Cultural Humility Project Paper

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**Introduction**

Humans are the most civilized yet most complex creation of God. Man is a social animal and thus it is almost impossible for him/her to live in isolation. The earliest humans used to live alone in caves and fight for their survival. Then as the human population started to grow, the number of people living in caves also started to grow. They first became a family, then a clan or tribe and then became a nation. From there onwards, the concept of a social system or a society came into being and humans started moving into the societies. This social segregation solely depended on the number of people at a specific place at a particular time and having common goals. In fact, these goals defined the purpose of society and became the main reason behind the formation of that particular society.

In the current times, and with such a large population of people residing in the world, there are a number of groups, societies and communities living at the same place. These groups or communities live and share the sameresources in the same geographical region. The goals, concepts and beliefs followed by these communities may be differentand they may be having a completely different lifestyle according to their own set of beliefs and traditions, they live together and share resources like food, water, living space and opportunities of education and livelihood. The term community itself means “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common”.

As it has already been discussed that every community has some particular positive and negative characteristics. These characteristics define the culture and norms of the particular community and they become more evident after a person becomes a member of that particular community. It can also be calculated by closely observing the habits and norms of that community. I also chose a specific community to research on for this specific project. The community that has been chosen by me for research and collaboration in this project is the Burmese Christian Community.

**Discussion**

The land of Burma (now known as Myanmar) has always been a rich source of culture and traditions. A number of people live here who follow different beliefs and concepts and contribute to making the culture and traditions rich. These people follow a number of religions and practice their life according to the rules and principles laid out by their religions. The biggest religion that is being followed in Burma currently is Buddhism. As per estimates, 88% of the total population of Burma or Myanmar follows Buddhism which includes Bamar, Shan, Mon, Karen, and Chinese ethnic groups. But this does not mean that no other religion is practiced in the region. The followers of other religions and faiths are also present in the country and they practice their religious beliefs freely. These religions include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Tribal religions and even no religion at all.

Christianity is the second biggest religion being followed in the Buddhist majority country. Out of an approximate population of 55.45 million, more than four million people belong to the Christian Community. This makes up to approximately 6.2% of the total population of the country. Most of these people belong to the Kachin, Chin and Karen community. Some of the Christians are also Eurasians. In fact, Christianity is the fastest-growing religion in the region. Most of the Christian population in Burma is Protestant, particularly Baptists belonging to the Myanmar Baptist Convention. The rest of the Christian population belongs to the Roman Catholic denomination.

The following details will discuss the different aspects of the Burmese Christian Community or the Christians living in Burma. These aspects include the highlights from the background information or the initiation of the Christian community in the region of Myanmar. In addition to this, it also explains how the community members tend to handle their issues of education, public health and opportunities.

**Background Information**

The history of Christianity in Myanmar or Burma dates back to the 18th century. The major reason for the spread of the religion in the country are the missionaries that came to the region in the 17th century. Several Catholic missionaries arrived in 1830 from Europe and by 1841, the number of Catholics grew to 4500 (Minkler, 2012). Protestantism started spreading in the Burmese region in the early 19th century when the first protestant missionary, Adoniram Judson, came in the region (1788 – 1850). It took years of preaching for him to get his first convert, but then the religion spread rapidly and his followers reached 10000 by 1851.

**Membership Role**

 **Reasons for choosing this community**

There are a number of reasons behind my choosing of this particular community. The first and foremost reason is that I personally belong to this community. I am a member of Burmese Christian community and a very regular and punctual visitor of the Church in this respect. In addition to this, the Christians living in Myanmar or Burma share a rich cultural heritage that has been carried forward since the first missionaries arrived in the country (Cohen, Chavez, & Chehimi, 2010). Every denomination that is present in the region has its own rich culture and traditions. These traditions or cultures represent the exact values that have been preached by the missionaries and the preachers in the community.

 **Insider or Outsider**

Regarding my status, whether I am an insider or outsider in the Burmese Christian Community, I would like to elaborate it once again that I personally belong to this community. I am an insider and have not only experienced the norms and traditions in the community but also practiced them personally. I hold the role of a Youth Coordinator or Youth Ambassador who works for imparting education in the community and helps the new students to overcome language barriers in the community.

**Cultural Humility in Practice**

The term cultural humility refers to the “ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is people-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person].” (Blackwell, & Colmenar, 2005) The concept of cultural humility involves understanding one’s own culture, traditions and norms in addition to showing a sense of compassion, respect and empathy towards the other cultures residing in the same geographical region.

**Community’s Health-related Goals**

Burmese Christian Community has a diverse and targeted health-related plan. The members of the community care generously about the health issues of other community member and this concern is not only limited to the community members of the Burmese Christian Community (Morgan, & Lifshay, 2006). The members of the community look after all the people living in the same area and sharing the same resources with them, whether they are Christians or not.

 **Community’s Principles and Practices**

The principles and practices of the Burmese Christian Community can be summed up in three simple words “Love, Compassion, and Empathy”. The members of the community keep in mind to look forward to the needs of others and compromise and sacrifice for each other. They help each other in the times of need and emergency and even sacrifice big things for their community members. And it is not only for their own community members, the Burmese Christians exhibit this behavior for everyone living around them irrespective of the religion, caste, color or creed.

 **Church as a Religious Congregational place and Community Center**

In my community comprised of the Burmese Christians, there are around 80 members that live and work together in South City, San Francisco, CA, U.S.A. These people come together for the betterment of their families and community, and develop different strategies in order to improve the quality of life for the community members (Eng, & Blanchard, 2006). The Church, in this case, acts as a place of worship and a community hall as well. The Church is used as a gathering place where all the important decision regarding the community are made.

 **Language, Power and Privilege**

The primary language that is being followed in this community is English, as it is also the primary language that is being used in the country where this study is being conducted, the United States of America. Then the concept of power or leadership in the community is not centralized but distributed among all the members of the community. All the members take part in the decision-making process and the intake if every member is considered extremely important for the development of the community (Hyde, 2012). Although the affairs of the community are managed by the Pastor, community leaders and the Youth Leaders, they personally go and visit the places of the community members to take their intake and see whether they are doing fine or not.

 **The Art of Protest and Social Media**

No community is free of conflicts and controversies. Various conflicts keep arising out in any group of people whether they are inside the community or outside. Most of the times when a community is living in a small number at a place, it has to fight for its rights. Sometimes the members of that community will have to strive even for the basic rights like food and shelter. Other times (which is mostly the case) the member of the community have to struggle for the opportunities like freedom (which may be freedom of speech, freedom of expression, or freedom of movement) or for equal opportunities like education or work (Orleans, 2012). The people in the Burmese Christian Community also strive for their equal rights through different sources like social media and various other platforms. One of the main and prominent ways of expression of the protest is art and performance, through which the people of a community register their voice.

**Conclusion and Further Directions**

Hence, in a nutshell, it can be concluded that the Burmese Christian Community holds a number of rich traditions and culture. The norms, values and traditions prevailing in the community are rich in corporation and love for each other, even for the members of the other communities. The community under discussion has also a rich and diverse history that spans far beyond more than 100 years. The whole Burmese Christian Community can be described in three words, “love, compassion and empathy”. Although the leaders and pastors of the community are performing a great role in leading and developing the members of the community, it can be developed by taking some simple and more progressive steps. The community can offer scholarships to the bright and outstanding students buy collecting funds mutually. Moreover, the same practiced can be carried on for the needy and poor children of the members of community. The community members can also be given more awareness about the health and safety measures so that they can look after themselves in a better way. In this way, we can have a more aware, educated and a much healthier society.

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