

EDUCATIONAL TOUR TO BHUTAN

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Bhutan, the land of the thunder Dragon was the perfect place for the department of Sociology to magnify the understanding of culture through the ideas, beautiful customs, traditions and the social behaviour of the people in Bhutan. To gain a firsthand experience of the land of the thunder Dragon, the students and the faculty members of the Department of Sociology set out on an educational trip from 21st of December to 24th of December 2017, lasting for three nights- four days to Bhutan. The group comprised of students from the second and the third year accompanied by two female faculty members. Among the 14 students, five were male and nine were female students.

We started from Sonada at 3:30am on two small vehicles and reached Phuntsholing at 10:30am on 21st December 2017. After reaching, the faculty members along with the students entered the immigration office for the immigration procedures. The paperwork was over by 5:00pm. We then headed towards Thimpu, the first destination of the tour, by road. Transportation was pre-arranged in consultation with a travel agency of Bhutan.

Culture varies from society to society and the moment we entered from India to Bhutan, we were pretty astounded to see the cultural variation. The visible attributes of culture such as artefacts, symbols, and the common Bhutanese language contributed in bringing the essence of being in a different country, alarming us at the same time to prepare ourselves to indulge in the short process of enculturation. To experience the culture and the local environment firsthand, the trip comprised of smaller trips to various places both historical and mesmerising.

After the much needed rest, all of us were very excited and thrilled to start the second day of the tour. The first place of visit was Buddha point, a monastery. The centrepiece of Buddha Point is the Buddha Dordenma statue which was constructed in 2015 to mark the 60th anniversary of fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuk. The view was indeed blissful. After spending some meditative moments in Buddha point, we then headed for one of the oldest monastery in Bhutan- the Chang Gang Kha monastery.

The final destination of the day was the renowned BBS tower. The BBS tower also known as Sangaygang is rightly named as the Lovers Paradise. The view from this place was very serene. After spending sometime here, we went to the National Library. We got a chance to see the World's Largest Book consisting of 114 pages. After the visit to the Library, we were headed to another famous destination of Bhutan- Paro.

After spending the night at Paro, the students and faculty members started for an adventurous albeit tough hike to the famous Tiger's Nest monastery. The walk itself was something to remember. After walking uphill along some very narrow and dusty path for about three hours, the group finally reached the Tiger's Nest. The journey was worth the destination. All the

students as well as the faculty members were awed by the breathtaking structure and construction of the monastery. The Tiger's Nest was the climax of the tour. All of us felt a pinch of sadness as the tour was coming to the end.

On the way back, the students and the faculty members got a chance to experience the local ambience and cuisine.

We reached Sonada on the 24th of December 2017.

Like its name Bhutan, every place we visited left us stupefied not only by its natural beauty but how they could retain or blend tradition with modernity without affecting its authenticity. Talking about tradition, as an observer we can say that, to a greater extent we see the tradition being maintained not only in the architectural form, small housing construction but we could see it being regulated in their day to day life by the usage of their traditional dress known as "KIRA" for women and "GHO" for men. I personally found it pretty fascinating to see, almost all of every generation more than comfortable wearing their traditional attire which in my country or in my sub-culture would be difficult to regulate as it is done in Bhutan. For example, the idea of wearing nepali "dhakka choli" or "dawra suruwal" by our youths when going to college was repudiated many times. When trying to understand these cultural forms, we see that people of Bhutan have embedded themselves to both the material and non material culture bringing in a sense of pride for their culture, traditions and for their country.

On one hand we see traditions and religion being practiced in every aspects of their life and on the other hand they have not isolated themselves from being advanced when compared to the other countries. Like any other country, Bhutan has its own airport, has facilitated itself with foreign goods and services and also have ample means of transportation. Even in its social structure we see that both men and women enjoy equal opportunity, where women are not confined within the four walls rather there were instances where we could witness many women independently driving vehicles on their own without being dependent on their men.

This educational tour to Bhutan has not only stunned us with its natural beauty but has also made us question ourselves in many aspects of our ways of living, as to how each of these culture and sub-culture play a significant role in our lives. By visiting different countries and understanding different cultures, there is always a space for us to reflect on our own culture and if given a chance this can give us the opportunity to help our society be better.