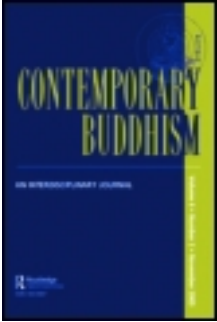


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BUDDHISM AS A VALUE SOURCE IN THE COURSE OF NEW IDENTITY AND LIFESTYLE FORMATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC*

Jitka Cirklová

This study is focused on cultural phenomena of contemporary Europe: the creation of a new religious identity without cultural precedent in European cultural history. It will concentrate on non-Asian Buddhist converts, who have adopted religious world views different from those of their ethnic heritage and the mainstream culture they live in and who use Buddhism as the value-source for their children's upbringing. The parents who, to a certain degree, master Buddhist practice and are attached to this particular religious culture, accumulate a specific religious capital which develops when there are higher levels of religious participation, knowledge and experience, including social networks. The aim of my study is to illustrate how accumulated religious capital and value models affect parental choice regarding children's education. How are these values transmitted within the families of different Buddhist streams? What is the role of the local Buddhist community in family life?

Theoretical premises

Intergenerational transmission is the major factor in the formation of beliefs, because it is the major factor in identity formation. Significant others, particularly parents, influence the development of value cognition in their children. What values are ascribed to Buddhism by parents who are highly active in Buddhist practice? Do they aspire that their children possess these values? Are these values and parental strategies different from those of parents active in mainstream religion?

Do Buddhists resemble believers of monotheistic traditions who look for social cohesion and order (Saroglou and Dupuis 2006)? As we can see in the results of the international value studies in which Schwartz's (1992) model of values has been used, members of Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities prioritize the

*During one of his regular visits to the Czech Republic, the Dalai Lama was approached by a young Czech couple who asked him to give their daughter a Tibetan name. The Dalai Lama chose the name Tändzin Jangdön for the little girl. (The Czech News Agency)

values of conservation of social and individual order, and tend to a limited self-transcendence (Saroglou and Dupuis 2006). Is contemporary Western Buddhism a new form of expression of a known, traditional religiosity? Or is it a form of individualistic, self-centred postmodern spirituality (Heelas 2005)? Answers to these questions may shed light on the current trends in denominational evolution as empirical studies carried out with Buddhist participants are scarce.

The focus group

For a period of two years (2007–2008), the author conducted field work in Czech Buddhist centres, using the methodology of participant-observation with its focus on activities appointed specially for families, or exclusively for children. Collaterally, printed documents and materials on Buddhist education published for parents and children's books on Buddhism available at that time in Czech Buddhist circles were analysed.

In the course of the research, over 70 unstructured interviews and 22 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, fully recorded and transcribed for the purpose of coding and analysis. The set of indepth interviews was partly structured according to questionnaires presented in the European Value System Studies.

The interviews were composed of five theme blocks:

- Personal conversion of the parent.
- Buddhist and non-Buddhist rites and ceremonies in the family.
- The role of the religion in the everyday reality.
- Spiritual and religious practice in the family of the respondent.
- The position of Buddhism in child-raising.

The respondents came from the three types of Buddhism most represented in the Czech Republic:

- Tibetan Buddhist groups (n = 9),
- Japanese or Korean Zen centers (n = 5), and
- Theravāda meditation schools (n = 8).

All 22 respondents are men (n = 12) and women (n = 10) in the productive age cohort, engaged in Buddhist practice for longer than a decade (between 10–14 years), married or living with a partner with whom they raise children of pre-school or school age. In order to establish a template for Czech Buddhist parents, a profile compiled of common respondent characteristics is sketched out below and diversifying aspects across various streams of Buddhism are noted.

The profile of the Czech Buddhist parent

The majority (86%) of respondents were university graduates. This high level of education is a common feature among members of Western Buddhist groups

worldwide (Saroglou and Dupuis 2006, 168). Another common feature was their secular background. Twenty respondents used phrases such as 'absolutely materialistic', 'atheistic education', 'completely secular, but moral and ethical' to describe the degree of religiosity of their original families. The remaining two affirmed that although secular, their parents were influenced by Christian ethics.

Secular roots are a common attribute among Czech Buddhists. This finding agrees with the 'strictness' hypothesis that Wuthnow (2004, 366) presents in his article on the spread of Buddhism in the United States. He concludes that Buddhism is more attractive to those who are unaffiliated with a specific religion. In other words, strict adherence to certain belief-systems acts (according to Wuthnow) as a barrier against the spread of Buddhist teaching in a social setting. He extends this hypothesis, by suggesting that the teachings of Buddhism are more attractive to those who, though not already affiliated with a religion, are searching for some ethical framework or for certainty about an afterlife (Wuthnow 2004).

The search for an ethical framework and spirituality for one's own path in life were the respondents' first and foremost reasons for becoming Buddhists.

After the technical university I needed to get away from the influence of my family. I had to formulate my opinion on this [i.e. religion] because until that time I had no opinion about it, but I was attracted by it. Such topics did not exist in my family. And then I read about Buddhism in a book on the world's religions about Buddhism. For me it was absolutely revolutionary that someone says things are impermanent. It was such a relief from chasing after some fixed and stable point in my life... (Adam, 35, Theravāda)

The second most mentioned is the need for acquiring tools to work directly with and interpret one's own spiritual experience. Therefore, the Christian method of practising collective religiosity was unsatisfactory for respondents ($n = 5$) who, for brief periods of time (up to one year), began an interest in Christian churches.

Either the search for tools that enable the exploration of one's mind, or the encounter with such techniques in an academic environment, led the respondents to a conscious Buddhist practice. A significant number ($n = 9$) of Czech Buddhists were introduced to Buddhism at university, through a popular lecture course on self-development at the faculty of psychology in Brno during the 1990s, presented by a Czech scholar doctor Mirko Frýba who happened also to be an ordained Theravāda monk. A group of five male respondents in my study underwent ordination and long-term meditation training (from 3 months up to two years) in various monasteries in countries of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. I will later present these experiences that deeply influenced their perspective of value transformation in the families they started.

Ten years ago I was in one seminar led by a psychologist. There were offered various methods of self-discovery. One of them was Buddhist meditation. I liked it and asked him for a contact to a meditation group. I started to go there. It wasn't that I tried it and then I would try something else. I meditated more and

more. And after the first two-week meditation retreat, I realized Buddhism is the way, the way with meaning for me. I have meditated before but I wasn't sure why I did it . . . (Jakub, 40, Theravāda)

No respondent saw the frequency or the intensity of his or her Buddhist practice as sufficient, despite the fact that they are disciplined enough to meditate regularly. When I let them elaborate their answer, they all described various methods of daily practice. They all saw it as important to attend longer meditation retreats (two weeks or a meditation weekend) during the course of the year to revive their meditation routine. This was particularly evident in the group of Theravāda male respondents.

First I wanted to be a monk. I had the time horizon of 18 years of age of my kids to stay here and then to become a monk again. I didn't want to leave my wife here alone with the small children. Today I leave it more open. Maybe there are also some other ways than to become a monk. But I definitely would like to go further in my practice and to meditate more intensively. Now I meditate 14 days intensively every year and last year I managed to meditate every day at home. Now it seems I will have a chance to meditate every day at work too. When I finish my studies and start my own dental practice, I plan to meditate during my lunch break. I am not sure what the nurse will think about it, but I want to do it. (Jiří, 42, Theravāda)

The interview excerpt above illustrates the frequent drift towards a this-world method of Buddhist practice among respondents with previous monastic experience. An adamant pursuit of incorporating Buddhist practices and values into their personal and professional lives is a common feature among all respondents. The most vigorous attempt to harmonize mundane lives with Buddhism is evident among male respondents from the Theravāda tradition. Half of them work in non-government organization (NGOs) oriented towards socially marginal groups. One respondent in his late thirties left a career as a marketing director in order to attend medical school—he had perceived his occupation as detrimental to others.

Another respondent, now a Tibetan Buddhist, had experienced similar feelings. She left a successful career as a theatre director to work in adult education and coaching. The change was prompted by an environment which constantly violated the Buddhist principles she valued. This research, as well as the data presented in the European Value Study (EVS) (Prudký 2009, 112), underscores the low value attributed by both Buddhists and adherents to New Religious Movement (NRM), which is based on Eastern spirituality, to power and achievement.

The respondents' interest in Buddhism can be seen as a form of new spirituality as defined by Heelas (1996, 2005)—specifically, as spirituality focused towards self, subjectivity and individual growth.

I try to meditate every day, mainly mornings, but also in the evening when the situation doesn't require something else. For example, when my little son is

teething I practice what I would call attentive awareness and I spend the evening with him. (Adam, 35, Theravāda)

Their prime interest in Buddhism could be seen more than anything as a spiritual quest but, as we see, they tend to emphasize the connectedness of Buddhism and every-day reality as a core aspect of their Buddhist practice. As we follow the development of Buddhist practices, we can observe a trend in which individual spiritual growth is equally important to the incorporation of Buddhist practice into the social and family context.

Religion or a lifestyle?

With Buddhism being so tightly interconnected with their daily life, my next interest was to clarify whether they perceived Buddhism as a religion or rather as a form of lifestyle. All respondents were uncomfortable with the idea of labelling Buddhism as a religion.

To me the fashion is lifestyle, religion is about God and Buddhism is neither of them. It is more a life philosophy, closer to religion. But in our branch there is no God. It is more about getting to know the inside of a man. (Jiří, 42, Theravāda) I would say it is a philosophy. For me it is the alpha and omega of my life values. In decision making—these are the values I respect. The word Buddhism is from the Europeans, not from the Buddha. The Europeans need the labels, so they call it Buddhism. (Adam, 35, Theravāda)

It is the way to be in the world. Buddhism has the method for being in this world. That is the amazing thing about it. (Květa, 40, Tibetan Buddhist group)

Their reactions echoed academic works published during the nineteenth century, which defined Buddhism as an atheistic philosophy (Rožehnalová 2008, 163). Nevertheless, for these respondents, Buddhism is not solely a philosophy. Loss (2010) similarly placed Western Buddhism between the realm of religious institutions and secular world views. Loss (2010) defined Western Buddhism as being either 'explicit non-religious, or implicit non-secular'. Buddhism opens a new paradigm in which spirituality is also put into practice by Czech Buddhists who do not direct their spiritual or religious practice towards transcendental horizons. The respondents direct their spiritual activity towards their families and surrounding social environment. Day (2009, 273) who observed a similar trend, used the term 'socially based godless morality' to describe the shift in the way young people define their faith.

In contrast with the denial of Buddhism as a religion is their attitude towards material objects representing Buddhist spirituality, particularly the Buddha statue. They all own one or more, and have it displayed in a visible place in their homes. In most cases these statues come from places significant to Asian Buddhists, or are blessed by Buddhist monks. Respondents belonging to Tibetan Buddhism arranged altars according to Tibetan tradition and, if housing conditions allow it,

an entire room is devoted to meditation. Buddhist material objects are not perceived as aesthetic decorations or as amulets, but as public statements about belonging to a specific group and as identification with Buddhism.

I have an altar at home. My son sometimes takes something away from there. So I put it back and tell him it belongs there and it is not for him. Sometimes he adds something there . . . a toy. So I leave it on the altar too. (Emil, 38, Theravāda)
For a long time I had a statue of Buddha hidden behind a drape,. And then I told myself it is not appropriate, because I want to acknowledge openly I am a Buddhist. So I took the statue out. (Adam, 35, Theravāda)

We have a statue, of course and I wear prayer beads around my neck. I use them too. I wear them because I want to be more clear to other people. (Jakub, 32, Soto Zen)

The number of owned material objects varied among adherents to various streams of Buddhism. Members of Theravāda and Zen Buddhist groups usually keep only the Buddha statue, while adherents of Tibetan Buddhism own a large variety of items and visual meditation aids. Tibetan teachers and high lamas command much respect as well. The role and degree of importance of the spiritual teacher in each family is extremely interesting across various Buddhist branches.

Respondents attitudes towards material symbols, quoted above, show a form of conscious realization of belonging to a specific group. In Schwartz's theoretical model of relations among motivational types of values (1992, 6–7), feelings of belonging to a community are classified as a manifestation of value security. Security is marked as a highly important value to religious people. Among Buddhists, we can observe the process of growing importance of evaluating security in parallel with the process of incorporating Buddhist ideals into their daily life.

Christmas as an issue

Through a case study of Christmas, I began research regarding the place of Buddhism in family life. The issue of Christmas emerged in the family of every respondent and was approached by all in a very similar way. Christmas is celebrated among Czech Buddhists and many respondents began to celebrate it again after they became parents, leaving behind radical vegetetarianism, along with a radical refusal of Christmas, which they perceived as a symbol of consumerism. What comes from their moderate approach is a modification and reinterpretation of the Christmas story they present to their children.

We celebrate Christmas normally, with presents. Every year I am a bit annoyed when this season comes. But it is not possible to take it away from my kids when Christmas is all around, without giving them some meaningful replacement. At least my wife and I minimize the presents. (Jiří, 42, Theravāda)

I tell them Christmas is the celebration of the Divine aspect in us, of that which is exceeding us. I say Christianity is showing the Buddhist way the best—the birth, the death, the rebirth . . . (Karel, 45, Kwan Um Zen)

We started to have a Children's Day in our center in the time of the winter solstice. We talk about the importance of light with my children and the importance of giving to other people. We try to shift their attention toward the joy of making gifts for grandparents and our friends. (Ilona, 34, Tibetan Buddhism)

I even take them to church on Christmas. I tell them what is going on. I want them to know all about it. But they know what Vesakh is also. On Vesakh, we go away for the weekend and celebrate it with my friends, who meditate and have kids too. (Pavel, 34, Theravāda)

They see the Christian fundament of the festival as a part of the local religious and cultural heritage, which can therefore infer their positive attitude towards tradition, conformity, conservation and social order value associated with traditional religiosity. The Buddhist approach differs in the way it put stress on the arbitrariness of tradition, emphasizing new and unique ways for understanding the traditional holiday. Evidently, universalism and tolerance (benevolence in Schwartz's term) are also important for the Buddhist respondents.

Christmas is a case that makes it possible to show the tendencies and the parenting strategies of my respondents. I noticed a great sensitivity towards the local cultural context in which their children grow. Across all the represented streams of Buddhism, I noticed the twofold worries of the respondents: about raising their children too differently from mainstream society, as well as the influence of conventional materialistic society on their children. Their parental strategies, efforts and attempts were concerned with finding a balance between these two.

Passing on Buddhism

The process of accepting the Buddhist perspective is the result of a gradual process of conscious decision making among the adult respondents. In what ways do they socialize their children into the Buddhist values? Beit-Hallahmi (1997, 96) argues the religious socialization is the result of interpersonal interaction and of the influence of the social surrounding. According to the author, people do not internalize abstract norms and dogmas but have images of self in concrete relations to a community and to the world. The author stresses the central role of the family in the religious education. In the Czech Buddhist families I observed two separate concepts for passing on Buddhism. The first I call *the awaiting strategy* and the second, *the active passing down* of Buddhism.

The awaiting strategy is common among men from the Theravāda Buddhist community who, for a certain period of time, became ordained monks in an Asian country or among advanced Zen practitioners. For them, Buddhism is associated with deep personal transformation processes and spiritual experiences and is not

easily shared with other people. Therefore, they would rather wait for their children to ask questions about Buddhist practice. They introduce Buddhism in a frame of the cultures of Asian countries, where they stayed or where their family friends travel. Telling the life story of the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, is also popular in this group of respondents, for whom a more intense or direct religious education is seen as negative and inappropriate.

I feel aversion to any form of religious education for a long time. I always thought children should not be baptized or in any form to have religion imposed on them. But I try to show them there are different cultures and different spiritual ways . . . (Pavel, 34, Theravāda)

I would be happy if they go this way. But I don't want to make it automatic: the father meditates, so the son will meditate . . . I want to wait for their development. Of course I will do something. I am going to be open, encouraging . . . luring. But I don't want to dictate the direction. I see it would be possible to indoctrinate them now, but I wait for their own interest. I hope it comes . . . (Daniel, 37, Soto Zen)

In his research, Beit-Hallahmi (1997) argues that intergenerational transmission of religion is primarily influenced by the religious practices of the parents at home, as well as their conversations with their children regarding religion. Respondents view their practice at home as a highly valuable model for their children; nonetheless, they acknowledge that its impact on them will only be realized many years later.

It was observed that female respondents, as well as the group practicing Tibetan Buddhism, had a very different approach to passing on their Buddhist beliefs. They aspire to incorporate Buddhist ideals into Western social settings (Shambhala Buddhist teaching, The Diamond Way Buddhism and other groups belonging to the Karma Kagyu lineage). I refer to their educational schemes and strategies as the schemes of active transmission. Here we see the direct and active upbringing in Buddhist values and meditation techniques.

I find it interesting that we are often very afraid to speak to our kids about meditating. We assume Buddhism to be something unique and complicated. We see it also as too personal an issue. But we overlook one aspect that comes before all that. Meditation is a way of working with our mind. And it does good for us—the parents. Why should we not introduce it to our children? Why are we afraid to offer it? (Alena, 37, Shambhala)

She is very active, so it is not possible to tell her to sit. But we do teach her to imagine Buddhas, to think about them and to imagine that she is calling them. Sometimes she sits and recites the mantras. She knows two. But she sits maybe for a minute, not longer. And sometimes she comes and says, 'I want to meditate too', so we tell her what to do and how and she is trying that. But we never would order her to sit with us. (Ilona, 34, Tibetan Buddhism)

Organizing a Children's Day, family weekends, inviting foreign specialists to lecture on the problems of teaching Buddhism, opening a Buddhist Sunday school—those

were some of the activities I observed for promoting the education of Buddhism. In the course of my fieldwork these activities were beginning to take place in Czech Buddhist circles.

The most progressive are Shambhala parents, who actively use foreign sources as an inspiration for organizing various family oriented activities, celebrating seasons in the Buddhist spirit and introducing the rite of passage coming of age for 12 year old children. The rite marks the end of a period in which a child lives solely in the family circle. After the ritual, children become vital members of the Shambhala community. Responsibility for one's own decisions is emphasized in the child's education. In terms of value theory, we could define it as an emphasis on the development of self-direction. Openness to change is ranked low among adherents of traditional religions (Saroglou and Dupuis 2006, 166).

The Buddhist centres play an important role in Buddhist education. They are perceived as places where children of parents with the same spiritual orientation can meet and socialize. Such meetings are seen as very helpful by all respondents, especially when they fear their children might feel lonely or not fit into peer groups due to their Buddhist family background. Some respondents also shared with me their belief in Karmic rule and their conviction of their obligation to provide, for those children born into Western Buddhist families, access to Buddhism. I observed widely varying views on the length of children's meditation practice. Regardless of Buddhist denomination, all parents were ready to explain and transmit the meditation technique to their children. What differs is what parents count as meditation.

I go to a meditation retreat for two weeks every year. The last time I came back, my kids wanted to know what I did there. So I told them we were sitting or walking and meditating. I explained to them how to do it and they were trying it. But they could manage it only for a very, very short time. I think four minutes was the maximum . . . (Pavel, 34, Theravāda)

On the other hand, at the Shambhala centres, any period of time the child manages to focus his or her mind on one object and to sit still, is perceived as meditation. During the day, when the children are engaged in various arts and crafts a brief meditation period is initiated by a stroke on the Tibetan bowl. They are told to listen attentively to the Tibetan bowl for as long as they can hear it. Parents consider this time adequate for meditation.

The technique of the *mettā* meditation (sending of benignity) to friends as well as school rivals, to beloved school teachers and those with whom the child has a problem of mutual understanding, is a favorite Buddhist practice to teach children. Among parents belonging to the Tibetan Buddhist school, the mantra recitation plays the same role: *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. It is most often used by children for the benefit of a sick friend or suffering animal.

The practice described corresponds with the theory developed by Fowler (1981). He observed that development of an individual's religiosity is age-dependent. Furthermore, he contends that younger children tend naturally to

accept their parents' religiosity, while children in the ages of 12–13 years old are primarily influenced by their peers. For this particular age group, the highest number of programmes and activities take place in the Buddhist centres. We can observe how Fowler's theory maps onto age related activities at Buddhist schools as the younger children attend the programme of Buddhist centres together with their parents, observe and can participate or play, the age groups of 10 years and above enjoy the programme intended for young visitors of the centres. The content of the programme combines the aspects of Buddhism with various crafts or sports (the archery).

The Buddhist values

Buddhism also functions as a source of explanation for the values that the parents respect. Even though respondents mention they were brought up to respect the same values and virtues, which some of them would refer as the Western ethic, they perceived secular family education as an arbitrary system of rules whose meaning was not sufficiently explained to them. In the Buddhist concept of causality they found a satisfactory background and reference source for their own life and for the raising of their children.

These findings correspond with claims presented by Prudký (2009, 100) about the sympathizers of immanent religious movements who decide for a certain religious tradition in accordance with the values that they already profess. In addition, Beit-Hallahmi (1997, 107) concluded from his research that individuals tend not to depart significantly from the faith and the level of religiosity in which one was brought up. Wuthnow (2004, 366) concludes his article by claiming that Buddhism attracts individuals who were not previously influenced by a different religious system, and who are unaffiliated with a church, but who nonetheless search for an ethical framework or seek answers to the questions about afterlife. The above theories seem to elucidate the specifically secular background of Czech Buddhists.

What are the values the respondents mark as Buddhist and which they intentionally cultivate? In the first place, they mentioned sensitivity towards suffering in general and compassion for the suffering of an animal. This was the first Buddhist value that all respondents mentioned they intentionally cultivate in bringing up their children.

She came home crying because the boys outside killed a snail. She tried to tell them it was suffering but they didn't understand her and laughed at her. Until now she only told her best friends in her kindergarten about Buddhism. She wanted them to be happy and to say the mantras. We tell her that Buddhism is our family secret. That it is not very good to talk about it very much because every person believes in something else. That some trust to baby Jesus and some don't trust or believe anything ... (Ilona, 34, Tibetan Buddhism)

Ilona's words reflect the common fear of non-acceptance by mainstream society of their Buddhist child. Parents are aware their child is taught to be sensitive to

certain issues above the societal norm and, in the long term, parents see it as a great achievement of their education. On the other hand, they recognize a Buddhist upbringing as a form of handicap, for which their child may be mocked by their peers. Therefore, children are warned against the rejection of the group if they talk about Buddhist ideas. The parents give the issue of ignorance as the reason. And ignorance is also the explanation for various harmful or mischievous deeds their child encounters.

I tell them the practical things about Buddhism. How to manage conflicts. My son is very stubborn and now has conflicts with the teacher. So I tell him to step aside in these conflicts and do it as an act of kindness to the teacher. That her authority doesn't mean automatically that she is a stronger person than he is. I use also parables with the martial arts . . . (Karel, 45, Kwan Um Zen)

Martial arts are used as a tool to introduce the children, mainly boys, to some Buddhist concepts of moral virtue. Most often heard were ideas about the importance to respect teachers and of non-violence.

The respondents perceive the level of interpersonal relationships as the starting point and the most important area where Buddhist values and principles should be practised and cultivated in the course of the child's upbringing. In all the families a keen sense of focus on cultivating prosocial values (compassion, benevolence, tolerance) over the values of self-enhancement (achievement, power, hedonism) is evident.

Buddhist role models

I believe that what differentiates Buddhist families from other young Czech families is the role of a spiritual teacher or other authority in the child's upbringing. Children in Buddhist families see their parents paying a lot of respect to teachers who, in most cases, comes from an Asian country. In the case of Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan monks who teach in Western centres visit their students regularly and the children are always aware of and participate in these special occasions. Parents talk to their children about the importance the teachers and guru have for them. The role model for human moral virtues and wisdom is, for Czech Buddhists, the Dalai Lama. During my fieldwork I saw his picture in children's rooms or placed on fridges in kitchens across all the Buddhist traditions I investigated.

Sometimes she asks how we know such things—about Karma and rebirth for example. So we tell her we know it from our teachers. And we have no better explanation, because we have nobody more knowledgeable to ask about it and therefore we respect them and trust them. (Ilona, 34, Tibetan Buddhism)

Both my daughter and son love Lama Ole. They always go to his lecture when he comes. They both have the Phowa initiation completed. I am very happy about that. (Karla 40, Diamond Way Buddhism)

In the families of Theravāda Buddhism, the place of the spiritual teacher is taken by the figure of a monk. The concept is more abstract in this case. The families are not attached to a particular personality in the sense of having a guru. Theravāda monks are perceived more as models of Buddhist virtues, but not as mediators in the Christian term—mediators between the mundane and the transcendent worlds. They serve as another dimension of life possibility and self-development, as models for meditation practice, or as part of the family story in cases where the father or his friends were ordained monks for a period of time. Beside the religious aspect, monks also represent other cultures and traditions. I believe that above average in Czech society, Buddhist families stress a multicultural and universalistic perspective on the world.

For me it is very important that my children have contact with monks. That they meet them, are able talk to them, get blessings. I want them to know about the way of life the monks have, what they do and why they do it. That humans can have different ways of life and make various choices. Also, they can meet people who see importance in other things than just in material stuff and brand clothes... (Katerina 38, Theravāda)

I try to be as sensitive as possible. I do it through stories. We look at pictures of monks in Sri Lanka, show them to my friends and they want to know about life in the monastery. How was it to be a monk? Or I use picture books. I used one geographical book and told them about Bhutan. How people live there, what their values are and why I like it. Or when I see some multicultural event, the week of Tibetan culture for example, I take them there. I want them to have as many stimuli as possible in this area. (Pavel 35, Theravāda)

Monks, monasteries, religious practices or the concept of afterlife are the realms parents were not acquainted with when they were growing up and which they began to explore actively as young adults. In Buddhism, they found answers for their need for a spiritual frame of reference or the cosmological order they missed in their lives. Here they found answers for their spiritual quest, together with an opening for further inner self-development and self-interpretation. The respondents repeatedly mentioned that they were seeking a spiritual system, where the core point was direct personal experience. Individual development was the prime interest, although we were able to track a later development towards re-evaluating the importance of a like-orientated community, mainly when respondents wanted their children to have contact with similarly educated peers. The development of pro-social values and a holistic perspective on the world is encouraged in the children's upbringing.

A common feature among all respondents, is a desire to expose their children to religion, as well as to grow up having a cosmology based on the spiritual

practices of their parents. Furthermore, they stress the importance of mutual tolerance among religions.

We tell our daughter that it makes no difference if people follow the Buddha or Jesus. That both men were good people. And that to be good to others is the most important thing. And that she can choose which way she wants to go. But she sees what we do, of course. So when she is sad, she sits and recites the mantras, as we do. (Klara 37, Tibetan Buddhism)

When they ask things about the afterlife and such, we always tell them this is our experience, our opinion and our perspective. And that there are other explanations too and other people answer them differently... (Adam 38, Theravāda)

Educational institutions, with other than a strictly secular educational agenda are popular among the parents who actively pass Buddhism on to their children. In the first place, the schools and kindergartens of the Waldorf and Montessori schooling systems were mentioned. In one case, a Christian lyceum was seen as a better option to a completely secular environment. Secular schooling is, on the other hand, seen positively by parents who opt for the waiting strategy in their education and see any religious education as an act of forced imposition.

I am so happy we live in the society which is that secular. And that the public schools are founded as secular. That the teachers can not tell them about Jesus in civics, for example. So the kids do not discuss such things either... (Pavel, 35, Theravāda)

Two of my kids go to a Christian secondary school. I thought it would be a better environment for them. More spiritual. But, when they try to cram Christianity into them at school, I dissolve it by Buddhism. They do not like the authorities much, so they seek other stuff. Last month, one of them read the life of Buddha, so he could argue against his teacher of religion. The Christian school helps me! (Karel, 45, Kwan Um Zen)

I think it is good start that our girl got accepted to the Waldorf basic school. People say it is a Christian place, because they talk about God in their assemblies. But I don't mind. It is a different place than the mainstream schools. For me it is important it is about human complexity. They don't teach them skills only... (Jakub, 40, Theravāda)

It is possible to trace the tendency to expose the children to religiosity. Local Christian heritage is introduced to the children as an alternative paradigm for interpreting the world. Exposure to various spiritual systems may potentially rouse a child's interest in the spiritual realm. In terms of value theory, we can see it as developing openness to change—the set of motivations (for example, stimulation, self-direction) which are contrary to a tendency towards conservatism/conservation of a given order (conformity, tradition, security). Respondents used the Buddhist term impermanence, to explain why they intentionally expose their

children to various religious concepts. Even in families who advocate secular schooling, we can identify the tendency to develop their child's spirituality. In secular schools religion is omitted. The parents are thus left with the task of filling up and unfolding this realm.

Concluding theoretical remarks

The aim of the study was to see how religious reality is constructed and what makes it different from day-to-day reality. The search for a transformation in every day reality is one of the main purposes of religious spirituality (Idel 2002). According to Idel (2002), concepts of spiritual perfection, omnipotence and omniscience are not only forms of conceptualizing the divine in itself, but also different approaches to imagining the perfect nature towards which the human being strives. Czech Buddhist parents were missing a cosmological concept of a perfect world, towards which they could direct their efforts of self-development. This personal quest led them to accept an Eastern model of spirituality, which can be described as a path to the Discovery of the Essence. When comparing the role and place of an individual in the Western and the Eastern models of spirituality, Idel (2002) argues that the Eastern concept of spiritual transformation is, by its nature, less extreme and difficult to achieve without community support. Every human being is invited to the path of transformation leading from misunderstanding to the discovery of the truth and reality, through knowing and opening one's consciousness. The respondents came from a secular background and, without the backing of a religious community, they began the path towards *Spirituality of Seeking* (Wuthnow 1998), which developed into an intensive personal form of *Spirituality of Practice* (Wuthnow 1998). Also we may read collected data in the background and with the accordance of the phenomenological theory of religion, as *sacred canopy* (Berger 1967), as an canopy arching over all aspects of life, having influence on daily decisions, or place them under the term *Spiritualities of Life*, which focus on what already lies within the order of things (Heelas 1996).

I find it intriguing that from the results of the study, it is possible to trace the development of religiosity throughout three generations of Czech families. It is also possible to observe how personal religiosity is transformed into new patterns and expressions. The most significant feature of the Czech Buddhist community is the emphasis on the role of spiritual experience or of the sacred in everyday experience.

Respondents grew up in a completely secular environment without the backing of a religious community. Therefore, they naturally chose a path focused primarily on individual development. Within the framework of Buddhist groups, they began to accumulate religious capital, which encompassed the secular ethics on which they were raised, as well as the Buddhist doctrine which broadened and added a transcendental meaning to the secular ethics they had already

internalized. Respondents, who for a certain period of time became monks, stepped out of the world they lived in. They used monkhood as a liminal period (Turner 1995) to internalize a new value system and world perspective. Later, when they became parents, they sought to reintroduce holy men from the outskirts of society back into it and incorporate spiritual role models as a part of family structure (Idel 2005). The lama, the monk or the teacher interconnected two realms and realities.

The next transformation in the pattern of religiosity of respondents occurred when they became parents. We were able to trace a tendency and need to engage in mutual activities with other Buddhist families. Evidently this is a time in which the formation of new religious identities for their children within religious communities becomes visible. The respondents have an apparent interest in associating with families who share similar values and Buddhist cosmological frameworks.

Parents are determined to expose their children not only to a spiritual cosmological framework but also to spiritual education, obtained through encounters with fellow Buddhists, whether lamas, monks or peers, as well as through participation in community activities. In this aspect, I see a development toward constructing Buddhism as a social reality and the end of seeking for a spiritual cosmology on the part of the parents. They accepted Buddhism, looked for Buddhist institutions and other normative patterns for the arrangement of a desired social relationship in which the exchange of a specific religious capital is embedded (Finke 2003). It would be too simplistic to apply Emile Durkheim's (1915, 62) definition of religion as beliefs and practices that 'unite into one single moral community' those who adhere to them. Also we may not overlook the impact of Buddhism on the life choices of the respondents, using Weber's (1922) perspective of religion as a guide to inclinations of an individual in his or her worldly occupation.

In terms of value theory, it is evident that Czech Buddhists attribute the highest virtue to values such as benevolence, tolerance and universalism. Universalism is viewed as unimportant or even negative among adherents to traditional Western religions (Saroglou and Dupuis 2006). Values leading to self-enhancement (power and achievement), are viewed negatively by the Czech Buddhists. The main defining feature of Czech Buddhists, as well as Western Buddhists (Saroglou and Dupuis 2006) compared to traditional religions, is their emphasis on self-direction. On the other hand, followers of mainstream religions value order as a source of security and life trajectory over self-direction.

In addition, I also argue that Western Buddhism does not fit only into the concepts and definitions of postmodern spirituality focused on the individual internal development. The internalization of Buddhism significantly influenced the behaviour of respondents in their social environment and in their interpersonal relations from the individual to the pro-social. In terms of sociology, it is fascinating to inquire how a framework of spiritual and historical tradition of a different cultural

heritage transforms the behaviour of an individual towards society, environment or his or her identity transformation.

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