

## ACCESSING THE CULTURAL SOCIALIZATION OF MONKS IN BUDDHIST MONASTERIES: A SOCIOLOGICAL PARADIGM

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### ABSTRACT

Monasticism has had spiritual and cultural significance since its inception as a religious order in India during the 6th century B.C.E. The study discovered that monks' participation in monastic life is both inescapable and integrated into their whole religious life. This study emphasizes the importance of modern ethnography in shedding light on historical topics, providing a paradigm for comparative inquiry, and thereby investigating the influence of lifestyle change in current times. The question is how far the cultural socialisation in recent times plays role in shaping socialisation of monk in Buddhist monastery? The research method employed in this study is ethnography with participant observation as a tool, and the methodology is qualitative. As a result, this study aims to close the knowledge gap on monks' cultural socialisation using emic rationalisation. In addition to retracing and reconstructing certain episodes from monks' lives, it highlights the evolution of monastic life and examines some of the circumstances that led to his deeper association with Buddhism.

**KEYWORDS:** Monasticism, Spiritual, Emic Rationalisation, Monks, Cultural Socialisation.

### INTRODUCTION

Monasteries have been portrayed as homogeneous and monks as direct representations of institutionalised religious principles in most of the writing on Tibetan Buddhist monasticism. Few studies have sought to explicitly explore Tibetan Buddhist monks' lifestyles and the role that the monastery's social milieu plays in determining these lifestyles. Monasticism as a cultural institution suggests a certain "religiousness" to all parts of its lifestyle by structurally excluding the individual from "normal" society in favour of a lifestyle aimed toward transcendent spirituality. The term "religiosity" will thus be understood here in a qualitative sense of the overall orientation that religious life – activities, attitudes, "moods and motivations" (Geertz 1973, 90) - takes. Instead, this research focuses only on the monastery and attempts to analyse the lives of ordinary monks: their biographical stories, the patterns and intricacies of their everyday lives, and the unique variables – structural, organisational, and cultural – that impact these. Monastic life is a crossroads where religious order (life) and socio-cultural norms collide and complement one another. Monastic life and economic activity are inextricably linked to a specific religious order, and they can only be fully understood if they are perceived through the eyes of insiders. Cultural sociology, concerns the systematic analysis of culture usually understood as the ensemble of symbolic codes used by a member of a society, as it is manifested in the society. For Georg Simmel:

“Culture referred to "the cultivation of individuals through the agency of external forms which have been objectified in the course of history". Culture in the sociological field is analyzed as the ways of thinking and describing, acting, and the material objects that together shape a group of people's way of life.”

Monastic communities in Tawang are generally made up of a diversity of virtually indiscriminately selected individuals socialised into an alternative culture from a very young age, rather than individuals who have been drawn together by a common interest in living a contemplative lifestyle in community with like-minded individuals, as is the case with most other monastic traditions. Buddhist society is viewed through the prism of social reality formation. How we describe society has an impact on how society is. Similarly, how we see other people has an impact on their actions as well as our own. We all play many roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions are influenced by these roles. We all play different roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions are influenced by the roles we play, who we play them with, and the setting in which we engage. Habitualization describes how “any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be ... performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort” (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Not only do we construct our own society but we also accept it as it is because others have created it before us. Society is, in fact, “habit.” Thomas Theorem which states:

“If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” (Thomas and Thomas, 1928). That is, people's behavior can be determined by their subjective construction of reality rather than by objective reality.

## RATIONALE

Personal curiosity about new things, the desire to get a research degree along with its consequential benefits, the need to solve the unsolved problems, an intellectual joy of doing creative work, the directives of the government, the desire to fill a knowledge gap, social thinking and awakening have stimulated scholars to do research (Kothari:2004, 2). The researcher has been working with novice monks for one year and just got into contact with them while performing field work for her M. Phil in Sociology on the theme 'The Art of Socialization of Novice Monks in Buddhist Monasteries.' During her M. Phil research, the researcher became aware of contemporary cultural socialisation, which was mostly related to changes in daily routines, online Dhamma classes, prayer and chanting in solitude, and the impact of modern socialisation on monks. During her previous research, the researcher built a rapport with the novice monks of Tawang Monastery. There were several questions that came up in the mind of the researcher.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Creswell and Clark (2007):** the paradigm attempts to understand the meaning of phenomenon based on the participants' subjective views using the qualitative approach. Research paradigms are used by researchers so as to confirm a strong research design. For this research, the constructivist research paradigm is used. The constructivist paradigm is crucial to understand the way members of the monastic order construct their world based on their views, experiences and

knowledge, as it enables researcher to acquire detailed data about the phenomenon from the perspective of those individuals who understand the situations. The researcher work is qualitative in nature, to explain the methodology she has taken ethnography to encounter culture being as a participant observer.

**The locale of the study:** The researcher has selected the monks of Tawang Monastery who are basically Tibetan Buddhist from Gelug tradition. It would be easy for the researcher as she has already collected data with the novice monks of Tawang in her past research. From sociological point of view Tawang is undergoing cultural transformation in recent times. So the researcher thought it would be apt to select this as her locale.

**Description of the sample:** The researcher aims at focusing her study on the cultural Socialization of monks. She planned to use the questionnaire method to collect data for her work, besides, studying documents, books, etc. The sampling method to be used for this study is selected by the researcher as per her research requirements and the nature of the universe. Because of the peculiar nature of the theme, this piece of research was going to be essentially of qualitative nature.

#### LITERARY TOOLS

The researcher plans on using theories of Cultural reproduction, a concept first developed by French sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu. It is the mechanisms and an idea of existing cultural forms, values, practices, and shared understandings (i.e., norms) which are transmitted from generation to generation, thereby sustaining the continuity of cultural experience across time and reproduction. It is a process by which aspects of culture are passed on from person to person or from society to society. Symbolic interactionists offer another lens through which one could easily analyze the social construction of reality. With a theoretical perspective focused on the symbols (like language, gestures, and artifacts), this approach is interested in how they interpret those symbols in daily interactions.

**Sources of Data Collections:** Two types of sources of data were used in this research: Documents and The field work. Since the research theme has a historical context and reference, it became necessary for the researcher to refer to the historical and contemporary documents for her research. The study requires the process of narrowing down the subject to study the research of Clans on taking physically disabled as a category to Bihar subject for this study since she is more interested in studying the urban scenario.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To study the phenomena of culture in monks in Buddhist monastery.
2. To assess the social change and ways of living of Buddhist monks in contemporary times.
3. To examine the process of culture forming social behavior and norms in Buddhist monks.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How far the daily routines or habits play role in shaping socialisation of monks in Buddhist monastery?

How the pandemic changed the lives of monk in contemporary times?

How enculturation plays a vital role in forming disciplined routines of monks inside the monastery?

#### **FINDINGS**

The consideration of Buddhism has always been heart to the discussion of what religion is. This study will assist to demonstrate that the influence of culture on a person is unavoidable, even within institutions, designed to separate a person from “normal” society in order to pursue more transcendent objectives. A monastery, on the other hand, is invariably, a social, cultural, and physical space. As a result, monasticism does not necessarily create the conditions for a person to renounce society in favour of pursuing a higher lifestyle guided solely by religious ideals that transcend society, but rather produces a parallel culture to that of the society it renounces. This research revealed that there is still a lot to learn about the education of regular monks. More comparative studies like this one, may, not only reveal a greater diversity of daily lifestyles, attitudes, and religious orientations in Tibetan Buddhist monasticism than is currently understood, but they may also aid in pinpointing which aspects of their social environments have the greatest impact on shaping religiosity.

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