminated nationwide every November 19th through the observance of Ladies' Day. One should impart knowledge on managing households proficiently and righteously raising children. Dealing with uncooperative men should be done calmly and tactfully. Though Ravana was evil minded, his virtuous wife, Mandodari, tried to rectify his actions. She strongly advised him against keeping Sita in Lanka against her will and instead urged him to return her to Ram.

#### **2.5.17 Question and Answer**

Q. Why do many scholars learned in the scriptures (sastras) declare that women have no right to acquire knowledge of Brahman (Brahma-vidya)? What is the reason?

A. There is no reason to declare that women are not entitled to knowledge of Brahman. Vishnu taught his wife, Bhudevi, the glory of the Gita, and the Supreme Lord (Parameswara) taught Parvathi the Brahman principle (Brahma-that was) through the Guru-Gita. That is what the Guru-Gita means when it says, "Parvathi spoke." What do these words mean? Besides, the Lord (Iswara) initiated Parvathi into yogic and mantra scriptures. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad mentions that Yajnavalkya taught Maitreyi this same knowledge of Brahman. This is a well-known fact. Now, you can judge and draw your conclusion about whether women are entitled to knowledge of Brahman.

Q. Others declare that women are not entitled to a spiritual studentship (brahmacharya) and renunciation (sanyasa). Is it true? Do the Vedas prohibit it?

A. The Vedas have two sections: Actions (Karma-Kanda) and wisdom (Jnana-Kanda). The section on actions is for beginners, for the undeveloped; the section on wisdom is

for the more advanced, the developed bits of intelligence. There is no reference to men or women in connection with these. The beginners are worldly, so how can they understand the immortal message of the wisdom section about the Atma? In the Brihadaranyaka, we have mention of Gargi and Maitreyi shining in the spiritual splendor of spiritual studentship (brahmacharya) and renunciation (sanyasa). In the Mahabharatha, we also have Subha Yogini and other women who are ideal and virtuous.

Q. Can a woman win knowledge of Brahman even while leading a householder's life?

A. Why not? Madalasa and others got knowledge of Brahman while in the householder stage of life. You must have heard in the Yoga-vasishta and the Puranas how they attained the height of auspiciousness, Brahmic wisdom itself. Then again, don't the Upanishads declare that Katyayani, Sulabha, Sarangi, Viswavara, and others were adepts in Brahmic wisdom (Brahma- jnana).

## **2.6 Symbols: Sacred and Profane**

The sacred symbols of the five world faiths (which subsume and represent others, too) teach that Truth has many facets, and every facet adds to its luster and value.

The OM symbol, which is a representation of all the processes of existence in Hinduism, is considered the ultimate formula for spiritual success. It is advised to listen to the ancient sound of Pranava, which resonates within one's heart as well as in the universe. The wheel symbol in Buddhism serves as a reminder of the wheel of Samsara, to which individuals are bound, and of the wheel of righteousness, which can lead to redemption. One should recall the wheel of cause and effect, deed and destiny, and the wheel of Dharma, which sets everything in order (Dharmachakra).

The fire symbol of the Parsees is an invitation to cast the lower instincts and impulses into the fire. Offer bitterness in the sacred fire and emerge grand, great, and godly. The cross symbol of Christianity carries the message of eliminating "I," feeling clean across and letting the ego die on the "cross," revealing your real self.

The Muslims' Crescent and Star symbol inspires steady faith and unswerving loyalty to good and God. Be like the star, which is fixed but never wavers from the crescent, symbolizing steady faith.

These symbols are sacred to the religious faiths and represent the identification of the name and form of the progenitors. Respect towards the symbol is sacred, and disrespect is noticed as profane.

## **2.7 The History of Religion as a Sociological Concept**

Religious narratives, symbols, and traditions have been utilized by leaders across various societies and throughout history to impart greater significance to life and comprehend the universe. Religion is a ubiquitous aspect of human culture and is typically observed publicly as a group practice in every known society. Religious practice encompasses a variety of activities such as celebrations, rituals, appeals to a divine power, marriage and funeral ceremonies, artistic expressions, spiritual contemplation, initiation rites, acts of charity, and other cultural practices.

In response to the societal changes brought about by industrialization and secularization in 19th century Europe, three influential social theorists emerged to explore the connection between religion and society: Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. Their contributions laid the groundwork for modern sociology.

Émile Durkheim, a French sociologist who lived from 1858 to 1917, provided a definition of religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" in 1915. He believed that the term "sacred" referred to things that were extraordinary and that had a connection to the concept of "the divine." Durkheim's argument was that religion emerged in society when a distinction was made between the profane, which was associated with ordinary life, and the sacred. For example, a rock is neither sacred nor profane in its natural state, but it can become sacred if it is used as a headstone or in landscaping, and profane if it is used for other purposes.

Durkheim is recognized as the first sociologist to have examined the societal implications of religion. He believed that religion served primarily to unite people in society, providing social cohesion, promoting uniformity of behavior, and offering

consolation and purpose during life's transitions and misfortunes. By applying scientific methods to the study of society, Durkheim argued that religion and morality were products of the collective consciousness of society, and that shared values and beliefs were essential to maintaining social order and stability.

Karl Marx, a German philosopher, journalist, and revolutionary socialist (1818–1883), also investigated the social implications of religion. He held the view that religion mirrors society's social hierarchy and acts to sustain inequality and uphold the existing order.

He argued that religion was merely an extension of the economic suffering of the working class (proletariat). His famous statement "religion is the opium of the people" (1844) encapsulates this idea.

Durkheim, Weber, and Marx viewed religion as an important aspect of society. Durkheim saw it as a means of promoting social cohesion and maintaining common values, while Weber believed that religion could exist separately from society. In contrast, Marx saw religion as inseparable from the economy and the worker and viewed it as a instrument used by capitalist societies to maintain inequality. Despite their divergent perspectives, all three social theorists recognized the significance of religion in shaping and influencing societies.

## **2.8 Functionalist Perspectives on Religion**

According to functionalists, religion performs various roles in society. Religion and society are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In this view, religion serves multiple functions, such as explaining spiritual mysteries, providing solace, and creating a space for socialization and regulation. Religious ceremonies foster order, comfort, and structure using familiar shared symbols and behaviors.

Functionalist theorists argue that religion plays a crucial role in providing opportunities for social interaction and group formation, which can lead to social support, networking, and a sense of belonging. In times of need, religion offers a place to seek both spiritual and material assistance. Additionally, religion can promote

group cohesion and integration. One of the ways it accomplishes this is through social control by reinforcing norms, including appropriate dress styles, law enforcement, and regulation of sexual behavior.

**Durkheim:**

He studied totemism among aborigines. Religious symbols are also symbols of society. Religion acts as a conservative force. Religion reinforces a sense of belonging to society. It reinforces the collective will of society (the collective conscience). When people worship religion, they also worship society.

**Talcott Parsons:**

He argued that religion's main function is maintaining social order. Religion promotes value consensus. Religious rituals help maintain order in times of social change. Religion helps make sense of contradiction.

**Bronislaw Malinowski:**

Unlike Durkheim, he does not believe religion reflects society. Religion helps people deal with situations they cannot predict or control. Religious rituals help manage the social disruption caused when people die. Religion helps individuals deal with social change. It helps them make sense of death and deal with the psychological stress of social change.

**Max Weber:**

He believed religion could be a force for social change because religion helps to define motivation. He believed that religion (and specifically Calvinism) helped to give rise to modern capitalism, as he asserted in his most controversial work, the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. They are the effect or influence of these religious doctrines on the economy and the position of the groups in the economic system.

Religion pertains to the sacred or spiritual aspects of human life, encompassing beliefs, values, and practices. In 1915, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things."

According to Karl Marx, religion was employed as a means by capitalist societies to uphold the prevailing inequities. It serves as a social institution encompassing beliefs and practices catering to society's requirements. Furthermore, religion is considered a cultural universal since it exists in all societies in some shape or form.

## **2.9 The Gender Gap in Religion Around the World**

Women are generally more religious than men, particularly among Christians.

Weekly across 53 countries with data on Christian attendance patterns. 11 Explaining the religious gender gap.

Religious scholars have been exploring various theories to explain the gender gaps in religious commitment for quite some time. These theories cover a broad range of factors, including biology, psychology, genetics, family background, social status, workforce involvement, and the lack of "existential security" experienced by many women due to their greater susceptibility to poverty, illness, old age, and violence.

The academic community is increasingly agreeing that the religious gender gap is likely influenced by several factors, although there is still no consensus on which factors play the most significant role in explaining gender differences.

The study reveals that Christian women surpass Christian men on all standard measures when it comes to religious commitment. However, in the case of Muslims, both men and women exhibit similar levels of religiosity on all measures of religious commitment except for attendance at worship services. This is because religious norms dictate that Muslim men attend services at mosques more frequently than Muslim women.

The position of women in society varies significantly across the world, with religion being one of the crucial factors contributing to gender inequality. However, religion is a dynamic concept influenced by cultural and historical factors, leading to varying interpretations and practices. Admitting the complexity of the issues, some religious norms and traditions can contribute to the formation of gender inequalities and subordinate the role of women in society. Using an exploratory quantitative analysis,

the influence of religiosity on gender inequality in social, economic, and political spheres is examined. The analysis reveals the emergence of three state categories: (a) those with a majority of residents without religious affiliations, demonstrating the lowest gender inequality levels; (b) societies that follow Christianity and Buddhism, exhibiting moderate levels of gender inequality; and (c) states where Islam and Hinduism are the dominant religions, characterized by the highest levels of gender inequality across the observed variables.

1. Gender inequalities can be defined as culturally and socially created differences between men and women when both sexes do not have the same share in the decision-making and wealth of a society (Ridgeway, 2004).
2. We understand religion as an ideology that affects the socio-political practices of a society and as a complex cultural system of meanings, symbols, and behaviors in communities (Stump, 2008).

Even in the present situation, the state has given women authority and rights, but implementation is difficult because of the religious and cultural practices of the society. The mindset of a gender perspective plays a role in gender inequality in religion.

## **2.10 Gender Discrimination in Nepal: Historical Context**

Gender discrimination is a historical event. It is related to the prevailing values of societies. These social values are buttressed by ideological principles supporting the respective times' cultural practices. Ideologies are the fundamental forces perpetuating the socio-cultural milieu. As a result of this role of ideologies, they define positions to be taken by women in each society. Most notably, religious ideologies invoked from Hindu scriptures have played a primary role in specifying the relationships between men and women in our society. Even though Nepal has embarked on the path to modernity over the last four decades, Hinduism, as a religion of the great majority of her population, has played a dominant role in forming ideological principles taken up by the state. Given this context, it would be pertinent to observe how the Hindu religious ideology has permeated the society and culture in Nepal and consequently reinforced gender discrimination in social processes. Classical Hindu laws on women

focus almost exclusively on the issues of their role as wives and their other behaviors. These laws expressed in the Laws of Manu, the great Hindu Philosopher, have stressed that women must be controlled because of their evil character (Wadley, 1977). According to "Manusmriti," during childhood, a female should be under the authority of her father, in her youth, she should be under the control of her husband, and in case of her husband's demise, she should be subject to her sons. A woman must never be independent" (cited in Kumari, 1990).

The central motif that revolves around women in the Hindu Holy Scriptures is to establish that they need to be controlled by men. The result is that patriarchal norms and values predominate the theme of the Hindu religion. For instance, patriarchy as a standardized system of male dominance has been expressed in various ways in Nepal. It is tied to the ownership of property, access to political power, and attaining social status. All these have directly affected the relative opportunities for men and women to acquire social rewards.

Discrimination exists in the ritual status of men and women as well. The notion of purity and pollution is observed more severely regarding cultural practices related to the life of women.

Menstruation and childbirth are a testimony to this fact. Women are also not allowed to enter the shrine of the family god during worship. Women are generally considered to confine themselves to worship. Women are generally considered to be the breadwinners of their respective families. As a result, the public sphere has been dominated by men. Women have a negligible participation of women vis-à-vis men, also reflected in the use of popular sayings like 'birth of a daughter is a doomed faith,' 'never mind the delay if it is a son,' 'someone who adorns other people's home' illustrates the lower standing given to women in society. Since women are seen as someone whose presence is only temporary in their parents' home, females tend to get fewer life chances and opportunities than males, even in their parental home.

Source: Anthropology and Sociology of Nepal

Gender-based discrimination across caste and ethnicity Nabin Rawal

## 2.11 Arguments

According to Durkheim, religion fosters a sense of community by creating social cohesion, promoting behavioral consistency, and providing solace during life's transitions and tragedies.

The researcher likes to throw the light to show dispute on religion which is against this argument of social cohesion and social control, with an example of organizations and sects of religion. The organization shows unity, but still, we can find disputes within them. The goal, the purpose, the essence of all creeds, faiths, and religions is the sublimation of man's mind to guarantee liberation for the individual concerned and happiness to the society of which an individual is a member. Principles and practices have emerged from this prime need, resulting in various creeds. The religion of the Hindus has always stressed the unity of all creation and tried to make people realize that the diversity we experience is not real but an illusion. Since faith comes into awareness only to mind that is clarified to the utmost, this religion has had to posit duality and even multiplicity with numerous deities for every facet of the whole. This accounts for the various denominations in Hinduism. However, this process of diverse viewpoints has also taken place in Buddhism (Mahayana and Hinyana), in Islam (Shia and Sunni sects), and in Christianity (Protestants and Catholics), notwithstanding the minor sects of other religions.

Durkheim felt it important to study religion within such a primitive setting for several reasons. First, he believed that it is much easier to gain in primitive settings for several reasons. First, he believed that in more modern society. Religious forms in primitive society could be "shown in all their nudity, "It would require "only the slightest effort to lay them open," Durkheim. 1912/1965:18. Second, the ideological systems of primitive religions are less well developed than those of modern religions, resulting in less obfuscation. Third, whereas religion in modern society takes diverse forms, in primitive society, there is "intellectual and moral conformity" (Durkheim, 1912/1965:18). As a result, religion can be studied in a primitive society in its most pristine form. More specifically, Durkheim examined primitive religion to shed light on religion in modern society.

The researcher is supportive of this argument because primitive society is simple. It is the source of prime knowledge. They are sincere in their role and much more identified with each other because of their dependency. It is easy to evaluate the fewer numbers where modern society is enlarged and expect certain issues they deny other members, and intensive study is somehow difficult. Simple and sincere observation concludes the effective result. More dependency leads to more functioning, keeping it alive, and always preserving originality. These small group members of the organization are known to all of them and cooperate in all the activities, and individual outreach is also easily possible.

The heart of Durkheim's theory lies in his concept of social fact. Durkheim differentiated between two basic types of social facts, material and non-material. The most important focus for Durkheim was on non-material social facts. He dealt with several of them, including collective conscience, collective representations, and social currents.

Durkheim emphasizes non-material social facts, but the researcher focuses on material social facts. Every activity is noted, and people find it externally. They look at how we behave, what we have, and what we do to society, which all is externally calculated. They evaluate the outcomes that result in society. They do not matter how much you are intellectual; it matters how you behave and how you serve society. For example, most of the temples are built personally instead of by the government. The land is donated as personal "guthi" which is calculated as material wealth. We need a place or organization to express our collectiveness which can be seen, and it is material. The network or bond increases through the organization. It is binding non-materially with the social currency based on communal beliefs. Revolution replaces the origin, but reformation keeps it alive with some change. The change is observed in material form as activities or actions which is non-material. This organization performing different activities is evaluated by social benefits provided to society.

Durkheim argued that religion and society are the same, two manifestations of the same general process. He identified society with God because he deified society; he did not urge social revolution. Instead, he should be seen as a social reformer interested in improving the functioning of society.

Everyone wants to transform their selves with noble characteristics. Religion is also the right conduct, so every individual should be transformed. This is possible if the person changes himself by applying religious discipline in his personal life, which is more effective. The researcher has presented the discourse of Sathya Sai Baba about religious transformation as supportive of this argument.

In this incarnation, the wicked will not be destroyed; they will be corrected, reformed, educated, and led back to the path from which they have strayed. The white-ant-infested tree will not be cut; it will be saved. Again, this incarnation will not select someplace other than where the nativity took place for the center of its leelas, mahimas, and upadesha (divine sport, miracle power, and divine instruction). This tree shall not be transplanted; it will grow where it first rose from the earth. It only teaches you to worship and pray.

Thus, the output of the religion claims for transformation where forgiveness and self-auditing are the key to transforming the individual and society.

Malinowski defined religion with personal experience that is very true to the researcher. The faith in religion strengthens because of personal experience, which cannot be easily disturbed. Everyone has different experiences, which can be the same in some cases. If someone shares her experience, then we may not believe that because we cannot even imagine that sort of incident, but it is true to them, and they live their life with that experience.

According to Frazer's viewpoint, magic was the initial component that emerged, and subsequently, the process of rational thinking was incorporated to facilitate the growth of religion. This is true, but magic and religion are not the same. Magic can be understood as a miracle too. The miracle is different from religion, but it is a part of religion. The discourse by Sri Sathya Sai Baba on miracles will help to remove the doubt between miracles and religion.

"Miracles are signs not to them that believe, but to them that do not believe," asserted Thomas Aquinas. Today, a large section of humanity, apart from his followers and devotees, knows Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as the 'man of miracles.' All those who were drawn to him by his love and wisdom have become his followers, while

only a few among those attracted by his miracles have remained his followers. "Miracles happen in the presence of love," said Robert Schuler. Those who fail to see the love behind miracles do have a role in the divine mission. Baba once revealed, "The signs and wonders that I manifest are given names that do not connote their true purpose or impact. They are denoted by common words in the limited human vocabulary, such as miracles or amazing acts. But they can be rightly classified as *chamatkar*, leading to *samskar*, which urges one onto *paropakar* resulting in *Shashatkar*. *chamatkar* is an act that attracts people on account of its inexplicability. This aspect of attraction is inherent in the avatar. Why does the divine attract? Is it to deceive or mislead? No! It is to reform and transform a process called *samskar*. What is the purpose of transformation? To make the person useful to society, to efface his ego, and affirm in his heart the unity of all beings in God. The person who has undergone *samskar* becomes a humble and kind servant of the needy. This is the stage of *paropakar*. Service done with devotion and selflessness prepares man to realize the one that pervades the many *sakshatkar*.

Thus, the fundamental purpose of his miracle is human transformation, and human transformation is the foundation of his divine mission. In his own words, "when the individual is good, the family becomes harmonious. When families are harmonious, society is stable. When societies are stable, the nation thrives. When nations thrive, the whole world is transformed. Hence transformation begins with the individual." Thus, the transformation of the human heart is the supreme miracle.

Karl Marx states that "Religion is the opium of the masses." Marx, in his effort for a communist society, sees that the bureaucrats had seized religion as an instrument and had poisoned the minds of the proletariat by convincing them that their condition of suffering would be rewarded in heaven. Drawing on these premises, Marx concluded that religion represents a potent, conservative, and oppressive influence that represses the masses by negating the freedom and autonomy of individuals. He posited this assertion in his renowned work, "The Capital" (1867), as he observed that many people have resigned themselves to their suffering without questioning the circumstances that give rise to it.

The scholar puts forth opposing views to the notion that religion can be a potent suppressive force that restricts the autonomy and rights of an individual. They argue

that the fundamental objective of religion is to emancipate humanity from oppression and enslavement. Religion is of immense help in fostering the integral development of the human personality. It advocates unity in diversity. True religion advises the harmony and unity of all religions. The essence, as well as the goal of all religions, is the attainment of the purity of mind and heart. Every religion has its own precepts and principles. But no religion preaches hatred, untruth, or unrighteousness. Religions emphasize human values and serve as beacons for the proper progress and development of mankind.

"Man is born to learn, not to be born again." He made the false superimposition of the truth of our reality first with religion. The cause of grief was not the real loss of any one of them; it was their own ignorance, and so is the case with ignorant men. Truly there is no cause for us to be unhappy and miserable. Because we have imposed limitations on our true nature of infinite being, the divinity, we cry in suffering that we are finite creatures. The limitations are only false superimposition of the truth of our reality that we first make. After imposing limitations, we take up this or that (sadhana) practices to transcend them. Every religion is here too free all from the bound of this world. As Buddha says, there is sorrow in this world, and there is reason for this sorrow, and there is a way to up heal this sorrow too. It always supports freedom which is nirvana.

Max Weber, contrary to Karl Marx's theory, argues that religion does not suppress all societies; rather, it uplifts some societies economically. He justifies his proposition in his famous and classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). Referring to the Calvinist doctrine, he claimed that religion played a pivotal role in shaping the incentive that ultimately led to the emergence of contemporary capitalism. He says the Calvinist doctrine exhorts every member of the Church to work hard, where to work is to glorify God, which is a calling of God, and that the hard-earned money should be properly used for the greater glory of God and should not be used lavishly or unnecessarily. Hence, the driving force of the aspiration for attaining salvation transformed into the impetus for acquiring riches, leading to the ethos of capitalism and the accumulation of wealth.

Primitive society is considered to have existed in its rawest form and is deemed as the most dependable source for such inquiries. Despite being unsophisticated, it is assumed to have incorporated nearly all the essential components of a religious system that could establish the foundation of religion.

The researcher is agreed with Weber and supports him against Marx, giving the reference from the literature review that religion does not suppress all societies; rather, it uplifts some societies economically.

The story of a small village Puttaparthi, South India, in Andhra Pradesh, is an example of a primitive village that later changed into the most popular pilgrimage with most of the modern facilities like railway station, helipad, air stations, and most wonderful thing is that the free health and education facilities with outstanding results. The Sathya Sai water project for 700 villages was handed over to the government, the largest project organized by a nongovernmental organization until now. It has become an international research center for researchers. The concept of religion as opium may be true not in a positive sense but as a counterattack because of the rise of an example for the whole world for social, moral, and developmental strategies. The astonishing result in medical science and scholars of universities has been a challenge and subject of research for the whole world. The teachings from a small village now occupying the whole globe. The transaction rate of foreigners is recorded high as an income source of this place.

The followers believe in action, work, and duties, and socio-economic status is also raised and able to organize different social work projects, which have become a challenge for the government. They have changed their lifestyle to be a simple, sincere, and well citizen of society, and it is a society away from the debate of haves and have not.

Karl Marx's epitome statement that "Religion is the opium of the masses" is not suitable for my study because religion enlightens humans. It gives the right knowledge about action and human responsibility. Religion makes more active and intelligent, and how can it be opium? Religion is not the art of hypnotism, and it does not paralyze anyone. We do not find the message not to work in any religion but are encouraged to work with full enthusiasm, sincerity, and perfection. In some cases, we may find a direction for sanyas ashram dharma to live solicited begging seven houses once a day, but it has an age bar. It prescribes the age after 75 years. Otherwise, it teaches us to live in the present without worry performing our duty, which is our dharma (right action). They teach us to practice detachment from the material world.

It does not mean leaving the family or society, but they teach to practice the philosophy, "head in forest and hands in society," which lead them to serve society without ego and selflessness.

Marx also talks about the formation of class. He viewed religion as a tool used by capitalist societies to perpetuate inequality, but in my opinion, religion is trying to form a classless society where all behave as if they are equal. When a man has reached the highest, when he sees neither man nor woman, neither sex nor creed, nor color, nor birth, nor any of these differentiations, but goes beyond and finds that divinity which is the real man behind. A classless society is possible only in a religious society, which is the result of faith in religion.

Howell (1998) further says: Sociological significance of joining a religious movement that promotes unusual gender roles lies not simply in the actual content of those roles but in the way their adoption fits into the participants' life trajectories. The adoption under the sanction of an NRM of gender codes considered aberrant by mainstream society is read as experimentation, and the whole period of experimentation is seen as an interlude analogous to a rite of transition.

Crucial to Palmer's interpretation is the frequently reported finding that new religionists studied in Western countries seldom stay with their adopted spiritual families for more than a few years.

## **CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The investigation is primarily exploratory and descriptive, utilizing qualitative data. As such, most of the data constitutes empirical observations obtained through a comprehensive inquiry utilizing open-ended questionnaires. The universe of research consists of the members of the Sri Sathya Sai organization Lokanthali.

Diverse secondary sources such as published and unpublished books, manuscripts, journals, newspapers, theses, dissertations, local and regional publications, booklets, etc. were consulted to facilitate a comparative evaluation. These resources substantially augment our comprehension of the socio-religious history of the organization, including its beliefs and practices that have influenced and molded the current investigation.

### **3.1 Rational of the Selection of the Study Area**

This Sri Sathya Sai Center Lokanthali is one of the active Centers that holds huge numbers of members of a different society. It is linked with a network of Sai organizations. It also covers the whole activities of the organization. Most importantly, regular visit and observation was made easier because of transportation and communication facility. Time-consuming with less expenditure is rational for the site selection.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The organization is the gathering place of different types of people from different places with different characters, attitudes, and statuses. They are united to perform the activities in harmony. Most of the studies are descriptive. The practices made in the organization by different participants from different cultures, societies, caste, and age groups were noted through the membership profile provided to them and observed in the field on community work and daily activities they performed. So, the explorative research design is used in this study. The study is related to the functional perspective of religion.

### **3.3 The Universe and the Sample**

The universe defined in the research is the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Center Lokanthali; for the investigation, the whole universe was drowned completely. They are of different ages, castes, and occupations. There were 146 members (female and 91 male-55) in the organization. Among them, 19 female respondents were selected through purposive sampling for the in-depth interview and presented in transcribed form. The data is presented in descriptive form.

### **3.4 Natures and Source of Data**

The main source of the data represents the female participants as a primary source. Their expressions, feelings, and behaviors are empirically analyzed in qualitative form. The data collected from the annual reports, dairy, attendance reports, and other Sai literature are secondary and quantitative in nature.

The primary data sources are the fieldwork of the primary data, the reviewing of the related article findings, and so forth. And the research generated reliable data from Sai literature, the charter of the organization, and other weekly magazines, published papers, journals of different scholars, books of well-known authors, and articles.

### **3.5 Data Collection Technique**

Primary data for the present study is collected through the same limited tools as a case study and in-depth interview schedule. All the data is presented and analyzed to fulfill the objectives. Personal experience was used while elaborating and specifying data. Respondents are visited personally, informed about the study, and asked the questions face to face with understanding. Before the interview, short details were noted in the form. The questionnaire form does not include names, but only respondent form no is noticed. The interview was recorded as well as noted.

### **3.6 In-depth Interview**

To generate the primary data, there is a scientific and reliable interview method that is most relevant. So, making an interview schedule, an In-depth interview was conducted. The respondents were interviewed by asking open-ended questions, emphasizing personal sharing.

### **3.7 Observation**

In social science research, this method is the most useful way of data generation. And this research study, the researcher was concerned about those respondents' activities that were unable to answer these questions, which were asked in an interview.

Moreover, the children, women, men, and youths are the participants, so they are being observed. This helped to catch their natural activities in sight. Some glimpses of woman's participation in different activities are taken as photographs.

### **3.8 Analysis of Data**

The data is mainly in informative and descriptive form, which is based on empiricism, so personal practices and sharing are linked with arguments of different scholars. The respondents' answers are the jewels of the study, which shed light on the report, which is a transcribed version of their practical life.

### **3.9 Limitations of the Study**

The study is limited to the Sri Sathya Sai coordination committee state 3.ka. The study is based on a census survey. Data for the study is collected with limited tools such as questionnaires, observation, and case studies. Including these three are some more limitations of the study. The thesis was performed under the limited time bar and source. The thesis study covers a certain area of the Sri Sathya Sai committee province-3-ka, especially Lokanthali Center. As this work was conducted for an M.Phil. degree dissertation, this will be only useful for the same goal.

The thesis has been tried to bind within the time, area, and other limitations, so it is, of course, for a certain purpose that cannot be used as equally as it has been here. This research work is for the partial fulfillment of the M.Phil. Degree in Sociology, and it gives information, guidelines, and practice of community but not enough because there are some limitations.

## CHAPTER IV: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 In-depth Interview of Respondents

#### Respondent No. 1

I usually get up early in the morning and start the day with prayer and worship. I am a housewife now but used to teach school before. I have one daughter with us employed as a therapist, and my son and daughter-in-law have migrated abroad to the USA. My husband was a retired government officer just a few months ago but working as a chairperson of this organization. I am also an active member of this organization, as I served as a women's coordinator. I usually attend all activities and regular bhajan in the morning session, and bhajan twice a week is my heartbeat. It's been 23 years of my lifetime affiliated with this organization. We are migrated from Khotang, Biratnagar, and now to Lokanthali 1 permanently till now. I heard about this in Biratnagar from my sister and was encouraged by the time I came to Kathmandu with my husband, struggled for existence, and again came to Bhaktapur Gathghar. Nearby there was this organization. I joined, and later we built our own home at Lokanthali and which is a walking distance. My daughter supported me and learned so many things from her, which she learned from this organization in balbikash class. My husband was annoyed at first when he was in India; officially, he was changed from the philosophy of Baba, and nowadays, he is serving at the state level of this organization too. Transformation in my family and me is a great miracle for me, and social and economic status in society is also renowned and respectful. All these credits go to my lord.

I visited my abode in Puttaparhi, which is always in my mind and feelings. We all are vegetarians, and we have a spiritual environment at home. We do our job mutually, my husband loves me, takes care, and equally participates with me, but I always respect him. We are also respected in the organization; most activities are mutually done, but female participation is always accountable. Sisterhood and brotherhood are practiced, and females are always motivated to progress in their spiritual path. Selfless services are always encouraged, and adult education, sewing, and webbing are provided. Talk programs are arranged, and spiritual discourses are provided, which helped in the growth of self-confidence, bliss, and outreach to society and regulation

of cultural practices and gratitude towards religion. I feel the real transformation and enthusiastically playing a vital role in society too. So I am always willing to participate as much as I can because this is my hope in life.

### **Respondent No. 2**

I start my day with Morning Prayer and worship, attaining the morning session of organization. We are migrants from Sindupalchok very early in life, struggling in the city with three members of the family from the Newar community. My husband works in reconstruction sites, and we own a small fruit and juice shop. My son is a student with a bachelor's degree now; while he was a child, he used to go to a balbikash class for moral education. I am proud of him and confident too that he will never choose the wrong path in the future. I joined the organization 14 years which was nearby our room. I was married early now I am 40 years old. My marriage life was a bit miserable, and it led my husband abroad for a few years. At that time, I was engaged in this organization. I learned so many good things and developed self-confidence. I rarely miss the activities, but nowadays, later, for a few years because of business, it is hard to manage time because my son was abroad for study. Now he is back and helping me in the shop and attain the organization. We all believe in God and support each other. I find a family environment in the organization; we are learning so many good things. There are many female devotees, and a competitive environment sometimes leads to misunderstandings between newcomers and old devotees, temporary and permanent residences. I benefited from the training organized by the organization of beautician and sewing classes. Some of my friends have started as a livelihood too from this training.

I find myself changed in different attitudes within my family environment too. I was unknown of this environment, and I am learning by practicing, which is interesting too. Nowadays, we can walk side by side in society morally even though economically, we are struggling here. We are satisfied, but if nothing happens in the future, we can return to my husband's birthplace. My family believes in me and hopes to help, also that I am in a good organization that is always willing to help others. We were there at the time of the earthquake; recently, we visited the orphanage home there and helped them. My belief and practices made me a regular visitor of this organization in cases of menstruation only.

### **Respondent No 3**

I used to get up early in the morning, and my first duty was to join the organization's morning activity session; after returning, I started to do my other household work. I have got one son who is ten years old and one daughter of 8 years old. While I visited the organization, my daughter was six months baby. We were at the rent, and my friend took me for the first time to the organization. I was impressed and started to join it regularly. There was a balbikash class for children. I took my son every Saturday morning. Later, my daughter also joined it. My duty was to look after the children and support my husband in his business. My husband migrated from Sinduli, and my husband used to supply plastic products. It was quite a pity time then, but because of his hard work now, we could buy the land in this place. We are planning to build a house soon. I got good company in the organization, and my householder were also members of the organization. They used to organize family bhajan sessions each Friday. I was a vegetarian from an early stage, and I was quite happy with these surroundings; my husband also was quite happy about our children spending time in the organization. I was quite regular in all activities with the children. Our business is progressive, the children are also doing well, and I could support my husband.

I do not have visited Puttaparthi, and I have not seen swami live, but I engaged with the organization, and my belief has been so strong. I am eager to know more, the regular presence in activities has broadened my thinking, and I find my prayers have been answered. I like the discourses given by swami, and I used to participate in the service activities organized by the center. We also visited my home in Dhading at the time of the earthquake with so many supporting materials through an organization. It has been a friend in my life. I am a housewife and caring for the children and supporting my husband is my prime duty. I manage my time to join the activities. My husband also supports me. My parents are also happy and proud that I am with good company and the right and safe place in the city, caring for the whole family and raising the economic status too. I think I could not leave this attachment easily. We could afford the land at Balkot; it was a little far, but when we heard about selling the land at Lokanthali, I forced my husband to sell it and buy it. It was a good sequence because I was praying that I did not want to lose this company forever, which was heard by God. I am praying to have a residence here. I hope he will hear me.

Sometimes females used to talk about doing services, and they underestimated that we were not residents here and we could not join them, which made me unhappy. Even now, too, I hear that she has become proud now because she earned lots of money and afforded the land too. These shorts of comment pinches all of us, but now I do not concern about this gossip. I participate in the activities and perform my duties like cleaning the hall, serving the members, attaining the bhajan sessions, leading the bhajan, and taking children to balbikash. I am happy with what I have and what I am now, and always eager to have more knowledge and wish to serve the organization.

#### **Respondent No. 4**

I am from an ethnic group. We believe in God but do not need to perform religious activities regularly. For 20 years, I regularly attended the organization's activities with my two sons. One is still regular, and another is the outside valley now. My husband has been abroad for a few years now, and he is establishing his own liquor shop. My elder son got married and had a grandson too. I served as a coordinator, too; it is near my house. Most of the time was spent in the organization. Time flies so quickly; I hardly manage to serve outside the valley nowadays. Family boundaries are thick, and it is competitive, newcomers are participating in organizations. I am literate only, and no other skills are gained because of my own inefficiency in technical skills; I served as a coordinator, too, but temporary sitting of official policy changes the coordinator within two years, which gives a chance to motivate all other members. Now I am serving just as an active member. We have a monthly schedule of service in the organization for regular bhajan sessions. A group of two females and one male are listed, and our duty is to clean the hall and maintain discipline. I never like to miss this opportunity. I take it as a spiritual practice in my life and want to continue it.

Sometimes the issue of ethnicity is raised among females, but this is not allowed in the organization. Caste, creed, color, and class are negligible. My family and relatives are amazed by my behavior, and society also asks how you are managing my ethnic and cultural practices. I can hardly leave the organization; I cannot forget the respect and humanness of the organization. I hesitate to participate in the menstruation period even though it is allowed; my husband and daughter-in-law serve the worship at this time. Other forms of devotion are hard for me, and reciting god's name is easy for people like me, so I am regular in the bhajan session.

### **Respondent No. 5**

Awakening with God and fewer activities in the household are my daily activities. I visited Puttaparthi before I came here. It was a wonderful and unforgettable pilgrimage that is still fresh in my mind and heart. We migrated here from Panauti after the completion of our own house. I became a regular in this organization nearby my house for 16 years, and it continues, but I do not know the end. We are seven members remaining, husband and me, in this bungalow. They migrated aboard. My daughter is in the city and often visits me, and her son regularly asks me about my health. We both are long-term patients of diabetes. Worries, fear of death, and the need for a family do not disturb me now. I am dependent on him now, and he is my friend.

Everybody respects me due to my age factor and is inspired too because of my continuity and bravery in family matters. My husband is physically weak now, but we were together on a pilgrimage. I manage to attain most of the activities. People ask me about my family; my answer is that my mother (God) loves me 1000 times more than others making them quiet. The organization in society is a board for us, and happy to practice the culture and regenerate the faiths in religion. My grandson of my married daughter and her family are also participating in the organization in their own place, and my grandson visits here often and plays the musical instrument; it makes me so happy. He learned so many things from this organization; as an age factor, I could not do it, but he started it in his childhood. I am a patient with diabetes and pressure. My remembering power is decreasing, and sometimes I even forget the program of the organization. He will take care of everything in the coming days, even my health.

### **Respondent No. 6**

It is my retired life of age 66 after setting all my siblings who started migrating from Sindupalchok at a very early age life from the Newar community. Comparing that life with a present, I am in heaven now, spending most of my time in religious activities and with my life partner. Once, my husband was sick and worried that someone white-robed would come to take his life. Doctors found nothing in the report, and after counseling with my brother, it was known that he was Shirdi Sai, a noble personality. These curiosities lead to the spiritual journey of visiting the Sai

organization at Gaushala. We used to stay at Jadibuti, and Lokanthali was a few distances away. It has been 21 years now. We shifted residence at Lokanthali in our new house and new environment. My husband left all bad habits. Luck started favoring from that time. Business shifted to a Construction Company. Two sons and daughter-in-law are migrating abroad with their children. The older one is here with us. Elder son is handling all his father's business, and it is progressive. Most of the road constructions tender are bided by our company. No, complain to them and be worried too. That illness was a gift by God to welcome into his world.

He cared for us even though we were unknown. We are participating in almost activities and serving in all aspects. We are migrants, but still, most of all, we behave gently and recognize ourselves as religious-hearted in society. I am always praying for a religious life with you till to the end. I am old and don't know about singing, reading, or speaking, but I like bhajan sessions I attend regularly. Meditation is impossible, chanting mantras are difficult, and I just love the bhajan and participate in most organization activities.

### **Respondent No. 7**

I am 43 years old now. We migrated from Kavre, and we are brahmins. Everyone worships as a daily habit. We used to stay rent in this place, and it was near the room. I started to participate in the organization, attaining first at the bhajan session. I serve the organization as per the routine of our service. I have a son and daughter, both are students of higher secondary level, and my husband looks after the fancy shop. I help him and look after his home. We all have respect for the organization and my family's support for me.

Even though we were well enough in our village, it was too hard to be in the city. Now we can afford our own house in Bhaktapur. It is a little bit far away, but our business is still here in Lokanthali, so we must come regularly. The place and organization are lucky for us. We are raised economically, and children are also well enough in their studies. All these credits go to the organization where I learned tolerance and forbearance. I feel quite strong and confident. I can talk smoothly in society. We were unknown to this place, but most people behaved respectfully. I can hardly read and write. I have no more technical skills. I used to lead bhajan in the

organization. They are friendly and respectful. This is enough for me. I am always praying to have these chances in my life. Sometimes I have misunderstandings with females in the organization, but I realize that it may be my little knowledge. I am satisfied with my life.

### **Respondent No. 8**

The organization was near my house, but very lately, I was introduced. We were in a joint family and had loads of work and responsibilities. It has been 16 years; my elder daughter is married now, and my son and younger daughter are studying at the bachelor's level. They were a student of balbikash. I did not complain about them because I learned so many things from them, and they shared with me their learnings from the organization. My husband was an elder among his brothers, and my father-in-law passed away very soon. It was a great challenge for him to manage his brothers, sisters, and mother. My mother-in-law also passed away a few years ago. We started a business of electrical suppliers, but it was hard to manage the expenditures of the house, so he started a business land. Looking towards my children's mother-in-law and brothers of my husband was quite challenging, but I got courage from prayers and the good company of organizations. Most of my prayers were heard.

My husband also helped me and supported me in participating in the organizations. He also visits at my request. He managed his responsibilities as a father to his brothers. A younger one is abroad with his wife, and another is mentally disturbed. I used to pray for others too. I served as a coordinator too. It was a great time and precious time for me, provided by the organization, learning, and practicing. It made me courageous and kind. We are well-established in society. Other friends of the society also invite me to their activities with respect. I learned so many religious importance and superstitions are also buried, but monthly pollution is still in my mind because of family pressure and the belief of society, but in this organization, it is not restricted. We can participate in being clean. Now I must manage the household of these two children, and I will be free; then, the organization will be my friend forever, so I am still participating mainly in weekly bhajan sessions and service activities often.

### **Respondent No. 9**

I get up early in the morning regularly at 3 pm and start with meditation and other spiritual practices. Happy family with a spiritual environment of equity and equality in sharing all the responsibilities, even religious activities too. Every morning I meet my parents because it is near my house and my mother is diseased. Most messages and doubts are solved in the dream. Relation started in a dream 19 years and continued in an organization nearby the house. I was married to Hetauda, but due to the job and business with my husband, most of my time was spent in a birth place, and I permanently started living too at 54. Difficulties solved by praying bared a lot, and still to come, but the confidence of tolerance and the blessing of God keeps it away easily. Both sons got married, and one is abroad. Managing time, especially the bhajan session, is easy for me due to good understanding within the family. I love serving without a post.

The way of life is filled with confidence and spiritual knowledge and will continue. Good respect for others and do respect for others too. Proud to be female and always respect males. I alone visit the organization. I was worried about my sons. I was always praying to God for good company and a good future. One of my sons was falling in love with inter-caste, but I was not preferred. If he was to marry her, there was no option for me to accept because I have learned that caste and creed do not matters. Later, the girl left her, and I felt that I had gotten my prayer answered. Now he is abroad with his wife. I got a daughter-in-law as a devotee of my second son who understands my feeling; even though they do not visit an organization, they have respect toward it. I love quiet and peaceful moments. I deny the crowd but attain some of the social programs as a compulsion. Most of the males are well-known. They are brothers from the same area, and I feel happy to see them working together and thank God that he made them on a religious path in the youth stage, which is playing the ideal role in society.

### **Respondent No. 10**

All my family members are of religious faith and culture Brahmin. Everyone does their own rituals as a morning discipline. We migrated from Sindhuli, and my husband was a government employee, and we migrated to several places with him,

and it was at the valley where he took retirement. I am 60 years old now and finished all my duties towards my family. We migrated here permanently in our own house 25 years ago while my children were reading at the school level; now, my son and daughter both got married, and my son and daughter-in-law are abroad. He is serving as a government doctor there. My mother passed away just a couple of years ago, and she stayed with me for a long time. She helped me to attain the organization. Our whole family is a member of the organization, and we have been participating till now. I heard 31 years; when we sifted here, I heard the bhajan on the way and joined it. Then I was regular in this organization. My husband spends most of his time reading books and meditating. My daughter served as a woman coordinator too. I was worried that my son, who was abroad, might marry a foreigner. I was always praying to God not to happen. Finally, my prayer was heard. He was back to marry, and they are happy there now. He took us to Mansarovar, one of the holy pilgrimages which lie in Tibet. He is religious even though he is abroad.

I have health issues, so I cannot attend the activity now, but I do not like to miss the weekly bhajan session. I enjoy it because my feelings are expressed through it. There is female participation, and I find some misunderstanding within. They put pressure on males also as their majority. I visited Puttapparthi too. We respect our ancient (soul rested in peace) and never take food before offering them. I find this organization as a prayer hall, so I will not give up participating in it.

### **Respondent No. 11**

We migrated from Khotang very early in 2048. Among five sons and a daughter, three sons migrated permanently here in the city, but my husband is still in the village. I am now staying with my second son and his family. I am 76 years old now. At first, we used to stay at Gaushala, and I attained a bhajan there and learned so many things. It was not different than our Hinduism. In our village, also I used to attain the bhajans, which was traditional. I was back in the village, but my son requested so many times to come and stay with him. I made a promise to him that if he would take me to temples and bhajan and not disturb religious rights only, then I would come. He was settled at Lokanthali near the organization, so I agreed to come again.

It is my retired life, and most of the time, I engage in religious activities and help my daughter-in-law and grandchildren, but I try to attend weekly bhajan sessions. I was new here and old age too. I used to join and follow the bhajan only. I was also willing to participate in service activities, but female devotees did not ask for a single time with me. My children are also happy that I got a place to spend their time happily, and they also show devotion towards the organization. I have not been to Puttaparthi but love him because he hears my prayer. Occasionally I also sing bhajan, which is my improvement. Everyone respects me as a good old woman.

### **Respondent No. 12**

I left all my practices. I am a housewife, but there are helping hands of my son and daughter-in-law, and grandson. We migrated from Biratnagar. I simply used to practice worship and meditation at a favorable time because of my physical health. My husband is hard on spiritual discipline now than me. Once upon a time, I got a book of Sairam written by Dr. Bhatia, which made me crazy and started from the beginning of the organization 32 years. My family was from the Maharaji community (one of the sects of Hinduism), but I am not in that community which made me debate with my brother. Before his demise, he was convinced of me. We started activities in our own homes, teaching moral education to children. My husband was a government teacher, and I requested him to help take Bal Vikas's class for children, which greatly supports us. Onward, he became active in the organization. After completing family duty, we are now watchdog in the family, so most of our time is spent on religious activities.

I am satisfied with myself and my family and left debating with others. Contemplating myself is my first duty. There are lots of miracles and manifestations of bhivuti (sacred ash), amrit (divine nectar), and discourses in the dream. Still, among them, the transformation of my husband and I is a real miracle to me. My husband does all rituals, and there is no obligatory work division. I spent most of my time in the organization; how can I stay away from it now so it will be continued? I dive into my own spiritual ocean, neglecting all other incidents.

### **Respondent No. 13**

I was a teenager when I heard about the organization. My brother used to tell me about this and make me participate in different functions. I got married and came here. Now I am 41 years old. I have got one son and a daughter, she is in Bangalore for her study, and her son is reading at school. They both are a student of balbikash. My husband also supports us in this. I have been in this organization for 16 years. My mother used to teach about spiritual practices, and every morning I start with worship. I am a beautician and work in my own parlor, but due to physical illness, I stopped it as a business. I am providing parlor service personally without cost to those who used to visit at the early time. I am motivated by the organization to do it as a free service. I take all responsibilities of the parlor in the organization in different cultural functions of children. I also train new females in handicraft arts. I used to lead bhajan and regularly served the organization on a monthly schedule. Now I am practicing playing the harmonium. I used to give a discourse on spirituality. I am a coordinator too. We organized free beautician training for a long time, but now it is given to my municipality. It was a great opportunity for the female to explore their talent and empower themselves. We were separated early after my marriage. No one other participates except my family in the organization. I have been exemplary for them. I visited Puttaparthi with my children. I was astonished by their service and inspired to do it.

### **Respondent No. 14**

I have been a responsible woman coordinator for the organization for three years. We are migrated from Sunsari to Kathmandu and now here in Lokanthali. We were at a rent, and my sister near to my offer to join the bhajan I could not ignore, so we used to participate sometimes there. I got a booklet of 70 messages collected on the auspicious occasion of my 70th birthday. I loved it and started to visit frequently. We were making our new home at Lokanthali, and it has been six years of migration here. I saw the organization here, and after a few months, I started to join it. Suddenly I was chosen as a woman coordinator, but still, I was not fully dedicated. As a woman coordinator, I started to perform my duties as attendance, cleaning, managing service activities, and giving lectures. I visited Puttaparthi, the destiny of all devotees. I started to be responsible and develop faith, but I feel that it was preparation for me to

develop forbearance because a great disaster was going to happen to me. My husband has been abroad for several years, and my daughter is a student at CA in Bangalore. My son was a student of higher secondary level. We used to visit organizations together on occasion. I was stroked by the death of my young son because of a bike accident. I heard different views from everyone, but I relied upon God. I was not frustrated. I controlled myself. Later, I accepted the death. Now I feel much more devotion toward this organization.

Unexpectedly I met with a white robed saint while we were on a visit to Kagbeni, Mukti Nath. My friends were offering Sarah for past ancestors, and I departed from them and started searching saligram (sacred stone) in the bank of Gandaki, where I met this saint and was introduced to all incidents of my life. He clarified me with appropriate reasoning. There was no culture of offering saradha in my house. My father and mother-in-law were dead very early. My husband was abroad for a long time and visited once a year, and there was no time and date for saradha. Our pitri were searching for that part, and as a result, your son spent a little good time with you and became a pitri who will again help all other pitris to free them.

My neighbor's sympathy was well enough, but I did not know how I was made this strong for this. I could not control myself and should be mad, but I have been controlled. I give this credit to God. A new belief has rooted within me that my son is in the form of pitri, and we offer him every item made in our kitchen. I respect beggars and help them. I take part in different social services organized by the organization. There is a good platform for women to empower themselves. I was supported so much by female friends of the organization.

### **Respondent No. 15**

I am 59 years old now. I live in kaushaltar with my husband and two sons, and one is abroad. At 16 years I am, I started to participate in these activities. We are the migrant of Ithahari. I love meditation and help the organization practice meditation. I give a speech on spirituality and sometimes lead the bhajan also. I am a housewife and take care of a family, and managing time for the organization is easy. My family also does respect me, but they could not participate in these activities. My neighbors are curious about me because the places where I live dominate the migrated population.

Sometimes I arrange bhajan in my residence too. My morning is spiritual, with yoga, meditation, chanting, and worship. It is my responsibility. There are no other female members in my house.

I participate in the weekly bhajan session in the organization. It is a good time there. The Female responded better. Women's participation is dominant and competitive too. It sounds too odd for others who are participating in bhajan, but in this yuga, this is the simple and easy way to offer devotion. The evening time is not so busy, and females feel a favorable time before they start their evening duty of household. It makes exposure to society and empowers their tolerance and outreach to information. Those who want to lead in the organization have an equal chance and right.

### **Respondent No. 16**

I was invited to attend bhajan by my neighbor 20 years ago. I am a housewife. I have two sons and a daughter; now I am with my younger son and daughter in law grandson and granddaughter, while the elder is also near to us. They all are well settled. My concept is clear about bhajan that it is good, and morning worship is a part of my life, and my daughter-in-law also follows it. I have a traditional belief that women should learn to worship and teach their daughters and daughter-in-law to continue it. It was a hard time for us that we had to do so much hard household works at that time. We could not get a chance to sleep up until late morning. We should wake up before dawn. We have less time to worship regularly because of work pressure. Now it is too free to work, worship and sleep, but I still wake up early in the morning, and I have nothing to do household work. Just taking care of my husband is enough and watching the house. I feel strong than my daughter-in-law. I participate in the organization regularly. I get energy there and feel very active. I do not have to do any work in the organization. I just follow the bhajan and pray. It is helping my mental and physical health to be strong.

There are female members in the organization, and each of them is capable of so many things. They compete. Sometimes it may create discussion. We are illiterate, and We do not have much work at home. It is easy and blissful to join the bhajan session. We get a good place to pray at this organization. Other members do not go

there but have respect towards it. My daughter-in-law participates in different pieces of training organized by the organization. I wish all my family members to be happy and to be religious. I will go there for my lifetime.

### **Respondent No. 17**

I am 21 years old now. I am reading at the bachelor's level. It has been nine years with this organization which is near my house. I was a student of balbikash, and I have other friends too as a student of balbikash. I was the education coordinator and served as a teacher too. I love children, and it is always a good time with children. I occasionally participate in the bhajan session but do not miss the class. I was to Puttparthi just a few months ago. I had heard so many things before, but now I saw it, which made my belief strong. My father and mother are getting older, my brother is abroad, and my elder sister gets married a few months ago. My mother is a homemaker, and my father has a health problem. I played my role well in my sister's marriage, and relatives also appreciated it because of my parent's handover to organize the ceremony for me. I just thanked God that I got this confidence from the organization. We are from the Chhetri community, so chanting Sanskrit sloka is hard for us. I learned some Sanskrit and mantras in the organization. I took part in teachers training too. We just worship occasionally. My mother used to play this role, but my father is also religious. I have a hard role to play for my family and for my career, too, so it is difficult to manage time for the organization. My family supported me in attaining all these activities of the organization. I own their beliefs and trust because they found me as a courageous daughter.

In this present time, there is no gender discrimination; both have equal rights and gain equal status in society. The organization has strict discipline but no discrimination, which is good for students and teens. Sometimes it makes me angry personally, but I feel it is good for organizational rules. There are females who form groups and compete and criticize each other, which I do not like. This makes us frustrated. I am unmarried and worried about it that what my future will be. Will I get a chance to continue or not? Instead of that, today's society is very challenging and competitive, and we should be competitors too. We should not run away from the race because the

struggle for the existence and survival of the fittest is the theory of today. The organization has so many activities, and we could not participate in these all because of career consciousness. We believe in God as well as in action too. We are not spiritually awakened. We are practicing. I try to manage my time as much as I can.

### **Respondent No. 18**

I am 22 years old, and I have been in for nine years been to the organization with my friend. We were students of balbikash, but now I am serving as a balbikash teacher and education coordinator. It is a challenge for me to manage my time for the organization. We are a family of six members, and it is hard to manage economically. My mother works hard to continue her business, and my father starts the morning with worship. They were happy with me about the organization but became angry that I spent much time there. As a teacher, as well as I used to compose dance too. I must teach children. On occasion, I must prepare them for cultural programs. I am from the Newar community, and bhajan and prayers in Sanskrit were a dream, but this organization gave me this opportunity. It empowered my talent and confidence. It gives us spiritual knowledge. As a teacher of balbikash, I get a chance to teach in school. I am a student in my bachelor's fourth year. I have a friend from different communities who are friendly and respect me.

I am helping students of balbikash to learn so many bhajans, mantras, stories, meditation, dance, and value games in the discipline. I am learning spiritual knowledge from elders and discipline from brothers and sisters from the organization. They help us to be good and competitive. There are many challenges to face, but I feel strong to face them with self-confidence. My heart is kind now and always behaves equally, and I am not afraid to raise my voice against untruth. I am afraid that I must marry because of the environment. The challenge of my carrier, family responsibilities, and race makes me think, but I am confident I will overcome all obstacles. It is my wealth which I gain from this organization. I love to participate in the bhajan sessions. Those who want to serve are always welcome in this organization, and they are trained in so many faculties if they want to empower themselves, as I feel myself.

## **Respondent No. 19**

I am 50 years now. I have a family of 7 members. I have been a vegetarian since childhood because I was grown in the religious faith of Krishna pranami. I was married here; my husband and his parents were not vegetarians. My son used to read in the school of Lalitpur, and he brought a card from this man. It was not noticeable then, but later, he told us I saw the man with a red robe in our room. It has been 22 years with the organization. It started in our own house. My husband was back from Japan and wandering in different sectors, and after the visit to Puttaparthi, he started to organize bhajan sessions which turned into an organization. My role was to help them; later, I became active as a woman coordinator, performing services, leading bhajan, and giving speeches. I feel strong now with confidence and can be happy in any situation. I was trained for tailoring, and later helped as a trainer in the same organization. I am a housewife, and lord Krishna was my idol, and I loved the Krishna bhajan only, but later I visited Puttaparthi and started to respect and love all religions. My family is spiritual. My mother-in-law does not have eyesight now, and she lost it because of diabetes which stroked suddenly. She was also very active in the organization. People used to talk about it negatively, but we take it easy. My husband was not religious during my marriage, but after this organization, he changed himself and continues his spiritual practices.

The effect of this organization is memorable. My son married a few years ago now he is abroad with his life partner. The people of the organization managed everything. In death, youths of the organization were called to lift the dead body because, according to culture, the dead body was to be carried to Pasupathi for the funeral ceremony. They were well known for their selfless service in society. There were different religious activities, but it was organized often. We can find seasonal bhajans within Newar communities specifically for them because of the language problem. After the establishment of this organization, regular bhajan sessions have been organized where members of different communities participate, and it has been regular for 23 years. Walking in the early morning and singing bhajans in the community is praised by everyone. Most youths, both boys and girls, have been transformed into good human qualities, and now they are idols of society. The organization is in the surrounding of a temple now. The samiti of the temple was passive. The place was neglected, and we

started to look after it. The environment changed; the flow of people was massive, and everyone was praising us, but the people of samiti started to be jealous and afraid that samiti may lie in the shade. They are having a debate nowadays against us. There is always a conflict between good and bad people in society. Most people support us. Women's participation is good because of the good environment. They are motivated, inspired, and respected.

According to Durkheim, religion serves as a means of community building, fostering social cohesion and promoting behavioral consistency, while providing individuals with meaning and purpose during life's transitions and tragedies.

We have heard about the unity of religion, but when we try to understand it, we find disputes within them. The researcher concludes it with external unity and internal dispute. People find unity as an outsider, but within an organization, there were some debates in understanding. They unite against other, but the internal conflict remains. The organization's female unites to serve the activities but competes to prove them better. The organization is the umbrella with a sacred symbol to unite people of the same faith in society. They always aim to occupy the whole sky with the same faith, but it is difficult to cover the whole because space may not be enough for those all. They have different interests, but while we see them in the same line with their dress code and under the umbrella of sacred symbols, no one even guesses their internal dispute.

Durkheim examined primitive religion to shed light on religion in modern society. This small unit of respondents of the organization is known to each other, and they are cooperative and competitive too. They represent a single spoonful of water from the ocean which is enough to define its taste. The code of conduct and pathways are universal, and the organization's activities are the same. The unit of an organization from a primitive society is easy to explore and sufficient to give output in detail. They are more natural. They are not mechanical. It is a nominal percentage of the total population of the organization, but it has its footprint or space in its whole organization, even inside or outside the country.

Durkheim's social fact includes material and non-material facts where he emphasizes the non-material fact. Still, the respondents emphasized their activeness because the

women coordinator was responsible in the organization. A material fact is compared with the structure of the organization. The status and role of the female coordinator are prescribed in this structure, and this inclusive structure makes the women participate from the beginning, which is later multiplied in number. The society experienced the empowered skill within the female of this organization through the training and counseling they exhibited as a trainer.

A material fact is compared as the output or result of the activities through behavior, character, and benefit of society, which is seen and experienced. The respondents are judged by their character which results in their behavior. Experience, knowledge, talent, and skill remain non-material if it is not useful for society, so it may be fruitful if it comes in material form that is in the practiced form, which the people see of society. The respondents were engaged as a trainer too.

Frazer believes that magically came first, and then the science of reasoning entered to foster the development of religion. Magic is understood as a miracle by most of the respondents. They have heard about the unbelievable miracles and shared about their miracles, like the presence of the physical body, the manifestation of bhivuti (sacred ash), lingam, nectar, cure of disease, and different signs to make feel of his presence. They developed faith in his character of omniscience, omnipotent, and omnipresent. But the miracle itself is not the religion. They experienced the miracles that worked as a visiting card, making them dive deep into the ocean as a culture. The cultural practices of loving and serving made their hearts kind, soft and pure. This selfless service with devotion leads them to the stage of self-realization. They started a way of life with the right action, called 'dharma' or religion. They find transformation within themselves, their family, and society, which is the real miracle, so they believe the root cause of transformation is the belief in religion that is right conduct.

So, the researcher finds miracles, not as a destination of religion, but it helps their faith to be strong with miraculous incidents. As religion leads to a disciplined life, a miracle may be the step for them to keep the first step in the religious path.

Malinowski defined religion with personal experience. Personal experience is the key to unshakable faith. "No one can share my feelings, and no one can steal my memory." There may be seven persons who might have similar faces, but no one has

the same fingerprint. Everyone is special with individual experience. The respondents have different experiences, which lead them to believe. They face different accidents but cannot break their bond and presence in the organization. The world is not the absence of back bitters, but they cannot shrink the faith because it becomes weak before personal faith is gained from personal experience. They are on a continuous visit to the organization. They shared the sad moments of their life. They were criticized, and rumors were created about the organization, but their personal experience defeated all these negative aspects and made them present till now. The researcher may be unable to transcribe their feelings but has tried to make them live.

For Karl Marx, "religion is the opium of the masses." It is already stated that everyone has their personal experiences, and the respondents shared the experience as they were prepared very early time. Already there was a sign for an invitation with different incidents. Most of them join the organizations themselves. They are serving as a volunteer. No pressure is created in any activities, even to donate. They are always awaking and using their discrimination power. They are managing time by performing their family duty and responsibilities. The organization never used the mass for riots, strikes, or political movements. It is the only organization where members contribute with their expenses for service activities.

Contrary to Karl Marx's theory, Max Weber argues that religion does not suppress all societies but uplifts some societies economically. The example of the remote small village of Andra Pradesh in South India with members around 103 now has changed to the destiny of all pilgrimages, center for research in hospitality management, medical studies, and educational hub of Excellency as well as religious belief. The respondents have quickly changed their lifestyles and are trying to make their home place Puttaparthi. They all are sustained economically. The social and economic status of the present condition was credited to God as a result of faith in God. They argue about believing in action in present situations and are always God-oriented.

Marx talks about class formation, but it is the only classless platform. There is no permission to behave any members with their identity of caste, color, creed, ethnicity, sex, and social status. They all participate in all activities. Even they participate in other social activities frequently, like funeral and marriage ceremonies and other rituals.

All these symbols are sacred and bear deep meaning. It represents the identification of believers in a shared community. They respect and worship it, and those who misconduct with this symbol have behaved profanely. These five symbols are the pathway to God in the organization and are recognized as sarva dharma stupa. The scarf they use at service is also sacred, and when they put on the scarf, they must be pure, as the five symbols printed on that scarf. Anyone with the scarf in service represents the god himself and suggests serving humbly. Bhivuti (sacred ash) is also used as sacred, which they put on their forehead and use at the time of pain as medicine for all diseases with faith and respect. They respect their religion and do not disrespect others' religions.

We understand religion as an ideology that affects the socio-political practices of a society and as a complex cultural system of meanings, symbols, and behaviors in communities (Stump, 2008).

Most of the respondents are dominated by the Hindu belief system, and this ideology plays a vital role in changing their behavior even in a place where it is not prohibited. The period of menstruation and other events like childbirth and death is not restricted to attain the activities in the organization, but the belief of pollution still dominates respondents. Cleanliness is godliness, so the organization suggests reciting god's name in the situation, but their ideology of religion stops them from participating.

Gender inequalities refer to differences between men and women that are created culturally and socially, resulting in an uneven distribution of decision-making power and wealth within a society. (Ridgeway, 2004).

Most of the respondents are married and dependent on their husbands. The male supports them. The female is limited as a women coordinator, but no one is found to be as a chairperson of the organization, but it is not restricted. About other organizations, few of them hold head positions.

The report of the Pew research center on the topic of The Gender Gap in religion around the world concludes that women are generally more religious than men, particularly among Christians.

Based on the analysis, three categories of states have been identified: (a) States where the majority of residents do not have any religious affiliation, exhibiting the least gender inequality levels; (b) Societies that follow Christianity and Buddhism, displaying moderate levels of gender inequality; and (c) States with the highest levels of gender inequality across the observed variables, where the inhabitants practice Islam and Hinduism.

In Nepal, even though the country is defined as a secular country, Hinduism is dominant. In the present situation, the state has given women authority and rights, but implementation is difficult because of the religious and cultural practices of the society. The mindset of a gender perspective plays a role in gender inequality in religion. Women's participation is more than male in religion, even though discrimination exists in the ritual status of men and women. The female

Respondents participate in the organization but are supported or permitted by their males. They have behaved respectfully in the organization, but they respect their husband in their household and try to make them satisfied. Most respondents support the belief in Hinduism, so there is a high percentage of female participation.

#### **4.2 Demographic context of the Respondents**

The organization is located at the border of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur districts, surrounded by the river Manohara and Hanumante, which helped in agricultural products for the basic income of farmers. Urbanization of the place is decreasing land productivity, and just a small portion of the field is used for vegetation. The place is highly migrated, and mixed cultured inhabitants are found, but the newar ethnic group and some chhetris dominate here. The economy is dependent, and socio-culture is alive with many temples and festivals. Religious institutions are practiced simultaneously within the population of nearly fifty thousand in harmony. As a research site, the research has chosen the Sri Satya Sai center Lokanthali, with 146 members affiliated with this organization. The researcher wants to analyze the women's participation in the organization and its effect on society made by religious participation with a functional perspective. There are 91 females and 55 males registered. Participation is irregular; some migrate to different places because of marriage, jobs, and study, and some have died too. Some of them do not visit now.

Most of the members are literate and achieved different educational qualifications, and only a few above fifty years old are illiterate. The representative of an educated personality is quite satisfying in this organization and proves the conscious participation of society. Most of the youths are students, and they are engaged in private jobs too, and study is an ongoing process to achieve a higher level. Few of them have stopped studying and engaged in their private business. Female adult has stopped their study and served as a social worker in the programs organized by the organization, like adult literacy project, health counseling, and sewing and webbing project.

Participation according to age and sex represents cooperation between them. Males are active and stronger, but here we can find many active members representing the female. According to percentages, it seems to dominate female organizations but domination according to sex, age, caste, religion, and the color is prohibited in this organization. Membership is free and voluntary. The compulsion of a woman coordinator is included in the executive board, so it is always representative, and this woman coordinator mobilizes the women to be active. Females are inspired by leadership. Women share and request to join them. This also increases the number of female participants.

We cannot find homogeneity in age because it is impossible, and the age factor is not determined. Still, in society, it is heard that these types of spiritual organizations are only for old, aged people. Youths also participated but few. The organization welcomes all spiritual aspirants under the restriction of age and sex. We can see adults over fifty years being engaged, and they are also representative of different activities within the organization and perform an important role in guiding. Members of the organization are engaged in various occupations. Most of the females who participate regularly are housewives. They are in various sectors and arrange their time to participate in activities, but the most favorable time suits the housewives, especially in the evening session. The organization organizes different activities in different schedules and requests others to participate. Bhajan session is the base for them, so they mostly like it.

### 4.3 Attitudes of Respondents

Mainly there are four types of respondents having different attitudes towards this organization with different means, and subjects are the cause by which they are affiliated. They are as follows:

One is always worn out by the ills that affect the body. She is the Aarta. Another is worried by the struggle for prosperity, power, self-property, prosperity, etc.; she is the artharthi. A third yearns for the realization of the Atma, reads the scriptures and sacred texts, moves in the company of spiritual sadhanas, acts along the lines laid down by the sages as sadachara (good conduct), and is always motivated by the eagerness to reach the sannidhi (presence) of the lord. She is the jigyanu. The fourth is the jnani. She is immersed in the Brahma tatwa (Brahma Principle). First, the aartha participates in an organization when she struggles and suffers from grief or pain. God's relation with her is in difficulty and suffers grief or pain. They talk more and praise god that I did this, and God gave me this and that. God loves me very much. He gifted me with this and that. Some of them pray for riches or position or power, or high status, and their relationship is with God until she is awarded the thing she craves for. The jigyanu third type is blessed with chances to do Nishkama karma (desire less karma), with a proper guru as a guide, and an intellect sharp enough to discriminate between aatma and anaatma (temporary and permanent) and thus helped to achieve the goal. These are away from distractions and concentrated on the single aim of liberation. They do not crave worldly desires. They are peaceful and soft and sweet speakers. Their heart is full of selfless love. They follow the nine codes of conduct and apply ten divine paths. They do not indulge in business activity at the organization. These are very few.

The search for women with different attitudes and desires in the spiritual field found this organization as a fertile field to grow the seed of their faith and belief. Some of them feel relief from their physical and mental pain, while others are satisfied with their yearnings for prosperity. Some are learning by doing and involving themselves in selfless services; some are not affected by anything and behave as witnesses.

#### **4.4 The Teaching of All Religion**

The word religion is pronounced as "DHARMA" in Sanskrit and is also recognized as righteousness, duty, and right conduct, but here it is concluded as dharma. The respondents were familiar with the word dharma and pronounced it too many times like dharma. I am trying to express it in their version to make it alive to better understand how they take dharma. The word "Dharma," which abounds in an infinitive variety of meanings, is being inadequately by one word, "duty," in our modern age. Duty relates to an individual, a predicament, or with a particular time or country.

On the other hand, dharma is eternal, the same as inner Atma. The birthplace of dharma is the heart. When translated into action, what emanates from the heart as a pure idea will be called dharma. If you must be told in a manner that you can understand, one can say, do unto others as you want them to do unto you. That is dharma. Dharma means avoiding actions that would hurt others. If anyone causes happiness to you, then you, in turn, should do good deeds that will cause happiness to others. When we recognize that what others do will cause difficulties, and if we do the same thing, it would be "Adharma."

Buddhism declared that truth and non-violence are the basic requisites for eliminating delusion and achieving purity. Christianity proclaimed that all are children of God and should have fraternal feelings toward each other. Jesus declared, "all are one, be similar to everyone." According to Islam, all are members of one family in spiritual terms. It regarded prayer as the best means of ensuring societal peace and security. Emperor Manu declared one must be prepared to sacrifice his body for his community and his community for the nation's sake. Manu's religious doctrine lays down that the welfare of society is most important. "Let us live together, work together, and grow together in joy and harmony." This is the teaching of the Vedas. It is evident that in this way, all religions propagated unity to promote the well-being of society. The welfare of the world is bound to the well-being of society. Thus, most of the respondents desire the welfare of society and contribute their effort as much as they can.

The respondents focused on the point of non-violence. Everyone is equal and should be treated with love. Religious belief is important and should be respected.

## **CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Summary**

The respondents of the organization participate in different social activities organized by it. The transformation of so many individuals plays a vital role in serving society without discrimination. They are empowered with different skills as well as bounded with strong faith. It regulates cultural practices. They function well within an individual, the family, and society. Their social and economic status is well maintained, and most cultural practices are regulated. This shows the functioning of society because of religion. Most females participate in both activities of house and society in comparison to males. They did not feel oppressed anywhere but were empowered with different skills. They are fearless and self-confident to bear every condition of their life.

Divinity is latent in everyone, like fire in wood and oil in sesame. Still, it is manifested form in females and latent form in males, which we can observe in participating in religious activities. Most of the respondents are supported by a male to participate in them. In some transformation cases, males are more active than females, who initially inspired them to participate.

They expressed the reason for participation with five Ds. The five Ds are Dedication, Devotion, Discipline, Discrimination, and Determination. Most of the respondents stated the regular visit with dedication and sowed the seed of devotion, which was protected by the bar of discipline; as a result, a tree of discrimination was erected and waiting for the fruit with determination. This makes them participate from their early years in the organization.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Religion starts with belief, and it generates respect toward it. There are different rituals to show respect, and while we perform these rituals, there are certain rules and regulations which are prescribed according to the role and status of everyone, which is framed as organizational structure. This is the study's conclusion, described in explorative form respectively.

### **5.2.1 The Belief System**

The deep-rooted belief system cannot be uprooted easily. It is practiced and learned and transferred and continued from generation to generation. The respondents are female, and they participate in a religious organization. Most respondents start their morning activities in ritual practice, which they take as their prime duty only in case of the restricted condition. In this situation, the daily activity is regulated by the daughter, daughter-in-law, and husband simultaneously of prior. The mindset of religious belief that females most do religious activity motivated them to participate in the organization. For example, the organization is not strict about menstruation. However, still, they hesitate to participate because the belief system that they think they are polluted during this period stops them from participating. Thus, the religious mindset of females being more devotional inspired them to participate in the organization.

Their empirical experiences with themselves bonded them with their faith, and their belief became strong even during a hard time. They compared their social and economic status within the period and found satisfaction as their prayers were answered. The accidents they meet in life were unbelievable and unbearable too. Still, they started to live normally after counseling by the organization, and they get an answer in different ways to foster their faith.

### **5.2.2 Latent and Manifested from Religious Belief**

A coin is two-faced. Mainly after its economic value, it is used for tossing to win the bet. The seen part keeps its importance, making someone win or make a start, and the unseen part cannot be neglected. Everyone believes the seen part. Everyone has male and female characteristics within a single body, and the character which appears is recognized by society and identifies the individual. To run the society and keep it functioning, both males and females are responsible and important. Who seems to be functioning is in front, and who is supporting is at the back. In the case of religion, both males and females play their roles to function, and in this organization, females are seen in front as supportive of functioning it.

The religious function is manifest in females, during latent form in males. Most of the married female respondent shows respect towards their husband as it is their duty or moral behavior even though male and female are equal. This discrimination should not be practiced. They are supported by their husband as well as other male members too. They believe in God but do not want to participate always, which shows the latent form of religion within them. They do

not want to be an extremist in the case of religion. They keep it in their mind, and they participate in activities often. As well as lots of husband of the respondents have changed into good followers and represent the manifested function of religion.

### **5.2.3 Respect**

Religion is a respectful belief system towards the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipresent power away from human reach and supernatural power, invisible power which can only be perceived with feelings. The divine form in the universe is called Iswor or God or Bhagawan. The relation between the world's creation and humans is the bind of belief.

Women are respectful because of their potentiality, forbearance, and kindness. They feel they are respected in this organization because they hear about their glory in spiritual discourses provided by the organization. It is easy to manage time. There is no compulsion for donation, and you do not have to pay due for absence from activities. They feel safe and peaceful and can visit different places with service. So, they are willing to participate in this organization. They are in the continuity of the same religious faith and belief with simple understanding and practices which keep them as religious and cultural beings.

### **5.2.4 Pathway of life in Kali Yuga**

"Daiva Priti, Paap bheti and sangha niti" (Love god, fear sin and get united) Most respondents in this organization believed in Dharma, in the name of God, acquiring dharma, doing dharma, and fearing sin (adharma, paap). They participate in good company in the organization. As the first step in spiritual practice, good company will develop knowledge, a love of silence, and solitude which will end attachment, the root cause of sorrow.

Thus, most women participated knowing the importance of institutional unity in this age, which helps to develop faith. Unity leads to purity, and purity leads to divinity which is the aim of every spiritual aspirant. In this age, association plays a vital role in raising the voice and making it fruitful. Buddhism also emphasizes the association "Sangham saranam gacchami" (I seek refuge in society). It helps to develop faith.

### **5.2.5 (Naama Smarana) Recitation of God's Name is an Easy form of Devotion in this Kali Yuga to Realize God**

Of these nine modes of devotion, Nama Smarana sadhana, remembrance of the lord's name, is the simplest and universally acceptable. All the world religions urge their followers to recite the name of the one lord, though how it is recited varies from religion to religion. It encourages the devotee to develop that attitude of unity and non-differentiation between divine names of all creeds, countries, and faiths. It gives the message of spreading that love, living that love. This love must grow in us and become deep and abiding. It instructs the devotees to engage in this discipline of reciting the names of God, remembering his love and his mercy, his majesty and his glory.

In this present time, this form of the spiritual practice of devotional singing is easy for all, and it is prescribed as an important means of devotion in the Holy Scriptures. Most are housewives; they spend their free time in good company. It is the easiest form of spiritual practice, and without cost, so most females participate in the organization. There is no compulsion or punishment. They do not have to spend more time regularly.

"But the reality is one, Nations are many, but the earth is one; Beings are many but breathe one; Stars are many, but the sky is one; Oceans are many, but water is one; Religions are many, but god is one; Jewels are many, but gold is one; Appearances are many, but the reality is one."

## **ANNEXES**

### **Annex-I**

#### **Interview**

Religion and women participation: A study of Sri Sathya Sai Centre Lokanthali

Namaste,

I have come here to obtain information on women's participation in this organization. The purpose of this visit is to accomplish my M.Phil. A degree in sociology required a comprehensive research report on any social topic. Hence, I request you to share in detail whatever information and experiences you have about Sri Sathya Sai center Lokanthali.

- 1 How long have you been affiliated with this organization? Were you participating elsewhere before?
- 2 Who told you about it, and how were you inspired?
- 3 How often do you participate in different activities?
- 4 What is your position, and what role do you play?
- 5 What change do you find within yourself?
- 6 Does it matters to your family?
- 7 What is the perception of society towards you as a member/devotee/ or follower?
- 8 What is the status and role of the female in this organization?
- 9 Did you face any misbehaving from males?
- 10 How is the relation among females?
- 11 What do you think about continuity?
- 12 Tell the message that you like most.

## **Annex-II**

### **Individual detail form for respondent**

Name of the center:

Form No:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Address:

Permanent:

Temporary:

Education: Occupation:

Marital Status:

No of family members:

Skill: