

Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research: A Study on Buddhist Nuns in Sri Lanka

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“Crystallization” is an intriguing new method that has appeared in recent years that embraces the unique perspective that artistic thinking can bring to conducting and writing research. This paper explores the peculiarity of qualitative crystallization in research on Buddhist nuns in Sri Lanka. Buddhist nuns in Sri Lanka strive and thrive under a system that excludes them in certain ways. It required a comprehensive analytical approach to the study of the lives of Buddhist nuns’ groups (or the survival strategies), whose places in Buddhism and the monastic community are not settled or singular. Inquiring about their place within the monastic world requires the researcher to elicit the significance of the different discourses and strategies for survival in which they engage and co-create. Discourse is the knowledge that is created about the world. Discourses talk about compelling stories that have varying degrees of power. Discourses are highly multivocal and rarely united. Crystallisation gives a language for describing and incorporating the diverse forms of representations of discourse, ranging from performances and embodied actions to sophisticated multimedia presentations and even state-sanctioned festivals of Buddhist nuns. Multidimensional thinking is a representation of multi-genre performances and truths/knowledge, as each of these genres offers a unique mode of knowing. This enabled us to address the different genres of each group of renunciants, which were at times mutually exclusive and at other times inclusive. This extension of qualitative research aims to stimulate the conversation and position crystallization as a tool for obtaining a deeper and richer understanding of the experiences of a historically silent group like Buddhist nuns.

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