

An Anthropological Study of Adjustment Patterns of Tibetan Refugees to Physical and Socio-Cultural Environment of Mundgod in Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka

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Abstract

Anthropology is the study of humans in a holistic approach. Physical anthropology studies the past & present evolution of human species and is primarily concerned with understanding the causes of present human diversity. In an evolutionary context, adaptation is tied closely with the concepts of natural selection and Darwinian fitness. The transmittance of the adaptation to offspring is said to be adapted, resulting in a new family of species known as variants. The phenomenon of the generation of a new variant of a species is known as variation. Variation leads to several bodily changes in the organisms. Anthropometry is the science of obtaining systematic measurements of the human body. The present study is about Tibetan settlers in the Mundgod region. The aim of present study is to understand the adjustment patterns of Tibetans in Mundgod to the socio-cultural & physical conditions prevalent in the local area and their level of participation in socio-cultural life. The study looks at the mechanisms that the Tibetans in Mundgod are employing to preserve their identity, and it also examines the areas of change. The Tibetan villages were visited, and tentative enquiries were made regarding the sensitive aspects of daily life. It is clear from the pattern and the settlement process that the Tibetans are using the available resources to conserve their Tibetan institutions and are relatively successful in this direction.

Keywords: Migration, Adaptation, Acclimatization, Variation

I. INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the study of humans in a holistic approach. Physical anthropology studies the past & present evolution of human species and is primarily concerned with understanding the causes of present human diversity. This broad definition encompasses fields such as human paleontology, evolutionary biology, human genetics, comparative anatomy, physiology, primate behavior, human behavioral ecology, and human biology. Human Biology broadly covers the areas of modern human biological variation, human ecology, nutrition and demography. Evolutionary perspectives encompass the origins of modern humans and modern human diversity; the relationship between climate and human evolution. In an evolutionary context, adaptation is tied closely with the concepts of natural selection and Darwinian fitness (Little, 1982; Little, 1995). Adaptation of an organism is its conformity to its environment (Smith, 1980). In Goodman et al. (1988), adaptation is defined as 'a process of adjustment to environmental constraints'. The changes in the organism that best suits the environment and leaves behind offspring are known as adaptation. Had there been no adaptation, evolution would have been impossible. The earth and all the earthly things are under constant change. The capability of an organism to change itself with the changing world determines its survival. The maintenance of this dynamic equilibrium represents homeostasis; which, in essence, reflects the ability to survive in varying environments (Dubos, 1965; Proser, 1964). The greater the degree of adaptation, the higher the ability to exploit the environment, resulting in the production of a more significant number of offspring and consequent higher chances of survival. It is the change in an organism's physical appearance and physiological characteristics upon exposure to different conditions of the environment, generally the harsher ones (such as temperature, radiation, and nutrient sources). Gradually the immune system of an organism gets acquainted with the new environment. Hence, the transmittance of the adaptation to offspring is

said to be adapted, resulting in a new family of species known as variants. The phenomenon of the generation of a new variant of a species is known as variation. Variation leads to several bodily changes in the organisms. Anthropometry is the science of obtaining systematic measurements of the human body. Anthropometry was first developed in the 19th century as a method by physical anthropologists to study human variation and evolution in living and extinct populations.

II. ADAPTATION AND VARIATION

Human adaptability can be defined as the capacity to adapt positively to an environmental stress (Frisancho and Schechter, 1997). The concept of human adaptability must incorporate the past, present, and future conditions of human existence (Dubos, 1965). A genetic adaptation becomes established through the action of natural selection (Livingstone, 1958; Neel, 1962; Mayr, 1997; Neel et al., 1998). Natural selection favors the features of an organism that bring it into a more efficient relationship with its environment. Those gene combinations fostering the best-adapted phenotypes will be 'selected for,' and inferior genotypes will be eliminated. Since the 1970s, the tremendous advances in statistical and molecular, genetic approaches to the study of human diversity have transformed our understanding of the genetic bases of human adaptation to ecological stressors (Crawford, 2000, 2007; Harris & Meyer, 2006; Pritchard, Pickrell, & Coop, 2010). Adaptation is a generic term encompassing acclimatization, acclimation, and habituation. In biology, an adaptation, also called an adaptive trait, is a trait with a current functional role in the life history of an organism that is maintained and evolved through natural selection. Adaptation should be defined as a process because time and environmental interaction are required for humans and populations to adjust to environmental stresses (Little, 1995). Adaptation refers to the current state of being adapted and the dynamic evolutionary process that leads to the adaptation. Adaptations contribute to the fitness and survival of individuals. Organisms face a succession of environmental challenges as they grow and develop. They are equipped with an adaptive plasticity as the phenotype of traits develops in response to the imposed conditions. The developmental norm of reaction for any given trait is essential to the correction of adaptation as it affords a kind of biological insurance or resilience to varying environments. The capacity of any stress-induced is a function of its application intensity, duration, frequency, and variability and the individual's genetic, phenotypic, and situational status. We must also recognize that cultural adaptations have also played an essential role in human evolution. Cultural adaptation is an important mechanism that facilitates human biological adaptation (Thomas, 1975; Rappaport, 1976; Moran, 1979). Contemporary adaptation of human beings is both the result of their past and their present adaptability (Lasker, 1969; Frisancho, 1993). Humans are similar to other mammalian species in conforming to the classic ecological rules of Bergmann (1847) and Allen (1877) documenting the relationships between body morphology and climate. The most widely cited research on this topic is the classic work of D.F. Roberts (1953, 1978). Roberts's (1953) paper on 'Body weight, race and climate' showed a significant negative correlation between body mass and mean annual temperature, indicating that humans appear to conform to Bergmann's rule. In subsequent work, Roberts (1973, 1978) showed that humans also conform to Allen's rule, such that populations living in colder regions have relatively shorter limbs and larger relative sitting heights than those groups inhabiting warmer regions.

Human variation is the range of possible values for any characteristic, physical or mental, of human beings. The human species is highly variable in every biological trait. Humans physiology, body proportions, skin colour, and body chemicals vary. Many of these features influence susceptibility to disease and other forces of natural selection. Continued selection over time has produced adaptations of local populations to the environments in which they live. Much of human biological variation is geographic, i.e. there are differences between population groups from different geographical areas. Both physical features and genotypes vary from one person to another within populations. Still, there is also a good deal of variation between human populations from different geographic areas due to evolutionary processes. Human variation is viewed, by physical anthropologists, as a result of evolutionary factors such as mutation, gene flow, genetic drift, and Natural selection. The ecosystem is the fundamental biological entity. The living individual satisfying its needs in a dynamic relation to its habitat. In Darwinian terms, the ecosystem is the setting for the struggle for existence, efficiency and survival are the measures of fitness, and natural selection is the process underlying all products (Proser, 1964).

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Andre Megot (1956), in his book 'Tibetan Marches' recorded a detailed picture of Tibetan society, outwardly primitive and outlandish but based on the mountainous borderland where western China marches with Eastern Tibet. This study can be viewed as a western traveller's view of Buddhist Tibet.

A.V. Arakeri (1979), in his study titled 'Tibetans in India: the uprooted people and their cultural transplantation' thoroughly examines the traditional culture of Tibetan refugees, their rehabilitation in India and adjustment at various levels, individual and societal adjustment, the stresses and strains they face, the effects on their traditional social- cultural life, the introduction

of cultural traits of the host society, their acclimatization to the present set up and the struggles to the maintain their culture customs, practices, beliefs and values.

Nupur Pathak and B.G. Banerjee (2000) studied the 'Culture-genic stress responses among immigrant Tibetans in India'. In the study, the data was collected from four settlements, namely Dharmashala, Kula, Manali, Dolanj, in Himachal Pradesh. The study concludes that immigrant Tibetans undergo the process of social change and gradual transformation into the host country's culture.

Basu (2008) studied on 'Interpreting the Tibetan Diaspora: Cultural preservation and the pragmatics of identity'. The objective of the study was to find out the relationship between pre-exilic Tibetan Bhutias migrant and the exilic Tibetan refugees who came to India after 1959 in Darjeeling town. Methodology adopted were combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods to interview the respondents. The study found out that Tibetans were able to preserve their old culture and relationship between Bhutias and Tibetan refugees were healthy.

Marbanlang E.K et al. (2013) highlighted on the demographic characteristics of Tibetan rehabilitants and their livelihood activities from Mundgod taluk of Uttara Kannada district during 2009-10. One hundred and thirty five respondents were selected by adopting simple random sampling.

IV. THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is about Tibetan settlers in the Mundgod region. The Tibetans were refugees who came to India in the wake of the takeover of Tibet in 1959. They have been rehabilitated into Mundgod from transit camps in Northern India, an exercise designed to settle them to a new, permanent type of agrarian life. In the dispersal of the Tibetans to several places in India, Mundgod, a subdivision in Karnataka State in South India, was one of the places selected for the purpose. While looking at the participation of Tibetans in the life of the local area, it is possible to understand the levels and mechanism of communication between the Tibetans and the host society. These processes show the identity change of Tibetans and of the host groups. The phenomenon of identity is specific to a society or a problem, even though certain psychological dimensions of the process appear to be general or universal.

V. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- a. To study the adjustment patterns of Tibetans in Mundgod to the socio-cultural and physical conditions prevalent in the local area.
- b. To study the levels of participation of Tibetans in the socio-cultural life of the local people.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Tibetan villages were visited, and tentative enquiries were made regarding the sensitive aspects of daily life. As a strategy, certain informants selected at random were interviewed, and information was collected concerning the pattern of life in Tibet, the relationships between the Monastic order and common people, the organization of Tibetan villages, the relationship between Tibetans and Indians, family and marriage and neighborhood relations. The schedule to collect primary data for statistical purposes.

VII. DISCUSSION

The Tibetan environment is more varied and productive of subcultures and lifestyles than has been commonly supposed. The Tibetan migrants to India reflect this variety. Adjustment is a dynamic process. On the one hand, it refers to adaptation to the local environment and, on the other, to the social conditions. As pointed out earlier, the Tibetans come from a very high altitude, and most of the year, it is cold out there. In Mundgod, it is hot and humid for most of the year, so it is challenging for them to adapt themselves to the hot and humid climate. Economically, the Tibetans have adjusted from dairying and simple agriculture to more permanent and intensive cropping. Most of them have adapted and are adapting to the new economy, especially the cultivation methods. Though agriculture in the Mundgod area is not greatly specialized, from the point of view of the Tibetans, it is a change. Most agriculturists were used to shifting cultivation, so the use of even simple agricultural tools was limited. In Mundgod, the pattern of agriculture necessitates the use of more sophisticated tools. The other type of adaptation refers to the adjustment to local social conditions. In Tibet, very few things were sold or bought, even if one had to use the barter method, which was adequate. However, in Mundgod, there is not much that the Tibetans can exchange among themselves. All produce

the same kind of goods. This inevitably brings the community from its insulated settlement life to the outside. Moreover, the Tibetans never knew anything about the Indian metric measurement. Now they have learnt all the tricks and have mastered the local size and market value of the various goods. Learning the local language, Kannada, is essential for a proper understanding of diverse local practices, and Tibetans know the local language very well.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to understand the process through which Tibetans of Mundgod were able to preserve their original identity as Tibetans. They are trying to varying degrees according to age, education and other circumstances, to retain a Tibetan identity; yet concurrently, they are acquiring a new identity. In this process of preserving and developing a new identity, they are constrained to make a distinction between essentials and alternatives in cultural beliefs and practices. For them, the essentials are central or pivotal to the Tibetan way of life, viz., religion, language and aspects of family life. The alternatives do not significantly alter their primary identity and are essential to living in the new socio-cultural environment. Adaptation to new economic conditions is proceeding rapidly. The Tibetans have quickly adapted to the new pattern of agriculture. It is clear from the pattern and the settlement process that the Tibetans are using the available resources to conserve their Tibetan institutions and are relatively successful in this direction. They have re-established their religious institutions, and even the village organization reinforces the Tibetan identity. However, despite efforts to preserve a traditional identity, the rehabilitation process has imposed a new way of life, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, the concept of progressive adjustment is essential. The idea is not inconsistent with the retention of their unique cultural identity. Still, the process demands reaching out to the broader society and participating in its commercial, professional, administrative and political institutions. In short, it implies social mobility or status gains. Already a proportion of the Tibetan youth in India is involved in this progressive adjustment. In doing so, these people are almost certainly securing long-term benefits for their Tibetan expatriates. In all complex industrial societies in the modern world, any minority group, whether based on colour, class, caste or distinct national origin, must enhance such participation if it wishes to retain its unique characteristics.

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