



## Monpa Worldview and Resource Management

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**Abstract:** The paper presents the profile of Monpa as a cultural people in relation to their resource management practices. The Monpa people have a very close relationship with their surrounding environment and biodiversity like any other indigenous community. However, the friendly co-existence with nature and natural resources is shifting due to changes in social economic and political administration, for example, renouncing Buddhism over the indigenous faith called *Bon*, Chinese aggression in 1962 and changes in the political system brought colossal transformation in economy and livelihood of the Monpa community. The present study is an attempt to understand the changes and continuity in the indigenous resource management practices among the Monpa community.

**Keywords:** Monpa, *Bon*, Buddhism, resource management, social evolution, changes and continuity.

### Introduction

Worldviews are ways of creating sense and order in one's or community's understanding of the world. Indigenous worldviews have been the basis on which Indigenous people have created their understanding of various phenomenon and their linkages with the natural world. It forms the ethical basis and guiding principles to interact with nature (Allport 1935, 798 and Haverkort and Reijntjes 2007,52). Though the significance of the indigenous worldview is recent in the academic discourse, its importance for environmental conservation and management has been recognized recently. Indigenous worldviews can provide an alternative perspective to understanding the human-nature relationship from a spiritual plane, where reverence for nature predominates the materialistic and dualistic assumptions of the superiority of humankind (Van Opstal and Hüge 2013, 687).

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The present study is centred around understanding the Monpa worldview in relation to the conception of the natural world and the use of natural resources. It aims to present the Monpa as a cultural people in relation to their resource management practice. The present way of life of the Monpa people is influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetan-Buddhism began to penetrate the Monpa area around the 8th Century. The *Guru Padmasambhava* (An Indian saint from Nalanda University) is regarded as the main propagator of Buddhism in Tibet (Banerjee 1984, 27). After establishing Buddhism in Tibet, *Guru Padmasambhava* marched towards the south and reached the land inhabited by the Monpas and sowed the seed of Buddhism. Before the intrusion of Buddhism, they believed in the host of supernatural deities, both benevolent and malevolent in nature known as *Bon* (a form of animism, governed by spirits, deities and supernatural beings). *Padmasambhava* succeeded by blending these beliefs with the teachings of the *Dharma* or Buddhist scriptures. It is said that, instead of casting the deities out, he re-casted the former deities as the guardians and symbols of the Buddhist teaching. The rituals and imagery of their former faith remain on the exterior, but the teachings of Buddhism slowly claimed the faith and mind of the people. However, some elements of their pre-Buddhist faith still remain strong among the Monpas. Therefore, to understand the traditional worldview of resources among the Monpas, it is important to identify the elements of both the religion which pervades their day-to-day existence and their relation with neighbouring communities both in and across international borders and various socio-political changes that took place in the region. Needless to say, a general profile of the Monpa people has not been presented, nor their culture in its totality, rather we have presented the Monpa people in relation to their resource management and related beliefs and practices within the frame of their culture which people adopted at various stages.

Geographically the Monpas are inhabited in the Kalaktang administrative circle and Dirang administrative circle of West Kameng District and the entire Tawang District of Arunachal Pradesh, India. These two districts are situated in the western parts of the state, bounded by China (Tibet) on the North, Darrang and Sonitpur District of Assam on the South, East Kameng District on the East and the Bhutan on West. For the purpose of this study, fieldwork was conducted in fringe villages which adjoin the Kalaktang administrative circle and Dirang administrative circle of West Kameng District of the state. For the purpose of this study, a total 7 villages were selected for primary data collection, 3 villages from the Kalaktang subdivision area (viz. Domkho, Morshing, and Sanglem) and 4 villages from the Dirang subdivision area (viz. Khellong, Bamrok, Menchang, and Phudung). The selection of the study area is

based on the same ethnicity, types of agriculture practice, remoteness, forest cover and degree of dependency on natural resources.

The topography of the district is mostly mountainous. A greater part of it falls within the higher mountain zone, consisting of a mass of tangled peaks valleys and small tributaries. The altitude of the district varies from 650 ft at Bhalukpong to 13714 ft. at Kangte peak from mean sea level, lying approximately between 91° 30' to 92°40' East longitudes and 26° 54' to 28° 01' North latitudes (Chaudhry 1996, 10-15). The Climatic condition of the study area is greatly influenced by its topographic features and its altitudinal location. December-January is the coldest month with a mean minimum temperature reaching 5° c to 10° C in foothills and below freezing points at a higher elevation. June –July is the warmest month with a mean maximum temperature registering 35° C and above in the plain and up to 15° C in higher reaches. The rainfall is generally high with nearly 2500 mm in the southern region and gradually decreasing towards the northern valleys. Due to irregular topography and vegetation type, types of soil also vary, black, red, sandy, and alluvial type soil predominate the entire study area (Norbu 2015, 81-83).

The Monpas are of Mongolian descent. They are more akin to the people of Bhutan than those of Tibet in customs, language, agriculture practices, methods of house building, etc. For differences in their spoken language, geographical location and other cultural traits, they are broadly divided into three groups, Viz, Dirang Monpa, Kalaktang Monpa and Tawang Monpa (Norbu, 2008, 23-25). Among the three broad sections there are several sub-sections, the Monpas are further divided into six sub-groups because of variation in their language. They are namely Tawang Monpa, Pangchen Monpa, Dirang Monpa, Kalaktang Monpa, Lish Monpa and Bhut Monpa. Linguistically they belong to the Tibeto-Burman Language group. The total population of the Dirang administrative circle and Kalaktang administrative circle is 14651 and 7438 persons respectively including both urban and rural population. There are a total of 81 villages in the Dirang Subdivision area and 22 villages in the Kalaktang subdivision area in West Kameng. Though the region is mostly inhabited by Monpas however, as per the 2011 census report, the Monpa population is not recorded separately rather it shows the entire population which includes the non-native population.

### **Understanding the Monpa worldview**

The Monpas have been exposed to several external forces of change which have shaped their present worldview, especially along with their close proximity with Bhutan and

Tibet has also influenced their perspective of life in general. The major influence has been the change of faith from the *Bon* to the Tibetan form of Buddhism. However, the *Bon* naturalism still pervades the traditional Monpa worldview. Their relationship with neighbouring communities and the socio-political changes that took place in the region also equally influenced the sociocultural and economic transformation of the people. For example, the extension of Tibetan administration, as discussed, Buddhism began to penetrate the Monpa area as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century. However, Buddhism mainly flourished in the region around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the establishment of Tawang Monastery (*Ganden Namgyal Lhatse*) in 1681 and the reincarnation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (*Tsangyang Gyatso*) at Urgaling (Tawang) in 1683. It would be safe to point out that religion has indirectly fused itself with the laws and social norms of society to the extent that religion has become a way of life in Monpa society.

After the establishment of Tawang Monastery, gradually the Monpa territories became part of Tsona District (South province of Tibet). Nothing could precisely be said as to, since when it came under the Tibetan Administration. However, as it became part of Tsona and especially after the establishment of Tawang Monastery, hundreds of monks in its great Monastery joined, which was a major force in Tibetan politics (Nath, 2014, 98). During the Tibetan reign in the Monpa area, every family had to pay tax in terms of grains to the Monastery officials. The Taxes were collected from every Monpa village; Thus, the layman or villager and cultivation became inextricably linked with Tax. Additionally, directly or indirectly, most of the cultivable land was owned by the monastery and the system of ecclesiastic administration was introduced in the Monpa area. Under this system, the Monks became virtually the administrator.

Again, in the year 1914, the Shimla Convention changed the political map and social structure of the Monpas. This convention discussed and demarcated the boundary between Tibet and the eastern Himalayan region of British India. Finally, the Mc Mohan line was drawn as the border between Tibet and British India, and Tawang was brought under the British Indian administration (Nyman, 1976, 155). However, even after the Shimla convention also, Tibetan officials exercised *de facto* power over the Monpa area till 1950 (Dorjee, 2017, 1).

In 1951, under the leadership of Indian Army Officer Major Ralengnao Bob Keating, India took full control of Tawang (Arpi, 2015). Later, the region was incorporated into the North East Frontier Agency (Arunachal Pradesh). After the Indian administration was introduced, this opened the floodgate of social changes. The new administration adopted so many welfare measures like agriculture, veterinary, cooperative, transportation, education, industries etc. Such policies were completely

absent under their previous government, except then religious activity. Under the Indian administration, one of the most important factors of the economic aspect of the individual was free from any kind of tax, which ultimately led them to become more progressive.

Another socio-economic paradigm shift of the Monpas was the Indo-China border aggression in 1962, which desperately affected the Monpas. In this regard (Dhar, 2005, 36-41.) in his book “*Arunachal Pradesh: The Monpas of Tawang in Transition*” mentions that the whole of Monpa traditional static life came to be changed overnight following a terrible political turmoil coming from beyond the border in the form of Chinese aggression in 1962. Soon after the border conflicts the whole socio-cultural scene in the Monpa country began to change. The massive transformation took place at the initiative of the government of India, who then extended their socio-political and developmental administration among the Monpas. Thus, the Monpa society started to undergo a serious process of social change at various levels. This event helped boost the economy, social infrastructure and social life, as the region became an essential political strategic state.

Additionally, the effect of modern education and technology has brought tremendous changes in beliefs and practices, tradition, occupation, and social values in Monpa’s social life. Also due to push and pull factors of population migration, especially in the last five decades, the population became heterogeneous with diversified occupations.

### Monpa World View of Resource and Resources Management

The knowledge of how Buddhism came into the lives of the people of this society is clearly evident and is widely understood but it is important to understand the pre-Buddhist practices of the Monpa community as a whole and the changes that took place in the political scenario in the region has also highly influenced socio-culture and economic profile of the Monpa people.

The Monpa worldview of resource and resource management has been shaped by many forces over the centuries. However major shapers have been the *Bon* Religion and Tibetan Buddhism. The Monpa worldview of the human-nature relationship presents a symmetric representation of the *Bon* ideology and Buddhism. Though it is difficult to segregate the *Bon* and Buddhist elements, an attempt has been made to differentiate the elements so that the influence of both religions can be analyzed.

***Bon* Worldview and Resource:** Prior to the arrival of Buddhism in the nativity of the Monpas, their religion was a form of shamanism that is referred to as *Bon*. It is

also an unchallenged notion that this *Bon* religion was also the religion of the Tibetan people (Chommu 2007, 79). The remnants of the indigenous belief practices still exist and influence the lives of the people in the society. It attributes supernatural character to nature, with the belief that gods manifest in several forms and beings of nature.

According to ancient *Bon* belief, the world is divided into three parts, heaven, air and Earth (Fitzgerald, 1961, 17). Occasionally these three spheres of the world are known as *Lha-yul* (heaven), *Meh-yul* (Earth) and *Lhu-yul* (Underworld). All three spheres of the world are guarded and surrounded by an assortment of supernatural beings or elements like various deities, Spirits and divinity.

**The air** is the domain of the *Tsan*—a group of demons or supernatural beings that are malevolent in nature to humankind. But they are also regarded as guardians of mountains and atmosphere. In this context, Rebbach writes (Fitzgerald, 1961, 19) that *Tsan* is supposed to appear as “Savage Huntsmen, red in colour, wearing helmets and armours, who ride on light-red horses over the mountains under the leadership of their King”. It is believed that, if a person happens to cross their path or encounter them, s/he may be overtaken by a deadly disease or illness. Occasionally, people perform a number of rituals at the family level and community level to please them. Traditionally, such rituals were performed by *Bonpu* (*Bon* priest), however, today such rituals are done by *Lamas* (Monks), which gradually diffused with Buddhism.

**The earth** or the middle sphere is shared by both natural beings and supernatural beings. Natural beings include humans, animals, birds, insects and aquatic species. On the other hand supernatural beings of the earth have various identities as per the *Bon* worldview. It can be categorized into three broad stratum, such as *Phu*, *Daa* and *Ling*.

**Phu:** They are generally regarded as protectors and guardians of mountains. *Phu* is identified with one particular mountain of the village, generally, it is the tallest or a major mountain range of the region in terms of both size and diversity of life. Every village has their own *Phu* and has different names in respective villages. They are believed to live on trees and rocks of that particular mountain. Especially in an area covered with thick forest or in and around the sources of natural springs. If anyone cuts down trees or pollutes such area, it is believed that misfortune or adversity will befall him/her, his/her family or community. It is believed that even the birds and animals of that particular mountain belong to *Phu*. Therefore, if a hunter goes hunting in the *Phu* area (regard to any *Phu*), then one has to ask/get permission from the mountain spirits by performing some rituals. In rituals, hunters offer *fan* (ritual flag), dry fish, egg, rice and *chang* (wine/liquor) to the mountain spirits for hunting down their animals. Other than the *Phu* region, such belief and practice doesn't apply to other hunting grounds

or the killing of wild games in any other type of forest or area. While in the *Phu* area, generally, one avoids the burning of onion, garlic, human hairs or anthropogenic activities. It is believed that such activity pollutes the atmosphere of *Phu*. Such acts can enrage the spirits and deities, who bring misfortunes.

**Daa:** They are also one of the supernatural beings believed to be the guardians of natural surroundings near the settlement area. Like *Phu*, every village has their own *Daa*. They reside in or are identified with natural objects such as rocks, trees particular water bodies etc. *Daa* of every village is identified in a specific location and are worshipped or such places are considered sacred. Any kind of human intervention in such places is prohibited by traditional norms of behaviour.

**Ling:** The third dimension of the supernatural being of the Earth is *Ling*. It is believed to be omnipresent and is not recognized in any particular place. Their presence is recognized everywhere. *Ling* can be roughly connoted as a spirit or God of space or atmosphere.

These three spheres or dimensions of supernatural beings are often called by Monpas as “*Phu-Daa-Ling Tsuum (Three)*”. As we have mentioned, every village has their own *Phu* and *Daa*. They have different names in different villages. For example, the *Phu* of Domkho and Morshing Village are *Ser-Phu* and *Phu-Wangley* and the name for their *Daa* is *Da-Serma-zong* and *Da-darma-zong* respectively. *Ling* are not confined to a particular area so they are regarded as omnipresent or entire space is under its domain. Many times, the particular spheres of *Tsan* and *Ling* are occasionally confusing or overlapping with each other in terms of their presence or habitation.

In the **lower zone**, there are *Lhu*- “Which bears certain resembles water spirit, and who can adopt the foam of snake at will, a point which later made them readily identifiable with the Indian *Nagas*” (Fitzgerald, 1961, 17). The original habitat of this *lhu* was generally water bodies like rivers, lakes and underground water. It is believed that they have their homes on the bottom where they guard secret treasures. They are also present in other natural objects such as rocks and trees. Various types of *Lhu* are identified on the basis of their number and nature. This supernatural being can be benevolent as well as malevolent. They can be found in any place including agricultural fields. The habitats of *Lhu* are considered as sacred. Human intervention in such areas is avoided and generally, such places are kept clean and free from any kind of anthropogenic activity. Natural vegetation in such places is kept undisturbed by human activities, even if it is under agricultural fields, forest, and pasture land or in any other places. The construction of a house in such a place is usually avoided; in other words, such places do not belong to human beings. Probably due to fear of the

ill effects of supernatural beings, any type of resource use over those places is limited to the human community.

It is believed that, if they are worshipped and offerings are made appropriately, then in return they grant fortune and well-being to family and society. If one neglects it or pollutes such area, then they get easily annoyed and it brings suffering and illness to an individual, family or community. If the sacredness of a place is not maintained properly then it is said that they migrate to some other places. In such cases, it is believed that an individual or groups who cause to leave them, from their present habitat, those individuals or group may suffer from ill-fates.

Other than above mentioned supernatural beings, there are a number of the other “deities and spirits” in Bon culture which are still well-regarded by the people in the region. A person believes that certain dimensions of an individual’s life, such as prosperity and miseries, health and illness, unnatural death or accident or good and bad are governed by these ethereal beings. People often offer prayers and rituals to spirits and deities for the well-being of the community, their crops and livestock. Earlier such rituals were carried out by *Bonpos*. However, today there are only a few *Bonpos* left. So, such rituals are usually performed by Buddhist monks and Lamas.

Within the frame of Bon’s worldview, all the natural objects and elements of the Earth are shared by various entities including, humans, nature and supernatural beings. In terms of ownership and use of natural resources, *Bon’s* worldview over natural resources is bipolar in nature. ‘The division of ownership of resources between humankind and ethereal beings is not exclusive and absolute as far as use is concerned’ (Basar, 2011, 86). On the ground of the ownership of natural resources such as forests and their animals, water-bodies, rocks, cliffs and other natural obsessions is not confined only to Humans but also to supernatural beings. Therefore, in terms of *Bon’s* worldview over resource sharing between humans and the supernatural is very complex and varied. Such resource sharing and the relationship between humans, nature and supernature, in this relation (Redfield,1953 and 1962 and Adhikary 1984, as cited in Basar 2011, 87) express that “This relationship has three dimensions in terms of Human-nature relationship, Human-human relationship and of course, Human-nature-supernature relationship. Further, this relation is not static over time and space”.

### **Buddhist Worldview and Resources**

The diffusion of Buddhism in the region resulted in drastic changes in the socio-cultural life. The teaching of Buddhism has hugely influenced the life of the Monpas



not only in terms of occupational patterns, and belief systems. But also, the socio-cultural aspects like marriage, customary law, festivals and observations etc.

The adoption of Buddhism brought a “quantum lift” in terms of the development of art, architecture, dance, agriculture etc. and the region flourished in a prolific manner. The diffusion of Buddhism in the region gave a lift to the people’s domestic as well as social life. ‘In spite of the absence of written literature, the Monpas are constantly in touch with a rich lore of written literature in the Tibetan language during the last three and half centuries. With the advancement of Buddhism in the Monpa area, especially after the founding of Tawang Monastery hundreds of Monpa monks and nuns have been produced. Some of them were educated in the monasteries of Lhasa. Thus, slowly literature started defusing in the Monpas area. Though the Monpas do not have a written language of their but they have a rich core of oral literature. They had in the past hundreds of such folk tales dealing with different aspects of man’s life, nature’s manifestation, peculiar characteristics of some animals and birds, deities and so on. Some stories are again in the line of Bon-demons standing in the way of good deeds. In fact, after the introduction of Buddhism, such tales are now tinged with Buddhist anecdotes.

The development can be found in the spheres of art, architecture, literature, engineering, agriculture, animal husbandry, trade etc. as it has been mentioned by Nath (2005, 67) in his book entitled “*The Cultural Heritage of Tribal Societies-2; The Monpa*”, in the field of art, Monpas may be called the most advanced tribes among tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. It is Buddhism which seems to have introduced the art of drawing, painting, writing, icon making, sophisticated instrumental music, dance etc. A Buddhist monastery demands these forms of art for religious purposes. A monastery is packed with such beautiful art with striking accuracy and finishing. In the Monastery, other than painting and icon making various other philosophies and Buddhist ways of life are trained. Such art, originally confined to the monastery only, perhaps later on went down to the laymen. Monasteries also need lots of paper for writing and various other purposes, such demands must have brought the techniques of making paper among the people.

Another significant contribution of the monastic institution is upgrading the art of wood carving. The Monpa’s wood curving seems to be a speciality, wood curving including various designs of doors and windows of Monasteries is very common. Buddhist narrations are full of fables and allegories to show conflicts and clashes between good and evil forces, which are presented in many dance forms and rituals where it demand varieties of clothing, especially the mask. Thus, we may say that the development of such art has been originated in the monasteries.

Buddhism and Monastic institutions lend a hand in developing art, literature, architecture, engineering skills, etc. among the Monpas. It brought change in terms of occupation and vocation. The teaching of Buddhism has also greatly influenced in terms of conservation and safeguarding biodiversity. For example-

**The ideas of *ahimsa*:** The doctrine of non-violence, concerned with the sacredness of all living things and an effort to avoid causing harm to them. The principle which teaches, respect for living creatures of all aspects of life. The ethical principle of not causing harm to other living beings. It is also related to the notion that violence has *karmic* (good or bad, viewed as resulting from one's action) consequences. Therefore, most Buddhist people avoid killing or hunting any beings. Such cultural ethics are capable of biodiversity conservation. Buddhist perception of natural beings is so close that it is often termed a "religion of nature".

***Saka Dawa*:** It represents the holiest and most sacred month in Tibetan Buddhism. Falling on the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar (June-July), associated with three major events in the life of Buddha, his birth, his enlightenment and his *Parinirvana* (observation that marks the death of Buddha). Therefore, this month is regarded as a great time to earn merits and attain spirituality, and purification. This meritorious month carries a special aspect whereby any good deeds performed during the month are rewarded multiplied by many times over. Therefore, people engage in observing these actions with much favour, such as avoiding killing and taking life, avoiding sexual contact, staying away from lying and deceiving others, and not taking alcohol, tobacco, recreational drugs etc. among the several schools of Tibetan Buddhism, a range of ritual and ceremonies are performed during *Saka Dawa*.

The ecological perspective of the *Saka Dawa* month, since the month falls in late spring to early summer, most of the flora and fauna species rejuvenate during these months. It gives enough time to nature to grow its offspring during these months and the least human interference with nature helps recharge biodiversity. Other than religious aspects, The *Saka-Dawa* month also plays a very significant role in terms of revitalizing biodiversity.

**Festivals and sacredness:** In Monpa's worldview festivals are marked not only for joy and celebration but also considered sacred. Monpas celebrate a number of festivals, like *Lossar*, *Choskor*, *Torgya* etc. During these festivals, people do not take part in any type of killing or avoid taking life, including cutting trees and agriculture activities.

***Sangen-Duechen*:** The term can be roughly translated as "*Sangen*- meaning Sacred day and meaning *Duechen*- big day". Other than the above events and festivals, there are many other sacred days and observations marked by the Monpas. For example, the

half-moon and full moon and the last day of every month (Known as *Tongchen*) are considered sacred. Additionally, there are many other important events and observations associated with the Tibetan Buddhism. These days are often called *Sangen*. Like the above days, these days are also considered sacred and activities such as hunting or killing, cutting of trees, and agriculture activities are avoided on these days.

**Taboos after the occurrence of death:** On the occurrence of death in a society, an entire community member is supposed to not participate in any foam hunting, fishing or killing other beings, until the dead body is cremated. On the other hand, deceased family members, kin and close relatives will not be involved in killing or taking the life of another being for one year, or at least they will strictly maintain it for forty-nine days.

The Buddhist believes in a cycle of death and rebirth. As per the Buddhist worldview, after death, the soul travels in the realm of the other world for the process of rebirth of his/her next form of life. It is believed that, if his/her close kin and family participate in any sinful acts, such as hunting, fishing etc, in this world. It also impacts on the journey of the deceased soul. Therefore, people observe such taboos after the demise of a family member. On the other hand, such beliefs also limit people's involvement, particularly in hunting and fishing activities in a community.

**Five Elements:** According to both the ancient Bon worldview and Buddhist tradition, it is believed that the five elements constitute all things in the universe, including one's body itself. They are earth, water, fire, air/wind and space/aether. The first four correspond respectively to the physical states of solid, liquid, heat and gas. Space is interpreted as integrating and harmonizing the other four elements (Nichiren Buddhist Library).

Thus, in the Monpa worldview, other than certain sacred days and observations, festivals and rituals, and taboos, generally people refrain from polluting the environment or the five elements, which are also considered sacred. In a way, it also facilitates the environment conservation and continuity of the natural environment.

Therefore, the teachings of Buddhism and their belief system hugely influenced the life of the Monpas and led to several changes such as socio-cultural aspects, art and architecture, economic activity, festivals, observation etc. It has brought forth a change in occupational patterns and vocation. The adoption of Buddhism has brought a paradigm shift in resource management among Monpa in various aspects, as mentioned above. The teaching of Buddhism also helped in the conservation and safeguarding of biodiversity significantly, which itself is a great means of resource management in the age of global environmental change.

## Natural Resources and Management

The relationship between the Monpa people and natural resources is complex in nature, extending from time immemorial to the present day and beyond. The community demonstrates excellence in caring for their land, water and forest resources. In the Monpa worldview, the land is the centre of their lives in terms of livelihood and individual or community's identity in a society. In Monpa culture, land is classified into various types and divisions based on its uses and ownership. The land resources among the Monpas can be broadly categorized into two types, that is *Go-sa* (individually owned land) and *Ma-ung-Saa* (Community land). Other than forest land and settlement areas, land resources are mainly used for grazing and cultivation purposes.

Besides other land resources, the Monpas have a very close relationship with forest and surrounding biodiversity like any other indigenous community. The region is covered with various forest types such as sub-tropical, temperate and alpine. Such a variety of forest types bestows people to interact with diverse types of flora and fauna and provides a considerable number of bio-resources. The forest cover also plays a significant role in the local economy, as it provides raw materials for construction, and natural ground for hunting, fishing and gathering activities. A large number of plant and animal species are used for various ethno-medicinal purposes. Thus, a large share of their daily life activities and livelihood depends on forest resources.

In view of water resources, the topographical feature and climatic condition of the study area provide diverse forms of water sources and an array of biological diversity. The various water bodies found in the study area, are identified and classified based on their uses and types of water bodies. Such as forest-fed rivers, snowed-fed rivers, lakes, springs, frequent rain, and artificial ponds, which are also considered as sacred in many dimensions and their uses are not only confined to humans rather they are also communal with supernatural beings.

The relationship between man, nature, culture and supernature in the uses and management of natural resources is dynamic and highly complex. However, on the basis of use and ownership of the natural resource, it is shared by both man and supernatural beings. Thus, it is bipolar in nature, the areas inhabited by supernatural beings such as the *Phu* region, *luh* area, etc, are not confined to human use and are considered sacred.

Likewise, the water bodies found in the region are also associated with supernatural beings in terms of ownership. Thus, polluting water bodies, and destroying the vegetation cover near the spring or upper regions of the water sources are considered taboo and generally anthropogenic activities in such regions are avoided and considered taboo according to the local culture.

In terms of forest resources and gatherings, The Monpas live in harmony with nature. They derive the majority of their daily necessities from the forest which they harvest cautiously and sustainably utilizing their age-old knowledge of the forest resources and their functioning. As discussed, frequent variations in altitudes favour the growth of various types of vegetation cover in the region. Such natural ground allows people to interact with a large variety of fauna and allied resources. Numbers of animal and bird species are killed and consumed by the Monpas. However, as per the customs, they do not eat carnivorous birds or raptors like eagles, owls, crows, kites, etc. therefore generally avoid killing. Traditionally the Monpas do not kill small birds because it is believed that *“if small birds are killed in large numbers, then there will be more pests or insects attack during agriculture season”*. They also do not eat a number of animal species such as primates and other carnivorous animal species of dog and cat families. Therefore, such animals are generally not killed if they do not cause any harm. Although hunting and fishing were practised by the Monpas since time immemorial, however after the intrusion of Buddhism in the region, such activities were declined or not practised. Even if they participate in hunting and gathering activities also, there are a number of sacred observations, seasons and festivals in which hunting and fishing are avoided. The influence of Buddhism and its teaching such as respect for living all creatures, thus the people avoid killing or hunting any beings. Such cultural ethics are capable of biodiversity conservation.

## Conclusion

The Monpas had a very close relationship with the natural environment in terms of resource use and sharing. As we have seen, all the natural objects and elements of the Earth are shared by various entities including, humans, nature and the supernatural within the frame of *Bon's* worldview. We have also observed various socio-cultural and politico-economic changes that took place in the region after the adoption of Buddhism by the people. Both faiths significantly helped in terms of the conservation of biodiversity. However, the mutual relationship which resulted in conservation has not remained immune to recent changes.

The current scenario of Monpa's worldview of resource use patterns and livelihood has changed a lot. The intrusion of modernity and globalization has brought a change in professions, occupations and belief systems among the people. The market economy had a huge influence on socio-economic life thereby altering the earlier perceptions.

At present, the economy of the rural area is dominated by agriculture, especially after the commercialization of crops began in the last two decades, the improvement

and development of motor roads and better communication systems. The increasing demand for food and crops in the market and the influence of modern education have led to the erosion of previous professions and belief systems. The people from the villages in the neighbouring town have started migrating to the growing township in the hope of taking jobs or for modern livelihood. On the other hand, a huge number of seasonal immigrants also has a direct impact on the environment and natural resources. The difference in faith and belief systems does not confine them from traditional restrictions as local communities follow. Additionally, Modern education has produced a number of educated people in various branches of knowledge. This group has entered into government jobs, politics, business etc. All these have been bringing tangible socio-economic changes in the society.

Therefore, Monpa's worldview and resources management pattern have changed a lot with changing belief systems and socio-political scenarios. At present, the Monpa worldview and resource management have completely developed into a new dimension or touched into a new paradigm, with the influence of globalization and the intrusion of modernity.

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