

12. BUDDHIST ECONOMICS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF TAMANG COMMUNITY OF TEMAL

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Abstract

Buddhists Economics is economic science based on Buddhists Philosophy specially focused on noble eightfold path. Ethnography denotes the detail cultural ethnicity profile of specified community. Thus it is an ethnicity graph of Tamangs of Temal Rural Municipality from Buddhists economic perspective. To get the detail cultural and economic profile of Tamang of Temal the study has been prepared. It is an ethnography of Tamang of Temal from Buddhists economics and right livelihood. Finally, Tamang are Buddhists but they are highly influenced by different ideologies and now turned into a different type of unique Temal Tamang Buddhists.

Keywords: Buddhist Economic Perspective, Ethnography, Tamang Community, and Temal,

Introduction

Writing an ethnographic article is really challenging. To adjust at least introduction, field experience, data sources, geography, culture, ethnicity, and cultural behavior of a study within limited pages is really a tough job. Because an ethnography refers to an anthropological record that describes the culturally significant behaviors of a particular society. Some cultural elements that may be studied include traditions, rituals, belief systems, religious impacts, language variations, moral values, and additional contexts of behavior. Other forms of cultural evidence can also be beneficial, such as: artifacts, oral histories, sacred texts, and various art forms. The researcher has the hefty task of gathering an extensive amount of information, meticulously evaluating the details, and developing

a narrative that highlights the themes revealed (IESS, 2008) in ethnography. The study is about the Tamang community of Temal village of Temal Rural Municipality. The historical values of Buddhist's philosophy of Boudhnath, Swayambhunath, and Namobuddha are developed as beautiful stupas in the premises. Tongsum Kunda, a holy pond is also located. Awalokiteshwar Vaikuntha- Naarayan temple, and Awalokiteswar Pashupati temple of Santaneshwar Mahadev are also close to the area.

Ethnographic research takes a cultural lens to the study of people's lives within their communities. Ethnographers seek to gain an emic perspective, or the 'native's point of view' of a specific culture. Ethnography exists in many forms and ethnographers continuously debate about what counts as ethnography, and 'how to represent the field' (Van Maanen, 2011). As a result, there are distinct versions of ethnographic research that have their own epistemological backgrounds and varied research practices (Atkinson, Coffet, & Delamont, 2001). Thus as an ethnographer I have been there in October and November of 2018 and 2019. I met the people, talked to the people and took the field notes.

Ethnographers argue in favor of inductive and discovery-based research processes focusing on 'local interpretations' (Geertz, 1973). It is argued that if the researcher approaches a community with a set of predefined theoretical models, concepts or propositions, they may fail to discover the distinctive and contextual nature of it. Therefore, I have been there as a pilgrim to the holy shrine area of Temal.

Ethnography, emerging from anthropology, and adopted by sociologists, is a qualitative methodology that lends itself to the study of the belief, social interaction, and behavior of small societies, involving participation and observation over a period of time, and the interpretation of the data collected (Lincon & Denzin, 2011). Of course my trip was simply to find out the overview of livelihood of Buddhist Tamang of Temal. I was living in a private home of a shaman Lamadai as a paying guest for a month twice. There I got ample opportunities to meet and interact with the patients as local community. Their beliefs on Buddhism and Animism (derived from Bon and Veda) is the pure cultural identity of Tamang of Temal. The impact of Tanrism, Rituals, and Hindu festivals in Mahayana Buddhism have developed the Temal Tamang Identity.

Using language or community boundaries to bound the ethnography is common (Cook & Crang, 1995) Ethnographies are also sometimes called «case studies.» Ethnographers study and interpret culture, its universalities, and its variations through the ethnographic study based on fieldwork. Among the population majority of the members that makes almost 40 % are Tamang followed by 34% Chhetri and then 18% Brahmin and 8% marginalized groups (Magar, and others) (Tamang,

2019). All of them speak Nepali, only about 40 % of them speak Tamang language as their mother language. It was not necessary to learn local language for me although I can communicate in Tamang language. The village is populated by Buddhists, and Hindus. Currently, there is a majority Tamang community in the area, along with Brahmins, Chhetris, Newars, Magars, and Dalits, as well as marginalized tribal fishermen (Majhi). The people here have been embracing agriculture, animal husbandry, tourism business and cultivation of Bodhi Chittamala, which has religious significance, as their main occupation (Tamang, 2019). Therefore, the village is almost dominated by the Buddhists Tamang. The livelihood is also influenced by Samyak Ajivika- Buddhist thought of right occupation.

Field Experience and Data sources

Ethnography is an in depth study. It is useful in intensive study (Kaini, 2017). In ethnography, what effect a researcher has on their own research and that a researcher should be aware of their own subjectivity in research (Palen, 2019). The objectivity of my trip was simply to identify the overview of the Tamang's Buddhists culture of Temal. However, the plethora of cultural practices and social behavior it was really difficult to define the subjectivity. Although the study as a paper is limited within Buddhist Economic Perspective, Ethnography, Right Livelihood, Tamang Community, and Temal, village of Kabhrepalanchok District of Nepal. Ethnographic fieldwork begins with participant observation, which is later complemented by other data (e.g. interviews and documents). Ethnographic research often starts with choosing a field site. Ethnographers engage in participant observation in order to gain insight into the culture in which they are interested. These insights develop over time and in relation to the social relationships in the field as well as through repeated analysis of many aspects of field sites.

An important part of the interviews or social interaction is to establish a rapport with the participant. The best way to do this is by being a good listener, which means to listen and hear much more than to talk and converse. It is an extensive overview of all issues to be considered when making field notes (Atkinson, Coffet, & Delamont, 2001). The general advice is that the field notes should be written either during the stay in the field or as soon as possible after leaving the field site. In ethnographic research, analysis takes place throughout the research project and is tightly connected with interpretation. Every night after 10, I used to write down the field notes as a diary. My learning and understanding from interviews and talks with different people, gives such a wonderful memories of the time.

Fieldwork as a form of inquiry that requires a researcher to be immersed personally in the ongoing social activities of some individual or group carrying out the research (Whitehead, 2005). I was

living with Mailadai, a famous shaman of the area. Almost all the people of the village know him. He is really busy shaman, every day at least he has to care 20 patients. I used to sit close with him and listen the social interaction every day.

While conducting any research in field, the researchers try not be ethnocentric by using the tool of cultural relativism (Parul, 2017). Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring setting or fields by means of methods which capture their social meaning and ordering activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer, 2000). I was visited as a pilgrim to have simply overview of the livelihood of the Buddhists Community but the subjectivity of the study made me to stay in the field two months.

Discussion

Ethnographic writing includes a lot of detailed description presented in narrative form. The purpose of description is to let the reader know what happened in the field, what it was like from the participants' point of view to be there, and what particular events or activities were interesting and worth exploring further. A detailed description and quotations are essential qualities of ethnographic accounts (Van Maanen, 2011). The present study was carried out in the months of October and November of 2017 and 2018, after the monsoon season. During two previous study trips (2015–2016) contacts were made with the local community in order to gather information on his daily habits, work, and relationship with the natural environment. To discuss on the issues of the ethnography of the Tamang community of Temal, Buddhists Economics, Geography, Ethnicity/community and livelihood have been selected as subjectivity of the study.

Buddhists Economics

The economic science based on the philosophy of Gautama Buddha is Buddhists economics originated from Nepal. The contemporary economics is biased on only materialistic matters which are the causes of pain, however the Buddhists economics drives the move toward right production to right consumption. Development is the final happiness of people and that comes from the adaptation of philosophy of Buddhism. Thus Buddhism must be integrated in rural development plans and programs (Dhakal, 2015). Temal Rural Municipality has recognized the necessity of Buddhist's perspective in economic development.

Buddhist's Economics is the study of economics based on Buddha's philosophy. The founder of Buddhism Gautam Buddha was born in Shakya dynasty from King Suddhodan and queen Mayadevi

as Siddhartha Gautam in 623 BC in Lumbini. He attained enlightenment" and became "Light of the world." According to Buddhist tradition, the sheltered young prince was shocked by the suffering he saw outside his palace walls, so he left his life of luxury to seek answers. After leaving luxurious life and becoming Buddha "Enlightened One", he spent rest of his life teaching the dharma (the path to liberation from suffering) and establishing the *sangha* (a community of monks). The energy and resources of people and bodies that could contribute to the rural development process by forming partnerships at sub-regional level between the public, private and civil sectors (Vesco & Ferrero, 2015, p. p.256). The Buddhists philosophy must address future course of action in economic activities and development.

From the western perspective, development economic strategies have therefore usually focused on rapid industrialization, often at the expense of agriculture and rural development. After about 1970, productivity growth in agriculture also increased rapidly, owing in part to a successful integrated rural development program. Policies geared to reducing income inequality and expanding economic opportunities in order to promote development, including income tax policies, rural development policies, and publicly financed services. Land reform A deliberate attempt to reorganize and transform existing agrarian systems with the intention of improving the distribution of agricultural incomes and thus fostering rural development (Todaro & Smith, 2015, p. p.532). From the perspective of rural development, migration can be a two-edged sword. Often, those who leave the rural economy are younger, better educated, and more skilled. Although this might reduce average labor productivity in rural areas, migrants may also be an important source of remittance income, which can contribute to improved productivity by increasing access to agricultural inputs and other productive assets (Perkins, Radelet, & Lindauer, 2013). Youth labor migration is also a serious socio economic issue of Timal village as others.

The term economic development implies a positive change or a movement from one state to a better one, which implicitly has better conditions. Economic development goal is to uplift the underprivileged and marginalized communities. Development is about helping them, bringing them out of poverty, 'doing well' enabling them a decent life the voices or experiences of the marginalized people, however, are not considered important in the development process at earlier period. It is now recognized that participation and ownership of the people are crucial to the success of development. Though the majority of development visions are crafted internationally and nationally, it is the experience of the community members that is used to measure the success or failure of development in the end any initiative of development may result into failure unless it takes into account the interests of the local people. By examining the local peoples' understanding of Development including their views and feelings, helps in understanding the impact and effort

of community.

Rural economic development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless (Chambers, 1983). thus development should be initiated from the deprived Tamang community of Temal by the municipality. Nepal is a country full of natural resources There are many opportunities to develop it. Financial insufficiency is the constraints for development. Generally, trickle down process of development is imposed in the society without the prior knowledge of the need of the people which is the severe cause of poverty.

So application of Buddhist economics will be the best so the collection of observations, interviews and documentary data, which are triangulated ethnographic research, offers a qualitative generates potential to yield detailed and comprehensive accounts of different social phenomenon as (actions, behavior, interactions, and beliefs). Participant observation also provides ethnographers an opportunity to gather empirical insights into social practices which are normally 'covert' from the public scenario (Schumacher, 1973). Cause of poverty, ill practices, lack of policy formulations educations trends, use of natural resources human rights violations, generosity rituals can be deeply studied through participatory observation.

Geography

Temal Rural Municipality lies in the Kavrepalanchowk District of Bagmati province at the Eastern rim of Kathmandu Valley, south of the Himalayas of Nepal. Temal Rural Municipality is formed with 9 wards merging Sasyukark, Saramsthali, Bolde Fediche, Pokhari-Narayansthan, Thuloparsel, Kuruwash Chapakhori, and Mechhe VDCs. It covers an area of approximately 89 Sq Km and has total population of 22,712. The majority of the people living in Temal are Buddhists. The major ethnic groups are Tamang, followed by Magar, Bharamin-Hill, Newar. Others less in number are Chettri, Ghatri, Kami, Damai, etc. Location and Topography: Temal is 40 km from Kathmandu. and at an altitude of Up to 1900 amsl. Gauri Shankar, Langtang, Everest and Dorjelakpa peaks can be seen from different part of Temal.

In the tourism development project in the Temal area has seven parks, Temal View tower, gates to Temal, Tamang Museum, Damfupark, International Tamang Park and the world's tallest Buddha statue are to preserve and promote. Temal rural municipality lies in Bagmati Zone of Nepal. At the time of the 2068 Nepal census it had a population of 22712. Among them the female and male

population had 12129 and 10583 respectively. The major castes groups residing in the area are; Tamang, Magar, Kami, Sarki, Damai, Thakuri etc. This rural municipality is surrounded by Sunapati rural municipality at east; Roshi municipality at south; Namobuddha municipality at west; Chauri Deurali municipality at north the time of the 2068 BS Nepal census it had a population of 22712 (Tamang, 2019). Famous for the blend of ancient Shamanist Bon culture and Buddhist Lamaism, Temal region is mainly inhabited by the Tamang community in the majority though Brahmin, Chhetri, Magar and other communities following Hindu religion (Ambu, Chaudhary, Mariotti, & Cornara, 2020). Therefore, Temal is a beautiful serene of hilly region of Central zone of Kavre district with high potentiality of Buddhists tourism.

The Tamangs are considered as one of the indigenous communities of hilly region who live in between 5,000-7,000 ft high above the sea level. They are human communities that have a long history of interaction with a particular kind of terrain and its wildlife (Kunwar & Pandey, 2016) Because the natural resources used by indigenous people today are often the same as those used by generations of ancestors indigenous communities tend to misuse these resources with a high degree of cultural significance. The Tamangs have close attachment with their natural setting. pristine area offers enchanting journey to experience the rich culture and lifestyle of the Tamangs

Ethnicity/ Community

Timal was the capital of Tamsaling Kingdom. The edge of Sailung Lekh mountains and traverses through Temal hill, crossing both the Sunkoshi and Roshi rivers to finally cover the southern flanks of the Mahabharat range where forces of the English East India Company led by Captain Kinloch and Gorkhali troops met in battle in 1767. There are different views regarding the Tamang people. Some have views that Tamangs belong to the Indo-Mongoloid Tribe and speak the 'nonpronominalized' dialects of Tibeto Burman group. Their traditional area is sub-Himalayan tracts of India and Nepal. At present, they live in large number in different districts of Nepal. Outside Nepal they are found in Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland within India and also in Burma and Bhutan. The Tamang were addressed in a derogatory manner as 'Bhote' (impure and unclean) and 'Murmi'. The Tamangs have a system of different types of societal leaders: Tamba (Traditional historian or oral historian), Ganba (elderly respected person of the village who knows rites and customs), Banbo (Witch priest), Lama (Chief priest) and Choho (village headmen) - to keep the Tamang society continuously alive and dynamic. There are more than hundred sub-groups (than (gotra) as well as sub-thar) within the Tamang community, and marriage between same sub-group (thar and sub-thar) is not practiced. But out of these groups, only 12 Tamang or Thar (Gotra) is believed to be pure (Lama, 2011). The study of the Tamang community makes it clear that these people have their own traditional culture which they practice in their own way.

Marriage is an important aspect of culture. It is practiced by the Tamangs with great joy following different kinds of rituals. Since the earlier period they are known as band society having their own cultural prosperity. But now-a-days Tamang culture has been influenced by the culture of other communities due to close association. The word ethnography literally means 'a portrait of a people', which reminds us that ethnography is about representing the field (Van Maanen, 2011)in turn, suggests that ethnography concerns both the processes of accomplishing the research and the research report itself, which is often written in the form of prose rather than in the form of a more traditional academic research report. This area is about 100 km far from Kathmandu and its villages are mainly occupied by the Tamang community. Although this rural area is not too far from the city centers, people living here are very deprived of basic infrastructures and facilities.

The community is one of the oldest ones of Nepal. The Tamangs are known mainly as having their own language and following Buddhism. The musical instruments *Damfu*, *Tungna*, *Murchunga*, *Binayo*, and the tune *Selo* 'belong to the Tamang community. One of the richest assets of the Tamangs has been *Selo* – a typical Tamang folk melody. It represents the entire culture of the group. The history of *Selo* is as old as the history of the Tamang community. Therefore, *Selo* stands as the original identity of the community. On the way of conserving its culture, the Tamang community has always been conserving the Selo as a communal identity. The *Selo* can be found everywhere sung by even non-Tamang communities. Especially the Tamang community expresses its cultural details, rituals and philosophy of life with the help of the *Selo*. Due to its development with their culture and tradition, *Selo* is their collective property (Waiba, 2014). From cultural point of view, Tamang are significantly rich and working day and night to preserve and develop it for the future. The culture is socially interwoven with Hindus and Bons. However, behavior, and religious practices of Tamangs of Temal are based on Himalayan Mahayana Buddhism.

Livelihood

Right livelihood is the third factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. It is belonging to the group of the morality or Sīla together with Right speech and Right action. Generally, the Buddha said five kinds of Wrong livelihood in the Aṅguttara Nikāya thus "Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of trade. They are, trade in weapon, trade in living beings, trade in meat, trade in intoxicants, and trade in poison (Piyabhani, 2019). The Buddha taught on right livelihood or transcendental livelihood for the Saṃgha in the context of ancient Indian society where the populace respected spiritual practitioners and it was the norm for householders to support wandering contemplatives.

The shadow side of the community is that many people are illiterate and therefore the major portion of population is involved in subsistence agricultural farming. Some people are recently engaged in tourism industry as porters, guides, drivers or other occupation. Since educational facilities for children are lacking and parents often consider education a trivial factor in life, children are not encouraged to get an education. They are mostly small farmers with agriculture as the major occupation. Rice, Maize, wheat, Mustard are the principal cereal crops, whereas potato, onion, Dalhan, Telhan crops milk production through livestock are other sources of income (Ambu, Chaudhary, Mariotti, & Cornara, 2020). Therefore, the occupations of Tamang of Temal is within the boundary of right livelihood of Lord Buddha.

"Economics or development must reduce the suffering of people" (Rai, 2008, p. p.78). Buddhist economics is that subject that deals with the quality and service given by the material life and based on right livelihood (Samyakajibika). Many scholars have defined Buddhist economics in different ways. Right Livelihood' is one of the requirements of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. It is clear, therefore, that there must be such a thing as Buddhist economics (Schumacher, 1973). Development is freedom and freedom is liberation (Teresi, 2002) (Dhital, 2009). A recent example in the Temal region concerns an endemic species of handicraft interest, Ziziphus budhensis, which is cultivated and traded for Buddhist rosaries (Ambu, Chaudhary, Mariotti, & Cornara, 2020). From industrialization, through the green revolution, to integrated rural development, policies repeated the basic "truth" that development consisted in achieving conditions characteristic of the already rich societies. The development discourse defined what could be thought, practiced, and even imagined in considering the future of Third World societies (Peet & Hartwick, 2015). Buddhist's philosophy could be the main essence of future sustainable economic development with right livelihood. The Tamang nationality of Temal can also be identified as having its own expertise in tasks like making Syama (a kind of long dress), Gya (a kind of gown), other typical cultural gowns like Gavarko, Gya-tokorok, wool blanket, Pakhi Syoldo, Surkaee and Fenka, and having the skill of making Nepali paper as well as Nanglo (Shieve), Doko, Thunse (panniers), Namlo, Thanka (head-strips to lift weight), mask etc. as their basic professions (Waiba, 2014). Therefore, Tamang community of Temal are completely following the right livelihood philosophy of Buddha.

Conclusion

The ethnography of Tamang community of Temal from Buddhists perspective is the cultural writing of ethnicity of Tamangs. Tamangs are the oldest nationality of Nepal and always backed by other communities. They are honest, happy, and laborious people with rich cultural perspectives. It is necessary to determine or develop a Nepali Buddhism otherwise entire Buddhism can disappear.

They call themselves Buddhist but every behavior, lifestyle, food pattern, are completely influenced by either Hindu, or Christian, or Bon, or *Mahayani*, or *Bajrayani*, or *Therawadi*, or Tibetan, so what! It is, I think a different unique Temali Tamang Buddhism.

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