

THE DONYI - POLO CULT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH
A STUDY IN TEXTUALISING TRIBAL ORAL RELIGION

By
Ruma Roy (Nee Chowdhury)

THESIS
SUBMITTED
IN
Fulfilment of The Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

To



Department of Anthropology
NORTH - EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY
SHILLONG
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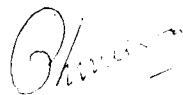
Prof. P.K. Misra,
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Dated, the 29th July, 1995.

C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that the subject matter of this thesis entitled "The Donyi - Polo Cult of Arunachal Pradesh - A study in textualising oral religion" is a record of work done by Ruma Roy (Nee Chowdhury). The contents of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous Degree to her, or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis had not been submitted by her for any Research Degree in any other University. She has carried out this work under my supervision.

In habit and character, Ruma Roy (Nee Chowdhury) is a fit and proper person for the consideration of the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



(P.K. Misra)
Supervisor.

Department of Anthropology
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Ruma Roy (nee Chowdhury)

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION TO LAND AND PEOPLE

Arunachal Pradesh or the land of the rising sun as it is called, lies on the north-eastern tip of India and covers an area of 83,578 sq.km. It lies between latitudes 26.28N and 29.30N and longitudes 91-30E and 87-30E. This mountainous land is surrounded by China on the north and north east, Bhutan on the west, Burma on the east and the vast plains of Assam on the south. This land of dawnlit mountains, as it is also known, presents a picturesque scenery with green valleys, meadows and mountain slopes, and a number of rivers intersecting. The major rivers flowing through the area include the Bharali river flowing through Kameng district, Subansiri river through Subansiri district, Siang river through Siang district, Dibang river through Dibang Valley district, Lohit river through Lohit district and Noa Dihing river flowing through Changlang district.

Arunachal has undergone through several political changes over the past years. In the early days, i.e. in 1914, this land was familiar to the Britishers by the name of North-East Frontier Tract which during various stages of evolution between 1914 and 1946 was subdivided into Balipara

Frontier Tract, Lakhimpur Frontier Tract, Sadiya Frontier Tract and Tirap Frontier Tract. These areas together with the Naga Tribal areas was subsequently known as North-East Frontier Agency or NEFA in 1951. A few years later i.e. in 1954, NEFA was reconstituted into Kameng Frontier Division, Subansiri Frontier Division, Siang Frontier Division, Lohit Frontier Division, Tirap Frontier Division, and Tuensang Frontier Division. But the Tuensang Frontier Division was separated from NEFA in 1957 and was absorbed by the Naga Hills, while the remaining frontier divisions were transformed into five districts in 1964. In 1967 Panchayati Raj, the traditional council was formed with five (5) Counsellors and twenty-six (26) MLAs. The Agency Council was formed for NEFA as a whole, and it was the highest administrative body. At the district level the Zila Parishad functioned in every district with a Govt. personnel known as political officer, while Anchal Samitis were set up in every village. There, were thirty-two (32) Anchal Samitis in all, with thirty-nine (39) members who were elected bodies. In 1971, Pradesh Council was formed in place of Agency Council.

On 20th January 1972 this land attained the status of Union Territory under a Chief Commissioner, and was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh. The name Arunachal Pradesh was originally suggested by the then Director of Research of NEFA

administration Mr. Bihabasu Das Shastri. In 1975, the post of Chief Commissioner was replaced by the post of Lt. Governor, and a legislative Assembly under the constitution was formed in place of the Pradesh Council which was functioning till that time. With acceleration of developmental activities and the awareness of modernisation in the minds of the youths of Arunachal Pradesh, this land ultimately attained its statehood on 20th February, 1987 and is a full-fledged state with its capital located at Itanagar in the Lower Subansiri district.

Recently, for administrative purposes Arunachal Pradesh has been divided into thirteen (13) districts, and the thirteen districts along with their headquarters are given below:-

Sl. No.	District	Headquarter
1.	West Kameng	Bomdila
2.	East Kameng	Seppa
3.	Lower Subansiri	Ziro
4.	Upper Subansiri	Daporijo
5.	West Siang	Along
6.	East Siang	Pasighat
7.	Lohit	Tezu
8.	Tirap	Khonsa
9.	Dibang Valley	Anini
10.	Tawang	Tawang
11.	Changlang	Changlang
12.	Papum Pare	Itanagar
13.	Upper Siang	Yingkiong

According to 1981 census, the total population of Arunachal Pradesh was estimated at 6,31,839 lakhs. The people are spread over a total of 3257 villages, and the density of population per sq.km. has been calculated to be 8 persons. The scheduled tribes of this region consist of 79% according to 1981 census.

Arunachal has made much progress in the field of education. According to 1961 census, the literacy rate was 7.13%, which increased to 11.29% in 1971, and further increased to 20.09% in 1981.

The climate of Arunachal Pradesh differs greatly throughout the entire state, and is unpredictable. This is because of the rugged terrains and hilly nature of the region resulting in variation of temperature and altitude. The temperature in the low-lying regions fluctuate widely in contrast to the areas lying at higher altitudes.

This land also experiences heaviest showers of the country, with rains lasting nearly the whole year through. The rainy season usually starts from the end of March lasting upto the end of September, June and July being the months of heaviest rainfall. Snowfall is also experienced at high

altitudes ranging from 1,500m and above. This usually takes place in the winters, i.e. between November to March months. The winters are damp and chilly, with the sky remaining cloudy for most of the time, and thick fog and mist envelops the atmosphere. During this time, the temperature ranges considerably in different parts of Arunachal, at times even falling below the freezing point.

Summers in Arunachal Pradesh are short and more or less pleasant with high humidity and occasional showers.

Different parts of Arunachal Pradesh vary greatly in altitude and climatic conditions. As such the entire region is covered with luxuriant vegetation consisting of trees of various size and species, ferns, mosses, algae, fungi, climbers and a wide number of useful plants.

In addition to the above, forests cover most parts of the state forming its greatest natural wealth. It is found that forests cover about 61 per cent of the entire land. Big trees of simul (*Bombes malabaricum*), holok (*Terminalia myrocarp*), oak and pine grow abundantly in the forests. Different varieties of canes and bamboos are also found in this area, and these are utilised for making useful articles

of daily use, like baskets, fishing traps, bags, containers, etc.

Orchids also abound most parts of Arunachal Pradesh, and a variety of about 500 species of orchids are found. With reference to Siang district, the Botanical Survey, Eastern Circle has reported the following:-

'From a general running collection in the region orchid species numbering to 40 and representing 16 genera have been collected From these collections one species is new to the Himalayan region and one Malayan species of *Coelogyne Carneae* Hook f. is recorded from India for the first time'.

Apart from many common species of orchids, some rare species like *Aerides odoratum*, *P. Manii*, *Dendrobium nobile*, and *Vanda coerulea* are also found.

The dense forests of Arunachal Pradesh are also rich in fauna, and exhibit a great variety of wild life. The most commonly found animals include mithun (*Bos frontalis*), elephant, snow-leopard, tiger, black panther, wild boar, barking deer, musk deer, wild buffalo, wild goat, wild cat, pandas, monkey and langur. A wide variety of birds are also

found in this enchanting land. These include the hornbill, kite, eagle, dove, crow, cuckoo, and parrot, pigeon, partridge, wild fowl, parakeet, pheasant, sparrow and swallow. Among the reptiles, the most commonly found are the lizard, cobra, viper, caldus and python. Leeches are frequently found all over the region. A wide variety of insects also infest the nature.

Arunachal Pradesh is also rich in archaeological ruins, and there are a number of places of historical interest in the state. The archaeological sites include those of Itafort located at Itanagar in the Lower Subansiri, Noksaparvat in East Kameng, Bhalukpung in West Kameng, Malinithan in West Siang, Bhismaknagar in Dibang valley and Vijohnagar in Tirap district. The monastery of Tawang is also very famous and is about 350 years old. Another historical site also included the well-known Parasuram Kund of Lohit district which draws a number of pilgrims every year at the time of Makar Sankranti.

This beautiful mountaineous land also serves as the homeland of some one hundred and ten (110) tribes and subtribes. Different tribes inhabit the different districts of Arunachal. These tribes include the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Akas,

Khowas, and Mijis of Kameng district, Daflas (Nishis), Apatanis, Hill Miris, Tagins and Sulungs of Subansiri district; Adis (Padam, Minyong, Pasi, Gallong, etc.), Khambas and Membas of Siang district; Idu Mishmis of Dibang valley, Digaru Mishmis, Miju Mishmis, Khamtis and Singphos of Lohit, and Tangsas, Noctes and Wanchos of Changlang and Tirap districts. All these tribal people have different dialects and distinct identities. They are very hard-working people, and possess a deep sense of beauty which can be manifested in their dances, songs, arts and crafts. The Wanchos, for instance, are very good wood carvers. The Monpa tribes are also very famous for weaving. They weave beautiful carpets which are widely known throughout the entire region.

The tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh are mostly cultivable workers. They practise their traditional method of agriculture, i.e. jhuming or shifting cultivation. In this a lot of land is cleared and seeds sown. This is continuously carried out for a period of two-three (2-3) years after which that land is abandoned and a new fertile plot of land is selected and cultivation works are carried there. Besides this, permanent or settled cultivation alongwith modern methods and implements have also been introduced in some parts of the state.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh are also endogamous. Clan exogamy is the basic rule of marriage which is in practise. Marriages are mainly of monogamous type but polygamy also prevails in some regions of Arunachal Pradesh. Polyandry is never practised at all. Payment of bride-price is an important feature among the tribes.

CHAPTER - II

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Religion is an all-pervading universal phenomenon, which forms an essential part of human life. It can be considered as a cultural system in which all the elements of life are closely linked with one another and as such, it must be understood in the cultural context. As beliefs have a positive value for the believers and guide their life, the function of religion is the same. Whether it is Hinduism, Christianity, tribal religion, etc. it does not matter, it pervades the entire life of the believer. It has a binding capability and identifies a group.

Religion is also considered as a set of sacred symbols which synthesize people's ideas, ethos and world view. Symbols provide moral and aesthetic values.

Religion can be classified into three categories based on the transmission of knowledge -

- (a) Oral - This form of religion is a-historical and has no explanation or philosophical interpretation. In

this case, the knowledge of belief and ritual is transmitted orally by word of mouth, from one generation to the next. The foundation of this type of religion lies in the human memory. Example of this form of religion can be observed among the various tribal groups.

- (b) Textual - This form of religion is historical and the knowledge of belief and ritual is textualised and codified. It possesses a body of doctrine and is sectarian. Example - Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.
- (c) Transcendental - This is neither oral nor textual. In this form, the knowledge is beyond the human spoken language. It is a mystic. In this, knowledge is acquired transcendently, through experience.

Based on the above classification, all cultures can be grouped into three types, which B.N. Saraswati has rightly termed as Laukik (oral), Sastriya (textual) and Naivritik (transcendental) using Sanskrit terminology (1970; 46). He has further made some basic distinctions between the oral and textual modes of transmission which are quoted below:

<u>Oral</u>	<u>Textual</u>
1) Construction of sound(time).	1) Construction of sign/code (space).
2) Direct, personal (The producer and the receiver are face to face).	2) Indirect, impersonal (The producer is absent or distant).
3) Creative.	3) Repetitive.
4) Effective in realizing power (Power of mantra lies in its recitation).	4) Text (of the mantra) in itself important (without gurumukh no knowledge).
5) Mother of paravidya.	5) Custodian of aparavidya).
6) Knowledge complete and authentic.	6) Book-knowledge incomplete.
7) Unbounded, immeasurable (The flow of thought maintained uninterruptedly).	7) Bounded, measurable. (Thoughts once codified, or put to writing become structurally fixed).

- | | |
|--|---|
| 8) Collective reliance
(Collective memory, anonymous authors, unity of expression). | 8) Ultimate reliance on the other (Individual memory, named authors, uniqueness of expression). (ibid;) |
|--|---|

The traditional religion of the tribal populations of Arunachal Pradesh is characterised as oral religious tradition which lack explanation or philosophical interpretation, and the knowledge of belief is transmitted orally from one generation to the next mainly through myths and in the process of growing up in the society.

The religion of the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh consists of belief in a high-god, supernatural being and also a number of benevolent and malevolent spirits and deities. It is believed by the people that the benevolent spirits do not cause any harm to living beings. It is either the malevolent spirits who cause harm or the Supreme Deity, who inflicts punishment on the people and in order to appease these spirits and deities the people adopt various means and ways at the time of crises and sufferings.

Again, on the basis of socio-religious affinities,

the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh can be broadly divided into three cultural groups. The first group comprises of the tribes who have taken up Buddhism. The Monpas and Sherdukpens of Tawang and West Kameng districts and the Membas and Khambas of West Siang districts are Buddhists of Mahayana sect and these communities have their Buddhist temples called 'Gompa' situated in the village itself. While the Khamtis and Singphos of Lohit are Buddhists of Hinayana Sect and they use ancient scripts which were derived from their original homeland, Thailand and Burma. These Buddhist tribes have definite places of worship. For example - the main centre of the Mahayana Sect of Buddhism is the oldest monastery which is at Tawang and is said to be some 370 years old, while the main centre of the Hinayana Sect of Buddhism lies at Chowkham.

The second group comprises of the Adis, Apatanis, Nishis, Mishmis, etc. Most of these tribes are the worshippers of Donyi-Polo or the Sun and the Moon and Abotani, who is believed to be the original ancestor or father of mankind. They do not have any fixed place of worship, and they do not have any written text. Their religious thought and practices are transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation. Recently a Donyi-Polo Mission is established at Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. These people also worship numerous deities related to their agricultural

activities and perform animal sacrifices, unlike the other two groups.

The third group of people are the Noctes and the Wanchos, Vaishnavism is practised by the Noctes of Tirap and some other tribes of East Kameng and Subansiri districts.

Besides the above, Christianity has also been accepted by some of the tribes of Subansiri, Siang, Dibang Valley and Tirap districts.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh celebrate various festivals in order to propitiate the spirits and deities and also to keep up the traditional beliefs and customs of the society. A calendar of the important festivals celebrated by the people of Arunachal Pradesh throughout the year is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Sacred Calendar of the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh

Sl No	Tribes	Names of festival	Month	Duration
1.	Adi (Gallong)	Mopin	April	4-6 days
2.	Adi (Padam-Minyong)	Aran	March-April	
3.	Adi (Padam-Minyong)	Solung	August-September	5-7days
4.	Khamba & Memba	i) Losar (UBI)	Jan-Feb	7 days
		ii) Losar (Sonam)	Dec.-Jan	3 days

5.	Apatani	Dree	July	3 days
6.	Aka	Sarak	Feb	4 days
7.	Digaru and Miju Mishmis	Tamladu	Feb	1 day
8.	Hill Miri	Bori Boot	Feb	4 days
9.	Idu Mishmi	Reh	Feb	
10.	Khawa	Kshyat Sowai	Jan	4 days
11.	Khamti & Singpho	Sangken	April	1 day
12.	Miji	Khan	March	5-10 days
13.	Monpa	Losar	Feb	7 days
14.	Mishing	Ali-Aa Ligang	Feb	3-5 days
15.	Nishing	Nyokum Yalo	Feb	5 days
16.	Nishing Bangni	Myokum Yalo	Feb	12 days
17.	Nocte	Loku	Nov	3-4 days
18.	Sherdukpen	Losar	Feb	7 days
19.	Tagin	Si. Donyi	Jan	3 days
20.	Tangsa	Moh	May	3-6 days
21.	Wancho	Ojiyele	Feb	5-6 days

The present religious intellectuals or elites are trying to textualise their oral religious tradition. This is being done mainly for two reasons -

- (1) For establishing a political solidarity.

This can be achieved through the consolidation of the diverse groups. The elites are trying to unite the

different groups in the midst of diversities, thus bringing them together, and establishing a standardized form. This is being done by the religious intellectuals for creating awareness among the group.

By textualisation, the religious intellectuals are making attempts to revitalise their beliefs and customs. The covert philosophy of the belief and customs are highlighted and put in a textual form. Religion, on one side is intricately woven into the structure of the society, but is not delineated into a distinct organized form. On the other hand, there is a number of organized religions which have permeated into their society and which have been viewed by them as a threat. These reasons have instigated the elites to organize their beliefs and customs in a text form. On textua- lizing, there arises a world of meanings which brings about concrete conceptualization of the symbolic forms and existence of supernatural powers.

(2) Self-conscious dignity.

The moral ethics and philosophies are within the tribesmen, and are intricately woven with their religious and social structure of the society. The religious intellectuals are trying to textualise their moral ethics and philosophies

to provide themselves with a concrete religious identity which will become the referring point for other people when talking about the ethnic group.

Objectives and Scope

In this study, an attempt has been made to discuss the emerging trends in the organisation of the Donyi-Polo faith. The study is of special interest because only a few tribes or the Tani group of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh follow the indigenous Donyi-Polo belief or faith. The Tani group comprises of Adis, Apatanis, Nishis, Tagins and Mishings (Miris) and these tribes are now trying to re-affirm the indigenous tribal faith to form a distinct identity of their own and to provide respectability to their cultural tradition. In particular, the researcher has tried to find out: (a) the strategies adopted for organisation of the tribal oral religion, and (b) the extent to which the new venture in writing tribal theology follows the indigenous tribal faith.

Though such an examination is not an easy task at all, as people are in the process of systematising their thought and giving shape to something which was mainly in the realm of experience and living through that experience. Now

they are constructing a textual form out of that experience. As can be expected there are differences of opinion and differences in emphasis.

The theoretical orientation that guided the study was as expounded by Clifford Geertz. For him, religion is a cultural system. It is a system of meaning embodied in the symbols which make up the religion, oral and textual, and their relations with society and culture-analysis and interpretation.

According to Geertz, culture concept denotes an historical transmitted pattern of meanings incorporated in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life. Symbols are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgements, longings or beliefs.

Religion, on one side, anchors the power of expressing symbolic resources for formulating analytic ideas in an authoritative conception of the overall shape of

reality, and on the other side, it anchors the power of symbolic resources for expressing emotions - moods, sentiments, passions, affections, feelings, - in a similar conception of its pervasive tenor, its inherent tone and temper.

Key-Questions

The key-questions for the present study are as follows:

- i) How and why are the tribesmen of Donyi-Polo faith eager to textualise their oral indigenous religion?
and
- ii) How does the concept of Donyi-Polo faith get reflected and integrated in the behaviour and social relations of the tribal people?

Research Technique

Since long, the researcher was very much keen to know about the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and whenever she had an opportunity or came across any book on Arunachal Pradesh, she would try not to miss the same. As such, she was slightly aware of the Donyi Polo faith.

In the year 1988, the researcher had gone on a

short trip to Itanagar. At that time she heard about the belief of the tribal people on "Donyi Polo" and became interested to know all about it. With this aim in mind, she enquired about it from a number of people and learnt that "Donyi" means "sun" and "Polo" means "moon", and only a few tribes of Arunachal Pradesh like the Adis, Apatanis, Nishis, etc., were the worshippers of Donyi Polo. The believers of Donyi Polo had no written text about it and only very recently some leaders of Donyi Polo are trying to textualise their belief about the Donyi Polo. She realised that there was a lot to know about it. Her understanding was if she pursues a study on the Donyi Polo she would also know more about the people who practice the belief.

As such, secondary data through pamphlets, journals, newspaper reports and books were collected. At times she felt frustrated because not much information regarding Donyi Polo were available in these sources. But on the otherhand, her interest and admiration for the tribal people continuously provided a source of inspiration to carry on with the work. After reading a number of books on Arunachal Pradesh and religion as well, decision was taken to collect first hand data from the people. The researcher worked out a plan for collecting data and decided that she should collect myths

about Donyi Polo, observe the various rituals associated with it and interview the people as well as the specialists who believe in it.

The researcher carried out the field work in two phases. She went to Itanagar in 1987 and stayed there till 1990. During her stay there, she made friends with a number of people who later helped her to collect information from various sources, both primary and secondary. One of the best informant was Shri Oshong Ering from whom she collected a lot of information. He is a very interesting person and knows a lot of information. Another person who helped a lot was Shri T. Rukbo.

In the second phase, from Itanagar she went to Pasighat which is the headquarter of East Siang district. Her field-work was confined to the Adi villages in and around Pasighat where she stayed from Feb-Apr'89 and again from Dec-Feb'92.

In all these villages she tried to meet the village elder or Gaon Burah or village headman. Besides the above, she made contacts with several old people of the village. She also talked to a number of present day youths, but most of them could hardly say anything about Donyi Polo. Instead their answer was that since time immemorial, their ancestors have been believing in Donyi-Polo. So they also do so.

Table 2: List of Villages.

Name of village	No. of Houses	Population (approx)	Tribe inhabited	Distance from Pasihat (approx)
1. Boying	15	75	Miniong	4 Km.
2. Balek	210	695	Passi	5 Km.
3. Mirbuk	-	-	Miniong	
4. Runne	38	108	Miniong	7 Km.
5. Tekang	85	400	Miniong	9 Km.
6. Taki Lalung	110	460	Miniong	9 Km.
7. Sibut	60	190	Miniong	5 1/2Km.
8. Monqku	-	-	Miniong	
9. Mirbu	-	-		
10. Bamin Bilat				

During the field-work, the researcher was all the time looking for those people who appeared to be knowledgeable and articulate about their community, specially those who could give some ideas about their beliefs and interpretations. Quite often, she was amazed at the depth of their knowledge and also detached thinking about how the life came into existence, how it is maintained and so on. Milton Singer has called such people as cultural specialists. With such people, she tried to have as much discussions as possible. Each time

she had some discussions with them, she felt there were more questions and which needed clarifications. Such repeated discussions and their interpretations allowed her to get some understanding of the complex concept of Donyi-Polo.

The tools that have been utilised in collecting data for the above study are:

1. Collection of myths:

Myths form the base of most religious institutions. Myths relate how one state of affairs became another; how an unpeopled world became populated; how the unity of mankind became a plurality of tribes. It is an instrument of knowing fundamental reality through transcendental method. For example, Malinowski (1925) described how myth "as it exists in a savage community" is "not merely a story told but a reality lived". It is a hard-worked active force and not just an idle tale. Though it relates to events of primordial time or no-time, it has a purpose, a deep message. It has a special significance because it conveys message indirectly or symbolically, ideas which is transmitted from generation to generation and also from one group to another. Thus we can say that myths play an important role in the cultural system of the people, on the basis of which ideas can be constructed,

and social relations between different groups of people can be reconstructed.

Myths form an indispensable ingredient of all cultures. It is therefore neither a mere narration. It is also not a form of science nor a branch of art or history, but it has the ability or function of strengthening traditions which it endows with a greater value by tracing it back to a better, higher, and more supernatural reality of initial events.

Verrier Elwin (1960; 212) had worked for most part of his later life on the areas of myth and religion among the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. According to him, tribal religion is built up from mythology, which generally represents a world picture and insight into life. He had collected a wide varieties of myths from the tribes selected for the present study. Some myths of the tribes under study have been collected by the researcher which are currently used by the leaders of the Donyi-Polo faith as text for new interpretation of the indigenous belief.

2) Interview:

Interview is an important research tool for collecting data in a fieldwork. It is a process of interaction between the interviewer and the respondent where the

interviewer meets and asks questions to the latter. In other words, this a direct method, in which the respondent is very much 'aware' of the presence of the interviewer.

This method has certain advantages -

- i) The purpose of the questions can be better explained and clarifications can be sought;
- ii) the insight of the respondents can be judged through cross-questioning;
- iii) Myths can be collected by means of this method because in case of oral religions, there are no other source. The foundation of oral religion lies in the human memory - the mind. That has to be explored.
- iv) it helps when dealing with old people and also the illiterate group;
- v) this method provides exchange of ideas and experiences in which the respondent may recollect and rehearse about the past. He may also define the present and wish to express his ideas about the future.

There are certain limitations of interview method as well:-

1. One of the major weakness of the interview is the

involvement of the individual in the data he is reporting and the consequent likelihood of bias. The interviewers tend to obtain data that agree with their own personal convictions. If an individual is assumed to be in possession of certain facts, he may withhold or distort them because to communicate them may be threatening or destructive to his ego.

2. The respondent suffers from certain limitations; i.e.

- a) his experience as an interviewee,
- b) his judgment about himself,
- c) his ability to express himself clearly.

3. A busy person may prefer to fill out a questionnaire at leisure rather than submit to a long interview.

4. Memory bias is another factor which renders the respondent unable to provide accurate informations.

5. Tape-recording of the entire interview is likely to be expensive of time and money. Moreover the use of tape-recorder may make the interviewee cautious and scare him away from divulging any secrets.

The interviews that were conducted were mostly

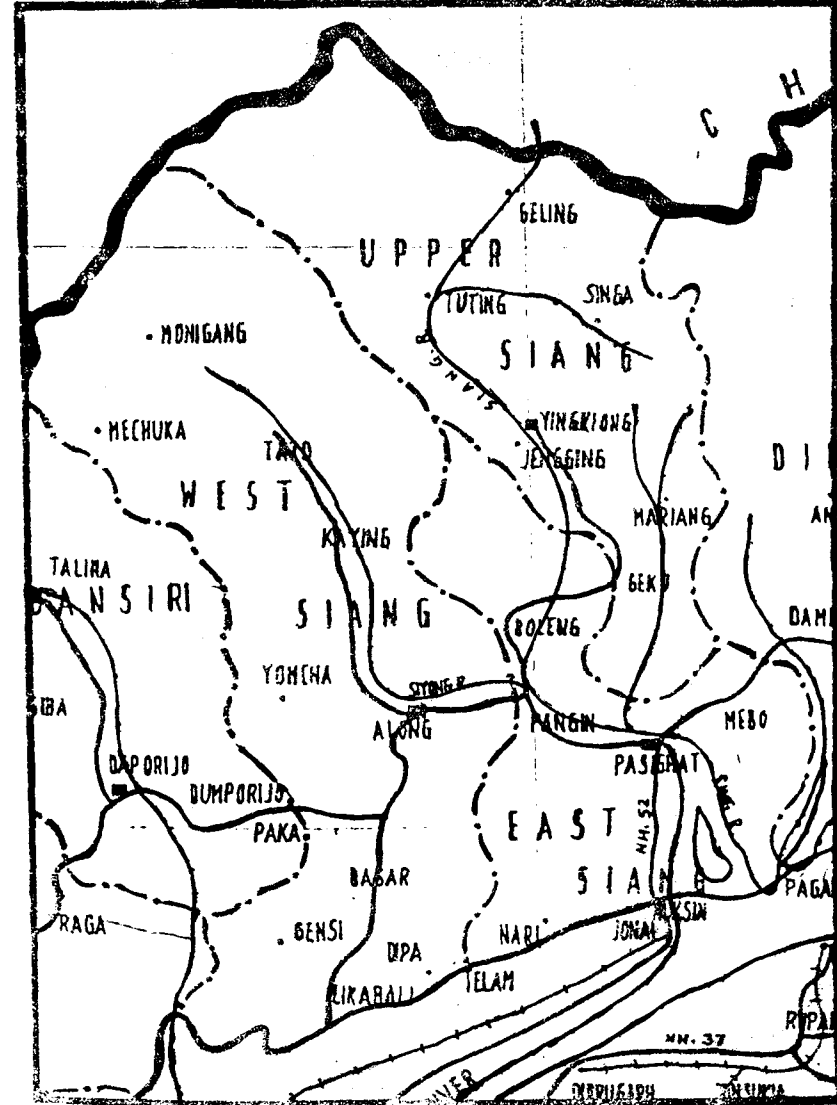
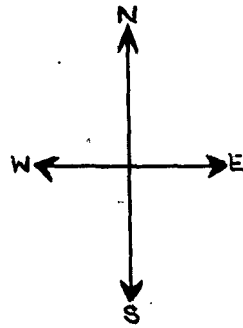
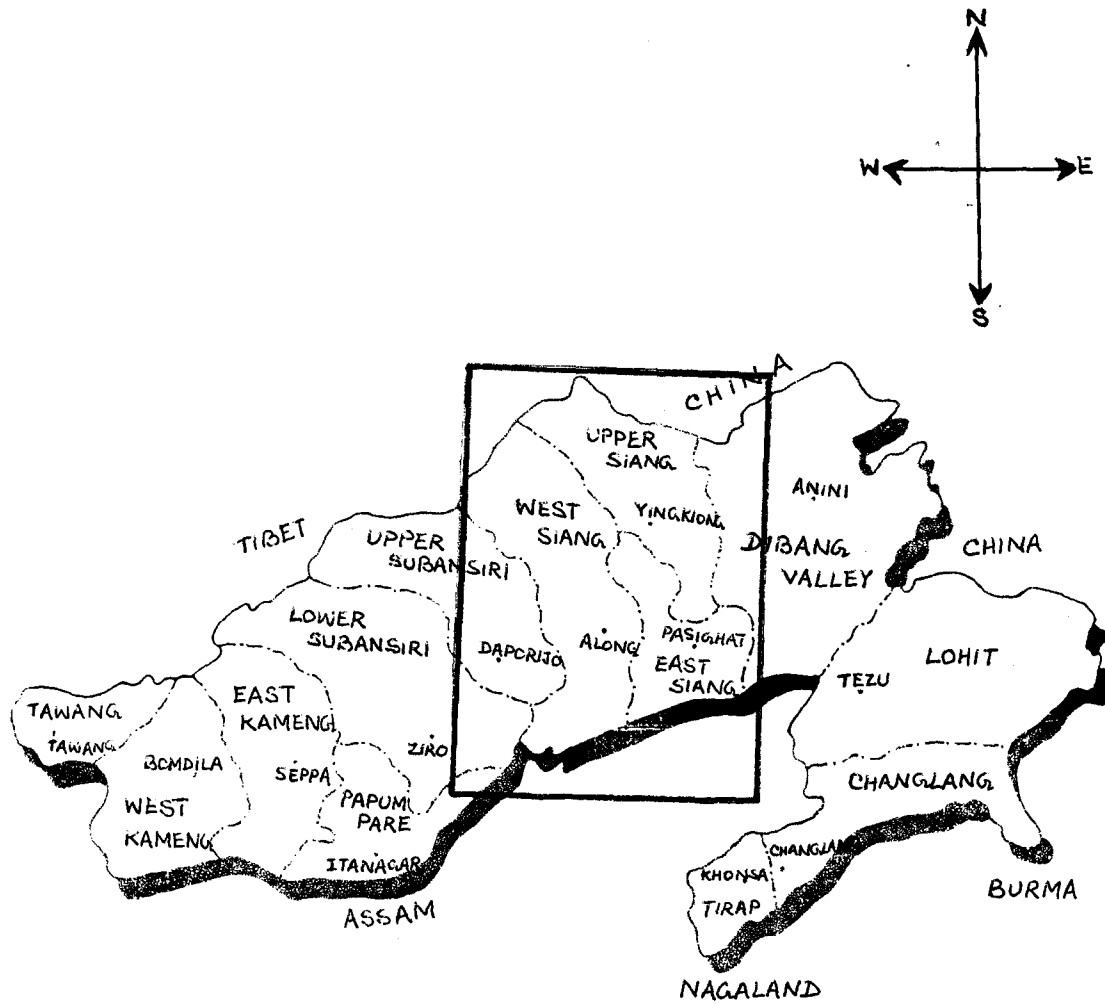
non-directive interview. A non-directive interview or unguided or unstructured interview is an appropriate method for obtaining insights into hidden or underlying motivations; unacknowledged attitudes, personal hopes, fears, conflicts and the dynamic inter-relatedness of responses. In these types of interviews, the interviewers do not follow a system or list of predetermined questions. The interviewer permits the interviewee to talk freely. Interviewees are encouraged to relate their concrete experiences with no or little direction, to dwell on whatever events seem significant to them, to provide their own definitions of their social situations, report their own foci of attention, reveal their attitudes and opinions. The investigator, therefore, gets a natural and representative picture of the subject's behavior and gains an insight into the nature and intensity of his attitudes, motives, feelings and beliefs.

3) Observations

Observation is another important tool of research. It deals with the external behaviour of persons in appropriate situations. The data is collected on the basis of observing the respondent in situ.

Observation may be defined as systematic viewing,

MAP OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH — SIANG DISTRICT



coupled with consideration of the seen phenomena.

The researcher interviewed the important personalities who are involved in textualising the oral religious tradition of Donyi-Polo faith, and this included mostly the religious intellectuals belonging to the Adi tribe.

The Adis are the major tribes occupying the Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Siang is located roughly between 93° 11' to 95° 35'E longitudes and 27° 22' to 29° 20'N latitudes. It is bounded by Subansiri in the west and Lohit in the east. The boundary of the district touches Tibet in the north and the Assam plains in the south. Siang district occupies an area of 23,723 Sq.km. (District Census Handbook, Siang district, 1971). Previously they were known as Abors, but now they call themselves Adi meaning 'hillman', and of all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, they are the most advanced tribe. They are divided into two broad categories - one comprising of Padams, Minyongs, Pasis, Panggis, Shimongs, Boris, Ashings and Tangams, and the other comprising of the Gallongs, Ramos, Bokars and Pailibos. Of all these tribes, the Padams, Minyongs and Shimongs are more in number.

Generally, the Adis are short statured with traces of Mongoloid fold in both men and women. They have dark brown

eyes, and the nose is neither too short nor flat and majority of them possess dark brown coloured skin, and clear black hair. But the hair style may vary from tribe to time, for example the Padams, Minyongs and Shimongs have their hair cropped while the Ashings, Tangams, and Boris prefer to keep it long.

The Adi society have a highly organised political institution or village council called Kebang. The functions of the Kebang as summed up by Dr. Elwin are as under: The Kebang still settles administrative matters, such as when and where to clear the forests and sow the seed, when to go on hunting or fishing expeditions, when and in what manner a festival will be performed and sacrifices offered. They have judicial powers and offenders of all kinds are brought before them and sentenced to various types of punishment.

Besides this, the Adis have a dormitory club called Moshup for boys and men, which plays an important role in the social organisation of the Adis. In the dormitory, boys of the village from the age of ten until they get married are allowed to sleep and this forms a very important place in moulding their personality and character. Here they are given lessons in concerted action for the good of the entire community and

they develop a sense of cooperation. The Moshup is also used as a meeting place for Kebang, specially in making decisions with regard to war and communal hunting. In some villages there are separate clubs for young, unmarried girls of the village, called Rasheng, the functions of which are more or less similar to the Moshup.

The Adis are a patrilineal society, and descent and inheritance of property are traced through the father. The older sons usually set up separate households but they have equal shares of the parental house, and it is the youngest son who takes responsibility of his parents. The widowed mother is considered a responsibility of the eldest son but in reality, she prefers to stay with the youngest son.

Besides the Adis, I made attempts to carry out my studies among the Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, but in this case my study has been very much limited. This is because the common people of the different villages were not of very much help. It is the Adis who came forward to textualise the oral religious tradition. Anyway, it is better to give a short description of the Apatanis too. The Apatanis occupy the central region of Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh and their villages are congested and closely knit. The houses are

raised on high wooden piles and are not very long.

The Apatanis are marked by regular features. They are tall and slender having large and deepset eyes. They possess brown coloured skin, long delicate hands, a narrow nose, and their face is long. There are certain distinctive features of the Apa Tanis. For instance, previously, the tail formed an important part of the male dress of the Apa Tanis and this has been described by E.T. Dalton (1845) as follows. "The men do not rejoice in much drapery; they wear a girdle of cane-work painted red, which hangs down behind in a long, bushy tail". On the otherhand, the women wear black wooden round nose-plugs on each side of the nose.

Both Apa Tani men and women used to tattoo their face, and this provided a distinguishing mark. The men tattooed their face below the mouth; a line was drawn from below the lower lip upto the chin, while the women were tattooed with broad blue lines from the top of the forehead to the tip of the nose and from the lower lip to the chin. But now-a-days, tattooing has been given up by the Apa Tanis.

The Apa Tanis do not have, any formal village council, but still their society is highly stable. However, they have an informal village council consisting of clan

representatives called Bulianq which guides village affairs. The society is divided into two broad endogamous classes, namely, the higher class Mite and the lower class Mura, and social relations are regulated by usage and tradition.

In an Apa Tani village, the social life moves round two focal points - Nago and Lapang. The Nago serves as a shrine where ritual meetings of the class of the village are held. The Lapangs are open platforms where clan members meet on social and ritual occasions.

Clan-exogamy or class-endogamy is the usual form of marriage, and in very rare cases polygamy is permissible, for example, in cases of marriage where the couple are childless, a man can marry a second time. Nuclear family, consisting of parents and unmarried sons and daughters, form the basic social unit of the Apa Tani society, and the father is the head of the family. Descent and inheritance is also traced through the male line.

Though the researcher can speak in broken Assamese language which she used mostly because the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh speak in the same, she faced language problem. In some cases, language caused a barrier because though interpreters

were availed, no tradition can be interpreted fully, and no member of the society can *ipso facto* present the insider's view of their tradition.

But the fieldwork was not an easy task. This is because the researcher really had to face certain unpleasant situations at times. First of all, it was difficult to make some of the people understand why she, being an outsider was interested to know about their religion. In a few cases, some people were also very suspicious and felt that she would use the information conveyed by them to do some harm to them. In these cases, she had to convince them that it was only a study and that no harm would come to them. In this regard, an incident occurred while she was in the field, work of which gives some idea as to the kind of fear, they perceive and this is worth recalling. For data collection, she went to see an old man of Mirbuk village (of Siang district) along with a friend who knew him very well. After her friend introduced her and talked to him about their purpose of visiting him, the first thing that he asked the researcher was if she had any connection with the Christian missionaries. Not only she, but her friend also tried to make him understand that she was a Hindu and was in no way connected with Christians. Hearing this, he seemed to be very much relieved and revealed to the the secret of his fear. He said that many of the present-day

youths were taking up Christianity, in the name of modernisation, forgetting their age-old traditions.

In the course of fieldwork, the researcher had to spend several hours with a respondent listening to what he was interested to tell her which often were not related to what she was interested in. In the beginning she felt, that may be she has not been able to convey to him what she actually wanted from him. For instance - sometimes when he was not in a good mood, he would tell her about his various problems, or at other times when he was in a joyous mood he would sing songs related to the creation of this world, agriculture, etc. in his own language irrespective of whether she was understanding the same or not. Later it was found out that he did this because he had confidence in her. It also helped her though not always, unknowingly when he would relate a myth or a story which he heard may be from his grandmother or mother, related to the worship of sun and moon in some way.

Though difficulties were faced, but on the whole, it is the friendly attitude of the people which sustained and encouraged her to go on. They tried to help her in whatever way they could when they learnt about her interest on Donvi-Polo. For times, they were some people who knew the term

Donyi-Polo and on being asked they just replied that since the very beginning their ancestors had been believing in Donyi-Polo and following their footsteps they too do so. But these people tried their best to give the researcher the names of religious leaders and personalities who could provide her information on her study. Some of the tribal elders whom she met were very happy that she was making a study on Donyi-Polo. This is because the youths of the society lack interest to learn about their age-long traditions, beliefs and customs, or may be they are busy with their own professions that they are not able to spend much time with their elders to learn about the same.

Limitations

So far the conscious attempts towards textualization of the 'oral-tradition' have been made by the Adi group in the state. Therefore, attitudes of other groups towards such attempts could not be collected for two reasons - (i) There was a visible lack of awareness among such group, (ii) The relative isolation of other tribes due to geographical orientation.

CHAPTER - III

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

There are several controversies over the nature and origin of religion. Though there's difficulty in defining religion exactly, but several attempts have been made by different scholars. Here the researcher will try to give a brief idea of some of them.

According to G. Watts Cunningham, "Mankind is incurably religious. Wherever on the face of the earth man is found and at whatever level of civilisation he may happen to be, he commonly has his religious beliefs and practices." (1971) In this definition, the indication is that it is in the nature of mankind to be religious. The author reaches to the idea of inevitability of religion by stating that it is found in all human beings. It is obvious that the definition is insufficient, because the author is not frontly confronting as to what is that which is commonly found among all human beings.

Again the minimum definition of religion is 'a belief in spiritual beings', in the words of E.B. Tylor (1913). In this definition too the problem is as to where to

draw a line and say that up to this is spiritual being.

According to Kant, "Religion is (subjectively regarded) the recognition of all duties as divine commands." (1973, 108). Kant's approach to religion appears to be more functional.

In the Golden Bough, Frazer proposes the definition of religion as "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life." He explains further: "Thus defined, religion consists of two elements, a theoretical and a practical, namely, a belief in powers higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them." (1922, 65-66). No doubt Frazer is a little more comprehensive in his approach to define religion but the problem is that he was more concerned to distinguish religion with magic. There are societies where gods are considered to be equal to human beings, they are neither superior or inferior.

Edward Sapir has put it as 'religion is precisely one of those words which belong to the more intuitive portions of our vocabulary.' (1949) This definition has built in problem of defining intuition. Thus we see that definitions of religion are generally ambiguous. While one is saying that

religion is part of human nature, the others are talking about the belief in spiritual being, a superior power and institutive aspect of human beings.

Besides the above definitions, several theories have also been suggested by various scholars to explain religion. For example, according to Kingsley Davis & W.E. Moore (1977) "The reason why religion is necessary is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves its unity primarily through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values and ends in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, they influence behaviour, and their integration enables this society to operate as a system.

In an extremely advanced society built on scientific technology, the priesthood tends to lose status, because sacred tradition and supernaturalism drop into the background.... [but] no society has become so completely secularised as to liquidate entirely the belief in transcendental ends and supernatural entities. Even in a secularised society some system must exist for the integration of ultimate values, for their ritualistic expression, and for the emotional adjustments required by disappointment death and disaster".

Davis and Moore here considered religion as indispensable only in so far as it functions to make the members of a society adopt "certain ultimate values and ends in common." These values and ends, it is said, 'must appear to the members of the society to have some reality, and it is the role of religious belief and ritual to supply and reinforce this appearance of reality. Through ritual and belief the common ends and values are connected with an imaginary world symbolized by concrete sacred objects, which would in turn be related in a meaningful way to the facts and trials of the individual's life. Through the worship of the sacred objects and the beings they symbolize, and the acceptance of the supernatural prescriptions that are at the same time codes of behaviour, a powerful control over human conduct is exercised guiding it along lines sustaining the institutional structure and conforming to the ultimate ends and values'.

The alleged indispensability of religion lies on the assumption of the fact that it is through 'worship' and 'supernatural prescriptions' alone that the minimum of 'control over human conduct' and 'integration in terms of sentiments and beliefs can be achieved.'

The postulate of indispensability contains two related distinguishable assertions. It is assumed first, that there are certain functions which are indispensable and if they are not performed then the society, or group, or individual will not persist. This sets forth a concept of functional prerequisites, or preconditions functionally necessary for a society. Secondly, certain cultural or social forms are indispensable for fulfilling each of these functions. This involves a concept of specialized irreplaceable structures and gives rise to the concept of functional alternatives, equivalents or substitutes. It diverts attention from the fact that alternative social structures (and cultural forms) have served, under conditions, the functions required for the persistence of groups.

The social role of religion has of course been repeatedly observed and interpreted for many centuries, and in this respect the emphasis has been on religion as an institutional means of social control. Regarding the 'functional significance of religion' some basic conclusions have emerged which Parsons has summarized as follows:

'It was Durkheim's view that religious ritual was of primary significance as a mechanism for expressing and

reinforcing the sentiments most essential to the institutional integration of the society. It can readily be seen that this is clearly linked to Malinowski's views of the significance of funeral ceremonies as a mechanism for reasserting the solidarity of the group on the occasion of severe emotional strain. Thus Durkheim worked out certain aspects of the specific relations between religion and social structure more sharply than did Malinowski, and in addition put the problem in a different functional perspective in that he applied to the society as a whole in abstraction from particular situations of tension and strain for the individual.' (Merton, 1949).

According to Evans-Pritchard, there are several theories of primitive religion and these have been divided under two headings - the psychological and sociological.

In the case of psychological theories, till the middle of last century the theory of President de Brosses (a contemporary and correspondent of Voltaire) that religion had its origin in fetishism, i.e. the worship of inanimate objects and animals. Then appeared the thesis of Comte that fetichism developed into polytheism which in turn gave rise to monotheism. The validity of these theories did not last for a long time and were replaced by others. But before their

replacement, there existed a German school or nature-myth school which was mostly concerned with Indo-European religions. The thesis of this school was that the gods of antiquity which implied that the gods anywhere and at all times were personified natural phenomena like the sun, moon, stars, dawn, the spring renewal, mighty rivers, etc. The important representative of this school was Max Muller.

According to Max Muller, men had always an intuition of the divine, the idea of the infinite - his word for God being derived from sensory experiences. All human knowledge comes through the senses, that of touch gives the impression of reality and all reasoning is based on them and this proves true in the case of religion also. The intangible objects like the sun, and the sky gave men the idea of an infinite, furnishing the material for deities and also serving as symbols.

Max Muller was very much interested in the gods of India and of the classical world. His thesis was that the idea of the infinite could only be thought of in metaphor and symbol and this could be taken only from what seemed majestic in the known world, such as the heavenly bodies or their attributes. These attributes then achieved autonomy by

becoming personified as deities in their own right thus losing their original metaphorical sense. The nomina became numina. Muller also felt that the meaning of religion of the early man could be discovered by means of philological and etymological research, which restores the original sense to the names of gods and the stories told about them.

Herbert Spencer and others of enlightenment era assumed that human beings were rational beings. They argued like anybody else that primitive man was rational, but his inferences were weak. Primitive man observed that any phenomena like the sun and moon, cloud and stars, come and go, and this gives him the notion of duality and also that of visible and invisible conditions. This notion was further strengthened by other observations for examples - of fossils, chick and egg, chrysalis and butterfly.

These scholars, however thought that the origin of religion, lay in the belief in ghosts rather than in souls. The appearance of the dead in dreams as long as they were remembered, suggests the temporary after-life of the soul, and the first traceable conception of a supernatural being was that of a ghost. The idea of ghosts was found everywhere and must have been earlier than that of fetish which implied the existence of an indwelling ghost or spirit and this was not

characteristic of very primitive peoples. This conception of ghosts inevitably developed into that of gods, the ghosts of superior persons or remote ancestors becoming divinities (the doctrine of Euhemerism), the food and drink that were placed on their graves become sacrifices to the gods to propitiate them. Thus, 'ancestor-worship was the root of every religion'.

Tylor's theory of animism is somewhat similar to that of Spencer's though he lays stress on the idea of soul rather than that of ghost. In anthropological writings, the term 'animism' is sometimes employed in the sense of the belief, ascribed to primitive peoples, that creatures as well as inanimate objects have life and personality, and sometimes with the further sense that in addition they have souls. The theory of Tylor covered both the sense, but with regard to the latter the theory consists of two main theses, one giving an account for its origin and the other for its development. The reflections of primitive man on experiences like disease, death, trances, visions and dreams led him to the conclusion that they are accounted for by the presence or absence of some immaterial entity the soul. The ghost theory and the soul theory might be regarded as two versions of a dream theory of the origin of religion. The primitive man, then, shifted the idea of soul to other creatures like himself and even to

inanimate objects. The soul could be thought of as independent and detachable and this gave rise to the idea of spiritual beings, whose supposed existence constituted Tylor's definition of religion, which finally developed into gods, beings superior to man and in control of his destiny.

But Tylor's theory faced certain criticisms. There is no evidence that the idea of soul and spirit have arisen in the way Tylor thought. Only it can be shown that dreams are cited by the primitives for the existence of soul and soul for spirits. Tylor wanted to show that primitive religion was rational which rose from observations, however inadequate, they may be and from logical deductions.

Generally sociological theories of religion provide that religion is valuable. It helps social cohesion and continuity. Though primitive beliefs and rites may appear foolish to the rationalist mind, they help rude peoples to cope with their problems and misfortunes eradicating despair, which inhibits action, and make for confidence conducive to the individual's welfare giving him a renewed sense of the value of life and of all the activities which promote it. Pragmatism was very influential at the time and in the pragmatist's sense of truth religion is valuable if it serves the purpose of giving comfort and a feeling of security,

confidence, relief, reassurance, if that is, consequence useful to life flow from it.

According to Montesquieu, though a religion may be false, it can have a most useful social function, and it is found to conform to the type of govt with which it is associated, a people's religion being in general suited to their way of life; which makes it difficult to transport a religion from one country to another.

For Durkheim, religion is a social, that is an objective fact. It is true, of course and Durkheim would certainly not have contested it, that religion is thought, felt and willed by individuals - society hasn't the mind to experience these functions - and as such it is a phenomenon of individual psychology, a subjective phenomenon, and can be studied accordingly. But it is nonetheless a social and objective phenomenon which is independent of individual minds. There are three important characteristics which gives it objectivity. One, it is transmitted from one generation to another, so if in one sense it is in the individual, in another it is outside him, which indicates that it was present before his birth and will be there after his death. He acquires it like he acquires language, by being born in a

particular society. Two, it is at any rate in a closed society general. Everyone has the same kind of religious beliefs and practices, and their generality or collectivity, gives them an objectivity which places them over and above the psychological experience of any individual, or of all individuals. Three, it is obligatory. The mere fact that religion is general means, again in a closed society, that it is obligatory, for even if there is no coercion, a man has no option but to accept what everybody gives assent to, because he hasn't any choice. Even if he were to be sceptic, he could express his doubts only in terms of the beliefs held by all around him. And if he would have been born into a different society he would have different sets of beliefs. It may be noted here that the interest shown by Durkheim and his colleagues in primitive societies may well have derived precisely from the fact that they are, or were, closed communities.

Religion is a social fact which arises out of the nature of social life itself. In the simpler societies, it is bound up with other social facts, law, economics, art, etc. which later separate out from it and lead their own independent existence. Above all, it is the way in which a society sees itself as more than a collection of individuals, and by which it maintains its solidarity and ensures its continuity.

Durkheim thus believed that primitive religion is a clan cult and that totemism is the most elementary form of religion. For him, religion belonged to a broader class, the sacred; everything real and ideal, belonged to one of the two opposed classes, the profane and the sacred (Evans-Pritchard, 1965).

Saraswati is of the opinion (1970, 1972, 1975) that in Indian society the tradition is cultivated, preserved and transmitted in essentially three different ways namely - (1) Oral, (2) Writing or Text, (3) Self-realising esoteric process. He argues that each culture adopts one of these ways as the essential mode of survival and adapts effectively when the mode is changed. He argues that what is most important in a culture is not its external manifestation but the inner mechanisms which operates within the culture.

Considering their essential ways of functioning or the systematization of cultural knowledge, Saraswati says that all the varieties of cultures may be classified into three categories as listed above. According to him when the social and cultural life of a group of people is guided essentially by oral tradition or the collective memory of its members, it may be called oral culture; when it is governed primarily by

recorded tenets or codified interpretative texts it may be called textual culture; and when a culture is involved in the self-realising esoteric processes and dictated by the canons of transcendental knowledge, it may be called a transcendental culture. Again, these three types of culture are distinct so far as the modes of transmission of cultural knowledge is concerned, but at the operational level they are very much inter-communicable and affect one another. Saraswati further points out (1970) that this distinction cannot be marked out hierarchically, as each of them is governed by a self-regulating and self-disciplining value system. (1983, 150).

According to Durkheim (1912), stress must be laid on the importance of studying symbolism as a key to understanding both the genesis of religion and its functional significance. It was important to understand what the intrinsic nature of sacred things symbolized. In his view, religion symbolized society, and society was the "soul of religion". Religious beliefs and sentiments of a society were symbolic representations of the unity of the society, and the unity is upheld by common beliefs and occasional rituals.

Durkheim (1965), also considered religion to be a collective phenomenon arising from social interaction, and the

roots of religious beliefs and practices to be located in social interaction. He derived religion from the very nature of social life, and it is interwoven at its very source with other aspects of the social life. Such inter-weaving is more comprehensive in simpler than in complex societies.

Levi-Strauss's (1963) concerns have been the study of the 'sacred' under forms of thoughts, mode of classification, mythologies, etc. He has proposed that sacred objects owe their significance to their availability as concrete manifestations or embodiments of abstract ideas. The 'primitives' symbolize differently, though their process of thinking is not different in any way from the 'civilized'. Religious systems, comprising myths and rites, are symbolic systems of signs, of communication, which establish through analogical reasoning continuities between nature and culture and between cosmic order and social life. The societies differ not in terms of fundamental constituent elements but in the way the different elements are interrelated in various patterns.

In accordance with Clifford Geertz's definition of religion, every religion is characterized by a system of symbols. For instance: the symbols serve as a vehicle of

conception, in traditional religion. Through the sun and the moon or Donyi and Polo, the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh conceive the idea of supernatural, the idea of divine and the idea of infinite, and as this religion is transmitted orally, difference lies in the mode of transmission.

Through symbols the people try to establish moods and motivations. Sacred symbols induce moods at different times and also in different places and motivations are liabilities to perform certain acts and to experience particular feelings. Human beings have limits of their power of endurance. When it becomes unbearable, the people try to bring it within their fold of possibilities and this is done in all societies through set of symbols.

There exists some similarities between the nature-myth school (or German School) and the traditional religion of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, i.e., Donyi-Poloism. According to the nature-myth school, the gods everywhere and always were personified natural phenomena like the sun, moon, stars, mighty rivers, etc. The tribal people consider god to be a Supreme power who is personified as the Sun and Moon like Donyi and Polo. It is true in Max-Muller's view that men had an intuition of the divine since time immemorial. Donyi and Polo have been existing since the very

beginning and from these the tribal people developed the idea of the divine, the idea of the infinite. In other words, the idea of the infinite has been expressed in symbolic forms, i.e., the sun and the moon.

Herbert Spencer and other scholars of the enlightenment school consider the tribal people as rational like any other being. Their beliefs and rites may not appear meaningful to the ordinary people, but they help the tribal people to meet their various needs as well as crises in life. The belief and rites help tribal people to deal with the problems and misfortunes of daily life and hope for well being. It also provides comfort, confidence and a sense of security.

The teachings and philosophies of Donyi-Polo faith have been passed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. This in Durkheim's view implies in one sense, that the information that flows is within the individual and in another it is outside him. This also indicates that it was present before his birth and will continue even after his death. But the problem that arises in understanding the process of transmitting spiritual belief from one generation to the next, is whether it is transmitted wholly or in parts.

Obviously, the mode of transmission of spiritual knowledge in oral society is different in kind from the textual. In oral society, transmission is in the process of growing up in the community, like, seeing, hearing, smelling, participating in ritual activities, in reciting the sacred lore and in experiencing the events. That is the transmission is not one time activity, it refers to a process which is spread over one's own life and what happened in the life's of other people. Transmission as well as the spiritual activities are connected with all aspects of life. It is integrated. It is spread out and overflowing and in that sense eternal. Does this mean that no change occurs in the oral society? Assuming that nothing is static, changes in oral society do occur but slowly. While events like, conversion to another religion are too drastic and sudden. How far these make a dent in the belief system is not clear but it certainly changes observance of different sets of rituals. In course of time such changes are bound to make an impact on their belief system.

CHAPTER - IV

DONYI-POLO FAITH

Concept of Donyi-Polo Faith

The tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh like the Adis, Apatanis, Nishis, Tagins and the Mishings (Miris) have a distinct indigenous religious faith called the Donyi-Polo faith or belief and they claim to be the direct descendants of Abo Tani who is considered to be the first human being on this earth. Literally, Donyi means Sun and Polo the Moon, and the conjugation of the two provides a socio-cultural aspiration to the tribal people.

Now the question that arises in one's mind is - what does the tribal people actually mean by Donyi-Polo? Is it just faith? And from anthropological point of view the most important thing to be found out is what actually people do and believe in the name of Donyi-Polo? How does the Donyi-Polo faith affect or guide the people's lives and also how this faith influence the people's social behaviour? To understand all these points, a detailed study of the traditional faith, belief and practices of the tribal people was undertaken.

To begin with, the Donyi-Polo faith of Arunachal

Pradesh has started from time immemorial. Donyi-Polo has 3 meanings - Physical, Spiritual and Ideological.

Physically, Donyi-Polo has been identified with the Sun and the Moon. The appearance of the two provides light, warmth and heat to the living beings of the world. Had there been no Sun and Moon, life would not have existed on this earth. The rays of the Sun Donyi like fingers stretch out and touch the living beings and make them feel the presence of the latter, which activates them. Similarly, Polo or the Moon with its soft nature is considered to influence the romantic nature of beings. Thus, in appreciation looking up into the sky the simple tribal people take the name of Donyi-Polo.

Spiritually, the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh believe that at the very beginning before creation, there was a vacuum or nothingness known as 'Keyum'. In other words, Keyum is something which lies beyond human memory. It is the remote past. As it is said:

Keyum Kenmary Yanqyanq ko Emde Dam,

Kere Kamenq Yenanaq Emde Kem.

This means that the nothingness is unknown of unknown and unseen of unseen. Then from this vacuum or nothingness, an ethereal or divine vibration started which

assumed a final form or image called Sedi or the creator of this universe. This in course of time threw out dirt or kori-koyyang out of which evolved the planets, meteors, earth, sun, moon and all the other objects of nature.

The Adis believe that Donyi and Polo are the two powerful eyes of the creator Sedi, and with these two eyes. He keeps a watch over the people and their doings. No man can hide from His vision, and sinners and criminals can never escape His searching eyes. Immature death, diseases and illness are all His punishments. So the tribal people remain unbiased before His eyes by taking the name of Donyi-Polo. Regarding the sex of Donyi-Polo, people are not sure whether Donyi-Polo is a male or a female deity. Some tell that Donyi-Polo is a single male deity while others contend that Donyi-Polo is virtually two; it is a male with a female counterpart.

The ideology that lies behind Donyi-Polo is that Sedi or the creator of the universe is infinite or unlimited. He is the authority of truth, justice, peace, love, purity etc. and is great and far from the touch of common man. So, in order to establish a link with Sedi the common man discovered the Sun and Moon, Donyi and Polo and through the Sun and Moon

truth, justice, love, peace etc. are focussed. According to the Tanis, thus there exists no gap between man and God, and Donyi-Polo means supreme power or the Supreme Truth to these simple people of the hills.

Mr. Ering has clearly put it:

"By Donyi-Polo they mean the Supreme Power to whom all material beings surrender. In the religio-cultural sense by Donyi-Polo, the Tanis mean the Supreme power or the Supreme Truth which pervades through all things and not necessarily the naked Sun and the Moon."

Sachin Roy writes: "Donyi, the Sun, and Polo, the Moon, are a twin of hers (Pedong-Nane). The luminous eyes of Irmym Miteko, a son of Sedi-Melo, were grafted on them one of each by Irsiye of the same family and so they became the luminaries they are now" (1966, 239). The Sun and the Moon are visible to the people because they appear daily in the sky and directly affect the human beings, plants, animals and everything on this earth. But in the hierarchy of gods, the Donyi and the Polo do not occupy the highest position.

There exists another view that Donyi-Poloism is a scientific religion. There are some elements on this earth which are of great importance to all living beings. These are

- the air that we breathe, the food that we eat, the water that we drink, the earth on which we live, and heat and light. One can imagine how life would have been without these elements. No one would have survived.

The air, food and water are believed to be gifted by nature, and the life that one lives is gifted by God. All the different religious groups believe that life is the creation of God. But it is not known to anyone of us as to how and in what manner God creates life.

Having talked with Mr. Lummer Dai, the following have been revealed:

"... And my God is Donyi-Polo whom you call Sun and Moon or Surya and Chandra I have said that we all, irrespective of different religious groups, believe that life is the creation of God. But as to how? Donyi-Poloism answers to this question. No one can think of life without air, earth, heat, light and water. These are gifts of Donyi. Air, for that matter oxygen and carbondioxide, earth and water are the indirect creation of Donyi, while heat and light are the direct gifts of Donyi".

So Donyi is the giver of life, and He is also the creator of the earth, air, water, heat and light. In this way, Donyi-Poloism is considered as a Scientific religion. Lummer Dai further says, "It is not the physical Donyi-Polo that we regard as our God. The physical Donyi-Polo is only a symbolic power there is a power, a creative power similar to that of Donyi-Polo which we human beings, do not see but feel deep in the heart its presence."

Origin of Donyi-Polo Faith

The origin of the Donyi-Polo faith is unknown. There is no written text or scripture of this faith. Whatever is known about the same is only from the human memory.

The Holy Scripture and the sacred unwritten words given in Holy 'Abang', 'Bari', 'Penge', etc., are the Holy Scripture of the Donyi-Polo faith. Though the Abang, Bari, Penge, etc. are in their traditional form these are the sources of light, wisdom and knowledge of the tribes. For example, the Adis have derived their concept, philosophies, moral teachings, prayers, worships and rituals from the Abangs. The same is the case with the other tribes also who follow this faith. It is in this way that the moral teachings and philosophies of Donyi-Polo faith have been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. The sacred

myths relating to the creation of this universe, plants and animals, teachings on moral conduct are all parts of the sacred unwritten book which serve the followers of the Donyi-Polo faith guiding their lives. Thus the unwritten sacred book of knowledge containing the sacred hymns, prayers and legends are believed to be the Holy Scripture of Donyi-Poloism, which must have been given to the first human being. Since then it has been embedded in the hearts of men from generation to generation.

The claim for the truth of these unwritten sacred statements and records cannot be made because these are experiences which must be known from within and by faith also, and has no explanation. For a believer, faith makes the unseen real, and the tribes too respond to Donyi-Polo by means of faith. It is faith which provides the tribes about the existence and principles of Donyi-Polo.

There are numerous myths which are narrated in the Holy Scriptures (unwritten) and some of them are described as below. These unwritten sacred words, myths, prayers, statements, etc. are usually narrated by the priests. Most of these myths provide the origin of Donyi-Polo faith.

According to Adi myth, Dadi Bote a benevolent god of domestic animals looked after and took care of the mithun or eso right from its birth. But when the mithun started moving about freely a malevolent or evil spirit, MEDENG SENE claimed ownership of the animal. In order to obtain a fair judgement, as to who is the rightful owner, both DADI BOTE and MEDENG SENE went to the land of Donyi-Polo. There in the court of the latter, they met the representative of Donyi-Polo, Donyi-Ropung Mone (a lady) who after hearing DADI BOTE and MEDENG SENE decided that both of them should perform a trial in her presence, for fair judgement. It was decided that individual bridges of Tuduk Rakasak (an easily breakable wood), should be erected and the mithun taken over it and whosoever's bridge breaks down it would signify false ownership. Ropung Mone's instructions were carried out and it was found that while the mithun was crossing over MEDENG SENE's bridge, the bridge gave way which proved the latter's false claim of ownership. Thus with the powers of Donyi-Polo it was finalised that DADI BOTE is the rightful owner of the mithun. This implies that Donyi Polo is almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, true, just and pure. The representative of Donyi-Polo also told Dadi Bote that in any difficult dispute the mithun should be considered as a representative of Donyi-Polo and be a witness to prove truth and justice to settle disputes. This was accepted by Dadi Bote and in course

of time He handed over the mithun to Tani (man) with Ropung-Mone's blessings. He also offered the Etor festival as a gift to Tani for the prosperity of the mithun. Thus it can be seen till today that the Adis perform the Etor festival to propitiate Dadi-Bote the owner of the mithun and other domestic animals.

From the above myth one can observe that Dadi Bote symbolises goodness, truth and purity while Medeng-Sene stands for evil. It seems that from the very beginning good triumphs over evil, and the followers of Donyi-Polo should have confidence in getting a fair deal from Him. Since that time the Adis who are the descendants of Tani (man) believed in Donyi-Polo.

According to another myth, there were two suns in the beginning of the world. It so happened that both the Suns rose one after another and there was not any time for the living beings to rest. After some time, they became very much restless and made plans to kill one of the suns but they had a problem as to who would do it. Finally they approached ETUNG TIKLUNG who was a renowned archer at that time among the living beings, He flew up to the sky and when one of the Suns was peeping out he show an arrow hitting it on the eye, making

it unable to rise. So the living beings had a little darkness to enable them to rest and sleep. The other living Sun after sometime got angry and decided not to rise any more, plunging the world in total darkness. This deeply affected the lives of the living beings, and they decided to send a messenger to the living Sun to rise. At first, a crow was sent but it failed. Then a cock was sent to make the living Sun rise, even if it had to be agreed on any kind of condition. The cock flew high up on a hill top and started crowing aloud and requesting the living Sun to rise. At this the Sun came out and agreed to rise only if the living beings were willing to give 500 lives at the time of rising and setting. As instructed by the living beings the cock finalised the deal, conditions were fulfilled. Since then the living beings started getting heat and light. The other Sun also started coming out but with a dim light and this is the Moon. Since then, it is believed by the Adis, that day is the time for work, and night time to rest.

From this myth, the notion of day and night emerged, of light and darkness. There is also the concept of sacrifice and of peace and violence.

It can also be understood from the above myth that the Sun, Donyi and Moon, Polo are the source of light and energy on this earth and that Donyi-Polo have been there since

time immemorial. The Adis also believe from that time onwards till today that the cock crows early in the morning to indicate the rising of the Sun.

According to the Nishis, the Sun was very big and much hotter in the beginning that he burnt up everything. Seeing this, Debo-Kombu shot an arrow damaging an eye of the Sun. This made the Sun furious and so he went and hid himself under the earth.

Apatani myth as recorded by Verrier Elwin goes as follows: In the days of Abotani there lived the Wiyus (which are gods, demons or spirits) - Doini, Polo and Si. Among these three, Si was the strongest. He was also very evil and wicked and often had quarrels with Doini and Polo. One day he asked his bodyguard or assistant, Tamu to go and devour Doini and Polo. Though Tamu went in disguise as a frog, Doini and Polo noticed him and asked him not to eat them instead they would give him fowls, dogs, cats, tai and kra leaves. But Tamu did not agree to this, and so Karcha, a priest of the Wiyus went to Tamu and made him agree to spare Doini and Polo in exchange of which he promised to give the things as was told by Doini and Polo if the latter failed. Hearing this Tamu agreed and

Abotani made offerings to Tamu, karcha and also to Doini and Polo.

In this myth, one can see that the stronger always suppress the weaker, and there was quarrel and jealousies right from the very beginning. There also exists the idea of sacrifice.

It is also believed by the Apatanis that Sun and Moon were sister and brother and as they were playing one day they came across a mithun's carcass which they divided between the two of them. The Sun took her portion home and shared it with her father while the Moon ate up his share on the way home. Hearing this, their father got very angry and hit the Moon with a stick which caught one eye of the Moon which tore out. That is the reason of dimness of the Moon's light provided by one eye unlike the bright Sun's.

In this myth, there exists the concept of relationships like sister, brother and father, and also of male and female. In this myth the Sun is considered to be a female and the Moon a male.

There is also a sense of unity and of sharing.

Another version is that the Apatanis believe right at the beginning that there was kenku, the form of which was unknown. Kenku gave birth to a female Wiyu 'Chantu' which had the appearance of an earthen ball. In course of time, chantu gave birth to Abo Tani, and told him that he is going to die. He entrusted Abo Tani with the responsibility of giving birth to mankind. Hearing this Abo Tani asked him that if he is going to die then where will mankind live and get food, water and light. To this Chantu replied that his thighs would become the earth on which mankind would live and cultivate. His eyes would become the Sun and Moon and his blood water.

This myth gives us an idea about creation, because from Kenku was born Chantu, from Chantu was born Abo Tani who in turn gave birth to mankind. There also appears the notion of sacrifice in this myth - Chantu sacrificed himself for mankind.

Another belief followed by the Apatanis is that - one female God named "Kulyung Pipiri Pinii" existed whose origin is not known except her self existence. She carried with her a very small quantity of soil which she flattened to her palm size. This soil became very soft. In order to make this soil hard and dry she had created Sun (Donyi) by creating

her palm side as sky and other side as earth. Earth is female and Sky is male. As such, Sun is the daughter of Earth and Sky gave birth to Moon (Polo) as son. But Sun was older. Then Abotani was born out of earth by Chantu (Father) and Chan - Chanka (Mother). Then the human beings came to this world as sons and daughters of Abotani. Hence, considering Sun and Moon, daughter of earth and son of the Sky as father and mother (origin of human beings), Donyi and Polo are believed to be the Almighty.

According to the Tagins, the Sun was very hot at the beginning that its heat killed the two children of the Wiyu Tamu. The latter in revenge tried to devour the Sun one day, but by magic the Sun turned into a leaf and escaped, and hid himself in the corner of his house. As such there was darkness everywhere and so the Wiyus, men and animals went to him and pleaded him to come out. To this the Sun replied that he would come out only if he is allowed to eat the son of Abo-Tani. But Abo-Tani at first refused to give his son, and on repeated persuasion he agreed and gave his son. The Sun then devoured the latter and came out from his hiding place to give light to this world. It is believed that before the Sun devoured Abo-Tani's son, men lived forever and there was no death. Only after the death of Abo-Tani's son, man started dying. Since then every morning before Sun rise, the Sun devours a man, and

one can find a man dying somewhere in the world everyday.

The concept of sacrifice is very significant in this myth, and also the concept of death.

Besides the above myths, there is another belief that Donyi-Polo faith may be a reminiscence of Bonpo religion.

Bonpo religion is the primitive religion of Tibet which dominated the Tibetan mind till the seventh century, when Buddhism was made a state religion by King Songtsen Gampo in the middle of the seventh century. Though there was sign of Buddhism earlier, it faced strong opposition from the priests of the primitive religion and the faith that prevailed all over Tibet was Bonpo. It is thought that lamaism which is a Tibetan version of Buddhism is an assimilation of Bonpo and Buddhism.

It is thought that the Tani group of tribes (comprising of the tribes inhabiting the lower eastern part of Kameng, practically the whole of Subansiri, the whole of undivided Siang and part of Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh) lived in Tibet wandering as nomadic tribes or settling here and there temporarily. These tribes might have

refused to embrace Buddhism, and in order to escape the wraths of the king's forces probably they had to leave Tibet. They might have migrated to present Arunachal Pradesh by the beginning of the eighth century, and during the long years from their migration these tribes formed several subtribes and clans within themselves, leaving aside the Tibetan culture. These subtribes also lived without any social inter-course except during intertribal clashes. This is because of the inaccessible nature of their land. Though differences exist between the different sub-tribes, and also between the pre-Buddhist Tibetan faith and the faith of the Tanis there are some points to be noted of Bonpo which is reflected in the Donyi-Polo faith.

At first, Bon means priest and Po means people, priest standing for religion and Bonpo meaning religion of men. In other words, in Bonpo the faith is transmitted from generation to generation through the priest. Similarly, in the Donyi-Polo faith, the Tani group of tribes consider their religion as the religion of men or tanis. The meaning of Tani in the Adi dialect is "man". In this also the priest - Miri plays a very important role. It is through him that one can get the knowledge about the creation of this universe, of mankind, etc. and he performs rituals, divinations, and propitiations just like the Bonpo priest.

The second similarity that lies between Donyi-Poloism and Bonpo is the vague concept of the supreme God. According to the Chinese historians, TsungLien Shen and ShenChi Liu, "Bonpo, one form of Shamanism, is considered by some scholars to be a Tibetan copy of Chinese Taoism. It lacked depth, having in default of a philosophic base, mixture of exorcism and primitive worship." The followers of Donyi-Polo faith, for long, had a problem as to whether the Sun-Moon God is Supreme or Sedi, the creator, though in recent times the Sun-Moon (Donyi-Polo) God is considered as Supreme. In the Donyi-Polo faith, the Sun and Moon are invoked as witness in settling disputes, and oaths are taken in Donyi-Polo's name. The Tibetan Bonpos also invoked Sun, Moon and Stars as witness in taking oaths. The pre-Buddhist Bons practised the same along with sacrifice of animals, which the Tanis are found to be practising till today.

In both Bonpo and Donyi-Poloism, the customs concerned with the cause and cure of disease are more or less similar. In the Bonpo faith, the cause of human misfortunes and ailments are usually discovered by means of astrological calculations or divinations. The causes of trouble are found to be gods, demons or spirits and offerings are made in order to appease them and relieve human beings.

In Donyi-Polo faith, local spirits are the cause of all human sufferings, and this is diagnosed by means of divination. Divination is done by examining egg, or the liver of a sacrificed fowl, by calculating rice or even by examining the patient's face and this is usually done by a priest known as Ayit Miri. He identifies the cause of the ailment and accordingly sacrifice of animals like mithun, pig and fowl are made.

Both the Tibetans and the Tanis do not have any temple for sacrificial purposes.

The customs and rituals connected with death are more or less identical in both the faiths. In Donyi-Poloism, there is no clear concept about the migration of the soul to heaven or hell after the death of a man. They believe that after a man dies, the soul goes to the world of the dead. The Pre-Buddhist Tibetans also did not have any clear idea about the soul going to heaven or hell after death. The Tanis, like the Bonpos, have a deep faith that life after death corresponds to the life on earth. It is believed that a man lives the same kind of life in the other world as he has lived on this earth, that is, if he is rich in this life then he will be rich in the other world, and if he is poor then he will be poor. In both the faiths, there is a custom of putting

one's earthly possessions in one's grave.

Practices on Donyi-Polo Faith

All the tribes who are the believers of Donyi-Polo faith have their own different ways of practice and belief. Some instances of such practices as performed by the Adi tribes are given below:-

According to early practice when a dispute occurred between two or more parties and remain unresolved for want of material proof, etc. the disputing parties invoke Donyi-Polo to witness and maintain justice by means of punishment and reward as the case may be, depending on the offense or crime committed, trials were conducted as follows :-

(a) With Mithun: In order to prove truth and justice mithun is taken as a means of medium or witness, and the invocation is chanted as -

*"Donyi aneke qiite poobe so
Polo abuke yaaro moobang so
Riki Songkidem kitbidak
Rilok sooyegem yekbdiak
Jine kanqinqe sering daklangka
Bomong tadinge sering daklangka
Milo lusi nakepe
Donyi Ropunge puubome
Riki songkit lo taqit molangka;
Nyamne luo nakepe*

*Polo Ropange paabome
Rilok Songgok lo tapet molangka."*

The English version of the above is,

Oh! Donyi-Polo you are omnipresent
You stand here as the sole witness of
this dispute.

We perform this challenging trial and proof with
this mithun as medium to show the results.

By you in course of time
let this mithun die an unnatural death
Against the wrong doer.
But no ominous fate
should occur to the mithun
For the right doer;
We submit this mithun
To your disposal on this day.

In this case, the maternal uncle takes the leading
step in invoking Donyi-Polo, along with the accused persons.
After the invocation is over, a time limit is fixed by both
the parties within which the result or justice done by Donyi-
Polo is obtained. The parties have to cut the ear of their
respective mithuns and release them. It is believed that the
mithun of the guilty person meets with an accident.

(b) With Egg in boiling water: Another means of trial that is
employed is with an egg in boiling water. And in this case
also Donyi-Polo is invoked by the leaders of the two parties
before they put their hands in the pot of boiling water to
take out the egg. It is believed here that the hand of the

quilty person will burn while taking out the egg from the boiling water, but the hand of the innocent person would not be affected at all. Donyi-Polo is invoked here as follows-

*"Donyi duuligem piidakla
Polo mepomem romdakla
Donyi sikire kirbung so
Donyi sikoem yuki sidak sim
Pemi tiisi nakem
Sikil beyode, lakpyo beyode
Osot kaalangka,
Milo gomtenge teenakem
Donyi kaaki no
Polo yaayo no
Lakpyo beliem meepi bilangka".*

The English version of the above is -
Oh Donyi-Polo, the Almighty power
Omnipresent and the saviour,
You stand here as sole witness
We are challenging for right and truth
With this egg in the boiling water
In your Omnipresence
Let the boiling water
Burn the fingers of wrong doer,
We submit to your justice action.

(c) Donyi-Polo is also invoked at the time of sickness. If a child suffers from some shock or physical ailments, or after hospitalisation if mental and physical weakness still persists then the traditional method of worship is performed with the belief that the person would be cured. This method of worship is termed in Adi as Lego Goqnam, and is usually performed by the uncle, parents, grandfather or grandmother.

In this case, alters are erected and the performer chants mantras as follows holding an 'emul' (which is a metal ornament) a bow without string and a chicken or a fowl in the hand.

*Giimang ane aaji no
Aaaji jimange jio duumilo
Pedong Konqkie kine nqo (by uncle)
Giimang konqkie Baabu nqo (by grand father)
Aaji kukue kudakku
Miinur rempinge kooyinq sok
Giiyit tarome tomna dakku.
Aaji jimange jone
Nyorong tatqabe serab lanqka
Siking kiirine rindo king
Aaji erinem pakjin nadakku;
Dooni pirbe pete lanqkuka.
Tabi letaqe Seqar no
Giiyit dobyadem
Byat lenq qebi lanqkuka
Aaji letie siijing yekupe."*

The English version of this is -

Oh dear son/grandson/niece
If you have lost your health
due to your ill luck
I come forward here
To perform this Leyo
With this healing metal (Emul)
For your lost health,
Listen to the sound of this Emul
To redress your health and energy
And follow me to your sweet home,
With this Rindo (creeper)
Your soul and health will be tied
Lest your health may wither again
The chicken or fowl will make your path clean
And follow it and come with us
I wish your early recovery of health.

After the performance of the worship, the Emul and the bow is hung by means of the Rindo creeper towards the position of the head of the patient on the latter's bedroom. An altar is also erected on the premises or beneath the ladder of the patient's house and a few strings of the Rindo creeper are hung on the patient's neck to indicate that the soul is being tied with the decaying health. The Adis believe that by this method the patient gets cured faster.

(d) In times of hardship Donyi-Polo is invoked as -

*"Donyi Polo no ngolum ayane
No aginpe ngolum tolnam ganamen
bilangka
Nok anqun lok ngolu lodipe giminge".*

The means -

Oh gracious Donyi-Polo
The source of life
give us strength and courage
To face any hardship
Give us light
To follow the path of truth and peace.

(e) In the absence of any proof when a particular dispute remains unsolved between two or more parties they invoke Donyi-Polo to witness and do justice by giving reward or inflicting punishment depending on the crime that is committed. The invocation that is chanted is -

*"Donvi mikmie serine
Polo migoe serone
No lusi lunem
Donvi songkit lo
Tagit molangka
No luo lunem
Polo songgok lo
Tapet molangka,"*

The above means -

*Oh Donvi-Polo
Thou art omnipresent and omniscient
To witness this act
Come and stand here
As the sole authority to decide the case
And confer truth and justice to all.*

Besides the above, there are several other prayers which are offered in the name of Donvi-Polo. These have been collected from Shri T. Rukbo and translated as well. Some of these have been collected and given below:

**PRAYERS
(KUMSINAM)**

1. *Seedi mongginge giiling sok ruutume no,
Meelo mongkoe geejonq sok ruutume no;
Nok angun asir layvir kolok
Giite lowne sonsudak aro
Nok amir ayabe leeyab kolok
Kone lolade tiitongdak aro.*

*No Doonyi ane rungko
No poolo abu rungko;
Doonyi ane nok avang kolok
Poolo abu nok aapam kolok
Mi takmine kepinna takamsi
Mimang takse kelopna takamsi
Tiiling asi esarem tiipangdung
Doling eme iigangem dopangdung.*

No doling roorongem arope binone;
 Ane kilungem kibine no
 Abu solongem sobine no
 Ute leringem riilenne no
 Pooro raarungem ruulenne no
 Kooje ruutumen tumlenne no
 Janggo tarongem roolenne no;
 Anpo gasumem sumlenne no
 Anki gayegem yeklenne no;
 Mirem opan takam
 Nokke ayanqlok biname.
 No lusi lunem
 Riki songkitolo taqit mone
 No luo lunem
 Rilok songgoklo tapet mone.
 Tiisi tiinem no
 Doonyi silinglo tinqa mone
 Dosi donem no
 Poolo menyolo duana mone.
 No Doonyi mikmie serine
 No Poolo migoe serone;
 No aapuk donggume kaalune
 No aarang liisame kangorne
 No sine rumggoem kaapatne
 No giite rumingem kangkulne.
 Dooni aaji takam ngolum no
 Tumi asirem layyir dakyika aginpe,
 Doonang olo takam ngolum no
 Lonmo ayabem leeyab dakyika loodipe.
 Dooni miloem siijing molaika
 Doonang nyamne giijing molaika;
 Aapuk miisiem miimo maika
 Aarang mingoem miimo maika.
 Gomung lusiem lumo maika
 Yorona luem lumo maika
 Tanqki pasiem pamo maika
 Taadong apsiem apmo maika.
 Nokke asirlo aginpe qiminpe
 Nokke ayablo loodipe yeminpe.

[Nqana takam turmona.]

DONYI-POLO
(Prayer)

1. (English Version)

- 1) You are, oh Donyi-Polo,

The creator of the fertile plains of Seedi,
The ruler of mountains and ravines of Melo
A flicker from you lightens the earth,
A ray from you brightens the world.

- 2) You are, oh Donyi-Polo,
The mother and father in the truest sense
Of the uncountable mankind on earth
Earning bread and water through your love,
And affection to meet up hunger and thirst.
- 3) You are, oh Donyi-Polo,
The source of fortune that come by men
The root of richness and poverty
Happiness and sorrows are your boons
Rich and poor alike are your gifts.
- 4) You are, oh Donyi-Polo,
The supreme Judge of the highest court,
The Almighty ruler with the laws eternal
Award you as one commits
And punish you as one's guilt
- 5) You are, oh Donyi-Polo,
The ever proving and ever witnessing
The omnipresent and omniscient
The predictor of all thoughts
The decider of all actions
- 6) Bestow the light of knowledge
To us - the decendents of Dooni
Shower the light of wisdom
On us - the children of Doonang.
- 7) Let us lead a life, clean and right
Give us a life true and just
Let our mind be soft and loving
Wondering not with thoughts impure.
- 8) Let us not utter a word omen
Let not our tasks be offending
Let our tongue be sweet
And our tasks helping and soothing
- 9) We vow to your feet to follow
The light of knowledge and wisdom
We pray to you to follow,
The path so true and just.

2.

DOONYI POOLO NOM BOTTEYAANA KAMANG

*Doonyi nom botteyaana kamang
Tani giidang so,
Poolo nom botteyaana kamang
Taleng kitkung so;
Ram, krishna, Budha, Jesus,
Mahammed, Nanak, Mahavir, Jhuda
Takamsi nokking lenne,
Takamsi nokke ooe,
Takamsi nokke dooyingem lubine
Takamsi nokke niitinem kibine
Tani giidangem kenbone bulu aroe,
Seekosin kamang kemoem itumna
Nokke binam aadilo aasuna,
Seekosin kamang pianqem daktumna
Nokke dinam lendilo lensuna,
Doonyi nom botteyaana kamang
Tani giidang so,
Poolo nom botteyaana kamang
Taleng kitkungso.
Seekosin kamang loboem sotumna
Seekosin kamang diqinem rintumna
Nokke binam toodi yaamo lenbona
Nokke binam giidi siipe aabona;
Doonyi nom botteyaana kamang
Tani giidang so,
Poolo nom botteyaana kamang
Taleng kitkung so.
Seekosin kamang siisanqem sotumna
Seekosin kamang sinamen rintumna
Takam sim no petom bidung;
Takam sim no petom kendung,
Takamsi nokke alaklo dung,
Takamsi nokke qooranglo dung.
Doonyi nom botteyaana kamang
Tani giidang so,*

[Poolo nom botteyaana kamang]

NO GREATER THING THAN DONYI POLO

2. (English version)

There is no greater thing than Donyi Polo
There is no mightier thing than Donyi Polo
In this universe, on this earth,

Ram, Krishna, Budha, Jesus
Mahammed, Nanak, Mahavir and others,
Are all messengers to this world from you.
Your creation - the Day and Night,
None can do it.
Your creation - the Winter and Summer,
None can do it.
Your creation - the life and death,
None can do it.
All are your gracious activities
All are your mysterious phenomena.
We submit to you - All mighty Donyi Polo

3.

DOONYI POOLO NOK IRI SINYO

*Doonyi Poolo nok iri sinyo
Yebom dope bitung tani giidangem
Ane kolang Abu ko;
Kemo kolang piang ko,
IIgang kolang ansing ko,
Asi kolang Eme ko,
Esar kolang ayit ko,
Siisang kolang siitok ko,
Aseng kolang anki ko,
Among kolang taleng ko,
Nok iri sinyo ager si
Ngana takam turmona
Nokayangla biname
Nokayanglok paaname.*

*Doonyi Poolo nok iri sinyo
Angun meelam lo kemo ko
Aku meelam lo aniko,
Nok aapi miisang
Iri sinyo imame;
Seeko sin ilamang
No petom ilane,
Ngana takam turnam si
Nokayangla biname
Nokayanglok paaname.*

*Doonyi Poolo nok iri sinyo
Diitem sinepe lekonem
Sinem diitepe lekonem
Lengkupne no petom
Leelatne no petom,
Seeko sin ilamang*

*Seekosin miilamang
No petom ilane.
Doonyi Poolo nok iri sinyo
Moopilo yepenem yedope
Asilo yepenem yedope
Ruulen bine no petom
Pilen bine no petom.
Nok iri sinyo ager sim
Seekosin ilamang
Seekosin miilamang
No petom ilane,
No petom kenne.*

THE MYSTERIOUS PHENOMENA OF DOONYI POOLO

3. (English version)

To live life, you have given - Male and Female.
To govern the world, you have given
Day, Night, Heat, Cool, Air, Sky and Earth, Water
Which forces sustain lives of all living beings.

Your mysterious phenomena,
After light darkness comes and go
After old New comes and go
These are all your wishes
These are all your kindness
But none can do it.

Your mysterious phenomena
High mountains go under sea
So also sea goes above mountains,
It is all your wishes
It is all your kindness
But none can do it.

Your mysterious phenomena
All living being under water or earth
Receiving foods from you
It is all your wishes and kindness
But none can do it.

4. DOONYI POOLO NOM AYANG YAANA KAPAMANG

*Kaada Kaadala kaalangkom
Doonyi Polo nom ayangyaana kapamang*

*Miida miidala miilangkom
Doonyi Poolo nom ayang yaana miipamang.
Tiilingem tiipang dope bidung
Asiem takam lo;
Dolingem dopang dope bidung
Dotkeyem takam lo;
Gunamen reying dope bidung
Esarem takam lo;
Kamoem piang dope bidung
Angunem takam lo;
Dopangla turdope bidung
Tornamen takam lo;
Asengla duudokupe bidung
Sirongem nokke keranglo;*

*Ngo luke yenamsi nokkle alaklo
Ngoluke turnam si nokke ayanglok.
Kaada kaadalakaalangkom
Doonyi Polo nom ayang yaana kapamang
Miida miidala miilangkom
Doonyi Polo nom igul yaana kapamang.*

DOONYI POOLO THE KINDEST SAVIOUR OF ALL

4. (English version)

Oh, the kindest saviour Donyi Polo
You have given: -
Water to drink, food to eat,
Air to breath, Night to sleep
Day to work and Death
To rest in peace in your lap.
Our living as of your kindness
Our life is at your disposal
You are the kindest saviour of all.

ROKOM LO KUMSINA

5.

*Doonyi mikmie serine
Poolo migoe serone
Giite loune sunsu mone
Kone lolade tiitong mone
Mi takmine kepinna takamem
Nok angun, iigang, esar asi*

Tani giidang sim turmona

*Aginpe biyar langka.
Nok angun bedang lok giminpe
Nok asir tornamen bilaika
Aapuk miisiem milmo maika
Gomung luoem lumo maika
Nokking mingkeng sila
Siiloke longe venamen
Ayipe yemo laika.*

MORNING PRAYER

5.

*Almighty Doonyi Poolo,
Omnipresent Doonyi Poolo
Through your kindness
We get the light & the day again today.
Let this bright light
Lead us all the time
Through right and just
Be equally distributed to all.
Your kingly light leadme not
To commit mistake and wrong
On this day in my duty.*

YUMELO KUMSI NAM

6.

*Doonyi mikmie serine
Poolo migoe serone
Nok avang lok siiloke longem yeyin to.
Siyum Doonyi Ane nok
Arbe leeleng lo
Poolo Abu nok
Angking kiibung lo
Immi tayube bunjub aadakku
Immi tapade bunggab aadakku.
Milo maanving mangkolo
Nyamne maanving mangkolo
Nok angun bedangem lengkan laika,
Nok asir agodem toorong bilaika.
Maanving bokdoem dukmem moma peka
Maanving ragolok opok moma peka.*

NIGHT PRAYER

6. (English version)

Almighty Doonyi Poolo
Omnipresent Doonyi Poolo
I accomplished my duty
Work of the day
With your kindly light and energy
Received from you.
To night I should be allowed
To rest on your lap and arm
And sleep in heavenly peace.
Let me see and get your light
In my dream all the time
Be not my dream ominous
And save my fate from odd and danger.

DODO TIIDOEM KUMSINAM

7.

*Doonyi mikmie serine
Poolo migoe serone
Doonyi Ane nok
Poolo Abu nok
Tiiling asie pasun binamen
Tiidak namoko;
Doling Eme parpam binamem
Dodag namoko;
Engo jemina takamem
Takar jemyana takamem
Tiiling rikiem kaadung momapeka
Doling roorongem kaatok moma peka.
No dogo suunem piiram momapeka
No tinggo suunem piiram momapeka.*

PRAYER AT MEAL TIME

7. (English version)

Almighty Doonyi Poolo
Omnipresent Doonyi Poolo,
You are saviour of life
From whom I get this piece of bread
And drop of drink in need of time.

Let all the living beings of this world

Get this food from you.
Be not there famine, save them you saviour
From starvation and hunger.

TAKAMKE LERING

8.

*Nok kaayum sinam ager lok
Ngom aginpe imo langka
Nyotko gamko kakolo ngom
Daapong aapiem kunjeng molangka,
Geemin rapmin kakolo ngom
Ayang aapiem gejeng molangka.
Mingum tadum kakolo ngom
Deena bedangem lengkan molangka,
Mitung miireng kakolo ngom
Mingkeng sikope dagge molangka,
Tumnam monam kakolo ngom
Angun bedangem lengkan molangka,
Anki keno kakolo ngom
Aseng angam bedangem lengkan molangka.*

[Nom mingkeng siyarye.]

SOURCE OF ALL

8. (English version)

Oh, the origin of every being
Let my action deserve
Your appreciation always
Let me sow the seeds of unity and love
Where there are divisions and hatred.
Let me show the path of purity
Where there are doubts.
Let me be the source of hope
Where there are despair,
Let me show the path of light
Where there are darkness;
Where there are sorrows
Let me show the path of peace and happiness
To thee with my faith ever.

MINGKENG SINAM RUUTUM

9.

*Ngok aginpe mingkeng sinam
Kensidung ngo loodipe
Kaasimaanam ruutum ko
Yebodung ngom;
Bi Doonyi mikmie serine
Bi Poolo migoe serone.*

*Bi miisi miinem kanggapne
Bi Mingo miinem ken'gapne
Bi lusi lunem tatgapne
Bi luo lunem gaggapne.*

*Bi pemi tiisinem
Riki songkit lo tagit mone
Bi taso doypnem*

*Rilok songgoklo tapet mone.
Bi tiisi tiinem
Doonyi siling lo tinga mone
Bi dosi donem
Poolo menyolo duang mone.*

*Ngolum turmona
Angun iigang Esar Asi Kedeng
Doonyi Poolo nok binam
Nok ayang lok ngolu
Tani giidangem kaapangdung.
Nok aapam lok ngolu
Tani giidangem yepangdung,
Nok angun lok aginpe giminpe
Nok asir lok loodipe yeminpe*

[Nom mingkeng siyarpe.]

THE OMNIPRESENT MASTER

9.

*I am aware of an unseen Master
That guide me every day
He is the probing Doonyi Poolo
He is the ever witnessing Doonyi Poolo.*

*The evil thinkers are watched
The evil preachers are heard,
And He who tightens them
With the rope of "Riki Rilok".*

The drinkers of forbidden ones.
 Are made to drink from "Doonyi Siling".
 The eaters in the forbidden way
 Are made to eat from "Poolo Menyo".
 He is the Almighty ruler - Doonyi Poolo.
 The light, heat, air and water
 And the soil are all your gifts,
 The sources of our life
 We live the life on this earth.
 You are kind and generous
 Oh, Doonyi Poolo.
 Lead us to follow the path
 Of your light and wisdom;
 Lead us to follow the path
 Of your truth and justice
 With faith for ever to come.

Riki Rilok - A punishing rope (Hand calve)
 Doonyi Siling and Poolo Menyo - Poisonous drink and
 food.

PRAYER SONG

10.

a) Kumdung Doonyi Nom

*Kumdung Doonyi nom
 Kumdung Poolo nom
 Doonyi mikmi seri nom
 Poolo migo sero nom;
 Doonyi Kaki nom
 Poolo yaayo nom
 Kumdung Doonyi nom
 Kumdung Poolo nom.
 Tumi gangging nom
 Lonmo siiring nom
 Ute ruutum nom
 Pooro ruutum nom
 Kumdung*

*Kooje lering nom
 Janggo lering nom
 Togung abu nom
 Yogam ane nom
 Kumdung . . .*

*Angun iigang esar asi
 Ngana takam turmona*

*Doonyi Poolo nok binam
Aginpe padung ngolu
Aginpe biyar langka
Aginpe duuyar langka.
Kumdung*

A PRAYER TO DONYI POLO

10.

- a) We pray thou Doonyi Poolo
The Almighty, the Omnipresent
And the Omniscient,
Our saviour of life;
You are the source of knowledge
You are the source of wisdom
You are the source of happiness and prosperity
- Give us knowledge and wisdom
Give us peace and prosperity
As you give us
Light, heat, air and water
It is all your kindness and gracious act.

TATKI TATKI TOL DOONYI POOLO KUMNAM NGOLUM AGOM

- b) *Tatki tatki tol Doonyi Poolo
Kumnam ngoluk agom
Kumnam ngoluk larik sito
Doonyi Poolo no
Tatki
Ngoluk turnam ngoluk yenam
Nokke ayang petom,
Ngoluk angun ngoluk donam
Nokke binam petom
Doonyi ngolum Poolo ngolum
Angun kaamolai.
Tatki
Gimoi keli keli sibuk raket kenmang
Gimoi keli keli Domuk Dooyi kenmang
Diite moopang kogong korong
Giten sim mai.
Tatki*
- Gimoi keli keli yilungyamsong kenmang
Gimoi keli keli adung apeng kenmang*
- Sinam nyoknam peso kenmang*

*Sinam nyoknam peso kenmang
Ngolum giyar moi.
Tatki*

PLEASE ATTEND TO OUR PRAYER

10. b) Oh, Doonyi Poolo
Be convinced to our prayer
And accept our prayer to you
All our life, light and food
We get from you only.
Let us go free and fearlessly
Of all hurdles that may obstruct us
Like land slide of rock
And high stiff and gorge of river bank.
Let us go free and fearlessly
Of all hurdles that may obstruct us
Like tide of storm and thunder.
Lead us unto our death with
All strength and energy
To face all these trials of life.

ASI AMONG TAKAM SIM PILEN BINE DOONYI POOLO NO

- c) *Asi among takam sime
Pilen bine Doonyi Poolo no
Engo takar rukling meerang
Ruulen bine Doonyi Poolo no.
Ali ango nesi neyang takame nok
Binam tangar lok turgedo,
Belena takamsi, nok binam,
Ngarsi ngarkam lok turge do
Siipir siiye lok singgedo.
Asi among
Doonyi Poolo duuma miio
Dooying Botem kiine Naane*
- Yeko kamaye,
Doonyi Poolo ginyo milo*
- Tani giidang so
Turna ngana duuyi-maaye
Asi among*

YOU ARE CREATOR OF ALL

10. c) Oh Donyipolo, You are creator of all
Living beings of this earth
You are giving all elements of life
To all living beings
Irrespective of small and big.
You are creator of all
Irrespective of man, animal, gods and goddesses
And without you they cannot live or exist
In the earth or heaven.
So, you are all in all.
You are every thing.

(a) An analysis of the above -

According to the Adis, Donyi-Polo is Omnipresent which means He is present everywhere, and as He is present everywhere He is able to see everyone and everything. But there lies a contradiction here because again if He is able to see everyone then He can directly do justice and He need not be invoked which the tribal people usually do, to be present as the sole witness of the dispute. The Adis perform this trial with the mithun as witness, and they believe in course of time by means of Donyi-Polo's justice/judgement the mithun of the guilty person will die an unnatural death. This means that the mithun will not have a natural death, but will meet with an accident. On the other hand, they feel that nothing should happen to the mithun of the person who has not done any wrong. As such the mithun is left in Donyi-Polo's name for His

judgement on that particular day. Here Donyi-Polo symbolises goodness and justice and the mithun serves as a medium of witness.

(b) Donyi-Polo is regarded as the Almighty power, i.e., infinitely powerful or very great. He is Omnipresent who is supposed to be present everywhere and He is also the Saviour, one who will save from ruin. As He is present everywhere, He can see everything and as He is infinitely powerful, He should have been able to act directly. But the contradiction here is that He is invoked as the one and only witness when the tribal people are claiming for right and truth. They place an egg in boiling water and invoke Donyi-Polo that as He is supposed to be present everywhere, He can see who is guilty and who is right. As such the boiling water should burn the fingers of the person who is found to be guilty and if the person is found to be right or not guilty then Donyi-Polo is supposed to save him as He is also regarded as the saviour. So the people believe that through Donyi-Polo they can obtain fair judgement.

(c) The performer here asks his son, grandson, or niece that if they have lost their health, which means that if they are suffering from any illness because of their bad luck, then the performer is going to perform this Leyo or the traditional

method of worship for healing a person. In this case, they believe that a person suffers only when his luck is not favouring him. The performer then takes a healing metal or 'Emul' for the recovery of the lost health and asks the patient to listen to the sound of the Emul. It is believed that if the patient is able to hear the sound of the Emul then his health and energy can be made up or regained. The patient is asked to follow the performer to his sweet home with the creeper, 'Rindo'. This means that the performer thinks of an imaginary home which is sweet because there isn't supposed to be any suffering in that home, and the Rindo creeper is taken to tie the soul and health of the patient for the fear that his health may decline again. The tying of the soul and health is also an imaginary act because soul and health are not visible to any person. A chicken or a fowl is also taken to make the path clean for the patient to follow the performer to his sweet home. In this way, the performer wishes his speedy recovery.

(d) In times of crises or hardships, the people invoke Donyi-Polo. According to the people, Donyi-Polo is believed to be merciful and the source or origin of life and so they invoke Donyi-Polo to provide strength and courage to all living beings to face any kind of hardships that come their

way and to overcome crises. The people further invoke Donyi-Polo to provide light so as to guide them through the correct path. Only with the light of Donyi-Polo one can follow the path of truth and peace.

(e) As Donyi-Polo is Omnipresent and Omniscient, i.e., one who is supposed to be present everywhere and One who knows everything, Donyi-Polo is invoked to witness the act of crime. Though Donyi-Polo is invisible or we are not able to see, Donyi-Polo is invoked to be present at the place where invocation is being carried out and it is imagined that Donyi-Polo is the only authority who can decide the case. As Donyi-Polo symbolises truth and justice, it is believed that Donyi-Polo alone can confer truth and justice to all the people, and this is also because Donyi-Polo knows who is right and who is wrong as He is Omniscient.

1. In this prayer, the tribal people indicate that Donyi-Polo is the creator of the fertile plains of Sedi, and the ruler of mountains and ravines of Melo, and through His light and rays this universe has been lightened. They regard Donyi-Polo as the mother and father of the entire mankind of the earth, and it is only through Donyi-Polo's love and affection that mankind are able to earn bread and water to satisfy their hunger and thirst. Just as parents love their

children, so also Donyi-Polo loves mankind. In other words, He is the provider.

Donyi-Polo is also regarded as the source of fortune, richness and poverty. Happiness and sorrows are His blessings, and rich and poor are His gifts. So it is Donyi-Polo who bestows fortune, richness and poverty to mankind. As such He is the source of good and bad. Both poverty and sorrow are also considered as blessings of Donyi-Polo. Donyi-Polo is also the supreme judge and the Almighty ruler of the highest court. Donyi-Polo inflicts punishment on those who are guilty and the degree of punishment varies in accordance with the crime.

Donyi-Polo is Omnipresent and Omniscient, being present everywhere and witnessing everything. He predicts all thoughts and all actions are decided by Him because though He is invisible, He is supposed to be present everywhere. As such the person invokes Donyi-Polo to bestow the light of knowledge and wisdom on the people who are the descendants of Dooni, and the children of Doonang. Mankind here are considered to be the children of Doonang and the descendants of Dooni. They further invoke Donyi-Polo to guide them and help them to live a true

and clean life and to make their minds quiet and loving and free from evil thoughts. He should also help people to perform good deeds which does not go against anyone, and to make their tongue sweet so that they do not utter anything evil. They should also be able to do good to everyone and help others in times of difficulties. For this, the people pray to Donyi-Polo and vow in His feet to be able to follow the right path. Donyi-Polo is personified as a human being whose feet are touched by people, seeking His kindness and blessings.

2. In this prayer, the tribal people are full of praises of Donyi-Polo. They indicate that Donyi-Polo is very great and powerful and cannot be compared to any thing existing on this earth. They feel that the different incarnations of Ram, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Nanak, Mahavir and others who had come to this world were all messengers of Donyi-Polo. Donyi-Polo had send them to this world, and has created the day and the night, the winter and the summer, the life and the death which no one else can create. As he is very powerful He has created all the above, and these are regarded as His gracious or merciful activities. These are also regarded as mysterious phenomena because these are secret wonders which can only be created by One who is Almighty and All-powerful. As such, the people submit to Him.

In this prayer, there exists the notion of day and night, winter and summer, and life and death. So there is the awareness that if there is day there has to be night, if there is winter there has to be summer, and if there is life there has to be death. Donyi-Polo is considered to be the ultimate.

3. Donyi-Polo have created male and female for the continuity of life. He has created various forces to govern the world like day, night, heat, cool, air, sky, earth and water and these forces are responsible for supporting lives of living beings. It is true that life would never have existed without the above forces. All the forces taken together are responsible for the existence of life. But the most important factor here is that life would have been at a stand-still without male and female. Both sexes are responsible for the continuity of life.

It is Donyi-Polo who is responsible for the miraculous wonders of this universe, like darkness is preceded by light and old is preceded by new. These take place because of His wishes and kindness. It would have been very difficult for the living being if there would have been only light or only darkness. Both are essential. As such, both come and go.

Similar is the case with old and new, if old is not replaced by new, then also there lies a problem because old will ultimately wear out and for the continuity of the old it has to be replaced with new and these kind of phenomena can never be done by anyone excepting Donyi-Polo who is regarded to be Almighty. It is through the power of Donyi-Polo that high mountains go under sea and the sea goes above the mountains. These acts can only be performed by the Donyi-Polo and it also indicates that Donyi-Polo is responsible for making the impossible, possible.

Again, through Donyi and Polo all living beings, living both on this earth and under water acquire food for their survival. As Donyi-Polo is kind, He never makes any distinction but provides food to One and all, and only because of Him living beings are surviving. So all the marvelous acts are attributed to Donyi-Polo.

4. Donyi-Polo is regarded as the kindest saviour of all. This is because He has provided mankind with the following. Water to drink or to quench thirst, food to eat in order to fill one's stomach so that one can keep oneself active, air to breath for survival, night to sleep which means to take rest, day to work or remain active. These are some of the essentials of life. Donyi-Polo has finally also given

death to rest peacefully in His lap. He is very kind and because of His kindness He has provided mankind with the above. As such man's life is governed by Donyi-Polo.

5. This prayer is offered to Donyi-Polo in the morning. In this prayer, Donyi-Polo is invoked as Almighty and Omnipresent, i.e., One who is very powerful and who is present everywhere. He is also very kind, and because of His kindness the people feel that they have got the light and the day again today. This means that they had day the previous day also and if Donyi-Polo wouldn't be kind enough there would have been no light and day, the next day. So as the day begins the tribal people pray to Donyi-Polo to lead them always through right and just with the bright light of the day, which must be distributed equally to all. He further asks Donyi-Polo to guide him with His kind light and to save him from committing any crime in performing his duty on this day.

6. Donyi-Polo is Almighty and Omnipresent who is very powerful and is present everywhere. In this prayer, the person prays to Donyi-Polo that he has performed his duty of the day with the latter's light and energy. It is believed that as Donyi-Polo is very powerful, it is only with Donyi-Polo's help and guidance that a person can successfully carry out his

work. He prays to Donyi-Polo that he should be allowed to rest and sleep peacefully on His lap and arms, at night. This is because he is aware that he'll be safe in the hands of Donyi-Polo and also Donyi-Polo will protect him. He wishes to receive the light of Donyi-Polo in his dream all the time, so that his dream is not dreadful. The light of Donyi-Polo here signifies that he wishes to remain in touch with the Almighty so that his fate is saved from odd and danger. In this prayer, the person is going back to the shelter of the ultimate. Donyi-Polo symbolises the ultimate.

7. Donyi-Polo is regarded as very powerful and great and He is also supposed to be present everywhere. He is also considered to be the saviour of life, and a person invokes Donyi-Polo at meal time. He imagines that in times of need, the piece of bread that he is eating and the drop of drink that he is consuming have been provided by Donyi-Polo. Thus he prays to Donyi-Polo to provide food to all the living beings of this world so that there is no famine and as He is the saviour of life, He can save living beings from starvation and hunger by providing food to all.

8. Donyi-Polo is regarded here as the origin of every being. In this prayer, a person invokes Donyi-Polo to appreciate his actions and to be with him so that he is able



to sow the seeds of unity and love where there are divisions and hatred. Divisions and hatred can be overcome by love and oneness. In cases of doubts, a person invokes Donyi-Polo to guide him so that he is able to show the path of purity, a path free from pollutions, and in times of despair he should be the source of hope. In darkness, he should be able to show the path of light through Donyi-Polo and at times of sorrow he should be able to show the path of peace and happiness. As Donyi-Polo is almighty He is endowed with powers and He is also believed to be the source of all, so He can only help mankind to overcome crisis. Donyi-Polo symbolises love, oneness, purity, light, hope, peace and happiness.

9. In this prayer, a person refers to Donyi-Polo. As Donyi-Polo is Omniscient, He is ever-witnessing and is always exploring the universe and the person is aware of the invisible forces that guide him in his day to day activities. It is also believed that though Donyi-Polo can't be seen, but as He is supposed to be present everywhere He keeps an eye on those who have bad thoughts and also listens to the evil preachers. It is imagined that these evil people are fastened or tied with a punishing rope 'Riki Rilor' by Donyi-Polo and they are made to drink and eat, 'Doonyi Siling' and 'Poolo

Menyo' which are poisonous drink and food. This is a kind of punishment which Donyi-Polo inflicts upon the wrong-doers as He is very powerful and great. Donyi-Polo has also provided the heat, light, air, water and soil as gifts to living beings which are the necessities of life, and it is only because of His kindness that living beings are able to live on this earth. If Donyi-Polo wouldn't have been generous, life would have been very difficult on this earth and would have finally perished. As such, the people invoke Donyi-Polo to guide them through His path of light and Wisdom, and also through the path of truth and justice, Donyi-Polo symbolises light, wisdom, truth and justice and only through Him a person can follow the right path.

10(a) The people offer prayers to Donyi-Polo who is Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Saviour of life, i.e., One who is very powerful and who knows everything. He is also supposed to be present everywhere protecting everyone. He is also believed to be the source of knowledge, wisdom, happiness and prosperity. So the person prays to Donyi-Polo to provide mankind all of the above just as He gives light, heat, air and water.

10(b) The people invoke Donyi-Polo to accept the prayers offered to Him and they believe that it is Donyi-Polo who

provides light and food to them. They ask Donyi-Polo to help them over-come all obstructions fearlessly, namely, landslide of rock, high stiff and gorge of river bank, and tide of storm and thunder. These are natural calamities which may have been caused by Donyi-Polo, and it is believed that only through the help of Donyi-Polo the people can overcome these calamities. The people also ask Donyi-Polo to provide them with strength and energy and guide them till they die so that they can face all the trials of life.

10(c) In this prayer, Donyi-Polo is regarded as the creator of all the living beings of this earth. It is He who provides all living beings with all the elements required for life, irrespective of their size. It does not matter to Donyi-Polo whether a living being is small or big. Since He is the Creator of both small beings as well as big beings, the required elements of life are provided to all of them. He is also the creator of all, i.e., man, animal, gods and goddesses, and their existence in the earth or heaven has been possible only because of Donyi-Polo. So Donyi-Polo is regarded as all in all or the most powerful. As such, He is considered to be everything.

In all the above prayers, Donyi-Polo has been

portrayed as creator, provider, ultimate, responsible for all action and who has the capacity to guide the right path. Donyi-Polo is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. He is considered to be the source of life and the protector of all beings.

Philosophy of Donyi-Polo

The faith and belief in Donyi-Polo have led to the emergence of the following philosophical concepts according to Shri T. Rukbo -

1. 'It is the universal truth and brotherhood.
2. It is the supreme governing power of the universe.
3. It is every-probing power, which is Almighty,
Omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.
4. It is the supreme judge of the highest court of law of eternity.
5. It is the divine light, wisdom and knowledge.
6. It is the source of life and energy of all living beings.
7. All living and non-living beings are creation of Donyi-Polo.

8. Purity, openness, frankness, truthfulness, love and peaceful coexistence are the eternal laws of Donyi-Polo.
9. Right, justice and kindness are path to the goal of Donyi-Polo.
10. Equality, fraternity, self-respect and self-reliance are the qualities and qualification of Donyi-Polo faith.
11. Mercy and apology with understanding are best solution of any problem.
12. Theft, hatred and lies are great sin.

These have further led to the evolvement of a number of principles, following which human beings can live happily on this world. (according to T. Rukbo and O. Ering) These are :

1. Follow the right or truthful path :-

Traditionally *Donyi*, the Sun and *Polo*, the Moon, symbolises truth, peace, greatness and perfection. *Donyi* and *Polo* are considered as important for attainment of perfection. The followers of *Donyi-Polo* always remain truthful, and believe that telling lies, commitment of crimes and offenses, and involving oneself in foul play are against the teachings of *donyi-polo*. As such one should never fear to fight for truth and justice.

2. Treat everyone equally :

The Creator radiates warmth and light to the earth equally through the sun and the moon and makes no distinction between caste creed and colour. Every living being on this earth

enjoys this equality and ^{af} surviving. In the same way, all living beings should be loved and looked upon equally without any discrimination.

3. Cultivate wisdom and justice :

The Sun and the Moon, Donyi and Polo, provide light to this world making it beautiful for living. They also symbolise truth and justice. In a similar manner, knowledge and wisdom should illuminate the minds of human beings and guide them to do justice to all. For instance, in the *Kebyang* (the traditional council meeting) of the Adis, the name of Donyi-Polo is frequently taken to do justice.

4. Be frank and forward :

The rays of the Sun and the light of the Moon come down direct to the earth. This teaches the people to be straight forward and frank in dealing with any affair.

5. Practice kindness and mercy :

Donyi-Polo is the light that guides human beings from committing any crime. It is believed that any human being who is on the wrong is either swallowed or destroyed by Donyi-Polo, and kindness and mercy are the forms of punishment that Donyi-Polo inflicts on the wrong-doers. Donyi and Polo never come to inflict physical punishment to offenders, but they use to guide man by

focusing light and rays.

6. Practice selflessness :

The Sun and Moon, Donyi and Polo, provide light and warmth equally to all the living beings on this earth. If, by chance, they stop then none of the living beings will survive. Though they provide light and warmth they do not expect anything in return from the living beings. Thus, Donyi-Polo teaches the people not to be selfish but to be helpful to all and to render services to the society and the world as a whole. One must be prepared to help those who are helpless according to one's capacity. Since the sun and the moon symbolise the physical representation of Sedi or God, selflessness is an important characteristic of him and this is reflected through the Donyi and Polo.

FESTIVALS ASSOCIATED WITH DONYI-POLO FAITH :

In order to understand the Donyi-Polo belief system, one will have to concentrate on the various rituals that are performed during the festivals that the Adis celebrate. Following are the important festivals celebrated by the Adis of the Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh :-

1. *Dongen* festival
2. *Dorung* festival
3. *Aran* festival
4. *Mopin* festival

5. *Etor festival*
6. *Solung festival*

1. **DONGEN FESTIVAL OF THE ADIS :**

Dongen or *Genne* festival is performed by the *Boris*, a small group of Adis inhabiting the upper central region of Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. This festival is celebrated in order to propitiate the Supreme deity *DOINYI-POLO*, and is usually performed after harvesting of job's tear millet or '*TANIYET*', and storing them in the granary. There is no fixed date for the celebration of the festival, but it is usually celebrated in Feb-Mar, with in a period of two fortnights which constitute the local month termed as '*SOBO-YERRE-POLO*' i.e. the 'mithun-pig month'. This is because mithuns and pigs are generally sacrificed in this festival. So the auspicious date for the festival is fixed by mutual consent, and the festival lasts for a period of seven days. Dongen festival has another important characteristic. In this festival, the newly wed couples of the previous year, of the village perform the rites of the festival in order to solemnise their marriage.

This festival is usually organised by a family or two families of the village separately or jointly. Every year families organise the festival by turn. Though this limitation prevails, traditionally all the people of the village as well as of neighbouring villages participate and extend help to the family organising the festival.

On the preceding day of the festival, the wife of the person performing the puja, *SOBO-PANAM*, sends invitation to each and every household to attend the inaugural ceremony of the festival at her house the next day.

On the first day of the festival, the villagers as well as guests of neighbouring villages assemble in the performer's house. The womenfolk then take out the grains from the granary which are spread on mats in the sun, and the young children are set to watch. The menfolk are also assigned certain works. They are sent to the jungles to collect bamboos and wood for making water containers and mortars '*Kipur*'. The old women then clean the grains by means of winnowing fans, and the grains are then pounded by the girls. After the pounded grains are separated from the husks by another batch of women, these are taken back to the granary by the boys.

In the morning of this day, all the villagers are provided with a meal which consists of rice and smoked squirrels, or pigs, if squirrels are not available. The villagers are again entertained in the evening, and the people rejoice drinking and merry-making.

The next day, called *BINNIYET* is spent in feasting and merry-making.

On the third day, a group of six young boys are sent to the jungle to bring plantain leaves or *Eko* and these boys are

provided with food and drinks which consist of rice, smoked squirrels and beer with ginger pieces. In the jungle the boys perform a puja or *EKO-TAKKE-ENAM* ceremony before cutting the leaves. In this ceremony, they place a little amount of rice, squirrel's meat and ginger on the stem of the plantain tree from which the leaves are to be cut. Beer is also poured on the stem. After this ceremony is performed, the plantain leaves are cut and brought to the village. On this day, invitations are again sent to the relatives, who are yet to come, to join in the celebrations '*MINO-DUNAM*' the following day.

On the fourth day, again a group of four boys go to the outskirts of the village to cut the trunk of a particular tree, which is locally termed as *LANGOR*. The trunk is then chopped in to pieces of firewood and stored outside the performer's house. But before the task of carrying firewood is completed, one of the boys has to carry four pieces of wood in four trips, failing which it is believed that he would become bald sometime in his later age. The task of cutting and storing firewood is termed as '*SILLI-TANAM*', and at the end of the ceremony the pieces of firewood are taken away by the members of the performer's lineage or clan. On this day, meal is served to all the villagers both in the morning and evening.

The fifth day is spent in erecting scaffoldings for the sacrifice of mithuns. In Dongen festival, four mithuns are sacrificed. So four scaffoldings are erected with *ESI-POTENNE* or logs of wood at four different places.

One scaffolding is erected in the courtyard BATUNG, while the second is erected near the granary of Kunsung. The third and the fourth are erected at the place where a common MACHAN (platform) is set up from which youngmen pull the ropes tied to the mithuns. The ropes reach upto the MACHAN after passing over the scaffoldings.

The youths of the village then go to the jungle in batches of two to catch the mithuns of the person performing the Dongen festival. There's a lot of excitement, and whenever a batch sights a mithun, they shout, "Dolu Asi Esong Katung Ke" meaning they have seen a mithun. In this way they inform the other batches to come and help in capturing the animal and once the message is conveyed, all the young men arrive at that place and help to capture the mithun. The captured mithun is sent to the village and search is carried on for other mithuns till all the four mithuns are captured and brought to the village.

On the sixth day, the mithuns are sacrificed in the name of the supreme deity DOINYI-YAYI, and this is usually carried out after the sun rise. Before the sacrifice starts, the new daughter-in-law of the person performing Dongen, applies rice paste ETTING HIDUNG on the foreheads of all the four mithuns.

At first, the biggest size mithun that is tied in the Batung is slaughtered. This is done by pulling the animal over the erected scaffolding and striking the head of the same with a felling axe. It is believed that this mithun is sacrificed for the dead ancestors. After this, the Kunsung mithun is sacrificed by the same method as was done in the first case. This mithun is meant to appease the spirits controlling the crops MITI-MITAK,

the harvest deity PIRNEY-TONNEY and the house deity MIRRORING-MISSING. Lastly, the other two mithuns are slaughtered at the KUNDUN, the place outside the house facing the KODANG, the place for guests of the house. These two mithuns are sacrificed in the name of DOINYI-YAYI. The method of slaughtering these two mithuns differ from the former two. Both the mithuns are tied with ropes around their necks, and pulled over the scaffolding and left suspended in the air for about an hour or so till they die of strangulation. While the dead mithuns remain suspended, the performer of the Dongen, his newly married son, daughter-in-law and her father come out of the house holding a rope in their right hands. The performer's son also carries a bowl of rice paste in his left hand. Then the four of them start moving to the left of the KUNDUN mithuns and on reaching the first of the hanging mithuns the performer's son applies rice paste on the mithun uttering the following words, 'Linning Eting Pe Danning Yebang Pe', which means that "Next year they would perform Eting ceremony and in the next after that they would perform Yebang. They are to be taken care of." After this, the performer's daughter-in law also applies rice paste to the mithun quietly without uttering a word. This same act is repeated in case of the second mithun also, after which all of them ascend the platform from one end and descend from the other making entry into the house from the right side. After entering the house, they hang the rope, that was carried by them in the PUDUNG corner of the house where skulls of mithuns that have been previously sacrificed on earlier occasions, are kept. Meanwhile some old men keep on chanting religious songs or *SOBO-GANNAM*.

The mithuns are then cut up and the meat is distributed to all the relatives and guests present on the occasion.

In the evening, *TIPU-MENAM* ceremony is performed. In this ceremony, the performer, his son, daughter-in-law and her father carry baskets containing rice, pork and mithun's meat, on their backs. Then holding one another's hands they move around a mat which is spread on the ground in front of the house, and after making a few rounds all four of them empty the contents of their baskets on the mat. These are to propitiate the spirits and deities. When the baskets are emptied, the young boys who remain standing nearby start shouting, 'Tipula-Langke-ke', the meaning of which is "Come and take the things lying on the mat'. This implies that the young boys are invoking the spirits and deities to accept their offerings.

On the last day, the guests, *MINU* or *MINONG* return to their respective homes, each of them carrying back along with them packets of cooked rice, mithun's meat and beer (apong).

The young boys then go to the jungle and collect seven bamboos of various sizes for *GOMBO-TUNAM*. Two long ones are put on either side of the house, crossing one another at the top and a third bamboo is positioned in between the two. While placing the bamboos, a boy from the group utters, "All the wealth of the Minyongs, Bokars, Membas and others should come here in this house". The remaining four short bamboos are placed in two on either side of the long ones. With the erection of this struc-

ture, the Dongen festival comes to an end.

Ponung dance forms an essential part of Dongen festival. It starts from the very first day and continues for the remaining days of the festival. There's a lot of excitement and the people enjoy themselves.

2. DORUNG FESTIVAL :

DORUNG is a festival of the *Padam-Minyong* Adis of East Siang District. This is a festival of community hunting called *KIRUK* and usually celebrated during winter months, i.e. between December and February.

Since time immemorial, the villages in Adi society have been divided into two or more *MEROMS* or social units and the units are organised on clan basis or on topographical position of the people. The membership to these *MEROMS* is inherited and cannot change from one *MEROM* to another. If new people move into the village, then the *KEBANG* (Village Council) decides to which *MEROM* they should be included and usually they join the *MEROM* in which there are few members. But if the same clan meroms exist in the village, then they join the same.

During this festival, the uncultivated land within the boundary of the village is divided among these various meroms and if the areas given to the meroms are vast, then these are further sub-divided into smaller areas or *SIPUS*.

There lies an interesting myth behind the performance of DORUNG festival, which has been interpreted in the following manner. In the ancient times, there lived two great hunters in the under-world by the name of *NUYI* and *GAMRO*. At that time, man (or *TANI*) already existed on this earth and they had started cultivation. They planted some vegetation, which started growing. But it so happened that one day as they went to examine the plants, they found that all the plants were destroyed and eaten up. *TANI* was very very angry, but he failed to understand what had caused the destruction and who was responsible for it. So he told the kite, who lived on the top of the tree, to keep watch over his land and to find out the cause of destruction. The kite had seen what had happened. He told *TANI* that it was the wild boar, *GUMGONG* or *SITRA*, who was responsible for the destruction. This made *TANI* furious and he decided to kill the boar. He approached the two great hunters, *NUYI* and *GAMRO* and sought their assistance to kill the boar.

Both *NUYI* and *GAMRO* agreed and came to help *TANI*. They set out to look for the wild boar and in their hunt, they suddenly saw the wild boar running. At this, *GAMRO* first shot an arrow but by mistake, he wounded the mithun and for this act of his, he was taken captive by *DADI-BOTE*, the owner of domestic animals including mithun.

Meanwhile, the wild boar was shot by *NUYI* but it did

not die on the spot. It managed to escape. So *NUYI* once again started looking for it and finally, he found it lying dead in the land, *KINE-MIRMIR BUDING*. *NUYI* then collected *EGAM* leaves, canes and bamboos and prepared a sling, with the help of which he carried the corpse behind his back and started walking. But after covering a short distance, the sling gave way and fell to the ground. It so happened that as the boar was falling along with the sling, the tusks of the boar pierced the sides of *NUYI*, causing excessive bleeding and finally resulting in his death.

With the death of the wild boar, *TANI* thus was relieved of all anxiety and since it was *NUYI*, who relieved *TANI*, the latter started performing *DORUNG* festival in honour of *NUYI*. It was *NUYI*, who rendered help to *TANI*. Since then, the *DORUNG* festival is being performed, creating an awareness in the minds of people to become skillful hunters. The myth signifies the death of the hunted and the hunter.

Before the commencement of the *DORUNG* festival, a *KEBANG* is held in which the date of the festival is fixed. Then a place is selected in between the jungle and the village called *DUMBANG*. This place is cleaned and a gate (*EYAP*) is erected, which is partly covered with branches of a thorny climber, *Tatkey* or *Tatkeng* and reeds of *Tapi*.

The celebration of *DORUNG* festival starts with *EMO MONAM*. On this day, the poisonous plant *EMO* are collected which are used in making arrow heads. There are two varieties of *EMO*

plants, one growing in snow-clad mountains *MOJI*, the roots of which are only utilised. The other variety is a sub-tropical plant *MORANG*, the fruits of which are only used. Both the roots of *MOJI* and fruits of *MORANG* are collected.

These are then taken in the *DERE* (bachelor's dormitory) by the male-folk or villagers. A corner of the *DERE* known as *DERE BANGO* is selected and cleaned and used for grinding purposes. The grinding is done with the help of mortar and pestle (*MOBYANG* and *MOTUP*); and the grinding of the *EMOs* are done entirely by the males. After completion of grinding, they start making arrows, the heads of which are coated with *EMOs*.

From the next day onward follows three days' hunting. The beginning of hunting is marked by burning a portion of bamboo (*BAMUK*). This burnt piece of bamboo is then kept in a particular place and hit with an arrow till it bursts. This bursting of bamboo is called *BUKNAM*. Before going for hunting, the hunters go to the *DUMBANG*, where a *BANGO* is prepared in which a fowl (*ROKPO*) is killed. After that, the hunters have to pass through the gate (*EYAP*) that has been already erected in the *DUMBANG* and while passing through the gate, each participant is touched with a broom-like thing. This is done by a person, who is selected for this purpose. The dogs are also touched with the same. There are dogs, called *KIMEN* which are particularly used for hunting. Touching of each and every hunter including the dogs indicates a sort of purification.

After this, they go for hunting. While returning from hunting, they have to pass again through the *DUMBANG*. If any animal is killed during the hunt, then a ritual known as *LAGLAM PANAM* is performed at a selected place (*LAGLAM PAKO*) in the *DUMBANG*. In this ritual, the materials required are four sticks (of any length), some leaves of *TALE* or *TALEY*, the leg of the animal that is killed and four arrows, which are known as *MAKSAR*. These arrows are not poisonous and differ from the arrows that are used for killing the animals. This ritual is performed on all the days of *KIRUK* or hunting on their return from the hunt.

It so happens that during hunting if a hunter aims at an animal and shoots at it, but by chance misses the animal, then there is a punishment for him. The hunter is tied to a tree if it is in the jungle, or he is tied to one of the posts of the *DERE* and he is tied with ropes that are made out of thorny climbers like *TATKEY* and *YORIT*. He is also beaten with these climbers. This is done after completion of one *SIPU* and before starting of another and the punishment is usually imparted by an elder member or a person, who has not missed an animal till that time. Moreover, in the evening, the youths of the village go to the house of that person, who is punished and collect one *PEROP* or a barrel of apong and this is termed as *ABLAK APONG*. This apong is enjoyed by both the young and the old members of the village.

During hunting, one *SIPU* after another is covered. When the hunters reach a *SIPU*, they divide themselves into two groups.

One group termed as *TONA* (or *TODING TONA*) waits at one end of the *SIPU*, while the other group termed as *RUGLIKNA* (*KIRUK YAMENG*) chases the animal from other end making some sounds. In this way, the animals are caught.

After three day's hunting, the following half-day is spent in hunting and the rest in observing some rituals. In some cases, when no animal is killed on the first three days of hunting, then the decision is taken by the village council to spend the entire fourth day in hunting.

On the fifth day, the youths of the village perform a kind of celebration known as *YAMENG DOKANG* (*YAMENG* meaning youth and *DOKANG* collection). On this day, they go for collection of foodstuffs. In some cases, on the same day, they go for just a day's hunting and this is termed as *DONYO KIRUK* and the animal that is hunted is distributed only among the participants, i.e. only those who go for the hunt. In some cases, *DONYO KIRUK* is held the next day. This marks the end of the festival.

Though there may be regional differences or variations in observing the festival for five days or six days, the basic activities in celebrations remain the same. There is a lot of fun and excitement as the young boys accompany their elders in the hunt, but hunting is tied down to a body of rules. Besides, hunting provides entertainment to the people and relaxation from their routine works. It also brings members of one Merom together.

In the myth of the above festival, the two archers Nuyi and Gamro have been projected as strong forces who are able to destroy the boar or the destructive force.

Tani (man) have been projected as weak and helpless. As such, he seeks help from forces which are stronger than him. Nuyi and Gamro help him by killing the boar.

3. ARAN FESTIVAL :

Aran is a festival of the Padams, the Pasis and the Minyong group of Adis, of the East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. This festival is also known as Unying among the Minyongs. Aran festival is generally held in the month of March-April and the festival lasts for about 15-20 days.

There lies an interesting myth in the performance of Aran festival. In every human society, nature has been personified in a number of ways. The same is the case with Adi society also in which two stages of nature have been identified as personification of Aran festival. One is the winter incarnation, *NYANI METE* and the other is *ARAN* of spring.

In Adi mythology, the incarnate has been personified as a beautiful young girl. The greenery of nature with its calmness and grandeur, accomplishes perfectness in winter. This beauty of nature has been compared to the calm, quiet and beautiful *NYANI METE*, who grows up into a young girl to be

married off to somebody and to be given a warm farewell to her husband's home. This hearty send-off, which is bid to NYANI METE, is celebrated in ARAN festival.

But the name of the festival has been derived from the name of SIKI NANE's son, KIRAN or ARAN. It so happened that in the beginning, TANI (man) did not know the ways of worldly life like cultivation works, rearing animals, etc. Seeing TANI's ignorance, SIKI NANE felt pity for him and decided to help him. She sent information to TANI that she would send her son ARAN who should be welcomed. Receiving information from SIKI NANE, TANI decided to offer ARAN eatables like ginger, meat, apong etc. but he did not know what play-things were to be given to him. So he planned to give him birds, rats, squirrels, etc. This reception of ARAN also forms a part of Aran festival along with the sending off of NYANI METE.

A few weeks before the commencement of the actual festival, male members organise a community-hunting. In this, the men of the village go to the jungle, erect camps and stay there. They spend the days in hunting wild animals and birds. Then, they return to the village on the eve of the day of the festival, i.e. Aran Dorep with all the games that they have hunted and these are shared with all the other villagers and kept in store for the festival. On this occasion, pigs and fowls are sacrificed by every family depending on their means. The rich and well-to-do persons also sacrifice mithuns.

Next day the actual celebration of Aran festival starts. On the morning of this day, the young children are offered roasted birds, squirrels and rats by the elder members of the family like father, brother and even uncles. These are relished very much by the children and it provides an occasion of variety for them. The roasted animals are attached to a string and hung like garlands around the necks of the little children, who are seen running about and showing one another and at times, occasionally eating from them. On the same day in a corner of the house, the housewives offer apong (rice-beer), meat, eggs, rice etc. and perform worship to the gods and deities, with the following prayer :

*"On this festival day
A gift from KINE NANE
Let all gods and deities
Visit this house
To grace the festival;
Worships are offered here
With apong, meat and rice
Let all be satisfied with it".*

In the evening of the first day, the village elders and children (both male and female) form different groups and start dancing. These groups visit every house of the village and perform dance and give blessings to the members of the family. They are also entertained with dry fish, meat, rice squirrel, apong etc. in every house and the young children collect these on all the days of the festival and enjoy a feast on the concluding or last day of the festival.

The second day is known as NYONAM Generally this day

is observed as a rest day after the hunt and on completion of the preparations for the festival. The people relax and spend the day in merriment.

On the third day, *LUKA LUNGAK*, *DADI BOTE*, the god of domestic animals is offered prayers and propitiated. On this occasion, the domestic animals of each household are brought near the altar (constructed in the front of every house) and rice, meat, apong, ginger, etc. are offered in the altar in the name of *DADI BOTE*.

The fourth day is spent on feasting and merry-making.

In the myth of the Aran festival, there is the concept of farewell or send-off of a girl to her husband's home. There is an indication of sorrow and pathos because the girl is leaving from her paternal home.

There also exists a sense of co-operation. Sike Nane felt pity for Tani (man) and decided to extend her help in cultivation works, rearing animals, etc. The concept of reciprocity is also conspicuous in this myth. Sike Nane agrees to send her son Aran to help Tani on the condition that Aran should be welcomed, and accordingly, Aran is welcomed. This implies the heralding of a new dawn for existence .

There is a female and also a male in this myth.

4. MOPIN FESTIVAL :

Of all the festivals celebrated by the Adis of West Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh, Mopin is an important agricultural festival of the Gallong group. This festival is celebrated in the months of March-April corresponding to Lumi and Luki months of Adi calendar to mark the beginning of agricultural activities. In this festival, Mopin or the deity of wealth and Mopin uyus-Pinku and Pinte are propitiated for a good harvest, good health and prosperity, and the festival lasts for about five days.

The mythological interpretation of Mopin festival lies in the following myth. Abotani, the father of mankind was the first human being on this earth. He did not know about cultivation. So all the gods and goddesses took pity on him and decided to help him in whatever way possible. They met at a place KARGU in heaven and there the decision was taken as to who would provide what materials to Abotani. DONYI, the god of light promised to provide sunlight for cultivation works and animals for domestication. MOPIN, the goddess of wealth and prosperity thought of providing all seeds and agricultural implements, while PEKA the god of war and valour decided on giving war implements like helmet, shield, etc. i.e. bodumbokom, and BUTE -YAPOM, god of jungle took the responsibility of providing games during hunting. All the gods and goddesses collected the above materials and bestowed them to MOPIN to give to Abo Tani. But Mopin did not know Abo Tani. The meeting between them happened as under:

During that time, there lived two brothers *TAKAR-TAJI* who wanted to perform a sacrifice ceremony , *DORYI-PANAM*, in which they were to sacrifice ten mithuns. But before performing this ceremony they had to perform a ritual, *RINDU-KAMDU* which was unknown to them. So they send *KEKO-PAI*, a squirrel as their messenger to find out from Abo Tani the methods of performing the *RINDU-KAMDU* ritual.

KEKO-PAI then went to meet Abo Tani , and enquired from him about the ritual. Abo Tani did not know the same .But he already had other plans in his mind ;he wanted to possess the mithuns of *TAKAR-TAJI*. So he told *KEKO-PAI* that his mother knew about the ritual . Abo Tani actually had no mother and so he erected an image in human form, covered it with cloth and kept it half-submerged in river water. He then asked *KEKO-PAI* to go and find out from his mother. He also instructed the latter to remain far from his mother because she would be asleep and not to call her because she was deaf and she would not hear. So the only possible way to awaken her was to poke her with a stick. *KEKO-PAI* followed Abo Tani's instructions but as soon as he pushed the image with a stick it sank under water. Hearing the news of the same, Abo Tani pretended to be very angry and blamed *TAKAR-TAJI* for the death of his mother. He further claimed the mithuns of *TAKAR-TAJI* as compensation for the life of his mother.

On learning this, *TAKAR-TAJI* felt very much depressed. But they were helpless. Abo Tani took away nine mithuns, and spared only one named Taapu Bo. So in order to fulfill their promise, they sacrificed this mithun and the responsibility of

distributing the meat among all the guests was shared by PEJEK (a small bird) and TAKOM DUMMA. It so happened that there were too many guests and so there was shortage of meat. In order to serve all the guests PEJEK contributed flesh from its legs and TAKOM DUMMA contributed flesh from its legs and TAKOM DUMMA contributed its head to meet the requirement of meat and even today one can see PEJEK having thin legs and TAKOM DUMMA having a very tiny head.

In the chaos that prevailed as regards shortage of meat, the deer DUMPUR got angry and kicked at the meat. Seeing this ABOTANI's dog KIPU became angry and started chasing the deer and the chase led them to the land of MOPIN, where the people were pounding rice powder for some ritual. As the deer ran across the place it spilled the pot of rice powder, which stuck to it. That is why even today the inner thighs of the deer is snow white, the colour of rice. The dog which was following the deer was caught by the people and kept captive. As the dog did not return for a long time an anxious Abotani went in search of the same. The search for his dog led Abotani to the land of Mopin where he too was kept in captivity.

As days passed by, Abotani made plans to set himself free, he thought of a plan. He caught a rat and placed its dead body under his armpit. After sometime the rat decomposed and started emitting a foul smell. This made Mopin very anxious; she thought that something was wrong with Abotani and that he would die soon. So in order to save herself from the risk of Tani's

death she released Abotani along with his dog. In addition, the MOPIN gave him the gifts of all the gods and goddesses.

Abotani of course did not know the art of cultivation. On his return, he first sowed the paddy-seeds on the ground without cleaning the same. To his surprise he found that the seeds did not sprout as expected. So Abotani went back to the land of MOPIN and told goddess MOPIN about his misfortune. Taking pity on him, MOPIN gave him fresh seeds again, and she also gave away her daughter *DIYI-TAMI* to Abotani as his bride. She further advised Abotani to offer mithun, pigs, and fowls in her honour and offer prayers at the time of sowing. So Abotani came back and started performing the Mopin festival in which he sacrificed animals accordingly and this resulted in good yields. Since then the descendant of Abotani, the Adis believe that MOPIN must be propitiated for successful cultivation, and so this festival is performed.

At the advent of the festival, a Kebang (meeting) is held in the village dormitory which is known as 'Dere'. In this Kebang, several decisions are taken. First of all, the date for the celebration of the festival is fixed. But this festival may also not be celebrated each year. This is usually found out by reading omens on an egg or by examining chicken liver which indicates the auspicious day for the celebration of the festival. Earlier, prior to 1966 Mopin festival was practically not celebrated in town. It started only in 1966 because of the initiative of the new educated masses. Besides fixing the exact



MAKING OF MOPIN IMAGES
(Mopin Festival)

date, a list is also prepared indicating the names of well-to-do persons for contributing the principal items of sacrifice like mithuns and pigs. At times when there are no wealthy persons, contributions are not made individually. In such cases, collective contributions are made.

In the meantime, elaborate preparations are made in every house to store sufficient quantities of fish, meat and rice-beer (apong) to last for the entire period of the festival. Ample quantity of rice is also pounded for preparing rice powder cakes which are offered to the Mopin. In addition to this, significant feature of Mopin festival is the smearing of faces with rice powder. All these activities mark the arrival of coming of the Mopin festival and every household prepare themselves suitably to welcome the festival and are in festive mood.

On the preceding day of the festival, an altar is erected at the site of the festival. This altar is made up of certain special plants like Tapi, Take, Eni, Ensi, etc. and is encircled with a bamboo fence to demarcate the place of worship. On this day, Dipe Monam ceremony is performed in the morning, in which the symbolic images of Mopin, of the ancestors, and of the god of rain, Doli, made of twigs, leaves and bamboos are installed by the side of the altar. The priest (Nyibu) invokes the deities, simultaneously, by chanting hymns and prayers. In the evening, messages are sent to every house, informing the menfolk to assemble in the 'Dere' the next day. After this, the actual celebration of the festival begins.



CEREMONY BEFORE SACRIFICE
(Mopin Festival)

On the first day of the festival, a representative from each household attends the Dere and helps in the collection and storing of food items, that have been contributed by the villagers towards the celebration of the festival. The priests also have their own functions to perform. They continue chanting prayers and myths at the place of worship, while the people enjoy a grand feast, singing, dancing, rejoicing, and merry-making. of the animals that are sacrificed.

On the following day, food from every house is again collected in the Dere, for the festival. On this occasion the Yudum-lik-nam, sacrifice, is performed in which a cow-mithun is at first tied adjacent to the altar where her head is smeared with rice-powder, and rice-beer. Thereafter, the mithun is slaughtered in the sacrificial altar to propitiate Mopin Goddess, Pigs and fowls are also sacrificed at the altar as ritual offerings. The people at this time are engaged in dance and merriment, while the priest remains busy as before, chanting incantations and prayers. The blood of the sacrificial animals are then mixed with rice-beer and poured over the images that are placed by the side of the altar, and the flesh of the animals are taken to the Dere for the community feast. After this, the people start dancing and singing "Hey Mopin" etc. and applying rice-powder to each other's face. They also visit one another's house, and in every house the guests are entertained with special Mopin cakes and other delicacies. It is used in various festivals

and divinations in all forms, e.g. rice-cakes, rice-powder etc.

At the end of this day, the people are given blood and hair of the slaughtered mithun, bristles of the pigs and feathers

of fowl that are sacrificed at the altar. These are taken as tokens of the festivals and are believed to bring good fortune to those people who keep them in the house.

On the third day, Mopin cakes and mithun's meat are distributed to one and all including the guests. The latter are also entertained in every house and the priests are given share of the animals that are sacrificed.

On the fourth day, the priest as usual chants prayers, while the empty packets in which mopin cakes were wrapped are hung on the altar.

On the last or final day, the whole village is cleared and a farewell feast is organised in which all the villagers as well as guests participate. After the feast is over, the priests accompanied by the people, go to the outskirts of the village to bid farewell and see Goddess Mopin off. With this the festival comes to an end, and the people return home and resume work in the paddy fields.

In this festival, the Adis use large quantities of rice, as is being used by some religious communities in other parts of the country. Rice is regarded as sacred, signifying purity of thought, word and deed. It is used in various festivals and divinations in all forms, e.g. rice-cakes, rice-powder etc.

Popir dance forms an essential part of the Mopin

festival. Popir means butterfly. Thus, Popir dance literally means butterfly dance. In other words, Popir dance is an imitation of the dance of butterflies. This dance is usually conducted by a Ponu Nyibo (leader) who narrates the mythological songs and the young girls and elderly women repeat after in chorus the song and joins in dances in steps according to the song. Old and young menfolk also take part and all distinctions like rich and poor are forgotten in this festive occasion. Thus Mopin festival unites all the people with a feeling of oneness.

from the destruction of domestic as well as wild animals. Etor is a branch In this festivals, symbolic images of Mopin of the ancestors and God of rain are constructed with twigs, leaves and bamboos. and the other is 'LUNE', which means the actual Solung festival. Etor festival is performed to propitiate DADI-BOTE, who

is believed In the myth of Mopin festival, there's a clear concept of provider. As Abotani (first human being on this earth) was ignorant about cultivation works, different gods and goddesses decided to provide him the different materials required for cultivation. Donyi provided sunlight, Mopin provided seeds and agricultural implements, Peka provided weapons and shields, and Bute-Yapom provided games. NG from causing further destruction,

the ENGO-TAKAR people decided that GUNGONG should be killed. But there was There is also a concept of sacrifice. Pejek (a small bird) and Tokom Dumma (animal) contributed flesh from their body to feed the guests as there was shortage of meat. There also exists a reciprocal exchange between Abotani and Mopin (goddess of wealth and prosperity). Mopin gives paddy seeds and her daughter Diyi-Tami, to Abotani and the latter offers mithun,

pigs and fowls in Her honour. (domestic animals) mithun and was taken captive by DADI-BOTE's people.

5. ETOR FESTIVAL :

At that time, there was a serious dispute going on between Etor-Bis another important festival of the Padam, Minyong and Pasi group of Adis of East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh. This festival is usually celebrated in the month of May - June, after the completion of community fencing, which is usually constructed for the protection of paddy fields and crops from the destruction of domestic as well as wild animals. Etor is a branch of the Solung festival, because the word "Solung" has two meanings: one is 'LUTOR', the meaning of which is Etor festival and the other is 'LUNE', which means the actual Solung festival. Etor festival is performed to propitiate DADI-BOTE, who is believed to be the owner of domestic animals like fowl, pig, mithun, etc. She asked the ENGO-TAKAR people to demand a mithun from DADI-BOTE as compensation for capturing GAMRO and to threaten them. The Etor festival has the following myth. The ENGO-TAKAR people (or the first people) planted sweet potatoes and these plants were destructed by GUMGONG, a wild boar. So, in order to prevent the GUMGONG from causing further destruction, the ENGO-TAKAR people decided that GUMGONG should be killed. But there was nobody among them, who could kill the giant boar. So the people went to the land of KINE-NANE, goddess of prosperity and foodgrains and requested for two strong archers by the name of NUYI and GAMRO to come and assist them in killing the wild boar. Thus, with the help of the ENGO-TAKAR people, NUYI succeeded in killing GUMGONG, while GAMRO, by mistake, shot at

DADI-BOTE's (the god of domestic animals) mithun and was taken captive by DADI-BOTE's people. to perform DELONG dance and AGAM KEPEL (the worship for property of mithun) at the time of the festival. At that time, there was a serious dispute going on between DADI-BOTE and MEDENG-SENE (evil spirit) regarding the ownership of the mithun. Both of them were claiming equal rights over the mithun. So, in order to obtain justice as to who was the rightful owner of the mithun, DADI-BOTE along with the mithun and MEDENG-SENE went to the land of DONYI-POLO. There the two parties were asked to construct individual bridges and to take the mithun over the same. It so happened that the mithun crossed safely over the bridge of DADI-BOTE, but while crossing over the bridge of MEDENG-SENE, the bridge gave way. So from this it was evident that DADI-BOTE was the real owner of the mithun. But MEDENG-SENE was not to give up so easily. She made plans to take revenge on DADI-BOTE. She asked the ENGO-TAKAR people to demand a mithun from DADI-BOTE as compensation for capturing GAMRO and to threaten him if he refuses to comply with the same. The ENGO-TAKAR people carried out the advice of MEDENG-SENE and DADI-BOTE agreed to give a mithun on the condition that he should be given a squirrel (LIPO), MITI OMUM, the lady of fragrance and perfume, along with other gifts. DADI-BOTE further claimed the thumb finger of the squirrel to be cut off as an agreement. The ENGO-TAKAR people agreed to this and taking the necessary items as demanded, went to take the mithun from DADI-BOTE. Along with the mithun, the latter gave a TAN tree (sacred tree), a branch of bamboo (to make rope for tying the mithun) and a branch of the OKJOK tree (for making post for tying the mithun). He further

advised the people to perform Etor festival every year in honour of him and also the mithun and to perform DELONG dance and AGAM KEPEL (the worship for property of mithun) at the time of the festival. Since that time, the Adi people have started celebrating the Etor festival annually.

After the fencing works are completed, the exact date of the Etor. The date for the commencement of fencing work is usually decided by the village authority and accordingly, on the first day, the youths of the village go to the jungle and collect TABUM or RILAM plants. These are used for making ropes and the whole of first day is spent in making ropes, which are used for tying purposes.

the pig killed in the previous day is divided into two parts : one part is distributed to every family of the vil. From the second day onwards, the villagers start constructing the fence. Usually the villagers are divided into three groups. The first group is known as DANIK or the young group and their duty is to collect posts from the forests and they also are to cut down bamboos into small pieces. The second group is called YARBE or DABE, which consists of the middle-aged people - say between 35 and 50 years. These people are assigned the task of collecting strips of long bamboos. The third group is known as LUMIK or MIJING and this group comprises of old people. They do not have to go to the forests. The first two groups, i.e. the Danik and the Yarbe, place the bamboos horizontally and vertically, while the Lumik party does the tying and erect the final fencing. While returning from their work, the young groups like Danik and Yarbe carry fire-wood from the jungle, which is stored to be utilised during the festival. At

the time of construction of the fencing, the owners of mithuns and cows are to prepare food and supply food and apong in the village dormitory. These are distributed among the three groups of the villagers, who carry out the fencing work.

In Etor festival, every family is supposed to contribute a pig. After the fencing works are completed, the exact date of the Etor festival is fixed. On the first day of the festival, which is called YEGUL, a pig is slaughtered near the community hall. This pig is killed for the community feast to be held the next day. The second day is called GAMPU. On this day, all the male-folks of the village assemble together in the community hall or Dere. Then the meat of the pig killed on the previous day is divided into two parts; one part is distributed to every family of the village and the second part is utilised in the community feast. The male-folks also bring rice, meat and apong along with them while coming to the Dere and all these items are also consumed in the feast. On the night of the same day, Delong dance commences and this continues for about three or four nights. In this, the Delong Miri takes part and in his song, he narrates myths related to the creation of mithun and pig and food-grains.

On the third day, DADI-BOTE, the god or owner of domestic animals, is worshipped and prayers are offered to Him. On the night of the same day, the path to DADI-BOTE's land is described by the Miri in his mythical song and this is known as AGAM BEDANG ABANG. This song is sung in accordance with the Delong dance. The Delong party also visits every house of the village and in each house, they are entertained with apong and meat. The Miri, on this occasion, is paid both in cash and in

kind and he is also provided with assistance in agricultural works. This is done only for one day by the girls of the Delong party.

There is a sense of co-operation because the archers, NUYI and GANBO. In Etor festival, every family is supposed to contribute a pig and a barrel of apong and this is done in turn one by one. If a particular family fails or refuses to contribute the same, then that family has to pay in cash for the cost of the pig and has to pay fine also. One thing is to be noted here that the pig, which is to be contributed, must have a certain measurement of chest (which is usually measured by the marking already made in the post of the Dere) and if the measurement is less, then that family has to pay for it and if it is more, then the village community has to pay for the extra.

6. SOLUNG FESTIVAL :

Again at the time of fencing, each family is expected to complete the fencing of the allotted plot of land. This is known as ETOR DAABE. If by chance, the family fails to complete the fencing at that time, then they have to complete it later. The young male members of the village are also required to participate in the delong dance and if a person does not participate, punishment is imposed on him either physical or in kind in the form of one fowl. festival is primarily connected with agricultural activities and in this festival DOYING-BOTE (The Divine This festival is performed mainly in honour of DADI-BOTE, the god of domestic animals, and also the mithun. In this festival, pigs are sacrificed. As this festival is performed in honour of mithun, mithun is not sacrificed in Etor festival.

The following observations have been made from the above myth :-

There is a sense of co-operation because the archers, NUYI and GAMRO came to assist the ENGO-TAKAR people in killing wild boar. It is also seen that from the very beginning there existed a dispute between good and evil, and ultimately the good triumphs over evil. There is also a reciprocal relationship, for example; Dadi Bote agrees to give mithun to the ENGO-Takar people only after the latter gives him a squirrel (LIPO), the lady of fragrance and perfume. There is also a concept of sacrifice for Dadi-Bote claimed the thumb-finger of the squirrel which was cut off and given to Him, for obtaining the mithun.

6. SOLUNG FESTIVAL :

Solung is the most popular Socio-religious annual festival of the Padam and Minyong group of the Adis of Siang District. The word "SOLUNG" is a combination of two words, 'ESO' meaning mithun + 'ALUNG' meaning a flock, from which the first syllable of each word is omitted, thus forming the word "SOLUNG". (ESO + ALØUNG = SOLUNG). This festival is celebrated in the month of August - September. Solung festival is primarily connected with agricultural activities and in this festival DOYING-BOTE (The Divine Protector), KINE-NANE (the goddess of prosperity), DADI-BOTE (the god of domestic animals) and GUMIN-SOYIN (the god of household and family or the village) are worshipped.



**PONUNG DANCE
(Solung Festival)**

night, The popular legend that lies behind the celebration of the Solung festival is as follows : the son of the God of Knowledge, YIDUM - BOTE is said to have given life to the paddy plant which was later nourished by the goddess of prosperity, KINE NANE. At that time, man was not in possession of paddy. So in order to obtain the same, he sent squirrel as his messenger to goddess KINE NANE asking for paddy. She gave him paddy with the condition that the latter would worship her every year, and sacrifice mithuns and pigs in her name. Since then, Solung festival is celebrated annually mainly to propitiate goddess KINE NANE. (Myth I)

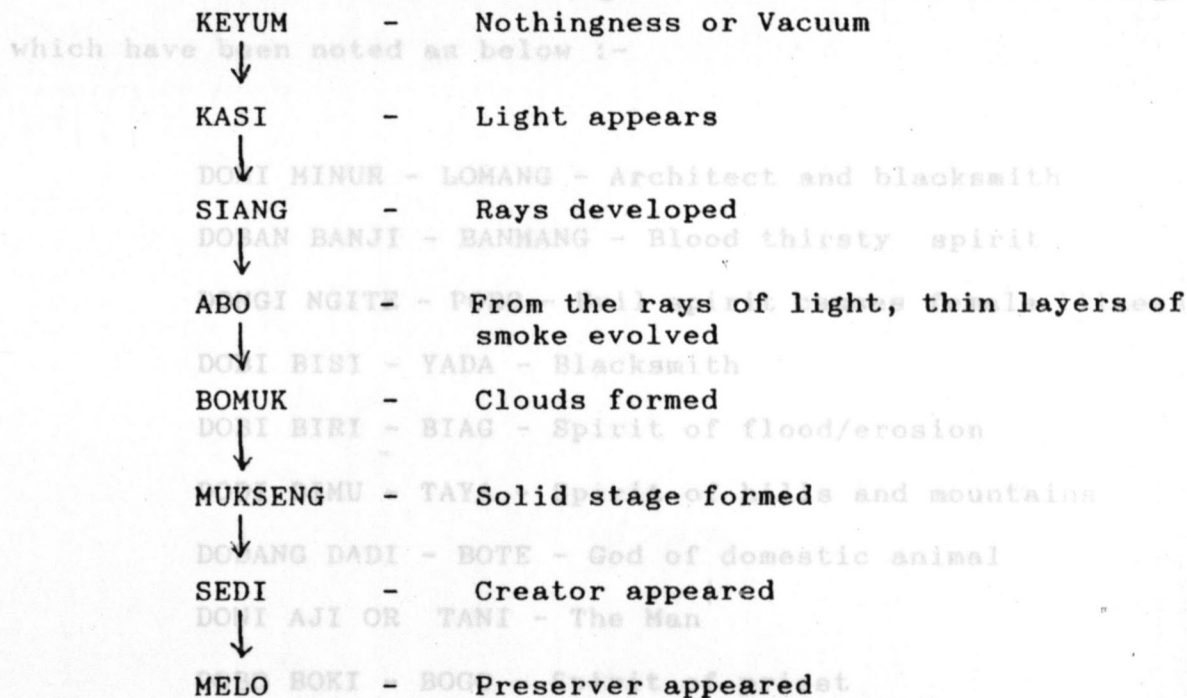
Solung festival is mostly performed for the welfare of the villagers, and also to obtain a rich harvest. This festival lasts for seven days, and the date for celebration of the same is fixed by the BOGUM-BOKANG (conglomeration of all village KEBANGS or councils which form the apex body in Adi Society). On the eve of the evening of the festival, AGAM KEPEL is offered to all the benevolent gods, goddess and deities to visit the house and village and to bless mankind and domestic animals.

In this festival, Ponung dance is performed, and during Ponung, and MIRI or priest narrates ABANGS, the stories about the beginning of the universe, the creation of plants, animals and mankind.

On the first day, DOGIN YUMA, the people start making preparations for the festival. Vegetables are stored and large quantities of rice-beer or APONG are also prepared. On the same

night, the MIRI narrates ABANGS related to the creation of universe, mankind and animals. The narration begins from KEYUM which is considered to be the remote past, beyond the reach of human knowledge or senses. From KEYUM, it goes on as follows, which has been collected from Shri T. Rukbo.

PEDONG NANE, in turn, gave birth to innumerable beings



After taking the form of living being,

SEDI created the following :- of wild animals

- SEDI SEPI - SIDONG - YOKMO - A great architect
- SEDI SENGOR - ORNE - The Sun
- SEDI TUNGGI - BABING - A fortune teller
- SEDI LIMIR - SOBO - The source of mithun
- SEDI LINGGEN - SOBO - The source of steel and iron
- SEDI DIDEN DENDE - SOBO - The source of food grains
- SEDI DIGIR IRKONG KONGKI - KOMANG - The designer of life
- SEDI DIDONG DOYING - BOTE - The divine protector
- SEDI DIMI MIKI KINE - NANE - The goddess of food grain
- SEDI DILING LITUNG - LIMANG - The origin of mankind
- SEDI DIMI MISUM - MIYANG - The maker of valuable of wealth
- SEDI DIPONG POLUNG - SOBO - The destroyer
- LITUNG - LIMANG (the origin of mankind)

LITUNG LIMANG

LITUNG TUSING-RODONG
(The owner of land)

LITUNG TUNGKAR
KARPUNG - KARDUK
(The inventors of
art and music
culture)

LITUNG TUYE
YEPE PEDONG - NANE
(The mother of all
living beings)

PEDONG NANE, in turn, gave birth to innumerable beings
which have been noted as below :-

DOMI MINUR - LOMANG - Architect and blacksmith
DOBAN BANJI - BANMANG - Blood thirsty spirit
DONGI NGITE - PORO - Evil spirit causes female illness
DOBI BISI - YADA - Blacksmith
DOBI BIRI - BIAG - Spirit of flood/erosion
DODI DIMU - TAYA - Spirit of hills and mountains
DODANG DADI - BOTE - God of domestic animal
DONI AJI OR TANI - The Man
DOBO BOKI - BOGO - Spirit of priest
DOMI MILI - MINAM - Spirit of epidemic
DONOM NOMGU - NOMNANG - Deity of wild animals
DOSI SILI - SIDONG - Spirit of water
DORO ROBO - Spirit of Jungle
DOSI SIBE - Monkey
DOPU PUDUK - PUSA - Frog

The owner of land, Tusin - Rodong, distributed land to
all the children of PEDONG, excepting MILI-MINAM (the spirit of
epidemic) and DONI AJI or TANI (the man), AS MILI - MINAM was
a spirit, TUSIN - RODONG suggested it to take refuge in the



**TYING OF MITHUN
(Solung Festival)**

atmosphere but he was unable to accommodate TANI on this earth. As such, PEDONG - NANE suggested TANI to find out his own way, and man's struggle for his existence is found to be narrated on the seventh day of the festival.

On the second day or DOROP LONGA, mithun, pigs and fowls are sacrificed. The guests are entertained to a special dinner and a portion of the meat is distributed to all the relatives while the remaining is preserved for the remaining days of the festival. In the evening of the same day, the MIRI or priest starts relating the LIMI-LIBOM ABANG in which he narrates the coming of the mithun to this earth, and this is accompanied by Ponung dance.

The MIRI narrates as follows : (Myth II)

SEDI LIMIR - SOBO finally took the form of a gigantic animal, and sat on the road between the earth and heaven/blocking communication between KINE-NANE and DOYING-BOTE. As such there was chaos everywhere and so KINE-NANE and DOYING-BOTE invited a number of beings to remove LIMIR-SOBO and clear the passage between the earth and the heaven. But every one failed, because LIMIR-SOBO was a furious animal and no one had the courage even to touch it, ultimately, from the land of DADI-SOMI (the kingdom of animals), DADI KARKI-MILI, DADI MIRUNG - LEJUNG, DADI MIRENG - LEGENG and DADI MIKO - PAKBO were summoned and together they were able to kill LIMIR - SOBO. After it was killed, it was cut into pieces which were thrown in different places and these grew

up into various forms of plants and animals. From the animal's testicles grew a gourd creeper which bore a gourd and after it ripened, a sound could be heard from inside it. Several experts were called to identify the object that made the sound inside the gourd, but none of them was successful.

At last a priest, DADI KOMI-YOKMO, from the land of DADI-SOMI was able to identify the object which he thought to be an insect. But on being requested to cut the gourd open, he found it to be a lump and not an insect. He felt that if the lump is developed then it could be a living being. So he collected materials from the different plants which grew out of the pieces of LIMIR-SOBO and developed artificial limbs and organs which he added to the lump. Then he left it for observation, which finally took the form of a mithun, and this transforming creature was called TAPUM-NINE (a lovely insect). The people of DADI-SOMI were entrusted with the responsibility of taking care of the mithun, and the animal was allowed to graze and move freely. It gradually attained maturity, and at this stage it was called ATO-DORNE (free moving animal).

The people of DADI-SOMI took care of the mithun, but when the animal attained maturity an evil woman, MEDENG-SENE claimed ownership of the mithun. The evil woman appeared from the land of BANJI-BANMANG (the blood-thirsty spirit). To solve the dispute over the ownership of mithun, both the parties were asked to appear in the court of Donyi Polo.

When both the parties arrived in the court of Donyi-Polo, ROPUNG - MONE a representative of Donyi-Polo, asked them to construct bridges of soft wood, (TUDUK-RAKSAK) and take their mithuns over their respective bridges. The mithun of DADI-SOMI crossed the bridge without any difficulty, but the bridge of MEDENG-SENE gave way as soon as the mithun was taken over it. This proved that MEDENG-SENE was telling a lie and making false claim of ownership. Thus DADI-BOTE (the people of DADI-SOMI) became the truthful owner of the mithun and since then the mithun was considered to represent Donyi-Polo as a deciding factor in all disputes. As such, mithun is considered to be the descendant of Donyi-Polo.

Meanwhile, the other children of *LITUNG-LIMANG* like *ENGO-TAKAR (KARPUNG-KARDUK)* had started cultivation. They planted sweet potato which started growing. But just before harvesting, they found that the plants were all destroyed by an unknown animal, which was later on identified as GUMGONG or wild boar. In order to kill GUMGONG, two archers NUI and GAMRO were approached and they were ready to render their help. It was NUI who shot the wild boar while GAMRO by mistake shot at the mithun and wounded the same. Thus GAMRO was taken captive by DADI-BOTE (the owner of domestic animals). Now it was the responsibility of the ENGO-TAKAR people to somehow get Gamro released.

At this stage, the evil woman MEDENG-SENE appeared and advised the ENGO-TAKAR people to make an idol of a beautiful woman and place it on the narrow path of DADI-BOTE. The latter,

unknowingly, would try to talk to the idol thinking it to be a woman and when there wouldn't be any response he would touch her. The idol should be placed in such a way that at the slightest touch it would fall down and then they could catch hold of DADI-BOTE and demand the release of GAMRO. The ENGO-TAKAR people followed the advice of MEDENG-SENE and DADI-BOTE as expected fell into the trap, but agreed to pay in terms of mithun for the compensation of the idol. While the release of GAMRO was impossible because GAMRO became the owner of the mithuns. While taking the mithun DADI-BOTE asked the ENGO-TAKAR people to make noise by beating the wall of the house after reaching home. This he did in order to obtain the mithun back. As such, when the ENGO-TAKAR people started making noise, the mithun got frightened and returned back to the land of DADI-BOTE. The ENGO-TAKAR people then reported this to DADI-BOTE who refused to spare another mithun and after long argument he agreed to give the mithun on the condition that the ENGO-TAKAR people would send a squirrel (KEBO) and a fairy from the land of fragrance (MITI-OMUM) for negotiation. The ENGO-TAKAR people followed DADI-BOTE'S advice and thus obtained the mithun, alongwith which they were also granted the ETOR festival in which DADI-BOTE is worshipped for the welfare of the mithun and other domestic animals.

The next day is BEDANG. On this day there is exchange of food and meat among friends and relatives, and PONUNG-BEDANG or the traditional song is sung by the MIRI. In this song, the MIRI makes an imaginary journey along with the Ponung girls, and in his song he covers with them the entire boundary of the Adi

Land. He starts from the particular village, giving first a description of the village. Then he describes the places that he crosses as he proceeds from the village, crossing hills, valleys, mountains, rivers and streams. Besides these, the past happenings are also narrated. The PONUNG-BEDANG continues for about 4-5 days and the song ends only when the MIRI returns to the village with the Ponung girls after completing his journey of the entire Adi land. While performing the imaginary journey of BEDANG, the MIRI imparts knowledge of the tribe, clan and family to the common people, and there is also an indication of a clear picture of the boundary line of the Adi land. On the fourth day a woman of the family sacrifices a fowl and offers cake or Etting and Apong (rice-beer) in the field in the name of the goddess KINE-NANE and DOYING-BOTE. This day is called BINNYAT, and the BEDANG continues to this day and the next. Here the MIRI narrates that after the wild boar GUMGONG was wounded, it ran away and was followed by a dog, SANYI. It so happened that in its attempt to escape, the boar jumped into a deep gorge, while the dog reached the land of KINE-NANE. On learning that the dog belonged to the ENGO-TAKAR people, KINE-NANE sent paddy seeds to the latter by tying a few grains on the dog's ears, which were sowed. Thus cultivation of paddy got introduced.

The fifth and the sixth days are spent on feasting and merry-making. These are observed as taboo days on which the villagers do not go out of their villages and they also avoid any strenuous work.

On the seventh day of the festival, all the old men of the village assemble at the village dormitory or MOSUP and make defensive objects like bows and arrows which are fastened on the main passage of the house, as well as on the doors of every house of the village. The people believe that evil spirits are always roaming in the atmosphere, and only by tying bows and arrows they can be prevented from entering into the houses. Bows and arrows are symbols of warfare. As such these are used for prevention of evil spirits. This day is called as EKOB or TAKTOR, and on this day the god of household GUMIN-SOYIN is worshipped to protect mankind and the domestic animals from diseases, epidemic and evil spirits. Usually the BEDANG is completed in the evening of the same day. Finally on the tenth day prayers are offered to goddess KINE NANE seeking protection of plants from worms and insects. This day is called IRNI and on this day all the decayed paddy plants are uprooted.

In this festival, the people offer worship for the welfare of the mithun, and this is termed as AGAM KEPEL. As mithun is considered to be a descendant of Donyi-Polo (from the ABANG that is narrated on the second day of the festival), worship to the same indirectly implies worship to Donyi-Polo and from this point this festival becomes important for our study.

The following prayer is addressed to the mithun :-

*This day reminds us still
How Dadi-Bote graced
The Engo-Takar people
With you, ATO DORNE, DADI-NINE
And you are a gift of DADI-BOTE.*

*We still cherish all blessings of DADI-BOTE,
And so you are adorned and blessed
With these branches of sacred tree oftan
With the sacred leaf of kow
As desired by DADI-BOTE.*

*Let your number increase quickly
As tan branches grow rapidly;
Be grown up with healthy quickly
As kow leaf grows up quickly.
Your good health be blessed by DADI-BOTE.*

In the above prayer, the people offer prayers for the welfare of the mithun.

On the particular days of the Solung festival the people get reminded of how the ENGO-TAKAR people were blessed with the mithun, which is considered to be a gift of DADI-BOTE (the god of domestic animals). According to the latter's wishes, the mithun is adorned and blessed with the tree of tan and the leaf of kow both of which are considered to be sacred. The people also pray for the rapid increase in population of the mithuns and just as the branches of the tan tree grows very quickly, so also should the number of mithuns increase. It seems the kow leaves also grow quickly. The Adis pray so that the mithun grows rapidly in good health just as the kow leaf, and all this is possible only with the blessings of DADI-BOTE.

In all the various festivals of the Adis, different gods and goddesses or deities are worshipped and honoured, like *DADI-BOTE*, *GUMIN-SOYIN*, *KINE-NANE*, etc. These different deities are not independent but are the parts of Donyi-Polo, manifested with specific purposes. Donyi-Polo is Almighty and possesses supreme power, and the power of the different deities are

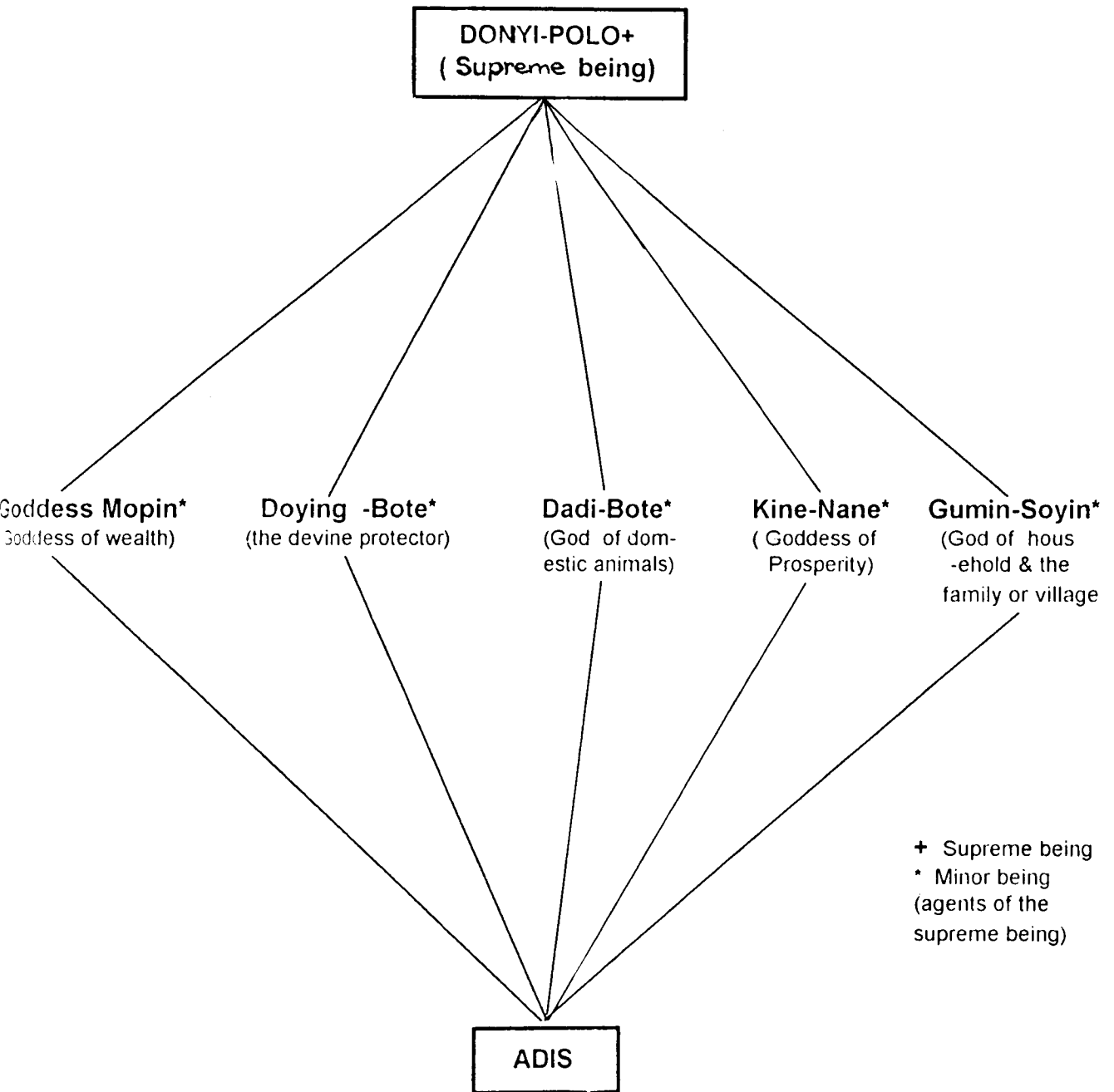


Chart I :

Shows that in all the festivals of the Adis, different gods and goddesses are worshipped and honoured. These gods and goddesses are subordinate to **Donyi-Polo**, each having specific roles.

inseparable from Donyi-Polo. Donyi-Polo is considered to be the Supreme being and the different deities are minor beings.

The different deities are agents of media to contact with the Supreme Donyi-Polo, and worship of different deities signifies the worship of Donyi-Polo. (as shown in Chart-1)

Donyi-Polo is also worshipped when natural calamity occur. For instance, when there is continuous heavy rainfall causing flood and erosion, or at the time of severe drought which causes famine, etc. Donyi-Polo is worshipped.

In addition to the above, the Adis offer prayers to Donyi-Polo in their day-day life. The daily routine of an Adi is as follows :-

After rising from bed, preferably before sunrise, an Adi is supposed to perform personal prayer to Donyi-Polo. Then he engages himself in his professional activities. Finally at night, personal or group prayer is performed in the name of Donyi-Polo to express gratitude for good health of all family members and also for a sound sleep at night.

ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF FESTIVALS :

In order to find out what are the common denominators in festivals, I have prepared a Table-III showing the essential features of festival.

Table - III
ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF FESTIVALS

Sl. No.	Names of Festivals	Objectives	Sacrificial Items	Other Items consumed		Division of labour	Participation	Distribution of meat	Dance	Peculiarities
				Food	Drinks					
1.	Dongen	1. Propitiate Donyi-Polo 2. Solemnise the marriage of newly wed couples	Mithuns (Four numbers) and pigs	Rice, pigs or smoked squirrels	Beer with ginger pieces	Males go to the jungles to collect firewood, plain-tain leaves etc. & to catch the mithuns. Slaughtering of animals is done by men, & recitation. Females-send invitation & clean the grains.	Single village or two villages (villagers & neighbouring villages participate).	All the guests and relatives	Ponung	
2.	Dorung	Community hunting	Fowl	Rice, meat	Rice beer (Apong)	Males - collect poisonous plants (Emo) which are grinded & arrows are made.	Single village	Meat is distributed only among the participants		
3.	Aran	Marking change of season and welcoming spring to welcome Aran	Pigs & fowls (common) Mithun (rare)	Roasted birds, rats, squirrels, dry fish, meat	Apong	Males - organise community hunting	The entire village	Meat is distributed to all	Dance	Females perform worship to the gods and deities by offering rice, meat, eggs, apong etc.
4.	Etor	To propitiate Dadi Bote (the god of domestic animals)	Pigs & fowls	Pig meat	Apong	Males - collect plants from the jungles for making ropes construct fence	Individual or community wise	One part is distributed to every member of the village. Second part is used in community feast	Delong	

Contd.

Sl. No.	Names of Festivals	Objectives	Sacrificial Items	Other Items consumed		Division of labour	Participation	Distribution of meat	Dance	Peculiarities
				Food	Drinks					
5.	Mopin	To propitiate Goddess Mopin (the goddess of wealth) Agricultural festival & for good health, good harvest and prosperity	Cow-mithun, pigs &	Fish, meat, rice-powder cakes	Apong (rice-beer)	Males - collect & store food items	Villagers & guests	To all the villagers & guests	Popir	1. Smearing of face with rice powder 2. On the 2nd day, blood & the hair of the slaughtered, mithun, bristles of pig & feathers of fowl are given to the people as tokens
6.	Solung	Welfare of the villagers, for a rich harvest. This is performed to propitiate Doying Bote (the divine protector), Kine Nane (the goddess of prosperity), Dadi-Bote and Gumin Soyin (the god of household & the family or village)	Mithun, pigs & fowls	Meat, vegetables	Apong (rice-beer)	Old men make bows & arrows		Portion of the meat is distributed to all the relatives. There is exchange of food & meat among friends & relatives	Ponung	Women of the family sacrifice a fowl & offer cake or Etting & apong in the field in the name of goddess Kine Nane.

An analysis of the above chart 'Essential features of festival' shows that the stated objectives vary from festival to festival. From functionalist perspective, these festivals are celebrated to bring the community together and attain some common objectives, such as, to ward off diseases and hidden dangers, mark the beginning of good season, ensure good harvest and continuous supply of animals. On such occasions everybody has a role - the males have one set of tasks while the females have another emphasizing gender difference in the community. Gifts are given and received between relatives, between the members of the village and the guests who come to participate from other villages. The important aspect is that both the individuals and community rights are recognised in gift giving and receiving. For instance, in Etor festival, a part of the meat is given to every member of the village and another portion is reserved for community feasting. Thus in the festivals, mutual rights and obligations of the individual and the importance of maintaining cohesiveness in the community are emphasized. Community is built on the concept of reciprocity, direct or indirect. The festival play an important role of reminding people of their obligations towards each other as per the norms of the society, as well as towards the nature which has made the life on earth possible. Besides, the festivals mean a lot of eating, drinking, and merry-making. Normally, the food they take on such occasions is not what they consume daily, that is the festivals provide opportunities to have something special. There is also license in drinking as well as relaxed behaviour in male-female relations. They indulge in a lot of dancing too. This way the

festivals play a role of letting the steam off, straightening the tensions and allowing new relationships to be formed and to blossom. All this is important for the existence and continued integration of the group. The existence and integration of the group are important for human beings anywhere, but are of critical importance to the people living in this region where inter-group hostility and non-too friendly terrain cannot be overlooked.

The festivals also emphasize the importance of reproduction - of human beings, animals and plants. They also emphasize nature's marvel and mystery in birth. People know very well that without successful reproduction the existence of life is at stake and therefore whatever power is responsible for the same, it has to be appropriately propitiated.

Looked at from this functional perspective, how a festival is actually celebrated, what symbols are used for celebrations, which symbols repeatedly occur, etc., can be considered a matter of detail, the important thing is the observation of the festival by the community.

But if we try to see what are the meanings of these festivals, then each and every detail in the organisation of the festival becomes important. It is indeed not possible for an outsider to indicate the meaning of each symbol as understood by the people. What is possible, is to show what symbols are considered to be most important and unique. It is also possible

to indicate what symbols occur in association with the other symbols. Such exercises may indirectly help us to point out towards possible meanings.

One set of meanings that is certainly conveyed through the participation in the festivals is the sense of satisfaction, joy, security and well-being derived by the people. It appears that human beings have to be repeatedly reassured that the darker (evil) forces have been taken care of, reproduction is assured, the group is intact, and supply of energy in terms of light, water and food is maintained. This explains the periodicity of the festival. But what is the link between these vital aspects of human existence with slaughtering of mithun and that, too, four on the occasion of Dongen (propitiation of Donyi-Polo), fowl on the occasion of Dorung (community hunting), pigs and fowls on the occasion of aran (marking change of season), pigs and fowls on the occasion of Etor (propitiation of Dadi-Bote), cow-mithun, pigs and fowls on the occasion of Mopin (for good harvest and prosperity) and mithun on the occasion of Solung (for good harvest and welfare). The common denominator in all these slaughtering is extinguishing life and letting the blood flow. What does these signify? The people themselves use different terms for slaughtering of animals for ritual purposes which means giving life to the deity; this is very clearly distinguished from slaughtering of animal for normal purpose of consumption. Slaughtering of animal for ritual purposes is a common phenomena all over the world, but is particularly more common in north-east India.

In festivals, the sacrifice may be seen as a gift from the villagers with which they hope to appease the deities. Or the sacrifice may be understood as representing the defeat of the invading demon or demons, who had afflicted or abused, the deities in myths.

Kingsley, in order to explain sacrifice in the honour of Goddess Durga argues that blood - sacrifice is the perception (perhaps only unconscious) that the God who nourishes the crops is identified with the power underlying all life, needs to be reinvigorated from time to time. Despite her powers she is capable of being exhausted through continuous birth and giving nourishment. To replenish her powers and to reinvigorate her, she is given back life in the form of animal sacrifices. The blood in effect resupplies her so that she may continue to give life in return (Kingsley, 1987).

According to Sheth (1979), sacrifice may be defined generally as a rite in the course of which something is forfeited or destroyed, its object being to establish relations between a source of spiritual strength and one in need of such strength, for the benefit of the latter.

Verrier Elwin (1960) has commented that the sacrifice is a sacrament, where the people eat in the name of gods.

Thus, one of the functions of sacrifice of animal is for the propitiation of the gods/goddesses. This is done for the welfare of the people, for reproduction of life, and for

continuous supply of essential things like water, food, light etc.

Another function of sacrifice is that, sacrifice provides abundance of meat which are shared as per their norms among the people. Thus the people are able to have a feast among themselves and the other members who participate in the festival or ritual.

Third interpretation could be that there is another world of varying power, rank, qualities and desires. These also have the power to oversee what goes on in the world of human beings. These power too, need food and drinks like the people in the living world. They have to be kept satisfied with the choicest of food and drinks. Mithun is the choicest of the animal for the Adis. Donyi-Polo is their supreme deity. He is therefore offered the highest ranking animal, but why four of them? There is no clear answer for that except that it is part of their tradition. Mopin and Solung are the other two festivals in which mithun is slaughtered but along with pigs and fowls. These two festivals are also connected with Donyi-Polo, reproduction and general well-being of the people. It is interesting to note that it is the cow mithun which is slaughtered on the occasion of Mopin which is primarily an agricultural festival. The underlying assumption could be that reproduction is a female activity and hence a cow-mithun. But this festival is also associated with the practice of smearing faces with rice-powder. On the second day of the festival, people are given blood of the mithun, berries

of the pig and feathers of fowls. There must be some underlying meaning of all this but in addition, it certainly shows that the receivers have participated in the sacred ritual and they, too, are entitled for protection and blessing of the supernatural power. These symbols also indicate the solidarity of the group.

In Solung festival, apart from slaughtering of mithun, pigs and fowls, women slaughter fowls and offer cakes and apung in the name of a female deity Kine nane. Apparently this festival too is associated with reproduction and well-being of the people.

In summary, it can be stated that people see a connection between slaughtering of animals, offering of food and drinks to the various deities with rich harvest, continuous supply of animals and their own well-being.

Table - IV
ANALYSIS OF MYTHS

Myths of Festivals	Elements	Symbols	Significance	Other characters
1. Dorung	Nuyi → Archers Gamro	Strong Forces	Stronger forces are required to overpower destructive force.	
	Guogong & Bar siira	Destructive Force		
	Kite	Observer (sentinel)	Discover the truth	
	Dadi Bote ...	God of domestic animals	He is very power- ful, a strong force	
	Tani (man) ..	Weak	Seeks help from stronger force, i.e. Dadi Bote.	
2. Aran	Nyani Nete	Beautiful young girl	Newly wed bride	She is being given a hearty farewell to her husband's place
	Sike Nane	Mother of Kiran or Aran	Help man through Aran	
	Aran or Kiran	Knowledgeable person	Aran ↓ ↑ Ginger, meat, apong etc.	
	Tani (man)	Ignorant	Seeks help. Mutual reciprocity. (Give and take relationship)	
3. Mopin	Abotani	Father of Mankind	First human being on earth (Ignorant of the art of cultivation). Cunning & clever.	
	Kargu	a place in heaven	For taking decisions (like court or village council)	
	Donyi	God of light	Provides of sunlight for culti- vation works & animals for domestication	
	Mopin	Godless of wealth and prosperity	Provider of seeds & agricultural implements	Materials required for cultivation works
	Peka	God of war	Provider of weapons & shields	

Myths of Festivals	Elements	Symbols	Significance	Other characters
Bute-Yapom		God of jungle	Provider of games during hunting	
Takar-Taji		Two brothers who are ignorant about the performance of a ritual	Existence of relationship	
Keko-Pai (squirrel)		Messenger	Mediate between Takar-Taji and Abotani	
Pejek (a small bird)		Sacrifice	They sacrificed portions of their body as meat for the guests as there was shortage of meat	
Takom Durma (animal)		Sacrifice		
Dumpu (deer)				
Kipu (dog)			Hunger. As there was shortage of meat he kicked at the same Hunger.	
Rat		Instrument of freedom	(Seeing the deer, the dog started chasing the deer) To release Abotani from captivity	
Diya-Tasi		Daughter of Mopin	Gift from God (as bride to Abotani) - to teach Abotani the art of cultivation. Reciprocal exchange. Seeds + her daughters	
			Mopin → Abotani Mithun, pigs, fowls.	
Dadi-Bote Medeng-Sene		Good Evil	Good triumphs over evil	

System of Festivals	Elements	Symbols	Significance	Other characters
Myth I	Nuyi Gamro	Archers	Strong, brave forces	Stronger forces are required to overcome powerful adversary Seeks help from Bamboo, Mithun ↑ Tan tree ↓ Okjok tree ↓
	Gungong (boar) Engo-Takar people (first people)	Powerful, destructive Weak and ignorant		
	Dadi-Bote	God of domestic animals	Reciprocal exchange	
	Squirrel	Mediator	Sacrifice	squirrel (Lipo) & the lady of fragrance & perfume
Myth I	Solong Yidum-Bote	Son of the God of knowledge	Has given life to paddy plant.	
	Kine-Nane	Goddess of prosperity	Provider of paddy plant	
	Squirrel	Messenger	To obtain paddy plant for man from Kine Nane.	Nithuns & Piga
	Man	Weak, ignorant	Seeks help.	
Myth II	Sedi-Liair-Sobo	Gigantic animal blocking communication. Furious animal	Source of mithun.	
	Dadi Kowi-Yokmo	Priest	Identification of object.	
	Dadi-Soxi	Kingdom of animals	Provide hunters.	
	Medeng-Sene	Evil, cunning	Good triumphs over evil.	
	Banji - Banwang	Land of bloodthirsty spirit		
	Dadi-Bote	Good		
	Nui Gamro	Archers	Strong and powerful	Destructive force is destroyed by strong force. Reciprocal exchange
Gungong or boar	Powerful adversary. Destructive			
Dadi-Bote	Owner of mithun			
			Mithun	Squirrel fairy from the land of fragrance

Types of festivals	Elements	Symbols	Significance	Other characters
	Engo-takar people	Possessed no mithun	Received mithun	
	Dadi-Karki- Mili, Dadi- Mirung-Lejung, Dadi-Mireng- Legeng & Dadi-Miko-Pakbo	Strong forces (Hunters)	Able to resume communication between earth and heaven by destroying Sedi- Limir-Sobo	

1. MYTH OF DORUNG FESTIVAL :

In this myth, two archers Nuyi and Gamro have been commissioned to contain the menace created by the boar. The archers are strong and skillful. They are human beings and prone to commit mistake. Boar is also strong but cunning too. He destroys the crops cultivated by the human beings. Crops are vital for the survival of the human beings. But human beings are not able to meet the deceit of the boar which represents a negative and destructive force. They summon the two archers who have the necessary courage and skills. They represent positive force. Ultimately the archers are able to destroy the destructive force but not before one of them made the mistake of hitting the mithun and inviting the wrath of Dadi-Bote, the god of domestic animals. The destructive force is destroyed and once again peace is established.

The myth has an observer in the shape of a kite. The kite sitting on the top of a tree is able to see what Gumgong is upto. Kite helps Tani (man) to identify the culprit.

But by himself, man is weak and helpless. In order to come out of the difficulty, he has to seek the help of Dadi-Bote, representing a powerful force. Man is surrounded by all kinds of forces - positive and negative. He has to seek the help of positive forces. The imagery of kite fits very well in the role of observer. Kite flies high or perches on tall trees and is able to see good and evil that goes on. Gumgong's evil deeds are

exposed and has to pay the price for his evil doings by his life.

2. MYTH OF ARAN FESTIVAL :

In this myth, nature has been personified in two ways. One is the winter incarnation, Nyani Mete and the other is that of spring, Aran or Kiran.

Nyani Mete has been personified as a beautiful young girl who is married off to a man and is being given a warm farewell to her husband's home. As such, there is sorrow and pathos. This is because the girl is leaving her parental home and going to her husband's home, which is always a tearful event.

On the other hand, there is Aran or Kiran, son of Sike Nane, who is a very knowledgeable person. Tani or man is ignorant and he lacks knowledge in cultivation works, rearing of animals etc. which are essential for existence. As such, Aran is being welcomed or the knowledge is being gladly received. This implies the heralding of a new dawn for existence.

There is also a male and female concept in this myth. Nyani Mete has been personified as female, and Aran as male. The human beings are according farewell to winter and they are ready to receive the spring season because in winter there's hardly any vegetation and so there is a crisis in food supply. While in spring, vegetation begins and the nature is back with life.

There also exists a reciprocal relationship. As Aran is knowledgeable, he assists man in cultivation works etc. and Tani (man) in turn greets him with ginger, meat, apong, etc.

3. MYTH OF MOPIN FESTIVAL :

In this myth, Abotani or the first human being on earth, was weak and ignorant lacking knowledge about the arts of cultivation. As such his condition was miserable and he did not know what to do. Seeing this, the gods and goddesses felt pity for him and so they met at a place in heaven, Kargu, where the decision was taken that they would all extend help to Abotani. It may be noted here, that from the very beginning some space was fixed for taking decisions.

In accordance with their decisions, the different gods and goddesses Donyi, Mopin, Peka and Bute-Yapom contributed the following. Donyi or the god of light provided sunlight required for cultivation works and animals for rearing purposes, Mopin or the goddess of wealth and prosperity provided seeds and agricultural implements, Peka - the god of war provided weapons and shields and Bute-Yapom or the god of jungle provided games during hunting. The different materials/elements provided by the gods and goddesses were essential for cultivation works. For instance, without sunlight or without seeds and agricultural implements, etc. cultivation is not possible.

It so happened that, at that time there lived two

brothers by the name of Takar-Taji who were ignorant about the performance of a ritual. As such, they sent Keko-pai (a squirrel) as a messenger to find out from Abotani, about the same. Keko-pai has been projected as a mediator between Takar-Taji and Abotani.

After the performance of the ritual, meat of the sacrificial animal was distributed to all the guests, and the responsibility of distribution was entrusted with Pejek, a kind of small bird and Takom Dumma, a kind of animal. As meat was being served to the guests, there appeared to be a shortage of the same. So in order to deal with the crises, Pejek contributed flesh from its leg, while Takom Dumma contributed flesh from its head. Thus, it is seen that both Pejek and Takom Dumma sacrificed portions of their body in order to meet the requirement and also to satisfy the guests. The concept of sacrifice has been prominent here and it is also seen that in order to satisfy, sacrifice is essential.

Dumpu, the deer, was very hungry and had a voracious appetite. Seeing that there was shortage of meat, Dumpu got very angry and kicked at the meat. This act of Dumpu infuriated Kipu (the dog). He, too, was hungry and lost his share of the meat. As such, he started pursuing the deer. This chase led them to the land of Mopin where the dog was taken captive by the people. Not knowing the whereabouts of the dogs, Abotani became very much anxious and went in search of the same and finally reached the land of Mopin. There he, too, was taken captive. In order to release himself and the dog he formulated an ingenious scheme.

He placed a dead rat under his arm-pit which emitted a pungent smell. This made mopin very much worried and she thought that he would die. So in order to escape the risk of Abotani's death, she set him free along with the dog.

The goddess Mopin gave Abotani seeds for cultivation and she also gave her daughter Diya Tami to Abotani as his bride. This she did because her daughter knew the art of cultivation and as such Abotani would be able to learn the same from Diya Tami. The marriage of Diya Tami with Abotani further implies that there is a need of reproduction. Goddess Mopin also advised Abotani to offer mithun, pigs and fowls in her honour at the time of sowing for a successful cultivation.

4. MYTH OF ETOR FESTIVAL :

In this myth, Dadi-Bote the God of domestic animals, symbolize goodness while Medeng Sene (evil spirit) symbolizes evil. Both these forces have a dispute over the ownership of mithun and finally it is Dadi-Bote who is successful in claiming ownership of the mithun. Thus it is seen that good ultimately triumphs over evil.

It was found that, at that time there were two archers by the name of Nuyi and Gamro who were very brave and strong. The Engo-Takar people (the first people) were very weak and ignorant. They had started plantations. They planted sweet potatoes, but these were destroyed by Gungong or boar who was very powerful and destructive. As such the Engo-Takar people approached Nuyi and

Gamro who represent positive force to kill the boars and they were successful on doing so. This signifies that stronger forces are required to overcome powerful adversary.

The Engo-Takar people also wanted a mithun from Dadi-Bote and so they sent a squirrel as mediator, to Dadi-Bote. He agreed to give the mithun only on the condition that the people would offer him squirrel (Lipo) and the lady of fragrance and perfume. So there is a reciprocal relationship. Dadi-Bote also demands the thumb finger of the squirrel as an agreement. This shows the concept of sacrifice. The squirrel had to sacrifice his thumb finger for the Engo-Takar people. Thus it is seen that in order to reach the supernatural deity, the Engo-Takar people seek help from other forces.

5. MYTH OF SOLUNG FESTIVAL :

Myth I - In this myth, man have been projected as weak and ignorant. He had no knowledge about cultivation works and he was also not in possession of paddy.

Yidum - Bote was the son of the God of knowledge who had given life to paddy plant and this was later nourished by Kine Nane who is the Goddess of prosperity. Since man did not possess paddy, he sent the squirrel to obtain the same from Kine Nane. The squirrel here acts as a mediator between Kine Nane and man.

Kine Nane gives paddy plant to man only on the condition that the latter would give him mithun and pigs. Since then the people celebrate Solung festival in honour of Kine Nane.

Myth II - In this myth, the communication between earth and heaven is blocked by a gigantic furious animal Sedi-Limir-Sobo which represents a negative force. This indicates that man were not able to communicate with the supernatural. As such they were very much worried and so they approached the hunters from the land of Dadi-Somi (the kingdom of animals). These hunters were very skillful and were represented as positive force. They were able to kill Sedi-Limir-Sobo and thus resume communication between earth and heaven. Ultimately the negative force is destroyed by the positive force.

It so happened that, at that time there was a dispute going on between Medeng Sene (an evil spirit) and Dadi-Bote over the claim of ownership of mithun. Medeng Sene symbolises evil because Medeng-Sene appeared from the land of Banji-Banmang (i.e. land of blood-thirsty spirit). Dadi-Bote symbolises goodness, as such, it is seen that ultimately Dadi-Bote wins which symbolises that good always triumphs over evil.

At that time, there were two archers, Nui and Gamro who were strong and skillful. The Engo-Takar people had started cultivation and the crops were destroyed by the boar or Gungong who is also strong and represents destructive force. The two archers are summoned by the Engo-Takar people to kill the boar

and ultimately they are able to destroy the destructive force.

In all the above myths, the common themes have been identified as follows :-

1. Human beings have been projected as weak and ignorant.
2. As opposed to this, there are powerful forces which are ready to destroy not only the human beings, but other natural things.
3. There is a mediator - who not only helps but establishes relationship between people.
4. Crops are essential for the survival of human beings.
5. The stronger positive forces are always able to destroy the destructive and negative forces.
6. Good ultimately triumphs over evil.
7. There is a reciprocal exchange between human beings and the deities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MITHUN IN ADI SOCIETY

Mithun is considered as a descendent of Donyi-Polo. As such considering mithun as a symbol of Donyi-Polo, we can find out its importance in the society in various fields like economic, political and social.

To start with, it would be best to give a brief description of mithun. Mithun is a very rare species and is found in the north-eastern region of the country. There are various theories regarding the origin of mithun. Some suggest that mithun has been evolved from gaur (*Bos gaurus*). But according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, mithun is believed to have originated from the casual mating of wild gaur bulls with domestic hill cattle, and this view is widely accepted.

MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCES :

Different types of legends are prevalent among the different tribes of Arunachal Pradesh regarding the origin of mithun. The legend that is prevalent amongst the Adi tribe is as follows mithun is believed to be a representative of the Sun. It so happened that the historic narrowed path "Donying Lingkit" was blocked by a huge object called "Limir Sobo".

The object couldn't be identified by the people at that time, but was later identified as the placenta of Pedong. It had



MITHUN

transformed into a Limir Sobo. An elderly person or priest by the name of KANKI BOTE was deputed to slaughter Limir Sobo and as desired, it was slaughtered. The pieces of flesh were thrown in different places which again grew up in different forms of plants and animals. The testicle of it fell in the land of Dadi-Somi (Kingdom of animal), from which a creeper of gourd grew which bore a gourd.

The gourd was cut open and from the gourd appeared a lump of flesh. Different materials were collected from the plants that grew out of the pieces of Limir Sobo and limbs and organs were put into the flesh and it was then kept under observation. At last that lump took the shape of the mithun, also known as ESO.

About the origin of mithun, S.H.Preter reported in his book "Indian Animals", (1948) that gaur has been known to breed with domestic cattle.

The total population of mithuns in the hill states may be noted as follows (Table -v) :

Table - v

Total Mithun Population in the North Eastern Region

Sl.No.	Name of the States	Total Population of Mithuns
1.	Arunachal Pradesh	84,852
2.	Mizoram	529
3.	Manipur	12,895
4.	Nagaland	16,539



Of all the states, Arunachal Pradesh has the highest population of mithuns.

Mithun belongs to the :

Class	-	<i>Mammalia</i>
Order	-	<i>Artiodactyla</i>
Family	-	<i>Bovidae</i>
Genus	-	<i>Bos</i>

There are two distinct varieties of mithun available. One is a massive bigger variety and cows calve in every alternate year and the other is a smaller variety varying in body structure and cows calve every year.

Maturity age :

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOUR :

Mithuns are massive in size and have a very well-developed shoulder region. The head is big with broad and well-developed frontal bones and the horns are stumpy medium sized and black or partial white in colour. Most of the mithuns possess black colour with white stocking in all the four feet. The eyes are prominent and covered with heavy eye lids. Mithuns possess a prominent backbone and the hump (as in other animals) is replaced by a sharp ridge which commences from the back of neck and tapers at the shoulder extending upto the middle of the back upto the 7th thoracic vertebra. The tail is covered with short hairs which ends into tufts of hairs towards the tip. The feet are sturdy with cleft grooves (clover footed).

Mithuns are semi-domesticated animal. As they remain

in deep forests, they are generally very ferocious. But when any stranger approaches them with open palm offering them common salt. They become gentle and docile. They are addicted to common salt. Usually they roam about in the forests. Though mithun prefers leaves and twigs of bushes and trees, but it gets easily accustomed to eat grass either in green or hay form. Mithuns quench their thirst by drinking water from small streams and during noon when it's very hot, they retire to the deep forests and it is the nearby streams where they ruminate.

REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR :

Maturity age :

A female mithun matures and is capable of conceiving at the age of around three years. While a male mithun also matures sexually at around three years of age.

Importance of Mithun in Society :

The tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh consider mithun as a sacred animal and mithun plays a very significant role in the society.

In tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh, the wealth of a person is measured in terms of the number of mithuns he possesses. The more mithuns a person possesses, the more wealthier he is considered to be. This again, directly or indirectly, determines the economic status of a person in the society. Again it is seen that the wealthier persons of the

society play a very influential role in political matters.

Mithun is also used for religious purposes. In most of the festivals, mithuns are sacrificed. Mithun is the choice of the animal for holy sacrifices to deities.

Again, bride-price is usually paid in kind, in terms of mithun. The number of mithuns that a person has to pay mainly depends on his economic condition. Sometimes crimes and disputes are also settled on a basis of compensation in which a guilty person has to pay in terms of mithuns. Thus mithun is an important animal of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and this is the only choice of animal for reviving friendship and ruling out differences in case of enmity.

Thus it is seen that the mithun has economic, social, cultural, political and ritual functions in the life of the people in Arunachal Pradesh. It is important source of food, it is used in establishing peace between the parties locked up in some dispute, it is used to compensate losses and in communicating with spirits and deities. Once a mithun is offered to the deities, it is expected that the well being of the living human beings is assured.

Chapter - V

DONYI-POLO AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW SOCIETY

The Donyi-Polo faith is the way the Adi people of Arunachal Pradesh look at themselves and the cosmos. It provides them a window through which they try to understand the world as they see it and beyond and try to draw meaning of their existence. By textualisation and institutionalisation of their oral traditions, they are, consciously and unconsciously trying to legitimise their religion to themselves and others, mobilise more people to their faith and also to establish their identity on more 'rational' and firmer grounds. In the process, they are laying down the foundation of a new society.

This statement needs some explanation. The question as to what has happened that they have to do all this now. The answer to this question is intertwined in historical, political, economic and educational development of the region.

Historically, the region is inhabited by a large number of tribal groups having their own culture, language and religion. In the past, they did interact for economic social and political reasons but yet they maintained their boundaries and followed their own traditions. There were periods of hostility as well as periods of friendly relations among these groups. But by nature of things, particularly the production being at mere subsistence level, there was no question of one group establishing complete

dominance over the other. But segmentary and self-regulatory system of each group was broken to a great extent during the colonial period. The population was exposed, though not intensively to a new order of things such as roads, newer technology, new people, new forms of administration and a superior political power. Obviously, these things were making impact on their society and culture. Further, they were confronted with new religions. They reacted to these in a variety of ways and also must have indulged in self-examination of their own religious beliefs and practices, in which the dominant aspect has been the unity of all beings - human and non-humans. The inter-dependence and inter-connectedness of human beings with animals, plants, sun, moon, hills, rivers are expressed in a variety of ways in their myths and numerous rituals they observe.

Post-colonial situation brought another dramatic change. They were provided with constitutional rights, safeguards and opportunities to develop according to their own genius. Protection and development were two important slogans of the new administration. Now they do not have to look down upon themselves and their practices. But what is to be protected and why must have been the upper-most questions to all concerned. In the meanwhile, another important development took place which had far-reaching consequences in their lives. Arunachal Pradesh was carved out as a separate state within the Indian Union (20th February, 1987). The tribal population of the state were now to run the affairs of the state. The state is a modern concept and it has well defined rules and regulations, stratified bureaucratic

organisation and so on. But their own society is still 'simple' lacking stratification based on either primordial ties or specialisation. Most of the social relations are based on face to face relationship. In the field of rituals too, the emphasis is on mass participation. The whole community participates in drinking, eating, dancing and making arrangements for the festivals organised in the name of Donyi-Polo. In the traditional set-up, there are no privileged people and no external organisation to regulate their lives. Religion was embedded in their society and culture. Their institutions were not separated from each other. There were no hierarchy of values. Behaviour was interlinked. But after the new political set up, all this has changed.

The state is an external organisation. It works in an impersonal way based on a set of rules and regulations. It has a bureaucracy and has a set of people who are privileged. In this scheme of things, how does their own society fit in which does not have a formal charter, specialists and formal organisation. The faiths, ideas and concepts they have, they acquire them in the process of growing up through doing and experiencing. But in the new set-up, there is an entirely different kind of demand. Demand is more compelling on the shoulders of the elite and leaders. They have to provide adequate rationale for what their community does. Some have to systematise their thoughts and put them in a language which would be understood by all. This also requires some sieving, while in the village situation, an 'act' is 'rightly' performed as a result of a lot of mutual discussions and corrections by the knowledgeable elite of the community. This

goes on at all the stages of ritual performances. But now the focus is changing from village to a much wider arena - now the arena is Arunachal Pradesh and further. The groups hitherto living in their closed boundaries have an urge and also invitation to come out and participate in wider activities of the state as well as reconstruction of their own societies. They have to lay down the basis of interaction among themselves and also put what they believe in on firmer grounds. In order to find wider acceptability, the appeal of their faith has to be universal. As a result of all this, a lot of activities both at organisational and theological levels have been generated.

INSTITUTION BUILDING :

A number of institutions have been set up. In order to promote the concept of Donyi-Poloism among the people, the Donyi-Polo Mission was registered as a Society in 1979 under the Chairmanship of Shri Gegong Apang. This Mission, at first, established a Donyi-Polo Vidya Bhawan at Itanagar as a model public school, which has classes from KG to Class X. This Vidya Bhawan has got other curriculum activities also apart from the academic curriculum of the school. These are Diary farm, Poultry farm and School kitchen garden. Besides, there is a sister organisation Boum Kakir Mission and this Mission runs two schools - one is for the needy and orphans and the other is the Donyi-Polo Mission School at Sagalee. There is also a Commercial Training Institute at Itanagar run by the Donyi-Polo Mission where Stenography is being taught, Megabyte Computer Academy

Section was started in the same Institute since 1989. Donyi-Polo Mission Charitable Homeopathic Dispensary located at Itanagar was started in 1983. The said Mission has decided to open a Deaf and Dumb School at Itanagar. It has started at Itanagar during 1989 a Music College. At present, classes of vocal songs, tabla, dance and sitar are imparted.

A separate section is also being opened on tribal folk song and dances. There is no hard and fast rules as regards admission to these institutions and admission is open to one and all. If a person is interested to seek admission in any of the above institutions, he need not be an Adi or a member of a tribal group. Even non-tribals are permitted to join. For example : there are many Bangl^ales and Assamese who have joined the Music College located at Itanagar.

Besides the above institutions, there are several social and cultural organizations located in various Sub-divisions of Siang district. Of these, the ones located at Along and Pasighat Sub-divisions are -

1. Along Sub-division -

- (a) Dist. Social Welfare & Cultural Society, Along.
- (b) Aided Cultural Centre, Kobong
- (c) Aided Cultural Centre, Rungong
- (d) Echimoku Aided Nehru Yuvak Kendra
- (e) Darkang Aided Nehru Yuvak Kendra
- (f) Angu village Cultural Centre
- (g) Jomo village Cultural Centre

2. Pasighat Sub-division -

Adi Cultural & Literacy Society

3. Adi-Folk Literature Research Centre, Along

These cultural and welfare societies at Along and Pasighat attract a great number of villagers from great distances and they are not only bringing a new awakening to the artistic tradition and genius but is injecting new life and dimensions to it. Researches are also being undertaken on the basic elements of Adi culture in which importance is given to the collection and publication of oral texts, like the faith in Donyi Polo.

In Donyi-Polo, there is no shrine or place of worship. In their social gathering and village council (Kebang), they distinctly take the name of 'Donyi-Polo' in course of discussion and counsel. They believe that the Donyi-Polo (Sun-Moon) is the ruler of this world and all the deeds of man on this earth are watched by Him. For example, in case of disputes, the jurist and the village elders conduct the proceedings and impart judgment in the sacred name of Donyi-Polo who is invoked for fair and truthful judgment. This belief in Donyi-Polo has discouraged his followers from telling lies and committing crimes like theft, murder, etc. The followers of Donyi-Polo faith are expected to be free from greed and jealousy and they treat everyone equally. They believe that Donyi-Polo is impartial and they do not make any distinction between tribe, caste, creed or colour. If a person is good, honest and kind, and speaks nicely, the Adi people say that 'He is a Donyi-Polo Ami' which means that 'He is

a man of Donyi-Polo' or 'a man of the sun and the moon'. This also implies that unless a man is pure and clean in heart, he cannot behave properly with others. According to the Adis, anyone can be considered to be a man of Donyi-Polo. In this sense, the people belonging to different cultural groups can be believers in Donyi-Polo and can interact with each other. That is Donyi-Poloism allows and in the present context, when there is a kind of great enthusiasm for it, also promotes cross - cultural interactions aiding in the creation of a new society based on common religious beliefs and practices.

Donyi-Polo is the religious faith of universal brother-hood. According to Kaling Borang "The Donyi-Poloists believe that the men settled in different parts of the world are all brothers. This fact is clarified in 'Abang' - sacred hymns and myths which go to tell that the plains, hills and the mountainous portions of the land mass were distributed and divided amongst the brothers, and therefore. The brothers had to divide themselves and spread over to different parts of the world to master over their land. This belief in brotherhood is clearly indicated in the day to day practices of Donyi-Poloists, for they do not hesitate in bringing in any man, woman, irrespective of caste, creed and religion and region to their hearts".

The social ethic in Donyi-Polo is to unite the tribes in the region. The focus of unity is based on discipline and undoubtedly on the quality of conduct.

The Donyi and Polo, Sun and Moon, imply something higher which are the symbolic material representations of the supreme being. It is not a religion based on human beings, ~~but~~ but it is a religion, a belief based on the unseen supernatural power which can be experienced by any and every human being.

The followers of Donyi-Polo faith do not have any specific symbol except the sun and the moon. It is learnt that in the name of Donyi-Polo, they pray without bowing their heads or folding their hands. They pray for purity, honesty, vision, peace, friendliness etc. which according to their beliefs are the qualities which Donyi-Polo represents and transfers to the living beings.

The lack of a cult-image and the inclusion of natural elements as their objects of worship help in wider acceptability of the faith.

Donyi-Poloism has been recognised as one of the religious faiths in the world by the World Religious Congress (1990).

Following an invitation from the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), with its head quarters at Frankfurt in West Germany, the Donyi-Polo Mission sent a three member delegation to the World Religious Congress held at Hamburg in West Germany from July 23rd to August 2nd, 1990. The members

of the delegation were Shri Oshong Ering, Shri Tumpak Ete and Shri Talom Rukbo. This was the first time the Donyi-Polo Mission was represented in an International Forum.

Another World Religious Congress was held at Bangalore in India from August 15th - 19th, 1993 and the members who represented Donyi-Poloism were Ms. Mamang Dai and Mr. B. Pertin.

Chapter - VI

DISCUSSION

In analysing the religion of the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh, it is found that Donyi-Poloism is a channel, through which human aspiration and faith which are traditionally cultivated by the Adis, is expressed.

Like anybody else they have to face the realities of life, make sense of their existence as well as of the nature. In search of the answers to their questions and in an effort to find coherence of the total existence, they have discovered the profundity of Donyi-Polo. The supreme qualities of Donyi-Polo are expressed through natural symbols such as the Sun and the Moon. The qualities of which are easily understood and realised. Day in and day out they perform their tasks enabling creatures to make their existence possible. The qualities on which these two powerful symbols are based have to be immutable and universally acceptable.

Thus, traditionally, Donyi or the Sun is considered to be the principal guide of truth and Polo or the Moon symbolises love, kindness, sympathy and compassion. The Adis attempt to accomplish perfection through truth, wisdom and compassion and thus realise Donyi-Polo. Donyi-Polo can therefore, be considered as a philosophy of humanistic faith that is based on natural traditions, ideology of which has evolved out of the belief and practices of the generations of the tribe.

In Donyi-Poloism, the flow of thought is maintained uninterruptedly through direct, personal contacts in which knowledge is believed to be complete and genuine.

It is seen that the Adis are awakening up to their pride in being Adi (the original). They are also trying to rediscover the religion of the Nature. They are interpreting their relationship to the world on the basis of the hermeneutical principles. Thus they cling to the divine universal symbol of the Sun and Moon, which helps to maintain their original identity of the natural religion. As such, a new social order is opening up based on the hierarchy of values of which they apparently had no comprehension before.

In the light of the data presented, the following observations have been made in the context of the objectives that were set for the study -

The strategies adopted for organisation of the tribal oral religion has been to give a call to eliminate all alien beliefs and practices, to revitalise the traditional ritual practices and to produce a new theology.

All these are problematic. The call to eliminate the alien beliefs and practices has no doubt a populist dimension. It is aimed to gather support from within and as well as across groups. The call readily appeals to the emotions of the people and helps in mobilisation. In practical terms the call is a kind

of reaction to what has been going on in the region. Attempts to proselytize people in the region has been going on. Proselytization at one time may have brought a glorified status but that does not work anymore in the changed political circumstances. Moreover, they realise that proselytization does not fit into their way of life and also undermines. Proselytization can be shunned but what about modernisation which is creeping in. All this resulted in their search for a coherent order of values which would be capable of conferring meaning and unity in the society. This they found in Donyi-Poloism. Donyi-Poloism thus became a symbol of their religion and cultural identity. Not that they have been able to resolve all the problems and oppositions, they confront them and as a result of which Donyi-Poloism is continuously evolving itself.

Rituals make the religious faith visible. But in tribal society they are much more than that. Rituals are very closely related with their economic activities, with their social relations and the maintenance of reciprocal behaviour. Besides, the ritual reflect their conception of nature, supernatural and also their values. Moreover, in order to distance themselves from the alien beliefs and practices, their own rituals get more intensively emphasised. In the process the observance of their own rituals get reenergised and revitalised. They became a rallying point. No doubt revitalisation of their rituals in the changed context cannot avoid making use of modern technology. Modern technology is efficient and has a wider reach. But modern technology also brings in new elements. For example, the use of modern means of communication in passing on the messages, in

gathering people and in various activities associated with observance of the rituals is extraordinarily efficient as compared to what it was in the past. The sheer pace by which people can be reached now or brought together breaks the traditional rhythm and put in demand for more physical space and more spiritual information.

These are of course problem areas. But their problem of problems has been how to integrate the rituals with the production of a theology. According to Saraswati the distinction between oral and textual religion are unbridgeable. One is bound by sound, the other by sign, in one transmission is direct and personal, in the other it is indirect and impersonal, in one creativity is involved on each occasion of transmission the other is repetitive. In oral transmission the spiritual power is realised by recitation. While in textual, sign has no power by itself. In oral religion, knowledge is complete and authentic, consciousness sees the spiritual fullness. The written word is incomplete, open to interpretation. The oral is unbounded and immeasurable, the flow is continuous. In written forms the knowledge gets circumscribed and fixed. In oral form the reliance is on self realisation by the collectivity. In written form the reliance is on the other. The expressions are unique and authored (Saraswati 1992). The oral religions by the definitions are enveloped in mysticism which get fully reflected in a variety of their rituals that are observed. Rituals can be performed in the minutest of details - and in perfect sequence but no explanations can be offered. Explanations are in the forms of observing the rituals correctly. This facility tends to get lost in the written

forms. The mystic cloud has to be removed, explanation has to be offered for clarity, understanding and easy transmission. If this be the distinction, the problem before the elites of Donyi-Poloism is what kind of explanation to offer for beating the drum in a particular way, sacrificing a cock, a pig or a mithun, drinking rice beer, dancing and so on.

These are integral part of culture. In other words the culture and religion are interwoven. They cannot be separated. But this is exactly what the intellectuals of Donyi-Polo faith are expected to do. In order to communicate and enlarge its acceptability, the intellectuals are supposed to put religion in a separate pedestal and to be identified as such, distinct from culture. It has to be in such moral terms that are universally accepted.

Culture represents the basic world view of the people in time and space and it is as dynamic as the society itself. As the society evolves so thus the culture. Since, for whatever reasons, the society perceives that textualisation of their religion is an essential task, culture too has to respond to it one way or the other. Obviously it means that there would be more intensive search of the roots and at the same time what are the new values that can be incorporated in the text that is being developed. The implications that arise from the timeless tribal traditions, breaking in part or in full acceptance of the historical religions are great and complex.

The old elements of the tribal faith are reinterpreted in the new idioms of the historical religions and the old idioms of the tribal religion are reformed by new elements. This is a process of retraditionalisation. But retraditionalisation leads to detraditionalisation which obviously is going to cause ripples in the society. It may destabilise the society to a great extent. There may be strong reasons for the tribal, to react against the new thrusts. In other words what is supposed to unite people may also become cause for disunity. This represent the tussle within the community.

The elites of the Donyi-Polo faith represent only a small section of the ethnic groups of the state, namely, the Adis. Some twenty years back the ethnic composition of this group officially included just two major tribes, The Gallong and the Minyong from the erstwhile Siang district. Today the group Adi represents other tribal groups which were once sub-tribes of either of the major groups - Gallong and Minyong. As such the group today has atleast 11 tribes. Whereas official documents show 110 tribes including sub-tribes in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. (Census of India. Vol. Arunachal Pradesh : 1981). Thus the group 'Adi' envelopes all the sub-tribes of the Adi group and they are substantiating their religion through elaboration of the existing myths in textual forms.

Though the Adi theologians deny their tie with any other religions (like Christianity, Buddhism, etc.), they remain grounded in these religious thoughts. In interpreting the indigenous belief of the Adis, they are looking for the similar-

ities with Semitic religion. For instance, Donyi-Polo has been endowed with such attributes as 'creator', 'almighty', 'omnipresent', 'omniscient', etc. The minority but dominant group even succeeded in getting a bill enacted in the year 1978, providing legal protection to the indigenous faith.

The intellectuals have also taken up issues related to ecology. In order to preserve tribal culture and identity, the preservation of wild life is an essential factor and some of the Adi intellectuals advocated the ban on the sacrifice of mithuns. Oshong Ering suggests the total ban on the sacrifice of animals even on festive occasions. Since he does not want to discourage the spirit of sacrifice, he has suggested an alternative of using symbolic images to substitute the killing of animal. But this may pose problem. The tribesmen are habituated with sacrificing animals during festivals. As such, they may not accept the idea of using symbolic images.

JUSTIFICATION :

The religious intellectuals have provided certain justifications in support of their effort to textualise their oral traditions and beliefs. According to T. Rukbo, there are two crucial factors responsible for this, namely, (a) party politics and (b) alien culture. Party politics has brought about disunity in the society.

Oshong Ering has further provided an explanation of

traditional cultural heritage, that is beliefs, systems, superstitious practices, myths, religious ethics, philosophy rituals, songs, dances etc. which are orally transmitted from one generation to another are there to establish their distinct identity. The people feel proud recalling their past and in maintaining their self-respect and dignity. The Adi intellectuals, therefore, are very much aware of the fact that their myths, folklores, etc. are important not only for sustaining their distinct identity, but are also a great source of their cultural history. So they feel it essential and necessary to textualise and record the oral traditions.

According to Tumpak Ete, with the spread of modern school education which takes children away from the traditional education and way of life, the priestly school of rhapsodists is fast disappearing. The old tales are losing their appeal because of ignorance of their real purpose and new ideas of social order and function. So there is every reason to fear that if these are not written down now, they will be lost forever. Soon there would be none who would know these lengthy narratives.

The above fear has led Tumpak Ete to devote himself entirely to the task of preservation of the cultural heritage of the tribesmen.

In order to promote Donyi-Poloism, some suggestions have been put forward by the various religious intellectuals, which are as follows :-

More books on Donyi-Poloism must be published to create an awareness among the people. According to the leaders these books will definitely provide ample scope for younger educated generation to understand and realise its importance and significance.

Secondly, the people have to develop strength, physical, intellectual and spiritual and harmonise these aspects of strength into one strength. Prayers and group discussions must be held at regular intervals, which bring the community together.

The more developed section of the society, whether in respect of education or culture or wealth, must make special efforts to bring the backward sections at par with them. They must cultivate the attitude that the whole society is like a family and it is the duty to help others. Fourthly, those persons who have left the Adi fold, should be welcomed back into the fold with love and affection and given due recognition and protection.

Finally, the leaders of all clans, cults and sub-tribes have a great obligation to fulfill. They must evolve a few simple social disciplines common to all Adis which can make every Adi feel that he is an Adi and belongs to a great brotherhood of Donyi-Polo faith. This is a programme that deserves serious consideration and implementation by all concerned.

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