

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ADIS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Dr. Jogendra Nath



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ADIS of Arunachal
Pradesh**

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The findings of a Research Project conducted
by Dr. Jogendra Nath.

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Dedication

*To
My Father-Bhadiram Nath
who did all for my education.*

J.Nath

FOR the book ADI
FOREWORD TO THE
FIRST EDITION

Dr. J. Nath is an erudite scholar on the culture of Arunachalee tribes, especially on that of the Adis. His long years' stay at Pasighat as Lecturer in Jawaharlal Nehru College brought him into closer contact with the Adi society. Then he made extensive and intensive tours in the Adi areas. In the process the author learnt the Adi language thoroughly, which, in turn, led him to deep association with the Adi people in general and Adi cultural organisation, Pasighat in particular.

His *The Cultural Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh: The Adis* is a result of Dr. Nath's personal experience with the Adis. More than the extant books on the Adis the author seems to have exploited his personal experiences in preparation of this book. He, of course, has to rely on Tibetan history and culture in forming his views on origin and migration of the Adis and their administrative system. That seems to have enabled the author to break new ground about the origin and migration of the Adis so far not touched by any scholar including the British ones.

In fact, Dr. Nath has advanced a new theory in respect of tracing back the origin of the Adi tribes in the Meyang branch of the Chilang tribe sojourning in the central eastern Tibet many hundred years ago. He is almost in a hypothetical stage; researchers and scholars may, perhaps, take this from Dr. Nath and search further on this aspect of the Adis in particular and of other tribes on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in general. So far, by migration of the tribes to this part

of Arunachal, the scholars meant the tribe's movement inside Arunachal itself. Dr. Nath has now shown the migration route beyond Arunachal Pradesh for tracing the tribe's origin and their movement.

Similarly, is Dr. Nath's study on construction of village, family-marriage-divorce, administrative system, religion and festivals and mysteries of life etc. meticulous. The chapters on these aspects show the author's own involvement in these aspects of Adi social life. His observation of an Abe speaker's upturned eyes, his staying in different Adi families etc. show the author's personal involvement' in these affairs. Dr. Nath is not a distant viewer of things; rather, he is a neo-insider juxtaposing the tribal society with his own society. That has put him in an advantageous position for seeing things clearly.

Dr. Nath has again used books on the theoretical aspect of social transition in the last chapter. His view has not, however, been *withdrawn from the actual changes taking place in the society*. He attempts to put the actual changes into the hard and fast theories as far as practicable. But wherever he found some changes caused by other factors the author has gone outside the theory and explained in his own way. The result is the total canvas of Adi social changes drawn with clear lines.

The book *The Cultural Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh* 'The Adis' is a masterpiece on the Adis and deserves appreciation from the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly the Adis. I hope, it will serve as an authentic source material for the researchers, scholars and social historians working on the Adis.

Tamo Mibang

Head, Dept, of Tribal Studies
Arunachal University.

FOR the book ADI
FOREWORD TO THE
SECOND EDITION

When Dr. Jogendra Nath joined Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat, in 1966 more or less at the same time I was also appointed in the teaching job in NEFA. Then, after some time I was transferred to the same college in which Dr. Nath was teaching. On joining that college I observed some peculiarity in Dr. Nath which the other people in the teaching job, especially at that higher level like that of the college, usually do not do. Dr. Nath had already developed a habit of mixing up with the local people, the *Minyong, Pasi, Padam, Abors* of the *Abor* Hill District sub-head quarters. Most of us thought Dr. Nath had an acute desire for drinking local beer, *apong* in this case, for which only he used to go out in the evening. Then certain other characteristics began to develop in him which no other lecturer from outside NEFA had shown with the others. And what is more surprising is that he had picked up the local language, called *Adi* language to the extent of communicating with the local tribal people (at least with the *Padams, Minyongs, Pasis* etc.).

That seemed to have led Dr. Nath to enquire about various aspects of their social life— their religion, culture, traditions and many other things. That perhaps encouraged the author to write the biography of Gegong Apang. And, as Dr. Nath used to tell us, that encouraged him to enter into the field of research in different aspects of tribal society. He first entered into the tribal research field in 1986 when the NEIHA (North East India History Association) held its Annual Conference in JN College. For the first time he presented a paper on the murder of Capt. Williamson, Asstt. Political Officer, Sadiya, the Administrative Officer to introduce a loose sort of administration in the Frontier

Region now called Arunachal Pradesh.

Introduction of administration in this *terra incognita*, known later on as Arunachal Pradesh is really interesting as we see it to-day. As the author says, when the British East India Company took over Assam as a result of the Yandaboo Treaty with Burma in 1826, the present Arunachal Pradesh was a sprawling region sparsely occupied by various tribes migrating from the north and the south— i.e. from Tibet and Burma (now known as Myanmar). It is the author's credit that he could see the Chinese spys and in Capt. Williamson's murder at very critical juncture of time- beginng of Chinese expansion into Tibet first and then to this *terra incognita*. Though local tradition at *Pasighat, Rengin, Pangin, Yagrong* etc. say it was the revenge motive of the *Yagrong Gam*, Manmur Jamoh, who, with the help of his tribal friends murdered the Capt., when he ventured to go up to *Pangin* inspite of his *Adi* friends warning not to go further north the author seemes justifiably argued that the Capt. was murdered by the *Abors* at the instigation of some Chinese spy. That is really interesting.

Another interesting habbit Dr. Nath had developed during those days was his passing nights with some *Adi* families. Very often we used to see the author coming back to the college campus next morning by 9 am or so for going to the class; and if someone asked him where he had come from he used to reply promptly he had been coming from Balek or Mirmir, the two *Adi* villages at an ecquel distance of about 2 kms from the college. That definitely gave him an advantage of knowing the *Adi* society thoroughly from inside; he saw the *Adi* method of cooking, the items of cooking and distributing the food among all the members of the family including this author. It is but natural that whatever goes on in the tribal hearth was nakedly open to the author. The author saw how an *Adi* woman boil water in front of him gradually putting salt, dry chilly, leafy vegetables, dry meat/fish/mouse preserved in the multiple layered platform over the hearth. These multiple layered platforms over the hearth are made of bamboo stick, cane rope and hanged from the roof. This particular domestic implement is an important tribal culture of Arunachal Pradesh. That leads to so many other aspects of social

life which could be easily understood by an outsider/insider: and Dr. Nath has fully exploited the situation in knowing the tribe from inside. That has lent high percentage of credibility to the book on the *Adi* tribe which we are concerned with. That hearth is known as *merom* in *Adi* language. Sitting around the *merom* and sipping *apong* and listening to folk tales of the tribes narrated by the elders of the families itself is a culture of the *Adis*. For, sitting around the *merom* and singing of *bari* by a group of experts is so cozy among the tribes that many aspects of the tribal life could be had by any research scholar: and Dr. Nath has availed the scope to the maximum extent through his passing many a nights in a tribal *merom* sitting and sipping *apong* while listening to the folk tales narrated by the elder generation and stories of hunting and wars amongst the tribes narrated by the comparatively younger people. There is a tradition among the *Adi* tribe of narrating some old historical events in a peculiar tone which is known as *Abe*.

Another peculiarity with this author in his no restriction approach to taking anything for drinking and eating offered by the host which probably one percent of scholars could only adopt; and Dr. Nath can be included as one in this respect. That has become the most authentic source of research material in case of this author.

The author's Journey to Lhasa over the Roof of the World from Nepal border seems to have added new flavour of authenticity to this book. His mention of coming across one young boy called Pha Pertin at Chigatse, a terrace cultivation field between Lache and Chigatse etc. have lent definite authenticity to this new edition of the book; and the readers interested in knowing the *Adi* tribe fully benefited by it.

Sd/-

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April 15, 2014

FOR the Second Edition of ADI **INTRODUCTION**

While introducing this research oriented book on the *Adi* tribe of Arunachal Pradesh I am to speak of many things which have taken place between the tenth decade of the last century and the second decade of the present century. My relation with the Omsons Publications, New Delhi, which had brought out the first edition of this book has undergone a sea change because of the publisher's cheating attitude in bringing out my other books. In fact, it is Omsons Publications, which suggested a common title for a series of my books on the various tribes of North Eastern Region in general and on the tribes of Arunachal in particular— *Cultural Heritage of Tribal Societies* followed by the volume number and the name of the tribe written about within bracket as we find in the first volume of that series i.e. this book. I accepted it as ideal one since I decided to write a series of books on the different tribes of India. So my acceptance of the publisher's suggestion was considered as a suitable one since that would be a series under the same title, adding there in the particular volume number and the name of the tribe within bracket. Accordingly this first volume in the said series is; *Cultural Heritage of Tribal Societies : Volume-I (The Adis)*; the second volume was entitled— *Cultural Heritage of Tribal Societies : Volume-II (The Monpas)*; the third volume was entitled *Cultural Heritage of the Tribal Societies : Volume-III (The Sherdukpens)*; The fourth volume was entitled : *Cultural Heritage of Tribal Societies : Volume-IV (With No Regret)– My Memoir in Arunachal Pradesh* etc. The

typed manuscripts of the last two were submitted to the said publisher in Delhi in 2007 with their assurance the two books would be brought out within one year. Unfortunately the Publisher had spoiled the third volume to an unrepairable loss, missing some pages, notes and references, preface, introduction, dedication, photographs and so many other things; and in 2012 when a sample copy of the volume-III (*The Sherdukpens*) was sent to me for approval and retransmission, I was shocked. Since then I have been extremely busy in writing a number of books on other tribes I have not yet got sufficient time to correct and rewrite the book. In the mean time a number of books I had consulted in preparation of the book have either been lost or taken by some people which I could not trace out. For instance I have already brought out a book on the *Misings* of Assam under the title *A Cultural History of Misings of Assam*; a book on the culture of the *Mijis* of Arunachal as *A Cultural History of the Mijis of Arunachal* etc. etc.

Finding some time in between so much of engagements I had started the process of correcting the book on the *Serdukpens*, and that would also be called *A cultural History of the Sherdukpens of Arunachal*.

Hence is the change of the original title from *Cultural Heritage of Tribal Societies : Volume-I (The Adis)* to *A Cultural History of the Adis of Arunachal* has been effected. In this respect I am enthused to tell that over the years since my preparing the book from the eighties of the last century to the second decade of the twenty first century I have collected more and more data on the tribe through study and travel in different countries. My journey to Tibet and Myanmar especially helped me a lot in collecting more and more informations regarding the tribes of present Arunachal Pradesh, specially on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. During my journey to Lhasa for instance I came across certain things which definitely made me available specific informations regarding the migration route of these tribes. In this regard mention may be made of my coming across a young fellow at Chigatse whose name is Pha Pertin; and Pertin is a

surname of a clan of the *Padam* sub-tribe. During my visit to different monasteries at Lhasa I came across a book entitled *Describing the Wonders of the Roof of the World*; this particular bilingual book– Chinese and English– has a number of map-like pictures along the course of the *Tsungpo*; and in two different such maps there are two specific regions known as *Bomi County* and *Medoc County*. By our interpretation we may get *Bomi County* as region occupied by the *Padams*, since *Bomi* is the name of the forefather of the *Padam* sub-tribe; similarly *Medoc* is specifically a clan of the *Misings* of Assam.

In the preparation of the second edition of the book special care has been taken to include these data for the knowledge of the readers. It is now expected that the readers in general and research scholars in particular will be benefited by their study of this new edition.

Dr. Jogendra Nath

Guwahati-29

15th April, 2014

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Chapter-I

Origin and Migration of the *Adis*

The *Adi* is a major group of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh comprising around one-third of the total population of the state. Due to various factors the *Adis* are educationally most advanced amongst the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. So far as the development of human resource is concerned they may claim first, and as such they have occupied major positions in the state in politics, in administration and other services like engineering, medical, education and so on.

The *Adi* group of tribes inhabit exclusively in both the East and West Siang districts, partially in Dibang Valley and Upper Subansiri districts of the many sub-tribes under the *Adi* major tribes mention may be made of the *Minyongs*, the *Padams*, the *Shimongs*, the *Milangs*, the *Pasis*, the *Pangis* etc. forming one group so far as their language and traditional culture are concerned, and the *Galongs*, the *Ramos*, the *Poilobos*, the *Boris* and the *Bokars* forming another group.

This study is confined mainly to the *Milangs* and the *Pasis* belong to the *Minyong-Padam* group. But broadly speaking it is a study of the *Adi* tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. As sub-tribes of the major *Minyong-Padam* sub-group it will be natural to make frequent references to these major sub-tribes and also to the *Shimongs* who are their neighbours. The *Milangs* and the *Pasis* again are concentrated in the Yamne valley of East Siang district. But broadly speaking it is a study of the *Adi* tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. In the

recent times. however, the *Milangs* have spread over Dibang valley and the *Pasis* on both the left and right banks of the Siang towards the foot-hill area.

At this stage one may be interested to know where from and how these people came to Arunachal Pradesh, in general, and to their present habitats in particular.

There are two opposite theories as to the migration of the *Adis* to the area presently occupied by them in Arunachal Pradesh. One school holds that they migrated from the north while the other suggests that they came from the south. In these two opposite opinions there is, however, some truth which is again based on wrong conception : one such conception is that they had first migrated to Burma along the course of the Irrawady, which was considered for a long period as the main water of the Tsungpo till the Tsungpo was completely discovered by the expedition which went to the *Abor Hills* to avenge the murder of Captain Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer, Sadia in 1911. Till then various scholars believed that the Tsungpo flows upto mainland China and later on came to be known as Irrawadi which flows down to Burma and from Burma only they had to come back towards the south, ie. Assam first and then from Assam they went to the cis-Himalayan ranges bordering Assam. Some proofs have also been there and it was discovered by the European scholars (mostly travellers and administrator) who discovered this. The ethnological and historical data, however, support the former. In the passages that follow I shall put forward my arguments in support of the former and try to show, with historical data approximately the period during which they migrated first to Arunachal Pradesh and then to their present habitats. Some European scholars detected a few *Dufla* (presently known as *Nishi*) after more than hundred years came back to the *terra incognita* now came to known as *Frontier Tracts*, NEFA and ultimately Arunachal Pradesh, and they were able to find out their original habitates in present Lower Subansiri Districts.

Any group of people would have the tendency to maintain relation-

social, cultural, commercial and political- with the people they have separated from due to pressure of history. The *Adis* have no much cultural affinities or ties with the people of Assam living to their south except with the *Mishings* who are recent migrants to Assam from Arunachal Pradesh. In fact the *Mishings* are close relatives of the *Adis* who came together out of Tibet; it was because of the *Adi* treatment of the *Mishings* as their vassals that the *Mishings* went down to Assam to avoid such treatment from a closely related group of people. Nor do the *Adis* have any relation with the *Nagas*, living further south, though ethnically both the *Adis* and the *Nagas* belong to the same Tibeto-Mongoloid race. Had the *Adis* moved from Tibet to Patkai Hill first as did, most probably, a few clans of the *Nagas* and then came down to their habitats the *Adis* would have some social and cultural ties with the *Nagas*. But, in reality, the *Adis* have the least social ties with the *Nagas*. Nor do the *Adis* have social and cultural relation with the *Kacharies* of Assam, another Mongolian group migrating much earlier than the *Adis* to the Assam valley, spreading over most parts of Assam in the past, and now concentrating mostly on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. As regards commercial relation it may be said, that till the advent of the British to Assam in 1826 the *Adis* had hardly any business relation of any sort with the people of Assam. Whatever relation they maintained with the *Ahoms* was required only because of the *Miris* living in the plains of Assam.

From all these it may be said fairly correctly that the *Adis* did not enter into present Arunachal from the south.

The other school suggests that the *Adis* migrated from Tibet to present Arunachal Pradesh from the north. To me this suggestion appears right; and in support of this view many arguments can be put forward.

1. Cultural Affinities :

The *Adis* are culturally more akin to the Tibetans than to their southern neighbours – the various tribes of Assam and Nagaland, some are Mongolian in origin. They are akin not only ethnically in their physical features but in their cultural traits too. The affinities

appear striking when their cultural features are put side by side with those of the Tibetans of the pre-Buddhist era. The *Adis* are not Buddhist and they do not have much cultural affinities with the Buddhist Tibetans of today. That throws some light on the possible time of migration of the *Adis* from Tibet. As I shall come to this aspect of *Adi* migration shortly I would not dwell on this aspect here in detail. It may be sufficient to mention that the *Adis* migrated to the present area in Arunachal Pradesh at the time of introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. But the actual migrational fact is that they took the course of the Tsungpo which came to be known, after Namcha Borwa, in between present Tibet and Arunachal and came to be known as Siang or Dihang. Mention is made of other wrong concept by some Indian Scholars because of their ignorance about the course of the Tsangpo even after the discovery of its course. The native religion of Tibet prior to the advent of Buddhism is known as *Bonpo* or *Bon*. The origin of many *Adi* religio-cultural characteristics can be traced to the characteristics of *Bon*. Helmut Hoffman made an interesting study of the primitive Tibetan religion and recorded thus in his *The Religions of Tibet*, “The Tibetans of those days (during bon religion) were apparently completely subject to the powerful and formidable nature of their natural surroundings. Their completely native -rooted and nature-dominated religious ideas revolved reverently and submissively around the power and forces of their wild highland landscape whose divinities were reflected in the idea of numerous good and evil spirits the Tibetans thought to see all around them. Almost all these many and varied spittis are still alive today in the beliefs in the ordinary Tibetan people.”¹

When one studies the beliefs of the *Adis* one is tempted to place the *Adis* in the position of the Tibetans of *Bon* religion or that of the ordinary Tibetan people of today and to find out the striking similarities between some spirits of the Tibetans and those of the *Adi*. In the Tibetan belief, the *Bon* faith and the *KLU* are spirits of water now supposed to have resided in the underworld and in the layer of water. Hoffman says, “The original habitat of these *KLU* was rivers and

lakes, and even certain wells. They have their homes at the bottom where they guard secret treasures”, and then goes on to say that the *KLU* “can adopt the forms of snakes at will”.² These *KLU* have striking similarity with the *Adi* spirit *Biri Byik*. It is the guard of hidden treasures and it takes, sometimes, the shape of huge snake, from their belief that one who sees this huge snake becomes the possessor of immense fortune it may be guessed that *Biri Byik* is the guard of hidden treasure.

Similarly the *Bon Gnyan*, *Sa-bdag* and *Sri* have similarity with *Adi DimuTaya* (spirit of the high hill), *Gumin Soyin* or *Gumin Bote* (god of the house-hold) and *Epom* (a spirit which prefers children for attack) respectively. As to the habitat and nature of *gNyan* Hoffmann says, ‘But the actual migrational fact “The *gNyan*, who roam around on mountains and valleys and make their lairs in slaty rocks, woods and ditches as they please are easily annoyed by human being and then they send sickness and death. The plague, which is known in Tibet as *gNyan* is a scourge attributed to them in particular... The god of the powerful Thang-lha mountain chain... is also known as the great *gNyan*”.³ *Sa-bdag* are the master of the earth and *Sri*, who goes by preference for small children is something like *Epom*.

Besides, the concept of God in *Bon-po* is similar to that of the *Adis*. To the *Bon* Tibetans heaven also represents personified God who “hardly seems to have played any role in man’s life.”⁴ To the *Adis Sedi* is one important God and he also does not play any role in human lives. The indigenous Tibetan faith regarding the causes of sickness has a close similarity with that of the *Adis*. According to Snellgrove and Richardson the salient feature of the *Bon* religion is concerned with the affairs of the earthly life. “Its purpose is to discover usually by means of sortilege or astrological calculation, the causes of human ailments and misfortune and then to prescribe a suitable cure. The main causes of trouble to human being are local gods, demons and spirits of all kinds and the normal way of counteracting their attacks is to make ransom offerings”.⁵ To the *Adis* also the human sufferings are caused by various spirits and ransom offering is the

principal means of cure from the sufferings. As this aspect of the *Adis* will be dealt with in detail in a subsequent Chapter I shall not dwell on it any further.

In this connection one may be interested to compare the Adi concept of the soul's migration with that of the *Bon* Tibetans, passed over as legacy to even Buddhist Tibetans. Snellgrove and Richardson comment of the Tibetan indigenous faith, in their study, a '*Cultural history of Tibet*', that "there is never any suggestion of transference (of the soul) to heaven or hell until Buddhism later on suggests such ideas. The deceased simply belongs to the realm of the dead, probably rather like a kind of Hades".⁶ The belief of the *Adis* behind burying a dead body is that the deceased is put on the way to the Hades. The *Adis* do not have any clear idea about the soul's going to heaven or hell. What can be gathered from the *Adi* priests (*Miri*) is that a deceased goes to another world and those who die unnatural death in accident, drowning, snakebite, suicide etc. which they call '*taleng sinu*' do not go to the world of the dead: such soul hovers over in the air of the earth's surface which they call '*taleng*'. The *Bon* concept of the soul's travel, however, has a striking similarity with the *Adi* concept of the soul's migration. In the pre-Buddhist Tibetan faith the 'consciousness' (soul) of a deceased is led through an 'intermediate state' to an ultimate region. Snellgrove and Richardson say that this 'intermediate state' of the *Bon* faith is the 'state' of the soul between death and rebirth, according to them there is a ritual for guiding the soul of the deceased from the earth to a different world through an intermediate state- '*Bar-do*' in Tibetan language.⁷ The *Adis* have a ritual which has grown into an institution known as '*pengey*' (a dirge) guiding the soul to a world where men's wisdom cannot penetrate. "There you are about to disappear on the horizon and we can see the thin trail of your eternal being."⁸ The Tibetans believed that the soul of a deceased loses its direction and so it has to be guided through performance of a ritual; and similar is the *Adi* belief that if it is not guided by '*pengey*' it may not go to the world of the dead.

Till the last part of the 20th century one thing which could not be

detected by the research scholars on the *Tani tribes* is the detailed rituals of '*Bardo*' in Tibet; in 2007 during my field study in Tibet I could detect a book in a monastery, named '*The Tibetan Book of The Dead*', which was suggested by Prof. Thetchen Detsen of Tibet university. It appears that the *Adi Pengey* is the very short synopsis of this Tibetan Book of the Dead by W. Y. Evans-Wenez. This book gives every detail of serious ritual to be performed by a special priest for 45 days to guide the dead man's soul till it takes shelter in another being. It may not be possible to supply here the details of every day's advice given to the soul by the priest; however, I could not check myself from quoting a few days' journey of the soul till its next shelter in another being. One may like to quote the first advice to the soul of a man which is going to die very soon. The special priest (or *Guru*) could be sitting by the dying man, when the breathing is about to cease, will say 'O nobly born (so and so by name) the time hath now come for thee to seek the path (in reality). The breathing is about to cease. The *guru* hath sat thee face to face before with the Clear Light; and now thou art about to experience in its Reality in the Bardo state, where in all things are like the void and cloudless sky, and the necked spotless intellect is like unto a transparent vacuum without circumference of centre.'⁹ Then the *guru* again continues, 'At this moment know thou thyself; and abide in that state.'¹⁰ This is to be repeated in the year of the dying person many a time. According to the Tibetan *Bardo* 'At this moment the first (glimpsing) of the *Bardo* of the Clear Light of Reality, which is the Infallible Mind of the *Dharma-Kaya* is experienced by all sentient beings.'¹¹ From that moment onwards leading to the death of the person to the point of reshelter of the soul in another life in 45 days (forty-five days) there is a daily advice course by the *guru* to the soul. That shows there is a period of some 44 to 45 days for the soul for transfer from one being to another being. It is not our intention to quote everyday's advice but to quote a few days' advice which may be revealing.

On the actual death of the person the *guru* or a brother of the faith will advise: 'O nobly born, that which is being called death

being come to thee now, resolve thus 'O this now is the hour of death. Now taking advantage of the death I will show act for the good of all sentient beings, peopling the illimitable expanse of the heavens so to obtain the perfect Buddhahood, by resolving on love and compassion towards the souls' perfection'.¹²

Another striking similarity can be seen in the proceedings of a burial of a dead body; in putting many mundane articles in the grave, in fact the remnant of Tibetan *Bon* faith can still be found in an *Adi* burial. Except the first few Tibetan kings who were believed to have divine origin and to have gone back to heaven at their own will on their death, and as such had no burial nor tomb, the later kings were buried. It is interesting to note the king's burial had ultimately given shape to a common faith. Along with the king his close associates such as ministers and his wives, though alive, were buried. The belief behind such performance is that the life after death depends upon the things buried along with the deceased: a man will have a life in the other world similar to his earthly life only when the articles and the beings he was surrounded with during earthly life are put by the side of his body in the grave. A king was supposed to lead a royal life in the other world and accordingly his close associates like important ministers, wives, in addition to enormous quantity of wealth like gold, silver, bead turquoise etc. were buried along with him. The *Adis* have also a similar belief and they practise similar performance, the *Adis* bury the dead body together with the articles with which the deceased was very much associated during his life in the earth. With the advent of Buddhism in Tibet the ritual of burying people alive underwent a change: instead of burying them the close associates are made the guard of the tomb articles; and as such they are to remain around the tomb and can not come into contact with living people.¹³ Referring to the burial of Shrong-Tsan Gampo, Snellgrove and Richardson say that since the king himself was the chief patron of Buddhism in Tibet he did not like to put his associates in his grave alive. For this, the companions of the royal dead were not buried, but lived within the precinct of the tomb, acting as though they belonged to the dead. The

co-authors quote a narrative of Shrong-Tsan Gampo's burial from an old text. It reads, "The king was placed on the throne on the central square of the tomb and they piled up in front of him a load of gold, silver and turquoises as well as the wealth of his treasury. They set up silk hangings, canopi, parasols and banners of victory, and having arranged everything properly so nothing was missed they affixed a seven fold series of seals so nothing could be broken open. The charge rested with the palace officials... They played the part of dead men and were consecrated as subjects of the (royal) corpse."¹⁴ This is in relation to the royal deads. The co-authors also mention that the Tibetans had elaborate ceremonies of burial, where their own special position and at one time even their personal companions were buried in their tombs.¹⁵ In the burial of Tagoli Jamoh, a rich man of Pasighat, who died in the mid-seventies, similar ritual was performed, a good amount of currency notes of high denominations and all other things he was associated with during his life, was placed by his "side" in the tomb so that in the other world he could live as a rich man. In 1986 I saw a tomb of a recently dead *Milang*, above the tomb a good number of live cartridges were seen hanging from a bamboo pole fixed with horizontal bar some four feet above the ground supported by two poles fixed about seven feet apart. On my query about the live cartridges my interpreter told that the deceased was an expert hunter and he had killed many deer, wild bears etc. and the interpreter said that in the next world also the deceased would have a similar life.

Some attach another reasons to this practice of burying properties and articles along with the dead body : if such articles with which the deceased was closely associated during this life time are not given in the tomb the deceased will not be satisfied and his soul would not leave the atmosphere of the earth, the soul will come to the family to disturb the other members for not giving him his beloved articles.

The list of cultural affinities between the pre-Buddhist Tibetans and the *Adis* can be expended to a great extent. But for our purpose we may mention one or two instances here and then pass over to other aspects which may throw some light on the *Adi* migration. We

may mention one kind of polyandry common in Tibet and in one group of *Adis*- the *Gallongs*. The two Chinese co-authors on Tibetan civilization, Tsung Lien Shen and Shen-Chi Lieu write about the Tibetan polyandry : “polyandry, of the type in which several brothers share one wife, is a popular form of marriage in Tibet. In one family we know, one lady presides over the committee of seven husbands. How a husband’s right is to be apportioned among the claimants varies with each family. Some tacit understanding based on rotation always exists. This is especially true among the commoners; among the higher classes precedence is always given to the most prosperous husband.”¹⁶ The *Galong Adis* of Arunachl Pradesh also have a similar type of polyandry. In this system polyandry is restricted to the brothers only. When one brother marries, his wife’s bed is shared by all his brothers; no one else is, of course, allowed to come near the wife. There is actually nothing wrong when a *Galong* says that the sons and daughters of his brother’s wife are his children also. In fact, many *Galongs* introduce the children of his brother their own children.

These may seem to be sufficient to show the social affinities of the *Adis* with those of the Tibetans the like of which they do not have with any people on their south in Assam or Nagaland, except, perhaps, with the Mishing of Assam.

Till the time of British introduction of trade marts in the Assam-Arunachal border area at Sadia and Kuriapar near Odalguri in Darrang district and in the second quarter of the nineteenth century the *Adi* had hardly any trade relation with Assam. Even the articles of daily use, like salt and other things, the *Adis* had to depend on Tibet, not to speak of luxuries and stationeries. There are a number of articles with which the *Adis* have traditional relation and these things were available in Tibet only. Tibetan sword, reddish-brown woollen coat, alloyed brass-metal, wares (arem in *Adi*), precious bead (tadok in *Adi*), are some articles the *Adis* attach too much value in their social and economic life.

It may be said that the traditional values attached to such articles during their sojourn for centuries in Tibet could not be easily forshaken

by the *Adis* when they came out of Tibet. In fact, when they crossed the Tibetan border they continued to maintain this trade relation to get these articles of daily use and traditional values. During those days the Tibetan border with present Arunachal was open and in which there was no administrative check to prevent frequent crossing of the border for transaction. To be true there was no border as such: the migrants were moving in southwardly direction in an extended jungles in the Himalayan range without any check neither from Tibet nor from the south. Under such circumstances it was easy to maintain the trade transaction. It is interesting to note the view of the Chinese authors on this particular aspect, they say, ethnically, the Tibetans spread over a vast area, but the Tibetan government did not have any administrative control. "All along east the Tibetan stray far from their base west of the river Min-king to the Chenstu Plain in the heart of Szechuan, southward they cross the Himalayan barrier and constitute an important part of the population of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal."¹⁷ It is peculiar that the co-authors describe the area where ethnically identifies people lived from szechuan province and go across present Arunachal Pradesh without mentioning it, to Bhutan, Sikkim etc. At a later stage, however, the co-authors have vaguely mentioned about it. "further south, the border touches Yunan and then bending westward extends to Rima. The region for Rima on the Upper Lohit, an eastern affluent of the Brahmaputra, to the bend of the Tsangpo is inhabited by roving bands of primitive native (Lo-pa), occupying the hilly tracts. east and west of the bend of the Tsangpo."¹⁸ These 'roving bands of primitive natives (Lo-pa)' on the east and west of the bend of Tsangpo are the *Adis*, an extended population from Tibet, till the McMahon line was established in 1914 or further till the actual control of the border as fixed by the McMahon line from around 1950 the *Adis* maintained trade relation across the border. The *Adis* maintained their trade relations with the Tibetan people from whom they separated, in the real sense of the term.

In this connection D.S. Dunbar's study may throw a better light. Writing in 1913 Capt. Dunbar regrets that in 1911-12 the British

proposal to study the *Abors* upto the Tibetan border through Karka could not be successful. But, from his study of map and information from the *Adis* he came to a sort of conclusion : “Beyond this Karka (in *Galong* area) are the *Buris* (or *boris*) who bring Tibetan merchandise, salt, cloth and sometimes a highly prized sword, down to the most northerly communities of *Abors* and *Galongs*.”¹⁹ His study of the most relevant map also convinced him this path through Basar and Karka would lead to Tsari in Tibet. Though he could not get informations about the tribes living upto the border through Basar and Karka, he had some information from one Chunguge from Tsari side. “From Tsari a magnificent view is said to be obtained down a valley running south. This valley is inhabited by the most northern sect of the *Lopa* tribe called the *Lotek*, who are an entirely different race to the Tibetans. They are described as wearing their hair in a knot on the top of the head, or cut *Abor* fashion. They carry bows and their iron tipped arrows are poisoned with aconite, they carry their arrows in the usual bamboo cases.”²⁰

From the above description of Chunguge and other description that this tribal people wear strings of beads which are ‘square beads of blue porcelain’ used by the people of Damoroh, it appears that the people are the *Abors* mixed with *Nishi* / Hill *Miris* etc. *Lopa* is also a general term used for the *Abor* and their allied groups. These people also had trade with the Tibetans.

Origin of the *Adis*

One may be curious to know the origin of this people who came from Tibet to Arunachal Pradesh. There is no definite information about the ancestors of the *Adi* tribes of people now settled in Arunachal Pradesh. A deeper study of the Tibetan tribes with probable tribe-names and place names may, however, lead one to arrived at a plausible conclusion about these tribes origin. For such a study the chronicles of Tibet’s rise and fall upto seventh century is very much essential. Such a study may throw further light on the actual route of their migration.

In their study of Tibetan culture Snellgrove and Richardson traced

a non-Chinese *Chi'ang* (*Kyang* according to Lieu and Shen)²¹ tribes herding sheep and cattle. They were nomadic by nature and many thousand years ago, they spread over an area in “eastern central Asia upto the furthest north-west border of China.”²² The language of a few of these tribes was Tibetan. The French author R.A. Stein, an authority on Tibet, however, considers the Yarlung royal dynasty as belonging to the *Chi'ang* tribe.²³ It may rightly be so. *Chi'ang* is an extensive tribe having many branches. In fact, one of the kings of the *Chi'ang* tribe, *Shrong Tsan Gampo*, consolidated first the various tribes of the Tibet making Yarlung its centre. Stein describes the *Chi'ang* tribes as “The *Chi'ang* are mentioned in Chinese sources from about 1400 B.C. to modern times. To start with, they were the western neighbours of *Shang* and *Chou* dynasty of China at her northern extremity. From the beginning of the Christian ear they lived on the Sino-Tibetan marches from Koko Nor to Szechwen. By the time the Tibetan royal line appeared in Yarlung, two important nations with *Chi'ang* populations occupied the region that is now Khan, eastern Tibet.”²⁴ It is plausible. Though the Kings themselves belong to the *Chi'ang* tribe they had to fight with some other branches of *Chi'ang* people for different reasons. One such reason was that the first powerful Tibetan king Shrong Tsan Gampo suspected some branches of the *Chi'ang* tribe intriguing with the Chinese king during his failure to get a Chinese Princess for himself. When Shrong Tsan gave the proposal to the Chinese emperor that he should be given a princess for marriage the Chinese emperor sent some enquiries to Tibet to assess the worth of Tibetan king. “The report about this little known people must have been unfavorable for when Shrong Tsan Gampo, following the precedent of the kings of the *Truks* and the *Tukuhun* (one of the *kyang* tribes), asked for the hand of a Chinese Princess, the request was declined. The Tibetan king thereupon bent his wrath first on the *Tukuhum*, whom he suspected of intriguing against him at the Chinese court, and then, after inflicting several defeats on the various *Kyang* tribes south of Koko Nor, he mustered a force of two hundred thousand to invade the north-west

border of Szechuan.”²⁵

We have the reason to believe that the *Tani* group of tribes of which the *Adis* are a major branch belong to this *Chi'ang* or *Kyang* tribe, especially the *Tukuhun* branch. It is not only that Shrong Tsan Gampo had attacked this branch of the *Chi'ang* tribe suspecting them to be intriguing against him in the Chinese court, this king would make another attack on these people in his zeal to propagate Buddhism in Tibet which we shall see very soon.

Again, Snellgrove and Richardson tell us that around 1st century A.D. the Tibetan speaking nomads made their movement from their in north-east Tibet to central Tibet.²⁶ It can, perhaps, rightly be presumed that these nomadic tribes gradually moved for south and stayed for sometime at Kongpo, north of Tsangpo. To R. A. Stein this *Kangpo* was the homeland of the Lopa aborigines.²⁷ Now the 'Lopa' (Southern Savages) is a term commonly used to cover the *Adis*, the *Nishis*, the *Apatanis*, the *Mishimis*. In this fertile land of southern Tibet, according to Snellgrove and Richardson, these tribes under chieftain system, "adopted a more settled and partly agricultural way of life."²⁸ The joint authors also tend to believe that by 6th century A.D. there migrated some more vigorous tribes who displaced the weaker *Lopa* tribes and they themselves settled in the area, the displaced nomadic tribes gave way to the stronger one, they themselves moving farther south. It may be a coincidence that king Shrong Tsan Gampo made his first attack on some branches of *Chi'ang* tribe at the beginning of 7th century. Now there may be two separate pressures— one from the 'more vigorous tribe' and the other from the king himself— or may be one and the same pressure detected differently by different scholars, which was but natural in a country where history is reconstructed on the basis of oral tradition of scanty, variously documented records. On any count the *Chi'ang* nomadic tribes made their southerly movement by 6th / 7th century. We have reasons to believe that these displaced tribes came to be known as the *Lopa* tribes of Arunachal Pradesh today. That these nomadic tribes who came to central Tibet later on, spread, over many parts of Tibet was

shown by these joint authors pointing to certain characteristics common with the *Chi'ang* tribes. The commonness lies "in the extensive nature of Tibetan farming with its even present element of animal husbandry, in the readiness of the Tibetans to travel great distance, in their seemingly inborn ability to handle and look after horses, yaks and other animals, and in their delight in open air and open space."²⁹ The *Adis* have the elaborate system of looking after the welfare of their animals, though they presently do not have many domestic animals. From their rituals observed for welfare of their domestic animals it can be presumed that in the long past they had many animals. In all probability they had to discard many animals during 6th century when they had to move farther south on the pressure of the stronger tribes.

The beginning of the seventh century A.D., was very important for Tibetan history. Study of this period of Tibetan history throws important light on the *Tani* group of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. This particular period is significant on two counts : (1) consolidation of Tibet under the *Yarlung* dynasty, and (2) introduction of Buddhism as state religion of Tibet. Both these historical events caused a great upheaval in central Tibet first and then spreading over the whole of it. The greatest king of *Yarlung* dynasty, Shrong Tsan Gampo succeeded his father's chieftainship as a minor. During his regency he was supported by a very powerful minister of the *Myang* tribe.³⁰ When he came of age he began to consolidate all the tribal chieftains with the ambition of making Tibet one country. In the process of consolidating Tibet he had to attack *Myang* for annexation. Stein writes : "This region (Tsang), including the land of Myang or Nyang, was annexed to the kingdom of yarlung in the early seventh century."³¹ From geographical proximity and cultural affinities one may assume that the *Myangs* are the present *Minyongs* of Arunachal Pradesh. It is a coincidence that the early British Officers who came into contact with the *Adis* knew the *Minyongs* as *Meyongs*. It may be that both '*Myang*' and '*Minyong*' were used by the local people to imply that particular sub-tribe. In Tibet the land of Myongs is Kongpo, the seat of the *Lopas*. Stein's remark in this connection is very significant.

Giving description of the people of Tibet he writes : "The south, whose inhabitants had not thus far been organised unto states, was lumped together under the name 'Mon', the term covers all sorts of aboriginal tribes of the wooded himalayan hills (e.g. *Mishimi, Abors*), and is possibly related to the word 'Man' used in literary Chinese for all southern barbarians."³² It means till the time of Shrong Tsan Gampo the 'Mon' or '*Lopa*' tribes could not organise themselves into a state. People in such fluid state have the tendency to move whenever some occasions arise. In respect of these *Lopas* or *Tukuhun Kyangs* the first occasion was this powerful king Shrong Tsan's attack on them. For his conquest and annexation must have caused a stir amongst the *Myangs* or the *Lopas* or the *Kyangs* and they might have chosen the southwardly direction. In addition to this, their movement was hastened by the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet, though buddhism began to percolate into Tibet from fourth century A.D., but it could not penetrate much. King Shrong Tsan Gampo married one Chinese princess and a Nepali princess. Both the queens being ardent Buddhist, they first converted the king and then persuaded him to make Buddhism the state religion, though a powerful king it was not easy for him to establish Buddhism in Tibet in view of the strong opposition from the existing religion, *Bon-po*. Tsung-lien Shen and Shen-chi Lieu write about this opposition and consequent struggle between the two forces : "Buddhism gradually made headway after a life and death struggle with *Bon-po*."³³ The king had to take severe measures for compelling his subjects to embrace Buddhism. The king was convinced that as there could not be two kings in one kingdom so was it, "impossible for two religions to continue to exist side by side."³⁴ He further records that "the king no longer was prepared to tolerate the existence of the *Bon-po* side by side with Buddhism... The king called the *Bon* priests together and placed before each one the choice of becoming a Buddhist monk or a tax-paying citizen. If he wished to do neither the one thing nor the other, he would be allowed to leave the country."³⁵ Though some *Bon* priests became monks, "the greater number preferred to go in panishment."³⁶

It may be inferred that the priests did not go out alone, but they were accompanied by their followers. From the nature of the *Adi* faith on the priests we have reason to believe that some batches of such banished *Bon-po* are the present *Tani* group of tribes living in Arunachal Pradesh.

This lands us in a position to determine the period of migration of the *Adis* or the *Tani* group of tribes, it is not that all the tribes covered by the *Tani* group came out from Tibet at one time in one batch, different sub tribes of the same wider *Tani* group moved out in separate batches at different times. It, may, however, be said with some amount of certainty that the total period of their movement cannot be more than a century. Concessions may, however, be given to some stray and adventurous batches who might have moved even a century or more earlier. Moreover, it is not exactly that they came out of the present Indo-Tibet boundary; it should be remembered that the present boundary known as Macmahon line is the result of the 1914 Simla Agreement concluded between India (British), Tibet, and China. Prior to that there was no fixed geographical boundary so far as the southern part stretching from Tawang to Rima is concerned as it has been noticed. It is a sprawling mountain range occupied by the southern savages. So only in the first quarter of this century could this be definitely said whether these nomadic tribes were out from Tibet or not. Otherwise these tribes were within ethnographic Tibet beyond the administrative sphere of Lhasa.

For determining the approximate period of their migration from the political/ administrative sphere of Tibet, two issues are to be taken into account : (1) Causes of their migration, and (2) Changes of historical events having relevance to *Adi* socio-cultural life. Hypothetically there are three reasons for their migration: (a) in search of more fertile agricultural land, (b) refusal to subjugation under *Yarlung* dynasty, and (c) collision between two faiths. So far as the first cause is concerned a few batches might have moved southward towards the latter part of fifth century or at the beginning of the sixth. The batches that moved out because of their refusal to come

under the subjugation of the *Yarlung* Dynasty left Tibet in the first half of seventh century. We have seen, in this connection, king Shrong Tsan Gampo's attack on and annexation of the Kyang land in his bid to consolidate Tibet. The last batches who had to leave because of religious conflict did so from the middle of the seventh century.

Tani way of socio-cultural life point to the same period, they do not have their written language and script. If we see the Tibetan history we find that the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet the Tibetans did not have their script and written language. It is Shrong Tsan Gampo who after his conversion to Buddhism, and in his zeal to spread this new religion all over his country, sent some Tibetan scholars with some Tibetan pundits to India to learn the Indian scripts for adopting it in Tibet and for translating the Buddhist scriptures into that language. Stein refers it with wonder to a *tun-huang* record that written language was introduced in Tibet in 655 A. D. on the pattern of Kashmiri Brahmi scripts.³⁷ The joint Chinese authors also refer to the introduction of alphabets and written language in Tibet during king Shrong Tsan Gampo's rule. They write : "His (Tsan Gampo's) reign was blessed with two greatest statesmen Tibet has ever produced Tho Mi Sam-Bho-Ta and gardon Tsen. Tho-Mi Sam-Bho-Ta together with sixteen companions, was sent to India by he king to study and work out an alphabet for the Tibetan language. He studied Indian character and phonetics, and on his return, he invented Tibetan alphabet with four vowels and thirty eight consonents, based on he Brahmi characters then in use in Kashmir."³⁸ From this historical data it can be said that written language in Tibet was introduced by the middle of the seventh century. From the fact that the *Adis* do not have a written language it may be inferred that they had migrated out of Tibet before the middle of the seventh century. But one *Adi* folk-tale as to why they do not have a written language suggests that the *Adis* at least the latest batches migrated after the introduction of written language in Tibet, 650. According to the tale of the *Lopas* and *Membas* were given, at the time of their departure, the written language in animal skin. But whereas the *Membas* preserved the

skin, the *Lopas*, when they felt hungry, baked and ate the skin. Hence they are without a written language even today. It may be presumed that by the time the *Lopas*, the *Tani* group of tribes, began to move out, the written language was begun to be introduced in Tibet. It can also be presumed that since the language was a means for preaching and spreading Buddhism its spread was confined to the Buddhist converts only. Those who refused to embrace the new faith were not enthusiastic to learn the language also. But they knew that a language was being introduced for writing. The baking of the skin carrying language and then being eaten up also suggest to a savage tribe without any interest in education.

Similarly the absence of calendar amongst the *Adi* suggests to that period of their migration. The Tibetans of the pre-Buddhist era (till early seventh century) also did not have calendar of their own. About this aspect of the Tibetan culture Stein writes; "Another interesting point is that the date of the New year was determined by agriculture."³⁹ He also points out that even today there is difference between the farmer's New Year Day and the King's New Year Day, and he believes that the calendar for the king which is same as the Chinese lunar calendar, was introduced by the *Mongols*. Similarly, Shen and Lieu speak about the recording system of the tibetans of the pre-Buddhist era: "they had no systems of writing, but for recording important facts they used notched pieces of wood and knotted cords. Having no calendar, they counted the beginning of the new year from the time of harvest."⁴⁰ Again the joint authors write, "The Tibetan calendar, though based on Buddhist conception of the wheel of time bears the unmistakable influence of the Chinese lunar calendar."⁴¹ It may be possible that his Chinese Queen, who shares responsibility with his Nepalese Queen for making Buddhism the state religion of Tibet, brought the Chinese calendar with her and was introduced in Tibet. The *Adis* also do not have any calendar till today but have a crude way of determining the seasons falling with the harvesting or appearance of some cricket like insect or flower etc. Their two major seasons are *Lobo* (summer) and *Digin* (winter), from this one may

argue, rightly perhaps, that they moved out of Tibet before the introduction of calendar in Tibet during the reign of Shrong Tsan Gampo or during his reign before sufficiently influenced by the new calendar.

The study of another aspect of *Adi* tradition may throw some light on the reason of their leaving Tibet at a particular period. The *Adis* are more or less purely democratic in their administrative system, this aspect of democratic tradition of the *Adis* is dealt in detail in another chapter. For our purpose here I shall show a contrast of this tradition with the tradition of dynastic rule imposed by king Shrong Tsan Gampo. With the increased power and fame the king worked out a kind of contract between the ruler and the ruled. The king had to make an oath to protect his subject. In return the subjects were to make an oath of allegiance not only to the king but also to his descendents who would become king automatically as per dynastic rule, one sample of oath taken by the subject is : "Never will be faithless to king Shrong-Tsan Gampo, to his son and his descendents."⁴² This indicates the tradition of surrender to the dynastic rule. But in the *Adi* administrative system leadership is never a hereditary one. In all probability, the *Adis*, who would not accept the dynastic rule, had to move out when the king tried to impose the dynastic rule over them. A study of another major happening in the Tibetan history may throw some more light on the time of migration of the *Adis*. This is about the assimilation of Buddhism with the aboriginal *Bon* religion which in its synthetic form is known as lamaism. The Indian Buddhist monks like Padmasambhava who were invited by the king to propagate Buddhism in Tibet considered it impossible for Buddhism to run side by side with *Bon* faith, on the other hand the *Bons* opposed vehemently the preaching of Buddhism at the initial stage. Then the Indian monks, with the approval of king Shrong Tsan Gampo, himself an ardent believer in *Bon* faith, decided to assimilate the two religious faiths through adoption of some gods and goddesses and rites of *Bon* faith. Padmasambhava himself was a tantric Indian Buddhist and he preferred to adopt some features of the *Bon* faith. On the other hand

some of the priests who were ready to accept Buddhism preferred absorption of some of their religious faiths in Buddhism. Speaking about this aspect of lamaism, Snellgrove and Richardson write : "Not only were those who called themselves followers of Bon busy absorbing all they could of Buddhist doctrines and practices, but many of those who called themselves Buddhist were occupied in fitting the old Tibetan gods and indigenous rites into the framework of the new religion."⁴³ The joint authors also hold that the amalgamation took place from the time the two religious faiths became face to face. Had the *Lopas*, the present *Tani* group of tribes, still been in Tibet they would have known some Buddhistic doctrines. But the *Adis* do not have any concept of Buddhism. That suggests that they left Tibet before this amalgam could have any impact on them.

I have not so far, come across, any writer dealing with the migration of the *Adis* who studies this Tibetan aspect of the issue though almost all of such writers agree that these tribes are Tibeto-Monolid. Most of them directly come to the point that these Tibeto- Mongoloid tribes came from Tibet without referring to the historical background of their migration. As a result many of them suggest a route taken by the tribes in their migration which seems not correct. Tarun Kumar Bhattacharjee, the author of the '*Alluring Frontier, The Myths of the Shimongs*', and a host of articles on Arunachal Pradesh for instance, says with certainty that the *Adis* were in Rima for a long time before their coming to their present habitats. The basis of his conclusion is that there is strong cultural similarity amongst the people of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, hill tribes of Assam, Nagaland, Cambodia, Yunan, Vietnam etc. who believes, were together there and then migrated to their respective places.⁴⁴ If one reads, however, his comment on imprint of cultural traits one may find Bhattacharjee mistaken in his conclusion that all these people had to go to the Rima area in the trijunction of India, China and Burma before their dispersal to different directions, he says : 'The traits that have been stamped in their culture by these ecological factors must be very old, imprinted in an early formative period. It is only after these traits had crystalised

that they moved out of their original formation.”⁴⁵ In fact this formative period was in the trijunction of Mongolia, Tibet and China which was the original place of these peoples, many centuries before Christ. It was from the trijunction from where the people started moving in different directions. It may also be said that some group moved to China and contributed to the Chinese civilization which is one of the oldest in the world. But most of the other groups avoided central China in their eastward movements later spreading over Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam etc. What is important is that the *Tani* group of tribes are not amongst the groups making their eastward movements : the *Tani* group moved to central Tibet where they sojourned many centuries during which they almost started living settled life as we have already noticed. S. Dutta Chaudhury also tends to believe that the *Tani* group including the *Mishimis* migrated to upper Burma first and then started coming back via the trijunction of Tibet, Burma and China. He writes : “Upper Burma was the beehive threw out swarm of migration people to India from early times. The sequence of Mongoloid migrations shows that prior to the arrival of *Akas*, *Daflas*, *Adis*, *Miris* and *Mishimis* representing the North Assam Tribes’ of the Tibeto-Burmans there lived in Assam and its adjacent northern hills another Mongoloid peopel called *Bodos*....”⁴⁶

This theory of Tibeto-Mongoloid groups’ migration route to the *northern hills of Assam* seems to be on the *asumption* that Lohit is Sangpo, the main stream of the Brahmaputra. On this presumption the nineteenth century authors concluded that all the Tibeto-Mongoloid groups coming out from Tibet took the river course of the Sangpo and came somewhere to Burma and followed the course of the same river which came to be known as Lohit. So these authors took the hypothesis that from Rima or from down below it the migratory *Tani* group took the courses of some *trubutarie* of Lohit and came to the Dibang valley and the Siang. The fallacy the authors of the later part of the twentieth century enter is that they have not paid any heed to the discovery, in the early twentieth century, that the Dihang or Siang is the Sangpo, the main *straam* of the Brahmaputra. Once this is

acknowledged that solution to the issue of migrational course of the *Tani* group of Arunachal Pradesh seems at hand. In this connection Ano Perme, a *Padam Adi*, expert in *Adi* traditional history seems to have suggested a plausible route when he says— “The ancestors of the *Adis* appeared, at a place which was the source of the river Siang.”⁴⁷ Tarun Kumar Bhattacharjee, however, attempted to link with Perme’s view by saying that... ‘They (the *Adis*) followed one of the tributaries of Salween and Irawaddy toward Rima. From there they pushed on and followed the course of a river they called Nyulum Siang which is likely one of the branches of Lohit. This river nowadays is known as Zayul.’⁴⁸ This appears to be wrong: Zayul cannot be identified with any branch of the Siang. In this connection the map of Tibet may be seen.

Captain Dunbar who deals with the *Abors* and *Galongs* (both are now known as *Adi*) in considerable detail mentioned about the migration of the *Adis*. His elaborated description of various *Adis* is, however, confined to their migration through different villages within Arunachal Pradesh itself. But then, he makes a sweeping remark : “the migration of the *Abors* in a southerly direction, down the valley, may be considered as fairly well established.”⁴⁹ This implies that the *Adis* migrated direct from Tibet to Arunachal Pradesh in India in straight southerly direction without going to the east i.e., to Burma first and then coming back westward.

Sachin Roy’s view, in this regard, also seems plausible. In his *Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture* Roy shows how the different sub-tribes of the major *Tani* group had settled in different places in Tibet across the border and entered into Arunachal Pradesh.⁵⁰ From the description of places through which the migration of the tribes to their present habitats it appears that the *Adis* do not have any occasion to go to Rima to come back again to Tibet or areas near Pamakoi from which the Siang takes a southerly direction. As such it does not appear that these tribes first went to Rima and then came back to their original places.

A study of the *Adi* folk-lore throws further light in this regard.

The *Adis* have the oral tradition of preservign history which is unique in arunachal pradesh. The system is proved more effective for the frequent practice of the system for almost any kind of dispute amongst the villagers within the same village or between two vilalges of different clans. as in the law court previous cases of identical nature are referred to by the lawyers so do the *Adis* refer back to their history as reference to settle any sort of dispute. This oral system of preserving history is known as *Abe*. Particularly in clan dispute an *Abe* speaker of each clan goes back to the origin of his clan history to show the credibility of his clan. In this case the speaker sometimes narrates the history of their migration referring to their stay at different places and the incidents that took place in those places. An *Abe* speaker, narrating their migration, may refer to some Place called *Ushang Kumting*, around Lhasa. This Usha (place-name) Kumting (dwelling) can very well be identifies with U and Tsang districts around Lhasa. In their narration they string together the place names they migrated through and these places are identifiable in Tibet followed by villages in Arunachal Pradesh. But there is no place name which can be identified in Assam, Nagaland or Burma or even in Lohit district around Rima. An *Abe* speaker, for example, will start his narrative with Usha Kumting as the original place and gradually come down to Ringong of (Arunachal Pradesh), Sigong (A.P.) Ngugong (Tibet), Pigrung, Likor, Puing, Kudak (near Tuting), Kujing, Pering, Naeming, Zedo, Anging, Suiging, Paling, Gette etc. (all these are withing Arunachal Pradesh). One peculiarity may be observed here that after Ringong and Sigong in Arunachal Pradesh comes Ngugong in Tibet. But it is one characteristic of *Adi* migration that some times some clan goes back in the face of a stronger enemy, this is more so with the *Shimongs* and the *Milangs*. The above place names are on the left bank of the Siang. On the right bank one *Abe* speaker may go on mentioning Gelling, Bone Kopu, Tuting, Ninging, Pango, ming, Mosing, Janbo, Bomdo, Ramsing, Gosang, Karko etc. One may argue that the *Abe* speaker may have serialised the place names upto the Tibetan border from their present habitation. But, an *Abe* speaker

does not merely mention the place names, but also describes the incidents that took place in such place. Not only that, in some of the places of their abode in the past there is not human habitation now. For instance in the left bank of the Siang there are no people at Pigrung, Pango, and Kudak. Talut Tamuk's narrative of places of migration from *Usha Kumting* southward is interesting, he goes on speaking haltingly in Hotentot-Click manner; *Usha Kumating*-Harpo-Ashi-Sibuk-Ashi-Tau-Lipik-Doni-Lipik-Lipik-Kamba-Tangam-Kumting-Zimoling-Ameling-Kumting-Sumge-sunyi-Tasingo-Kumting-Tsangpo-Kumting-Monita-kumting-Payang-Ngari-Kumting-Tangams-Kutong-pigo-Nyamsing-Zido-Bono-Kumting-Kopu-Pango-Tuting and down.

Tamuk's descriptive seems more convincing when we study another popular saying that the *Mishimis* and the *adis* are brothers and they migrated out of Tibet together. From Tamuk's description it is obvious that they migrated together up to Tangam and then branched off, the *mishimis* going Zimoloing-yameling Kumting down and the *Adis* coming to the Kutong Pigo, Nyamsing route.

The description of Anat Perme, a Padam from Ayeng village, is more interesting as it takes us further back to Tibet and beyond. Besides, he hints at the *Adi* genealogical stages staying at different places beyond present Arunachal Pradesh. He, of course, seems to have confused Tibet with Mongolia when he says they had stayed in Mongolia long back; for, he frequently changes the names of the two countries, Mongoli and Tibet, while describing the place-names of their migration in a chain. He says that *Pedong*, the mother of *Tani*, the common father of the *Tani* groups was in Tibet at a place called Pedong Jirle. With the *Adis* very often a place name is clan name also. *Karko*, *Shimong*, *Pasi*, *Milang Padam* are such examples, from *Pedong* they came to Doni-Dongor from which they came to a place called Tadok Gara. Tadok Gara is a hill having a big falls, it is also known as Kiling Kange. Their next movement is to Pomu Lingkyong. It is said that in a storm or erosion this dwelling place was damaged and they had to move to Sundogong, near Lhasa. Then they moved to Uzang-Mazang. The informant says that it is from this

place that many people branched off, he refers to two bridges known as Dajeeng and Jere. Some people crossed Dajeeng and went in an westerly direction and he tends to believe, these people as Bhutias, Monpas etc; and the *Tanis* and the *Midis* (Mishimis) crossed Jere to reach Jere Kuting. Then they came to Rigu Kuming from which they moved to Tompu. It is at Tompu that the Mishimi separated from the main body and made eastward movement. The *Tanis* moved to a place called Bikut Kuming on the bank of the Tsangpo. Taking the course of the Tsangpo they came to their next leg to a place called Didum and then to Dugong Kuming. At a slight distance from Dugong Kuming there is a steep hill called Diging *Adi*. As per local tradition there occurred a memorable incident at this place. It is, however, not clear from what Perme said whether it is to cross the rock or to make a very tall ladder to go to the sky something like Tower of Babel, that they actually attempted to lay a very tall ladder. In their attempts many people died and then they abandoned it. Till now the *Tanis* were inside Tibet. In their next move near Pamakoi they came southward along the course of the Tsangpo and crossed the Indo-Tibetan border (during those days there was no such border to enter Geling in Arunachal Pradesh). From here onward places will be strung together: Geling—Situm Berung—Tuting—Rigu—Migi—Janbo Bondo. It is from this Migi, Janbo-Bomdo area that the *Galong* group separated from the main column and moved south-western direction. The *Minyong*—*Padam* groups came down through Misung Penone—Loying Kayang Kuming—Nengu Kuming—Ruksin—Mibom Ache Bomi Kuming—Moling Kuming—Karko. The *Padam* and the *Pasis* and some of the *Milangs*, crossed the Siang from the right bank to the left bank at a point called Tayek Pigo. The *Pasis* being an allied group of the *Padams* they moved together to Ane Atkong. Then they crossed a high mountain range called Dirang *Adi* and went to Kesting. At Kesting one Kepang of this group was killed by somebody. There was a great *Kebang* to find out the people who killed the man. For this they got united and hence they are *Padam*. They could not get the people responsible for Kepang's death and

they moved to Damro. It is not clear whether the *Pasis* separated from the *Padam* at Damro or earlier. Ogom Dai says that the *Padam* and the *Pasi* were together. At the time of their separation their land and other properties were divided and the smaller group said 'Pasito', meaning got i.e. we have got our share. And so they are called 'Pasi'. But the same Dai gives a genealogical descent of the *Pasis* as—Pedong—Dopang—Pasi etc.; and then gives the description of their migration from near Bori area, Boki Sigo—Bogo Rango—Mingi Luyor. At this place they either came across a stone bridge or themselves made one and this is called Lidu Rekak. Staying around that place for sometime they crossed the Siang by a cane bridge at a point called Kuksung Aming and came near Komkar. This is more or less the route of the *Padams* also. From Komkar they moved to Moli Rigbi and followed the route—Moli Rigbi—Bue Pegeng—Nyatpin Kumting—Ruing Kumting. Ruing Kumting is the place where the *Shimongs* and the *Padam-Pasis* fought a battle. From Ruing they went down to Adi Pasi and established three villages called Sikko, Bine and Resing. From this it appears that their separation from the *Padams* took place much earlier. Sachin Roy, however, gives the same places of migration of the *Pasis* as of the *Padams* and crossed the Siang at Tayek Pigo.⁵¹ Some five hundred years ago some *Pasi* people, due to over population and in search of better land, moved towards Pasihat via Mebo. Some crossed the Siang at Kumlight and settled at Balek near Pasihat from where they spread over Mikong, Rani, Ruksin, Debing, Depi etc.; and some other moved eastward to Dambuk and Roing. There also they gradually spread over Bolung, Jiya, Parbook, Ngopak, Kyit, Motum, Seram etc.

The case of the *Milangs* is a peculiar one. Unlike the other sub-groups which are compact from a long time the *Milangs* attained a group compactness much later. Because the *Milangs* are a combination of *Milang*, *Padam*, *Shimong* and even *Minyong* and *Galongs*. Their migration to their present habitats is therefore not uniform one. Genealogically, however, there are some genuine *Milangs* (*Milam*)—the descendants of *Milang*. (Pedong—Domi

Miri and Milang). Tagin Litin, a *Shimong*, shows the mixture in *Milang* as *Milang-Minyong-Galong* 70%, *Shimong* 20% and *Padam* 10%. Except the *Shimong* element in the all others migrated upto Moling Kumting near Komkar - with the *Padams* and the *Pasis*. From Moling Kumting they went, to present *Milang* site earlier known as Olon via Londu Kumting (present Dalbing). Only the *Shimong* element migrated by the left bank from Taro Linku, the turning point of the Siang at which they crossed it. Then they took the Sigon stream and went upto Abroka pass and came to Gobuk. Because of the *Padam* aggression they moved back to Shimong, Gette, Pugging, Likor etc. Some people from Gobuk went to Milang in matrimonial relation in etc. Sachin Roy, however, tends to believe that Milangs are by themselves a sub-group and that they migrated to their present habitats in Milang, Dalbing and PakiModi.⁵² Some of them, however, in the modern time, Migrated to Roing and Dambuk along with the Padams and the Pasis.

The *Shimongs* had a separate route for their migration from Tibet. From the *Abe* speech of Amut Nopi, a *Shimong* from Shimong village, we get the following route of their migration. In Tibet, the *Adis* were under the control of the Taros or Mimats. They ruled over the *Adis* in an area around the confluence of Nyagong Ashi, Nyalung Ashi, Taro Siang. To Nopi this is this confluence from which the river takes southward turn. It may be presumed that to escape the wrath of the Taros the *Adis* came to the Tangam area where they did not stay for long and came to Nigong-Barging Aji-Hadang-Lumbuk-Ekorumbing- Mikong Pokok-Bolang-Gamson.

It is now fairly well confirmed that the *Tani* group of tribes migrated from Tibet straight south. Coming down the course of the *Tsangpo* the *Tani* settled at a place called Kopo at which the different sub-groups went in different directions in search of better land.

Notes & Reference

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Chapter-II

Construction of a Village and Its Individual Houses

It has already been seen that the *Adis* are a kind of nomadic tribe frequently on their sojourn. This nature of moving from place to place was significant till about 2nd century A.D. when they were in Tibet. However, coming into contact with some agricultural people they seem to have taken to agriculture and a sort of settled life. But their original tendency of going from one place to another still continues, though it has been restrained to a great extent by the settlement of boundaries of their habitats by the Britishers. Till then they were moving towards the plains of Assam and Dibang valley.

There are many factors which are responsible for their frequent movement: (1) First and foremost, the nature of a nomadic people is to go to other place, for better facilities of subsistence. During their stay in Tibet, before their knowledge in agriculture when they were herdsmen, they moved in search of better grazing areas for their cattle. After their acquisition of knowledge in agriculture they began to move to places in search of more fertile land for their crops. Their system of 'Jhum' cultivation, which demanded more land, enhances this possibility. With the increase of population more and more hills were occupied. Branching off of clans and villages demand more hills. Another reason again of searching for plain land is to assuage the hard labour in cultivation. In hills growing of crop is extremely labourious; whereas in the plains, agriculture does not claim so much labour. (2) Besides the demand for more land for social and economic reasons there are other reasons of their frequent change of habitats.

There were frequent internecine clashes. Sometimes a weak sub-tribe or clan was completely wiped out by some stronger sub-tribe or clan. So a weaker group was in constant fear of a stronger power. Whenever the weaker group found a stronger group settled in their vicinity they began to think of moving away to a safe place. Such a village used to move away either when they were attacked or before they were attacked for fear of extermination or servility under the stronger group. The Mishings of Assam today, who were a branch of the *Adis*, is an example of the above. (3) They believe that longer stay in a particular place attracts more *uroms* and *uyus* (spirits). As a result the village folk is subjected to frequent sickness, epidemics etc. Then also they decide to shift to a different place. (4) The *Adi* tribe is a hunting tribe and in the village there are a considerable number of expert hunters. Each village has got an area with well-marked boundary for that village only. If they go beyond that boundary or trespass into others' land inter-village clash is automatic. So they do not do that. On the other hand their own jungles are without much games. Similar things happen in respect of fishing rivers which are limited to them. To get more games and fishes they decide to move to a new area. For all these reasons the *Adi* people used to frequently shift their village to a new site. From the nature of the grounds we have seen above the method of selecting the site of a new village may also vary whenever necessity of shifting is compulsory, the method is short and improvised or when the necessity is a calculated one the movement is leisurely and the method is followed in detail.

Before going into details about how a site is selected it may be proper here to know what kind of area is selected. Sachin Roy says, - 'They preferred rather the nearest tops of the hills with declivities towards the rivers and steep unnegotiable fall on the opposite side.'¹ As to reasons of selection of a hill top he gives that due to frequent internecine clashes there was a constant security problem. For this security problem they select a site with natural protection against surreptitious attacks. What can be added to this is that a hill does not

give the full security to the villagers. But it gives maximum advantage to the villagers to fight back when the enemy is attacking the village. Actually speaking there is a slope in the front of the village through which the villagers have access for themselves, to their village and outside world. Since the back side is not negotiable to the enemy this is not usable to them also. So the front side is the only access to the village for the villagers themselves and outsiders including the enemy. Actually, the three sides of the village are protected- the back side naturally and the other two sides by ramparts constructed by the villagers. From the inaccessible shoulder of the hill two ramparts- a ditch some ten feet wide and six feet deep and then a dike of stone and earth on the village side- come from two directions almost to a meeting point in a convenient position in the accessible slope for a narrow space of 15 ft. On this passage they construct a gate with two stockades on the higher side. This is the only passage to the village. But "the villagers keep constant watch on this side against possible enemy attack.... At night also the watchful youths in the Dere... easily see the enemy approach and immediately alert the whole village when such enemy attack actually takes place. Then the whole village takes the best strategic position and launches their offensive or defensive, as the case may be."² The other criteria for selection of a site for village are:

(a) A river or a stream flowing by the site is a must. This serves two most essential purposes- water to the villagers for drinking and other requirements and catching fish. To meet the requirement of water for drinking and other purposes the most ideal situation is a spring like thing at the top of the hill from which arrangement of water supply to the village is done through aqueduct. Even in that situation there must be some river flowing by the village site for fishing purpose. Usually in south Himalaya there are some rivers by the side of the hill to drain the water from the vast area; and the hilly rivers are abundant with fish of various kinds.

(b) Sufficient space in the nearby hills for jhum cultivation

and hunting. Jhum cultivation demands periodic shift from one hill slope to another. That indicates how vast area in a medium size village of some 150 families requires. Village Damro, having around three hundred families has about 150 square kms. of land under its control. Each village has got absolute authority over the land enclosed within their demarcation- they are the sole masters in the- games and the river for fishing. No one else can catch fish in their portion of the river and hunt in their games - encroachers will have the penalty as per customary laws.

(c) They also see the site from health point of view and try to avoid the northern slope of a hill where the sun falls only indirectly. Such damp place is considered as haunting place of spirits and goblins causing all sorts of diseases and ailments.

These are the general conditions which can be examined obviously. And when some village is to be shifted these are the preliminary things observed by the villagers. Then comes the intrinsic examination of the site from spiritual point of view. In case of a leisurely selection of some suitable site the decision is first taken in the village *Kebang*. The *Kebang* decides to send three different groups to three directions to see suitable site of the village from the above angles first. Then they examine the actual site through egg/ rice divination. The divination is performed as under: One egg or ten whole rice is packed in a leaf and put in a hole in the earth about a foot deep; then the packet is covered with earth for three days. After the specific period the packet is dug out and examined; if the egg remains alright or the rice whole the site is considered suitable for their purpose; if on the other hand the object of divination is found spoilt on examination the site is not suitable.

After all these examinations the three groups report back to the *Kebang*. The *Kebang* in its turn, examine the reports and finally select one after much debate on the merits and demerits of the sites.

Then a group of people go to the selected site and construct first the community hall called *Musup* or *Dere*. Some people say that the individual houses may also be constructed first. Their opinion may

also be correct if the people of the whole village move together as a result of war in which they are defeated and driven out or as a result of epidemic which they consider is caused by heinous spirit. In that case they will not go for an extra ordinary big house to contain all the people. Rather they would go for constructing, on cooperative basis, some individual houses in which three/four small families are accommodated temporarily. On completion of all the individual houses they move to their respective houses. Then only they construct the *Musup* and the *Raseng*. In normal cases, however, they construct the *Musup* first followed by the individual houses and the *Raseng*. This has some mythological base also. According to *Adi* mythology when the first man was born no house was known in the world. Only after observing unbearable sufferings of man, the god became sympathetic to him and constructed a house for his shelter. The story of this mythology, however, is narrated differently by different people. Oshong Ering, a Minyong, says that it was not for *Tani*, the first man on earth, for whom the first house on earth was constructed, it was for *Karduk* and *Karpung*, brother and sister turned husband and wife, for whom this first house on earth was constructed.

The story goes like this: *Karduk* and *Karpung*, *MEN* in their spiritual stage, were the people of *Engo Takar*. Both of them were beautiful. Due to their staying together they developed sexual attraction for each other. When this incestuous and abnormal sex relation came to be known to the people they were driven away from the *Engo Takar* land.

“Anyi Karpunge Mimum Lang
 Abing Karduge Yemeng Binyi
 Birme Letiem Kabang Minsula,
 Biro Lakpengem Kabang Minsula,
 Engo ginyingem pemin sikai
 Takar gibboem simmin dikai
 Engo yomsie didum telokke
 Takar jangoe didum telokke
 Engo kiruge rukpak lento

Takar kiruge rukpak lento”³

Considering their act as sin *Karduk-Karpung* roamed in various worlds; but they could not get peace. On the other hand love bound them together tighter than earlier, and they could not get separated from each other. Rather, they became haggard and weak due to their wandering. At last they came to the notice of *Kine Nane*, the goddess of wealth and peace. She drew the attention of *Doying Bote* the god of knowledge and wisdom and appealed to help the couple in getting some settlement on earth. *Doying Bote*, in his turn, asked the *Doying Aag* people to construct a house for *Kardung Karpuk* and that house is the first *Dere* on earth and thus the human family started going first in the *Dere*.”⁴

Talom Rukbo, a Pasi, on the other hand refers to their mythology and tells that it was for *Tani* himself, the first man and father of mankind, that the *Musup* was first constructed.⁵ Rukbo has made his narration more acceptable when he says that this is a part of a great *Abang* called *Taktor* which is chanted with much importance in *Solung*. This *Taktor Abang* narrates how after birth, *Tani* had to face immense difficulties to survive in view of the presence of his devilish elder brother *Robo* and his friends. In fact he has to struggle for existence and ultimate attainment of supermacy over all living beings. The creation of *Dere/Musup* came in this very process. Mythology tells *Tani* became very much exhausted and weak, arriving almost at the last stage of life. Seeing his condition his great-grand parents (in spiritual stage) *Litung* and *Limang* felt pity for him and they asked *Gumin Soyin*, the god of house and house-hold, to be his spiritual protector. *Gumin Soyin* took him up and started taking care of *Tani*. Under his loving care *Tani* recovered his health and mind. The god also got a shade sort of house for *Tani*. This house is the first house seen by *Tani* (man) which was named *Dere/Musup*.

The story became more convincing when it narrates how, on *Tani*'s insistence, the originally bare house was gradually decorated with different things culminating in the decoration of the altar (*bungo* in *Adi*) where all community rituals are performed. To top everything

else, all the gods and evil spirits were invited to celebrate the completion of the house. It is at this stage only Ering's *Kardung-Karpuk* story comes, (of course with changed names- as *Karpung-Karduk*) they came on invitation for entertainment of the gods and the spirits, with their songs, dances, speech-making etc. "*Tani* was..... taught gradually all the arts of *Ponung* (dance performed by females), *Delong* (dance performed by males), *Bari* (song suiif, by males), *Miri* (song), *Kebang* (meeting) and *Abe* speech *Kebang* etc." by *Karpung-Karduk*.⁶ It is for this, says Rukbo, that the *Musup* is so significant in *Adi* society. After this significance is attained by *Musup Tani* felt it desirable to have separate house for his own.

U.S. Guha takes the same line of the story as narrated by Rukbo- it was actually constructed for *Doni* or *Tani* (man) when he found himself alone and afraid of *Robo*'s evil forces. Guha in his booklet *Moshup*, however, gives details of the construction and the gods and goddesses invited to the *Mushup* which, perhaps, was not possible in his articles.⁷ Though in details some variations have cropped up but the basic story remains the same.

There is yet another version of the story telling the reason of construction of the *Musup/Dere*. They say *Tani*, after his acquisition of the art of archery and fighting, got excited to fight. At the first instance he defeated his enemies *Rubo* and his legions. Enthused by that success *Tani* went on killing anybody who came to his view. In doing so he even crossed the borders of the human world and entered into the lands of gods and of spirits. He became a maniac, haggard, inconsistent. Then only the gods were alerted and on the suggestion of *Doying Bote* and *Kine Nane* the responsibility of looking after him was given to *Gumin Soyin*. To Guha, *Gomin Soyin*, the god of house hold is not the only god to be in the *Musup*; with him are a considerable number of gods and goddesses to help *Tani* in the *Musup* and later at home.

Coming back to the issue of construction, first the *Mu gup* or the individual houses, it may be said that even today the *Adis* construct first, except under practical situation otherwise as has been seen, the

Musup. Usually the *Musup* is centrally located in the village for convenience of all to come to the *Musup*. Opinion, however, varies in this regards also. Wilcox saw the *Musup*, which he called *Morang*, of *Meho* in the middle of village,⁸ without assigning any reason for it. Guha, who deals with the subject in considerable detail, however, finds the *Musup* at the entrance of the village. Then he gives his comment that the *Musup*, as an out-post for observing the approach of others, including enemy, is constructed at a prominent part of the village, "suitable as a centre of community life."⁹

In fact the *Musup* is the pivotal of the *Adi* society centering round which life ran from generation to generation. It is but natural that the house would be constructed with all seriousness and sanctity.

Tradition says that as the new village site is tested through divination etc. so is the site for the *Musup* examined through the same egg or rice divination. It is, however, not to be understood that as per divination this most significant building would be pushed to an insignificant corner of the village. Prominence of the site is always maintained and since the site is suitable for the village, the site for the *Musup*, in general, is spiritually available.

On selection of the site the village folk get engaged in collection of construction materials and digging. In collection of materials the experienced elderly people take the leading role, because not all kinds of timbers and plants and bamboos are used in this building. This building being a spiritually protected center of the village, such materials are to be used which have the properties of dispelling the evil spirits. There are some specific trees which they believe to be harmful to the evil spirits. Such trees are usually considered having properties of dispelling the evil spirits. So timbers from such trees are used in certain portion of the building. Similarly certain sacred plants and bamboos are used to attract the protective forces of *Tani*.

It is followed by a festival called *Rogum* by the *Pasis* and *Erin* by the *Padams/Minyongs*. In this festival methun, pig, fowls, eggs, apong etc. are offered to the gods and spirits. As it has been mentioned in the chapter on 'Veil of Mystery' the longest period of *Nyonam*

(taboo) for five days is observed in this festival. During these days nobody is supposed to go out of the *Musup*. In fact, as precautionary measures against violation of the *Nyonam* the villagers collect food-stuff sufficient for ten days.

After this ritual function, a community hunting is organised. Here also they observe all the rituals in the *Musup* before going for hunting. This hunting is very significant since the longevity of the village depends on the success or failure of this hunting. The young men's success in the hunting indicates a long life of the village. Failure in the hunting is indication of short life of the village. The first day's catches are offered to the very old men of the village who, in their turn, offer *apong* and rice to the hunting party. The next day's catches only are for the villagers, the actual hunters taking their lion share as per custom.

Another significance of *Rogum* is the spiritual value attached to it; considering the whole function a sacred one the *Adis* believe that it has got curative value. A person/family suffering from misfortune like prostrated illness, occurrences of bad things in the house, may avail this opportunity of *Rogum* for dispelling such bad luck by offering to feed the old men, the hunters etc. with *apong*, cooked rice, ginger etc.

This hunting is followed by *Tapu*, a festival for protection of the village both materially and spiritually. This is a festival of the young males in their arms as if to protect the village from external enemies. In this festival they take *apong* and rice prepared by the old people and the meat they got through hunting. Then they sing heroic songs accompanied by war dance. At moments the dancers take a ferocious posture as if two groups are actually fighting. The solemnity of this festival is indicated by the construction of an alter known as *Tapu Rungu*. It is made with the cleaned bambo end, *taruk*, *singkang*, *siri*, *talo*, *pele* (made of bamboo), *pobang* (made of bamboo sticks woven crosswise), small *pele* 4, ginger, rice, *apong*, *Lipo* (a kind of rat), *bunko* (another variety of rat), egg and *etku* (trap). All these articles are kept in the *Rungu* as offerings to *Doying Bote*. *Kine*

Nane, Dadi Somi, Gumin Soyiti and other gods and spirits. This is done for getting more catches in future. At the same time this festival is meant to show the power of the village in protecting it from the human enemy and spiritual enemies. *Rogum* and *Tapu*, thereafter, became annual functions.

Then they construct their individual houses on cooperative basis. Here again the same divination is conducted to see the suitability of the site. Depending on the number of people every day 2/3 houses are completed. On the same evening a ritual is performed along with a feast to the people involved in the construction of the house. Sacrifice of one pig is a must in this festival. A special *apong* (rice beer called *pobor*) is prepared in sufficient quantity.

In this function the chief participants are the elderly ladies called the *ejo dolung*, of the village. Some of the ladies have the spiritual knowledge and they take the initiative in making a spiritual wall through their songs, dances and other jovialities. They drink, eat meat and cooked rice since evening fall. The more the night advances the deeper are they in their songs and dances. Since it is done inside on the floor of the house they can continue without disturbance from the weather. In 1968, I happened to see some such function at Balek. The old ladies made a chain one catching the other's shoulder from the back. The front-most one would go to one corner of the house and catch hold of the corner post, the others in the chain would pretend to pull. Some sort of spells went on in chorus while doing so. At a certain stage some of them looked like spirit possessed. Then they would go to other place repeating the same thing. In all probability this is ritual for putting up a spiritual fencing for the house so that no evil spirit could come inside to disturb the inmates. There is, of course, another such protective hindrance to the evil spirits done by the owner. The owner of the house performs *kepel*, a kind of shamanistic propitiation of the evil spirits. On completion of the house, the owner performs this offerings, one egg, ginger, some rice and *apong* in a packet and a bamboo tube is fixed with bamboo stick some one foot long on the roof at the entrance into the house. Two *tan* leaves and miniature

bow and arrow to frighten away the evil spirit are also kept there.

When the construction of all houses are complete they will go to construct the village gate called *Pator*. It has already been noticed that the two portions of the village rampart, like two archs, come closer to the entrance into the village, without actually meeting each other. In this narrow space of about fifteen feet the *Pator* is constructed. In importance the *Pator* comes next to *Dere' Musup* so far as community welfare and survival are concerned. Like the *Dere/Musup* the *Pator* attains the secular spiritual significance in the *Adi* society. I am not sure of the significance attached to it by the *Minyongs* but for the *Pasi*, *Padams* and *Milangs* the *Pator* is highly significant thing. It is not understandable how this aspect of *Adi* social life escaped the notice of Sachin Roy while dealing in detail with the *Padam*, *Minyong* culture. With the *Padam*, it is noticed by the earliest visitors to the area. Though these visitors did not get much scope, perhaps, to know what it is during their very short stay for a day or two they have, however, mentioned about its existence. Wilcox, in 1825 observed in Mebo "a doorway recently built of green boughs, intended, as we understood, to keep out those evil spirits who might chance to travel in our company."¹⁰ It is indeed what the *Pator* is. Father Crick, in 1853, saw the same thing in more details of decoration and purpose. He says on his emergence from the forest, "I was made to pass under an arch bristling with bows and arrows, and in striking attitude that baffle description. This piece of architecture is fearful to behold, as well it might be, for it was to expel from my body the more stubborn devils who had been daring enough to cross the first obstacle."¹¹* The spiritual purpose and function of the village gate is more or less reflected in these statements of the early visitors to the *Adi* village. The *Adis* believe that the village is protected by the spiritual guard known as *Tordung Babu* who constantly keeps watch on the gate from any calamity that may come

* The first obstacle was performed on the body of Father Crick with an treatment of branches of plants and some charm before arrival at the gate.

from outside the village.’

It is with this belief that on completion of construction of the *Musup* and the individual houses, or simultaneously sometimes, the *Pator* is constructed. In shape it is a gate with two hollow posts woven with bamboo sticks. Then these posts are decorated first with green leaves or shrubs. Over it bows and arrows are fixed directing the arrow-heads away from the village to frighten away any evil spirits intending to come alone or accompanied with somebody especially strangers. It is further decorated with imitation spears of bamboo with the same motive. Figures made of bamboo shavings to symbolise something are also put in the gate. Then an arch woven with bamboo sticks is put over these two posts and the arch is also decorated similarly. One thing to be observed here is, that on the day of installation of *Tordung Babu* a dog is sacrificed and kept hanging from the arch with its intestines dangling out from its body. Sometimes some people sacrifice a dog and keep hanging from the arch with its intestines dangling out from its body. Sometimes some people sacrifice fowls and are also seen hanging from the arch. All these are done on the completion of the gate for installation of *Tordung Babu*. At the time of installation of *Tordung Babu*, i.e., throughout the process of decorating the gate with bows, arrows, spears, bamboo fastoon and sacrificed animal(s), certain charms (*Lube* in *Adi*) are chanted by the *Miri*. The *Lube* is but invocation of benevolent spirits from the hades- and all these spirits are brothers. They are all grandsons of *Siking Mone* (goddess of Hades)- with genealogy as under (a) Siking-Kitor- *Tordung*, (b) Siking- Kingeng-Gene, (c) Siking- Kingung-Gumin Bote (d) Siking- Kiro-Roja, (e) Siking- Kitang-Tapu.

The *Miri* or the oldest man in the village sings the following charms:

Ejoe, ejoe

Nergin-gin kulong abidem lalento

Nergin-gin mibo (the spirit) luposinape.

It is replied by an old lady as follows :

Miijinge, Miijinge

Nergin-gin

Noging kiling dem lalento, Nergin-gin

Mibo lupohinampe, Nergin.

The whole village observe *Nyonam* that day. In addition to the invisible spiritual guardian of the *Pator* the oldest superannuated man of the village is selected as the demi-guardian. And he is called *Pator Babu*. Sometimes a seriously sick man of the village may see in his dream or delirium crossing this *Pator*. In such case the man sees the *Pator Babu*, not the *Tordung Babu*. It is believed that if the *Pator Babu* allows him to cross the gate there is every possibility of his death; and if not allowed he may survive the serious sickness.

After the construction of this *Pator*, in case of a new village, it is annually repaired with all the rituals described above. Repair/reconstruction is done seasonally or on occasions as under :

Goeng - Goeng is a kind of insect which sings go.... eng. go.... eng at a particular season of the year. It is just at the beginning of summer, With this music come all the spirits to cause epidemic and other disease. The *Pator* is, therefore, repaired at this period.

Lokbat – At the time the *holok* plant blossoms (beginning of autumn) more diseases and epidemics occur in the villages. They believe that the *holok* flowers are signs of the spirit's pleasure i.e., their success in causing more diseases in the village. So at this stage the *Pator* is repaired again.

Kili (Epidemic)- In spite of so much of precautions epidemic breaks out occasionally in the village. At such time also the *Pator* is reconstructed with sacrifice etc. It is believed that the malevolent spirits sometimes enter in the village when the *Pator* is off guarded. These spirits are required to be driven away from the village. In case epidemic has already broken out in the village then the arrows and spears are pointed to the village so that the spirits are frightened out of the village; and if it breaks out in the vicinity then the arrow and spear-heads are directed away from the village so that the approaching spirits are frightened away.

Pator Babu – On the death of the *Pator Babu*, the oldest man

of the village, the *pator* is repaired or reconstructed with the belief that after going away of the *Pator Babu* the *pator* remains unguarded and some evil spirits may enter into the village.

This is the spiritual protection given to the village by the *Pator*. The aspect of material protection to the village is also significant. Usually just at the gate there is a stockade well guarded by *langkang* warrior. In the past the stockade was constantly guarded by about 20 able bodied young boys. Though it was occasionally slackened in time of peace it is tightened severely whenever possibility of enemy attack increases as a result of some feud with some other village. Twenty four hours watch is kept by these able bodied youths. Beyond the gate the rampart (a ditch of some 10' width and about 6' depth) is heavily laid with panjis (*iyor* in *Adi*).

This is how an *Adi* village is constructed and defended from all external forces, mundane and supramundane.

Notes & Reference

1. Sachin Roy : *Aspects of Padam MInyong Culture*, p. 49.
2. J. Nath : *The Young Panther*, p. 2.
3. Oshong Ering : 'Dere and Raseng System of the Adis', *NEFA Information*, July-1969 p.15.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 14-19.
5. Talom Rukbo : 'Traditional Faith and Belief behing Musup', *NEFA Information*, Nov. 1968, pp. 6-10.
6. *Ibid* pp. 8-9.
7. B. S. Guha : *Moshup Abang*, pp. 61-66.
8. R. Wilcox : '*Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the neighbouring Countries 1825-6-7-8*', quoted by V. Elwin in his *NEFA in the 19th century*, p. 232.
9. B. S. Guha : *Moshup Abang*, p. 19.
10. R. Wilcox : '*Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the neighbouring Countries 1825-6-7-8*', quoted by V. Elwin in his *NEFA in the 15th century*, p. 232.

Chapter-III

Family

Family is a unit of people living together for long association for the purposes of procreation, protection, economic interest and inheritance. To fulfil the first requirement there should be a pair for male and female initially and when that is done the rest follows almost automatically. Attempting a sort of definition of family Ogburn and Nimkoff call it a “more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children, or of a man or woman along with children. The sex and parental functions are distinctive of the family. They constitute the primary *raison d’etre* of the institution and are common to the family in all cultures. The primary personnel of the family consists of mates and their offspring.¹ From the ‘mate’ of the primary personnel grows the other members the children, daughters-in-law, son-in-law, grand-children and other relatives depending on the nature of family in a particular society. Every society of the world has got the institution of *family* which is broadly classified as (1) Simple Family and (2) Consanguineous Family. Whether simple or consanguineous a family is either patrilocal or matrilocal. A simple family is a nucleus of husband(s) and wife(s) and their children. Though other members may be added for staying, they are not formally connected with the family so far as the functions of a family is concerned. A simple family does not permit further expansion beyond the children of the primary mates.² Whereas a consanguineous family is one in which the relation of blood-kins is the core and is more

important than the mates.³

An *Adi* family is a simple family with the nucleus of husband and wife and their unmarried children. "Each man lives in a house of his own with his wife and daughters: boys and young men occupy a building constructed for the purpose in the centre of each village."⁴ Though the above is not strictly a definition of an *Adi* family from sociological point of view more or less the author gives the correct position of a one. What he speaks of the boys and young men sleeping in the dormitory does not preclude them from the unit of the family, for they only sleep there at night. For all other purposes of the family they are members of the unit. Dalton holds similar views regarding an *Adi* family, that the house is meant for the accommodation of the family by the couple and the unmarried daughters, while the sons occupy the dormitory.⁵ But observed from the practical point of view both Michell's and Dalton's statement fall short of the actual position from another angle. Both of them are nineteenth century visitors to the *Adi* area. In all probability they were not told about the girl's dormitory called *Raseng*. Since the institution of *Raseng* has been dealt in detail in the chapter on "marriage" I will not further dwell on it: what I mean to say is that the unmarried daughters of the couple also do not stay under the parental roof at night. Rather, the married daughter with her child(ren) stays with the couple for a long time after her marriage. Sachin Roy, however, makes a plausible approach when he says. "An *Adj* family, consists of a nucleus of father and mother with separable units in sons and daughters."⁶ In this statement also, however, there is still-the flaw of not including all possible members. In addition to the old parents of the father who may come in case of the present couple's husband being either the only son of his parents or the youngest of the brothers, there is possibility of children of either father by his *Raseng* beloved or of the mother by her *Raseng* lover. In the chapter of marriage etc. it has been shown that sometimes a *Raseng* girl may conceive as a result of her love with a particular boy who later on may not agree to marry her. She will deliver the child without any social castigation and she is free to

marry another boy. But the child thus produced, known as *dom ko* (pre-marital issue) will become a child of the real father if the issue is a boy and of the mother if it is a girl. This *dom ko*, if any, may become a member of the above family whether it is of the father or of the mother. It has also been noticed that in case of a divorced woman's marrying a second husband she may also take the female issues by her first husband to the second husband's house and these issues also become the members of the family for all purposes. Similarly, all the children, both male and female, of a widow by her first husband become members of that family. These are the peculiar situations to be noted in the *Adi* family.

To come back to the nucleus family. We may see the picture of an *Adi* family with the marriage of the first issue of the parents. 'Issue' here involves two kinds of issue- in case of male issue the picture is one, and in case of female issue the picture is another.

Let us see the picture in respect of male issue. Since one attains boyhood he is supposed to sleep in the *Dere/ Musup* at night till one gets married. Other than that he is in the family for all other purposes. During his *Dere* life he is supposed to get a girl of his choice from the *Raseng*. Their frequent contact grows into love in all senses of the word. Then he lets it be known to his parents through some of his friends; and that usually leads to their marriage. After marriage the boy's responsibility increases for he is to serve two families- his parents' family and the family of his bride's parents. His major attention is however, drawn to his in-laws house till 2/3 children are born to them. During day time he is to help his own father- in-law and his own father in their agricultural works. He adjusts his services according to the urgency and importance of works in his in-laws' field or his father's field. This continues for four to seven years by which 2/3 children are born. During this period his parents make arrangement for constructing a new house for him and his wife and children. In fact when a married man brings his wife home he brings his wife and children to the new home constructed for him. In this natural process a boy gets separated from his parents after his

marriage.

From the above the change of the picture of an *Adi* family with the marriage of a female issue may also be clear. Till her husband takes her and her children she is part and parcel of her parents' family.

Case history : (a) In village Kiit on the left bank of the Siang I stayed in a family. The family had a married daughter living with her parents. I observed that her husband comes at night and goes out in the morning. At that time the couple had one child only. Her parents were still alive.

Coming back to the nucleus couple it may appear that with the completion of marriages of all the children the nucleus parents remain alone in their old age. In reality it is not so. Tradition has seen to it that in the old age no one is left unattached or uncared for. There is provision for adjustment with situation for taking care of the nucleus parents at their old age. In the traditional *Adi* society the youngest son is to stay with the parents even after his marriage: the youngest son and his wife take care of the old couple in their day to day life. For their long drawn necessity and protracted ailment the elder sons and daughters-in-law who are separated have also the responsibility to look after. In such case the brothers put their heads together and take necessary steps for redressing the old parents' grievances. The oldest son, who had gone out of the family first, is rather more responsible in such cases. Above all the eldest son is to perform the last-rites at the death of their parents.

Another question may come to one's mind. What happens if the nucleus parents who do not have male issue. Here also tradition has provision for the youngest daughter to continue to her stay at her parents' house along with her husband. Society has the sanction for the groom to stay with his wife and children at his wife's parents' house without any castigation. This is the provision of adjustment kept in the tradition for everybody's security.

The *Adis* are a patrilineal society. As usual with the patrilineal society the family is a patrilocal one. But here also it may be said that it is not a purely patrilocal family. It has already been noticed that ..

newly married couple has a vacuum period; the man temporarily stays with the wife's family instead of the wife's coming to live in husband's family. The son-in-lawship (*Magbo-ginam* in *Adi*) ends with the couples' going from the bride's family and starting new family separate from the groom's family, if the groom is not the only son or the youngest son of his parents. This situation of an *Adi* couple- separation from both the parents' families and starting a new one- seems to have been called *nuolocal family* by Sachin Roy.⁷

Broadly speaking all the patrilineal members of a clan are brothers and sisters to each other and marriage amongst themselves is not permissible. Some exceptions have now been noticed. In spite of being brothers and sisters for marriage and other social security purpose every individual has other relations with different members of the clan. We may study this as under giving the necessary terminologies :

'A' is a child of a particular family of a particular clan. In *Adi* term its father is *abo* and mother is *ane*; its father's/ mother's father is *buku* (the commonly used term is *baabu*) and mother is *neku* (commonly used term *naane*) ; its father's brother, in chronological order from eldest to the youngest are- *pate*, *payong*, *patum*, *payi* and *pasak* \ its father's sisters are *nyani* (to indicate respectability *nyani bote* is used) ; father's brother's wives- *ane*; its mother's brother is commonly known as *aki*, (*Kaki*), but when more than one maternal uncles are there it will call them in order of age *kite*, *kiyong*, *kiyi*, maternal uncle's wife- *yayo* its mother's sisters in order of age- *mote*, *moyong*, *moyi*.

Let us see one's relation to his brothers, sisters and cousins: one's elder brother is *abing* and younger brother is *biro*; elder sister is *mimi* and younger sister is *birme*. So far as cousins from father's brothers and sisters are concerned, it may be said that unlike the *Tais* or *Khamties* the *Adis* give value to age not to lineage. So whether a male cousin of 'A' is from his father's elder brother or younger brother, elder sister or younger sister that cousin is *abing* if elder and *biro* (*ani*) if younger. Similarly a female cousin is *mimi* and *bime*

repectively.

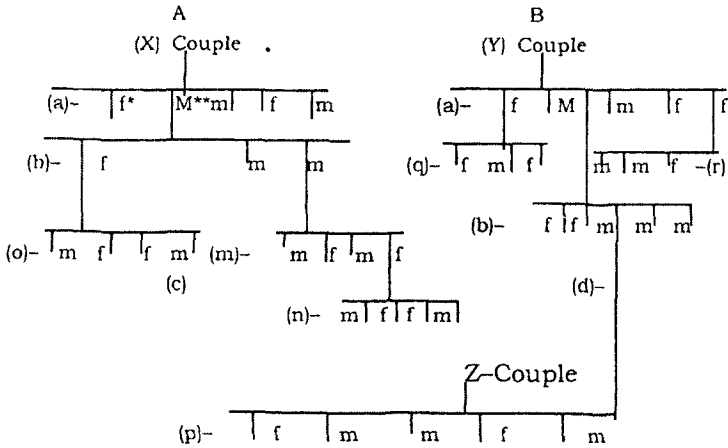
'B' is an aged man of a particular family of a particular clan; to him his son is *O* and his daughter *Ome*; his daughter-in-law is *nayameng*; his son-in-law, *makte* (eldest), *makbo* (others). His grandchildren, from both male and female lines are *oten* in respect of both male and female. His brother's (both elder and younger) children: male *O*, female *ome*; his sisters (both elder and younger) so – *O*, daughter, *Ome*.

Supposing 'A' and 'B' have got married. Naturally- A & B, are from different clans. To 'A', B's father is *atto* and mother is '*ayo*'; B's brothers, both her own and cousins, particularly of her own clan, are *igo* and sisters are *igne*, even B's *nyanis* (father's sisters) are A's *igne* | B's sisters are behaved lightly, for A's marriage with them is permissible, whereas treatment to B's *nyanis* is respectable, for they are like mother-in-law. Sometimes, therefore, they are called *nayni* by A also. To A, B's paternal uncles are *pate*, *payong*, *patum*, *pai*, *pasak*. Similarly B's maternal uncles are *kite*, *kiyong'* *kiyi* to A, if they are not from A's clan. Very often it is observed that B's maternal uncles may be from A's clan, and in that case 'A' may have other relation with them from his own side. For instance, A belongs to Dai clan. B's mother may belong to Dai clan married to B's father's clan *Moyong*. After marriage between A & B, B's clan maternal uncles- *kakis*- may not be *kakis* to A- they will be *pate*, *payong* etc. Similarly B's cousins from her maternal line will not be A's *igo*, *igne*, for they are brothers and sisters or some other relations to 'A' by his paternal line.

For a comprehensive relation the following figure may also be seen.

The tie of an *Adi* family with its clan is very strong. The cohesion of this tie is made strong on two counts :

- (a) tribal sense of cohesion on basis of blood relation and
- (b) possession of common clan property.



* f-- female
 **mm -- male

Note :

1. 'A' and 'B' are two clans
2. A(X) and B(Y) are two couples of the said clans.
3. (a) and (b), common to 'A' and 'B' are second and third generations.
4. A(c) is wife from third generation of A(y) to husband B(d) from third generation of B (y), the children at (p) are the children of A(c) and B(d).
5. In the branch lines- (i) A(m) is fourth generation from A(x) through third generation male; (ii) A(n) is fifth generation from A(x) through fourth generation female; (iii) A(o) is fourth generation from A(x) through third generation female.

We are now to find out the relations- in *Adi* terminologies of (i) A(x) to A(a), A(b), A(c), A(m), A(n), A(o) and B(d); (ii) B(d) to A(c), A(b), A(a) and A(x); (iii) A(c) to B(d), B(a) and B(y); (iv) B(a) to A(c) (v) husbands of the females at B(i) to each other; (vi) wives of the males at B(v) to each other; and (vii) all other relations within these groups.

Explanation:

1.

- (i) To A(x) the children at A(a): male = O, female = *Ome*
- (ii) To A(x) the children at A(b): male = *Otem*, female = *Oten*
- (iii) To A(x) the children at A(c): *oten*
- (iv) To A(x) the children at A(m) = all *oten*
- (v) To A(x) the children at A(n) = all *oten*
- (vi) To A(x) the children at A(o) = all *oten*
- (vii) To A(x) and A(a), B(d) is... = *makho*

2.

- (i) To B(d), A(c) is = *meng*
- (ii) To b(d) the children at A(b): male = *igo*, female = *igne*
- (iii) To b(d) the children at A(a) : A(c)'s father *atto*,
A(c)'s mother = *ayo*, all others- male = *igo*, female =
igne or male- *Pate, Payong Pai, Pasak*, is age order,
female = *nyani*.
- (iv) To b(d) A(X): male = *atto babu*, female = *ayo nane*

3.

- (i) To A(c), B(d) is = *milo* (mijing in old age)
- (ii) To A(c) the children at B(b): male = *igo*, female = *igne*.
- (iii) To A(c) B(d)'s father at B(a) = *atto*, mother = *ayo*, all
other male = *igo* or *Pate, Payong, Pai* etc. female =
igne or *nyani*
- (iv) To A(c) B(Y) male = *atto babu*, female = *igne* or
nyani
- (v) To B(y) and B(a), A(c) is = *nyumeng*.

4.

- (i) To the children at (p), A(c) is = *ane*, B(d) = *abu*
- (ii) To the children at A(b) male = *Kaki* (common term
aki), Kaki's wife = *yayo*, females, in order of age =
mote, moyong & nd moi.
- (iii) To the children at (P) A(a): male = *kaki babu*, female
= *nane*
- (iv) To the children at (P) B(b): male, *pate, payong, pai*,

pasak, female = *nyani*

- (v) To the children at (P) B(a) : male = *buku (habu)*, female = *neku (nane)* (*buku's* wife also *neku nane*).
- (vi) To the children at (P) A(o): male - *biro*, female *hirme* (for elder = *abing* and *mimi* are used for male and female respectively)
- (vii) To the children at (P) A(n): male = *O*, female = *Ome*.
5. At B(q) the husbands of the females are *belho* to each other.
6. At B(y) wives of the males are *belna* to each other.

(a) The *Adis* have a strong sense of blood relation for a few generations till a new sub-branch is started from a particular person of strong character or by a shift of a group of clan people under a particular chief. Two examples- one from the *Milangs* and the other from the *Padams*- are given below to show this strong sense of blood relation. Every surname is traceable back to *Pedong- Nane*, the mother of first man.

Milang : Here the geneological descendance will be shown upto Bytin Byngkep etc. *Pedong-Bomi-Miri-Ringkiyong-Kingou- Nguyi-yidal-Dalbing-Bitin and Bingkep. Padam*: here the geneological descendance will be shown upto Perme/Pertin : *Pedong- Dolo-Loung-Nuda-Dai-Ike-Kepang-Paper- Pertin/Perme*.

If we see the position of *Nguyi* there may appear three generations from him upto *Bitin and Bingkep*. As two different sub-clans are branched off from *Dalbing* there may be more or so such sub-clans at every stage. From *Nguyi* downward all the possible branches/sub branches are clan brothers since they are descendants of the common father *Nguyi*. It is to be noted that branching off is not done at every stage of one father to sons: one particular branch subclan may continue for a few generations till an occasion, like shifting of one group to

another place or very influential man in war and social activities, arises for originating a new subclan. From *Domi*, for instance, *Miri* may be even fourth, fifth or any generation; but since there was no important man to be counted the generation in between are not considered; and since *Miri* is a figure to be counted a new branch is carved out in his name as a sub-clan. In spite of this fact, each clan/ sub-clan feel a strong tie with their common ancestor *Domi*. The major clans of the Adi group of tribes such as Minyong, Padam, Karko, Komkar, etc. have also been branched off. They say that there were four brothers from a common father, a descendant of Pedong. They were Nyibo, Bomi, Botum and Boyir. From Nyibo comes the Minyongs, from Bomi the Padams, from Botum the Karkos and from Boyir the Komkars. At a broader level each group has a strong cohesion in its relation with the other groups. The clans and sub-clans are the close blood relation group and some clans have strict marriage restrictions within the clan. So each family has a close tie with its clan.

(b) This blood relation is farther strengthened from generation to generation. The Adis have a strong tradition of common property. That common property is constituted with the property the founder father of a new clan/sub-clan had at the time of his branching off, plus the property brought by the wife as marriage gift from her parents, and the property he earns during his life time.

Example : Suppose A is an important man of a clan. At the time of his separation, he, in his turn, would take his share of his ancestors' property. Then he would earn some property during his life time by dint of his labour and diligence. He may have at the time of his

death a number of *arems* (valuable plate of Tibetan metal), *cianki* (bigger pot of Tibetan metal), *tadok* (precious beads of Tibetan metal), *eso* (methun) and his portion of the landed property. On his death these properties are not shared by the brothers to be taken to their individual houses; these remain usually with the eldest brother; but they have their share in them.

They have got a peculiar concept of sharing property, probably due to the barter system that prevailed till today in the interior village, that the property can never be equally shared amongst the contenders. This again goes back to the original quarrel of the mythical brothers-Nibo and Robo, man and devil- whose ancestral property could never be shared; instead of sharing they quarrelled which is the original cause of man's suffering on earth. Even today property like *arem*, *todok*, *danki*, *eso* etc. cannot be shared to the satisfaction of all. To share all these things equally they are to break every item of the father's property into equal shares so that no one gets neither more nor less but in reality this is not possible with the advantage of further use of the things. An *arem*, for instance, once broken and divided is of no use. Similarly the *methuns* of the *lalliei* also will not be shared unless butchered and meat distributed. If the father has got 15 methuns and there are three brothers they will not share five methuns each with minor adjustment here and there; in their concept each brother carries in mind that every third portion of each methun is his. Under this circumstance they do not share the items at the time of separation. Even the landed property, though different plots are ear-marked for each brother to cultivate, no brother, nor his sons, can sell the land he gets as ancestral property, without taking the permission of his living brothers, cousins etc. Though *arem* *todok* do not grow as such as the *methuns* coming down from the ancestor grow with the passage of time. All these become the property of the male descendants of the original father. For further clearance the two diagrams may be seen: In **diagram 1** A represents the male ancestor and in **Diagram 2** B represents a female methun at the time of A's death.

and wants to go to some husband other than her brother-in-law. Supposing C earns a lot but his brothers B and D earn less; then also B and D cannot claim any right over his property whereas they have the common right on property left by their father A. B's property earned during his life, however, forms a common property for his sons. Supposing 'B's sons are M, N and O. They will have share of the property of their father in addition to their common property left by A at B's hands.

This common property is used for common purpose of the clan. In fact each member of a family is a member of the clan and the clan is responsible for absolving him from any serious matter. Supposing one of D's sons is charged with murder and is heavily fined which his parents are not in a position to pay. Then the clan as a whole is to pay the fine, either from the common property or from their individual property as per one's worth. It is the clan responsibility to release him from the *Kebang* fine. Naturally, each member, each family, relies on an unbreakable tie with the clan.

The relation of the family with the clan as stated above is a concept of blood-relation and property. In addition to this there is another relation, in the social context, which is very important. This is the relation between the maternal uncle and his nephews. This is almost at a spiritual/superstitious level. From social and ritualistic point of view the *kaki*, is significant to his nephews. The commonly used word for *kaki* is *aki* which means nest i.e. shelter; and it is the duty of the *aki* to give protection, both material and spiritual, to his nephews. One's economic protection is usually given by one's parents. But if in an inter-clan clash one is wounded it is the *aki* who will first move the *Kebang* for appropriate compensation. If the accused clan comes to term and pays the compensation as per the verdict of the *Kebang* the *kaki* is satisfied. If, on the contrary, the accused refused to concede to the *kebang* decision, the *kaki* is to initiate revenge on the accused. He would see to it that at least one member of the accused clan, not necessarily the person who wounded his nephew is equally wounded by himself or his men. However, it is be noted that it is not always the

real brother of the wounded's mother, but influential member of the mother's clan can take the initiative in this respect.

This is what we have seen so far as the significance of the *aki* in material respect is concerned. In spirituoritual respect *aki*'s significance is much more. In fact, according to *Adi* belief even the spirits are afraid of *aki* of a boy or girl to whom some mischief is done by some spirits.

There is much significance of the *kaki* in relation to social superstitions. In case of divorce of a woman or death of her husband she may like to leave her husband's house and come back to her relatives. According to social belief she should not come back to her parents, for it is ominous to come back to her parent's house. Rather she can go to the maternal uncle's house where she might have been born during her father's *makbo ginam* period.

In *Adi* cosmogony, there is a spirit called *Epom*. *Epom* is no other than *Robo*, Tani's elder brother, turned into a spirit when chased by Tani to take revenge upon his misdeed to Tani's wife during Tani's long absence of five years due to *Robo*'s tricks. Since then *Epom* is in look out for a chance to cause harm to men. One of *Epom*'s common mischief is to lift a child when found alone in the field. The child is taken to the jungle and put hidden on some big tree. Ater search for the child for a reasonable time if they fail to get it the *Adis* believe that the child is kept hidden by *Epom*. They usually attack the trees With axe, dao etc. In this attack on the tree one of the influential *akis* of the spirit possessed child is to initiate the attack. Then only the *Epom* gets frightened and returns the child. In this'-connection Dalton's reference to loss of a child in agricultural field and subsequent action of the villagers is interesting. He says that the *Adis*, when failed in their firstsearch, were sure some '*deo*' had hidden the child in the jungle. So the villagers would attack the jungle, particularly the big trees on the branch if which it was supposed to have kept the child.⁸ What Dalton did not come to know is that it was the maternal uncle of the Missing child who takes the lead in this respect. When a maternal uncle does so all the *Epoms*, including

the one who had kept the child are frightened and they ask the responsible one to release the child.

In a recent case in respect of an aristocratic *Adi* lady the *aki* had to take some ritualistic action. She was suffering from an unknown disease and she was shifted to Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh. There also no sign of her cure appeared. And her relatives were almost sure she would die. Then some one suggested her maternal uncle perform *emul* treatment. Since her own *aki* was not available one distant *aki*, Ogom Dai, was called to Dibrugarh. After his *emul* performance the lady gradually improved and now she is completely cured.

In the *Adi* society, there are various kinds of oath-taking to absolve one from suspicion. Whenever such a suspicion is raised socially on somebody regarding stealing, adultery, land encroachment etc., the maternal uncle comes out of the picture. Say, for example, a man is charged with theft though he is not actually the culprit. Now to prove his innocence he is to go through some ordeal. He may be asked to take out an egg from boiling water in a bamboo knot. In such case everything is arranged under supervision of the *Kehang*—in two bamboo knots water will be boiling with eggs in it. The maternal uncle of the accused will come and invoke the gods and pray them to punish the culprit, and not the innocent. Then the accused and the accuser will bring out the eggs from the boiling water of their respective knots. Nothing will happen to the person who is innocent but the culprit's hand will be scalded immediately.

In respect of marriage also, the maternal uncle of the groom plays a significant role. It is interesting to note the similar custom in the Assamese society. The maternal uncles of the groom and the bride take much initiative in their marriage and the uncles' marriage gifts. Amongst the *Milangs* also the number of maternal uncles of the groom will decide how many *eggling* the bride's parents will get on the marriage of their daughter.

In addition to the human members there is a litter of dogs in every family. Like the other human members the dogs have every

access to any part of the house- bedroom, sitting place, kitchen and what not. The interior of an *Adi* house does not give one an impression of privacy. For a newly married daughter and her husband, during her period of *Makbo ginam*, a small enclosure is carved out in one corner of *Rising* (place for the guest) side in either the interior one or the one immediately after the entrance. That too is an improvised one with bamboo- sheet or plank on the bamboo-sheet platform floor. The other place of privacy is the extreme interior or the back of the house which is demarcated by plank with a slit door for going there. This is called *regum* (latrine). Other than these there is nothing in the house for privacy. This is made, perhaps, possible by the dormitories for both male and female children. The grownup unmarried boys and girls sleep at night in the *Musup* and *Raseng* respectively. But the dogs are not supposed to be outside the house at night. There is, of course, a tendency these days to keep the dogs outside the door to avoid man's sleeping with dog. I remember it well a dog sleeping by my side when I slept in an *Adi* house in the floor itself by the side of the *merom* (hearth).

Their love for dog has a mythological background. It is the bitch (*kine*) which brought paddy seed from the underworld. Since then man started keeping dogs in the family as respectable members. *Kine Nane*, the goddess of crops and property- sounds dog like. *Eki- Ane Kine*. *Kine Nane* to the Galongs, from the world (of Mopin). Thus partly as the dog that brought the seed or the goddess of crops and wealth, they consider dog to be religiously/ superstitiously important member (domestic animal) in the household. When I asked my informers the reasons of keeping dogs they said it is the sign of good luck. The family which has dogs will not face shortage of food-stuff and family without dog is ominous. Dog is a sacred animal. The second reason they said is that as a hunting tribe the dogs are essential. But there are two other reasons, which they did not allude: for sacrifice and for scavenging. It is noticed in the chapter on construction of village how a dog is sacrificed at the *pator* (gate) to ward off the evil spirits attracted to the village. The dog is used as a scavenger in the

Adi family though not in the general sense, but in a specific sense We have seen in the chapter on construction of village how they select the site of a village on the top of some hillock. Very often they face the scarcity of water. And the mother would not get water to clean her defecating baby. It is the dog which lick the anus of the baby. For all these a dog is an important animal in the *Adi* family. It is common site, particularly during winter, to see a litter of dogs around the cooking pot in the *merom* when preparation of meals are going on. And when meals are served and all the members of the family are ready to take from the same leaf in which everything is provided, the dogs take position with other members around the dish. I have not seen the dogs taking their share from the same dish when grown up members take meal; I have however, seen them sharing meal with the young children from the same dish in the very eye of the grown ups.

It has been noticed in *gibat* how the small function celebrated on the day the new born baby is formally taken out from the house differs in respect of male and female. That actually marks the male-female distribution of labour. In fact the male has a completely separate field of work from that of the female, if, occasionally their separate field merge into one. We have seen that in case of a male child the carrier of the baby takes imitation bow and arrows; and in respect of female child the weeding implement is made to be touched by the baby. These are symbols only. But they decide the field of work for the male and the female.

Hunting is an exclusive occupation of the males and women are not supposed to participate in it. Even when the female goes for hunting in a sort of acting, as we have noticed in the chapter on marriage, she does so in the guise of a male. So in the field of war with weapons is exclusively for the male. The monopoly in these two fields is implied in the statement made by Sachin Roy, "As a rule women do not use any of the weapons (like how, arrow, spear, sword) excepting the dao and the small knife, which are necessary for their daily work."¹ There is no mention in their tradition of a woman going to the war when it is declared one and fought outside the village.

When, however, a village women participate by way of helping their men folk. Even then they participate with their own weapon. not the male weapon. The weapon used by women is the chilly powder either dry or mixed in water sprinkled to the enemy by surprise while in their work field her weapon is sex. They offer sex to the enemy, once the enemy accepts the offer the woman is never killed by the enemy. For. it is believed that the male flow into the female body is nothing but his going into her. Killing of the woman after that means suicide which in turn is very bad in their belief.

Most of the works in the agriculture field is in the lot of the woman. Except in *jhum* cultivation, and in the upper regions they have mostly the *jhum* cultivation, agriculture is an exclusive affair of the woman. In *jhum* cultivation the felling of trees is involved. Felling of the trees is done by man and after that the setting of fire to dry stem and branches and cleaning of the lower vegetations are done by the women folk. Then they put the seed one by one in the holes which they make with a pointed slick Weeding is also the affair of the woman. When the harvesting time comes the women goes to the field with sickles and a bamboo or cane made basket. The basket is carried on her back. hung from her head with the help of a strap. After cutting the corn she puts in the basket till the basket becomes too heavy for carrying. She unloads the corn in a safe place only. At the end of the day's work she carries one load home.

Collection of firewood from the jungle is also exclusively woman's duty. It is an interesting sight when a group of women/girls coming with basket loads of firewood from the jungle in the evening fall in any *Adi* village. There is also no age bar in carrying firewood from the jungle from the age of about ten to the end of their life they carry firewood. Very old lady carrying firewood from the jungle is common sight in an *Adi* village. If one asks a very old lady why, at her age, she carries firewood she simply says it is part of her life. I asked many such ladies in Balek. Milang and other villages why they carry such load which could be done by their daughter or daughters-in-law. The answer is the same. Carrying of load seems nothing to them:

they carry it as if nothing has been done by them. So in addition to carrying the basket hung from the head they are very often seen making thread out of raw cotton while walking. Preparation of yarn from cotton is also purely women's duty. Her work in respect of yarn does not end there. Making, of cloth is exclusively her affair. She has to prepare cloths for all the members of the family including herself. Though they scantily use cloths for covering their body they require good quantity of *hadu*, a kind of blanket made of rough yarn and raw cotton. Occasionally a sleeveless coat is also made out of that cloth.

Husking of paddy is usually done by the women folk. The old ladies are, however, spared from this hard job in the families having young girls/women.

Carrying water in bamboo tubes from the stream/ spring or the point of aqueduct is done by the young girls. Unlike in carrying firewood the ladies from the families having young girls/women are rarely seen in this job. Occasionally, the young boys are also seen collecting water for the family.

Cooking is more or less a common job for both man and woman. In preparation of *Adi* food, in fact, no extra labour is involved. The hearth itself is kitchen. Fire is kept burning twentyfour hours throughout the year. At home, all the members sit around the fire; and the cooking pot, whether for rice or curry or tea is almost always seen on the three-pronged stand on the fire. Any member of the family can put rice, vegetable, fish, meat or anything in the boiling water. Since these things are rarely washed before putting in the cooking pot and there is no oil or spice used in the curry it is not difficult for any member to put the things in the pot. Similarly, making the meal ready in dish, *ekkam* (a leaf of special variety) is common duty of man and woman. Whenever they decide to take some elderly person puts the things in the *ekkam* which in turn, is put on a stool, and all of them take from the common dish sitting around it.

Another job done exclusively by woman in the *Adi* society is preparation of *apong* (rice bear). There is a taboo on the part of man in preparation of *apong*. Though *apong* is an item of daily use in

Adi family the men folk have got nothing to do in its preparation. It has been noticed elsewhere that apong, particularly the intoxicating ingredient, (*siye* in *Adi*) should not be near the poison for arrow or while the arrow point is lubricated in that poison.

These are the odd jobs of an *Adi* woman. In short “she started growing and learning all the household works like carrying firewood from the jungle, preparation of apong, cooking of food, weaving cloths in traditional *Adi* loom, and doing agriculture.”¹⁰

In fact an *Adi* girl learns her responsibility from her childhood. It is almost a tradition in the *Adi* society that a female child is to carry her next brother or sister born to her parents. If the gap between two issues is two years, as very common though sometimes it is even less, the elder one, if female, is to carry the younger on her back. With the help of *eppon* she usually carries the younger one. She becomes so habituated that sometimes she seems unconcerned that she is carrying some one on her back. In January 1992 when I paid a visit to *Kyit* I was surrounded by a group of children. Among them three young female kids of two to three years, themselves naked, carrying their younger brother/sister on their back, drew my interest most. When in wonder I looked at them they were observing me strangely. In their unconsciousness they occasionally rocked the baby on their back and did every other things like others. One is to see to believe that a girl of that age climbing up the hill and down the gorge with a baby on her back trotting after the mother going for agriculture at a distance of five to ten k.m. Though in going to the field the mother may carry the younger baby sometimes, on return in which she is bound to carry some load in the basket the child must carry the baby. I enjoyed an interesting sight at *Milang*: a lanky child of about three was to carry her younger brother of about one and a half with good health. She understands her responsibility so much so that she would not leave any of the articles they had. Unfortunately, she had an extra cloth other than the one with which the baby was attached to her body. Keeping the cloths on the ground she herself sat so that the other baby could climb on her back. Tying the baby on her back

with one cloth she would stand up with all her force. Then she would bend up with the load on her back from which she was not able to stand up. Then she would release the baby and try the same again. In the fourth time one idea struck in her mind- she would keep the extra cloth on a rock at a higher level so that she was not to bend with the baby on her back. She succeeded.

It is noticed in the chapter on Administration that *Kebang* is a male monopoly. In this patriarchal society the mental works are usually done by the males. Other than hunting, collection of poison, construction of house and occasional war the males have no much physical labour. And since all these works are of periodic nature the males have much leisure time. The men folk use this leisure time mostly in *kebang* in the *musup* or gossip in the *tungu* (open platform portico with no overhead roof). But what is interesting is that they are not as idle as they appear to be very often they are seen with the knife in their hand doing some handicraft of bamboo cane. The very common handicraft is making some basket or bamboo umbrella. They have innumerable baskets of different size and shapes with different names for various functions. Though the size and shape are different the design of weaving is same. Occasionally they are seen preparing cane rope for tying purposes.

In respect of religion most of the ritual functions are done by men. It does not, however, mean that women have no share in the religious functions or festivals. Since all the festivals are celebrated with dances women's participation is a must. Particularly in *Solung* the major festival of Minyong, Padams, Pasis, Milangs and their allied groups, women's participation comes in a big way. From the day *kebang* decides to celebrate *solung* on a particular date the women folk, especially the young girls, get busy in preparation for the festival. During the festivals the women are to perform dances every night. On the second stage of the festival, known as *Binyat*, the women folk perform rituals in the agricultural field. Other than that all other ritual functions are done by the men. In every festival or any other ritual function, *kepel* is performed. And it is done by men. Then all

sacrifices are made by men.

Though there are distinct fields of work for male and female there is perfect understanding and coordination between the two for a well knit texture of the family.

Notes & Reference

1. Willam F. Ogburn & Meyer F. Nimkoff : *A Handbook of Sociology*, p. 488.
2. *Ibid*, p. 489.
3. *Ibid*, p. 490.
4. Jhon F. Michel : *North East Frontier of India*, p. 51.
5. E. T. Delton : *The Tribal History of North East India*, p. 27.
6. Sachin Roy : *Aspect of Padam Minying Culture*, p.206.
7. *Ibid*, p. 205.
8. E. T. Delton : *The Tribal History of North East India*—quoted by V. Elwin in his *NEFA in the 19th Century*, p.266.
9. Sachin Roy : *Aspect of Padam Minying Culture*, p.117.
10. J. Nath : *The Young Panther*, p. 69.

Chapter IV

Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance

Marriage is a system evolved along with the formation of the human society. There is hardly any human society which has no marriage system of any sort. This universality of marriage system suggest to very many aspects of the regulated way of human life so far as the human propagation is concerned, I say 'regulated way of life', because even before the marriage system was evolved the procreative function of man was performed by the male and female. But for their function human race would have been extinct long back. Along with the growth of the society this procreative aspect is regulated; for regulation was necessitated by many other aspects which, in their turn, became acute with the growth of the society. These other aspects are not very important for discussion within the scope of this chapter. Presently our discussion will be confined to the regulation of the procreative system which came to be known as marriage. "Marriage" is so vast an institution that it cannot be enveloped into a short as possible. Any short definition is bound to convey only certain aspects of this vast institution. Bernard Shaw for instance, calls 'marriage' a 'legal prostitution'. The term 'prostitution' means so many things. It may mean mental prostitution for biological union of two bodies entered by marriage against the mind of one or both the partners; it may again mean the licence for sexual activities with any number of people for producing children. Sexual activities between the opposite sexes lead to child production; as child production before marriage is immoral in some societies. Prenuptial sex is also immoral in such societies. Marriage issues the licence of morality in the child producing process.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* attempts to give a comprehensive definition of marriage, though it may not be all comprehensive:

“Marriage ... is legally and socially sanctioned union between one or more husbands and one or more wives that accords status to their offspring and is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs and duties of the partners. The universality of marriage within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions, such as procreation and provision for sexual gratification and regulation, care of children and their education and socialization, regulation of life of descent, division of labours between the sexes, economic production and consumption and provision of satisfaction of personal needs for affection, status and companionship.”

Generally speaking this longish definition gives maximum coverage of the different aspects of marriage. This also, however, does not cover everything. So the *Encyclopaedia* adds to this definition, “The kinds of institutions and customs that a society develops to fulfil these functions depend on a number of characteristics, as size and complexity of the society, level of economic development, form of kinship system and the nature of economic, political and religious institution” for elaboration to cover more aspects.

The *Encyclopaedia* also shows the stages of development in certain human societies in which there was no institution of marriage as such. For example, the Koman society, one of the earliest civilised societies (later Republican age) did not have any marriage ceremony prescribed by law. “However, the relation of *matrimonium iustum* was initiated simply by the parties beginning to live together with the intention of being husband and wife (*affection maritali*)”. This is important here, for the society we are discussing also does not have any marriage ceremony prescribed by their law or religion.

From the above definition it may appear that one important factor of marriage is the regulation of child birth and line of descent. In the Adi society this factor is given the topmost priority in respect of marriage. In the past the growth of population in this hill tribe was extremely sluggish. This may be attributed to many factors: in addition to biological factors, particularly in respect of the Shimongs, there were epidemic, natural calamities endemic in mountains, lack of

medical knowledge etc. As such the Adi society felt strongly for the growth of population. This was further necessitated by frequent inter tribal clashes, for numbers counted very much for victory in such wars. In such a situation a society could not afford to perform a union (marriage) between a male and a female one of which has got no child producing capacity. To ensure child birth out of a marriage, a regulating institution for child production, the society created such atmosphere so that the male and female could be tested in their child-bearing capacity before marriage. Sexual adjustment is one factor for child producing. This necessity sanctions pre-nuptial sexual activities of the boys and girls of the society.

This has given rise to two other institutions called *Musup* and *Raseng*, male and female dormitories respectively. In addition to many other socially important functions performed by these two institutions these create congenial atmosphere for free pre-nuptial sexual relations between the boys and girls. The unmarried young girls sleep in the *Raseng*. The young boys visit the *Raseng* at night and meet the girls. Occasionally they sing and dance together thus coming closer to each other. They talk to each other and express their mind for physical contact. A completely new girl in sex act may not know the art of love-making. In such case the *Raseng Mimi*, the elderly and experienced girl in the *Raseng*, teaches them the art of love-making and encourages them to proceed. Such thing sufficiently prove that the idea behind this system is to test each other's potency in fulfilment of the marriage contract to produce children. In case a particular pair find sexual maladjustment or sexual impotency of one or the other both the boy and the girl are at liberty to seek other partner. The *Raseng* serves the purpose of sexual test and is proved by existence of another *Raseng* in the village for the younger girls who are yet to attain age of puberty. To this *Raseng* of the younger girls no young boy goes with sex purpose. Usually the old men and women go there in early hours of evening to talk about their mythology, social customs and to teach how to enter into social life. After attainment of puberty only a girl from the younger *Raseng* goes to sleep in the

other *Raseng* for the grown up girls. When I asked Shri Banom Perme, a Priest of Damro, with vast knowledge about their mythology and social customs, whether there is some ceremony to be performed at the attainment of puberty of a girl. Mrs. Perme offered to answer to my question relating to such matters. She said, there is no special ceremony performed on this occasion. My questions and her answers are given below:

Q. Then how do you know a girl has attained her puberty?

A. We, particularly the mothers, keep watch on the girls whose breasts start developing. That is the first sign that a girl is going to attain puberty. When a girl attains puberty with the first menstruation, the mother/elderly lady of the family knows it by some means.

Q. Why are you particular about a girl's attainment of puberty if there is no function performed on such occasion?

A. There is a purpose in it: after her puberty she is supposed to go to the elder *Raseng* where she may play with some boy and receive him sexually. Before puberty she is not supposed to sleep at night in the elder *Raseng*. Generally, after attainment, of puberty a girl is not supposed to sleep in the younger *Raseng*.

The initial course of sexual affairs in the *Raseng* between a boy and a girl is the first stage of marriage. It is interesting to note here that though this nightly game between boys and girls is socially sanctioned that is not the marriage itself. Until and unless a boy and a girl are recognised by the society as husband and wife, or they do not desire to be so recognised for some biological incompatibility they are free to leave each other without incurring any moral compunction. Even if the girl conceives during this probation period and they like to leave each other they can do so without incurring any social immorality or individual displeasure. Like the boy the girl is equally free to change her lover and find a more compatible one. She is simply to deliver the issue declaring the name of the baby's father to ascertain the right of the father or the mother over the baby according to the baby's gender. After the delivery of the issue the girl is equally preferable as any other girl for any boy as a marriage partner. Rather she is more so

because of her success in the first test of child-producing capacity. For this particular custom of the *Adi* society some may consider this society as devoid of chastity or sexual morality. Such view is, however, far from truth. Every society has its own customs and traditions. Chastity, morality, ethics and things like that for a particular society are founded on social customs and traditions of that society. An immoral or incestuous or unethical act is considered to be committed by some one only when one violates the social customs and traditions. It may not be correct when a Minyong boy, who is clan exogamous, remarks that the Hindus are incestuous because they marry their clan sisters. Similarly it will not be correct to say that the Adis are devoid of chastity because of their pre-nuptial sexual activities for selection of marriage partners. It is a matter of customs evolved through the ages on the basis of necessity of time and situation; such customs are more valuable and so morally stronger. The Adis also evolved the customs of pre-marital sex at a time that demanded the assurance of child birth out of a wedlock. It is this demand, perhaps, which made Tape!

Modi, an oid Milang to retort in 1982, when I asked him why they had the *Raseng* system till that day to remark: "Do you mean to stop creation by abolishing *Raseng*? But lor *Raseng* I would not have been here, you would not have been here." So significant is the existence of *Raseng* in connection with marriage! It is again, perhaps, this connection with marriage and *Raseng*, that Karhop Siboo of Shimong village, where the *Raseng* system was abandoned, showed his anger to me when I asked him why they had abolished this system: "It is you, the non- Iribal people, who are responsible for abolition of the system from our villages. We did not want to stop this. We know the trouble we have faced due to absence of I he system"! As to the function of *Raseng* amongst the Minyong Adis, Srivastava gives an elaborate account of sexual activities between the boys and the girls. To him The boys and the girls go on changing their partners everyday according to their taste. He says, "there is nothing to prevent the boy from sleeping with other girls, if he like; to do so. His fiance can, at

best refuse to marry him.

Similarly, “As a great amount of sexual licence is permitted within[^] the *Raseng*, a girl also may have as many boy friends as she likes” From the following it may, however, appear not so amongst the Milangs. In 1990, I raised the issue of sexual relation between boys and girls in *Raseng* to Jokut Modi (a Milang) and his wife Adde Modi. They not only corroborated the view of T. Modi and K. Siboi I met in 1982 but also said something more. It is especially Adde Modi who was emphatic on the value and purpose of maintenance of *Raseng* in the society. Her comment answers to the opinion of some critics of the system that *Raseng* gives shelter for licentious promiscuity for the boys and girls changing their sex partners every day. In fact, it is the other way round, according to the Modis. They say that *Raseng* is a place where courting and love-making are done in the knowledge of all the *Raseng* girls and the girls know who is whose partner in the sex-act. There is tacit understanding that changing of partner every night for the sake of taste is immoral: and as such no boy or girl changes his/her partner frequently unless there is a serious problem in adjustment in a particular pair. Adde Modi was emphatic when she said that abolition of this system has created a serious problem in some villages. *Raseng* or no *Raseng* Adi boys and girls are free to move meeting their friends of both the sexes at night. In the words of Oshong Ering, an Adi and an expert in Adi culture,— “Adi boys and girls are free to move about and associate with friend and join social organisation and function like singing, dancing and merry-making. Adi parents do not allow their sons and daughters to remain confined to home and they ask them to go out and meet friends, otherwise a boy or a girl becomes dull.”¹ In such a situation a young boy or a girl once having the taste of sex tends to go out every evening, with social sanction. To Adde Modi The *Raseng* itself keeps a watch on the behaviour of a particular boy or a girl, and truancy in sex is not approved by *Raseng*. The girls who do not go to *Raseng* or in the villages where there is no *Raseng* have clandestine sex. And since this is not done in the knowledge of others the boys and the girls tend

to change their sex-partners to suit their taste.

Thus the significance of *Raseng* in relation to marriage is immense. But it is interesting to note that local writers on Adi marriage system or the institutions called *Musup* and *Raseng* do not link these: they write papers and articles on these two aspects without showing the inseparable relation between the two. Oshong Ering, for instance, has written articles on Adi marriage system without mentioning *Raseng*.² Talom Gao, the first student of anthropology from Arunachal Pradesh has also written papers on *Dere* and *Raseng*: but he also did not pay any attention to its significance in respect of marriage. Rather his treatment of *Raseng* seems half-hearted when he says, “*Raseng* is constructed on the basis of clan organisation and has no sanctity or spiritual significance as the *Dere* has got.”³ Sachin Roy, however, dwells on the issue in considerable detail dealing with the subject in relation to marriage. He writes, “The *Musup* and *Raseng* are central institutions where boys and girl get practical training in traditional mode of life. Here the boys and girls are allowed to find their way into the mysteries of life; in addition to the social and communal life, to the mysteries of sex. In this, the dormitories may be considered as schools of preparation for matrimony.”⁴ He also deals with the murtship of boys and girls before marriage in the *Raseng*. He writes, “After adolescence, a girl really starts her romantic life and in the *Raseng* she starts her courtship which leads her to choose her mate in future life. Young boys from different *Mushups* come and join the girls in the *Raseng* in the night. A girl is free to entertain any hoy of her choice and there is no reflection in the character of the girls or the boys for doing so.”⁵

Srivastava also holds a similar view that the sexual irlation of the boys and the girls in the *Raseng* ultimately ends in marriage though in the initial stage of their such irlation marriage is not the intention.⁶

When a boy and a girl find, during their pre-nuptial sex relation, themselves satisfied from all angles they desire to be life partners. Now comes the second stage of marriage. Through various means the boy conveys his ilrsire to his parents. Usually he takes the help of

his friends for conveying his desire to his parents/guardians. If all other social conditions are fulfilled the parents invariably give consent to the boy's desires. The normal Nucia conditions to be fulfilled may be as follows: (a) the girl should not be from a family in which there is a leprosy patient (b) she should not be from a family much poorer than that of the boy (c) she should not be from a family in which lunacy is a hereditary problem and (d) she should not be from a slave (*pakbo*) family. Though condition (b) is very often overlooked the other three are of insurmountable nature.

When the groom's parents agree to the proposed union of their son they take initiative for getting consent of the bride's parents. Applying the same criteria the girl's parents usually give consent. So, in a sense, Adi marriage is a marriage after a long romantic affair. Oshong Ering calls it a kind of civil marriage after long romantic affairs. "The traditional marriage of the Minyongs and the Padams* is almost akin to civil marriage in which the choice and decision of the boy and the girl is supreme, parents and society usually do not go against the decision and choice of the intending couple unless the boy and the girl are considered immature."⁷ By 'immaturity' of the boy and girl Ering, perhaps, points to their inability to examine the traditional restrictions as noted above.

After the conveyance of the desire of the pair it is the responsibility of the boy's parents to obtain social recognition to their son's marriage. At this stage the boy's father (Sachin Roy says, the boy's mother, which may also be correct since this custom varies from village to village) or an experienced old man of his family/clan, expert in marriage negotiation, goes to the girl's family to ask for the girl's hand to their boy. The traditional way of asking for a girl for marriage is indirect. The first day the man would visit the family as any other member of the society visits a family. After their usual talk about the well-being of the family and taking of apong as usually offered by the host the guest would ask '*Oying anneko Kaman*' (Don't you have green

*The Pasis and the Milangs observe, almost verbatim the customs and traditions of the Paoams

vegetables to offer me)? The *Adis* consider a girl to be a leaf vegetable. But the problem is, occasionally some people actually ask vegetables from other family. For a common *Adi* it might mean a usual asking for vegetable. It may, however, be observed that the parents having a marriageable girl in the family are usually conscious of such language. But still it may so happen that the bride's parents take the literal meaning of that man's asking and offer some leaf vegetables which the *Adis* generally have. In such case the man from the groom's side pays next visit asking for the same thing. The second or third of such visits gives sufficient hints for what he pays the visit and the bride's parents respond accordingly saying either 'yes' or 'nor' instead of giving latuce leaves. Sometimes, however, the girl herself gives hints to her mother about the man's visit if she herself is too inclined to marry the boy for whom the man comes. On the favourable response from the bride's parents the process for formal agreement follows. This is known as "*Nyameng Tatnak*" (arrangement of daughter-in-law). This custom of social nicety is so mible that very often this escapes observation of the Ntudents of sociology studying this society. Sachin Roy, for instance, has not mentioned about it. To him, when the boy's desire is conveyed to his parents "the mother of the boy prepares one chungu of apong, two or more mucked squirrels and ginger paste. With these, as presents she repairs to the girl's house and makes a formal proposal on behalf of her son to the girl herself as to her mother."⁸

Sachin Roy also records that occasionally, and it is a rare occasion, the bride's parents also, when the groom is extremely suitable to their daughter from very many angles, take the initiative for obtaining the consent of the boy's parents for the desired marriage.⁹ In this case also the marriage process is same. After the acceptance of the offers made by the groom's family the groom is allowed to visit the bride at night and he may even sleep with her in her parents' house. At day time he very often works in his own house; but occasionally he works in his in laws' house or field. This is called '*Makho Ginam*' (the son-in-law going and working for the in-laws).

In the Adi concept of marriage, however, this is also not the complete marriage. To them, in addition to the conjugal life of the couple for producing children, a marriage is a process of cementing relation between two families. The cementing process continues for years together after the actual marriage which is nothing but legalised physical union of two partners without much hubbub of a ceremony. Actual ceremony starts in a larger scale after the marriage: offering of meat, drinks etc. by the groom's family in all festive occasions. It is actually this, desired friendship between two families which occasionally deters the groom's parents from giving consent to their son's desire in marrying in another family. About the process Sachin Roy gives an elaborate description which seems correct to the last point: "With the Ettor festival following the engagement, starts a formal exchange of presents, which is known as *Lungkang*. During that festival the girl prepares good quantity of *apong* meat mid food and sends them to the boy's home, and the boy responds by killing a pig and sending it to the bride. This formality is observed every year as long as the girl lives with her father's."¹⁰ We may simply add that the exchange of *apong* and meat in all the festivals continues even after the bride comes to her husband's house with two/ three children.

The last function in connection with marriage is the bringing of the wife to the husband's house. One peculiarity to be noted with interest is that the *Adi* society is a patrilineal one and the wife must come to the husband's house, if late. The bride's coming to her husband's house with her children is prepared well ahead. Srivastava gives a good account of this preparation saying that she comes to her husband's house "well equipped" with seeds of all usual crops, a sow and a hen and all other articles of female use in day to day life. Usually the mother of the girl prepares all these for her daughter before her 'departure' for the husband's house. The mother considers that "her daughter gets well equipped before she embarks on a future life in some one else's house..."¹¹ This he says in respect of the Minyongs, In respect of a kindred group the Milangs— the preparation is a concrete one so that she and her children are not to depend on

somebody's favour. My informant Shri Daltem of Dalbing says that the crop prior to her coming to the husband's house is done by her in her husband's land. When that crop is harvested then only she shifts so that she can enjoy her own produce on her arrival at her husband's house. This is called Am-agam. All other things remain as mentioned by Srivastava. This sounds plausible from the *Adi* custom of a boy's having a new house from the day his wife comes to stay with him.

On the day the bride actually comes to her husband's house a big feast is arranged by the husband for his own people and his in-laws. With the Milangs the feast is a gorgeous one with preparation of meat of five pigs, among five perops (perop is a basket in which the ingredients for fermentation are prepared), sufficient quantity of rice etc.

Similar to this system of marriage after a romantic affair there prevails amongst the Padamas, Pasis and the Milangs a system of premarital contact of the partners which is known as *Nogin Angong*. The two social institutions *Musup* and *Raseng* do not provide for a meeting place for the boys and girls, of different villages situated at a distance of upto 10/12 k.m. *Nogin angong* provides that scope for the young boys and girls of distant places or two groups belonging to the same village. *Nogin* is a kind of rice-beer and *Angong* means love; and love between a boy and a girl developed through offer of this *Nogin* beer is known as *Nogin Angong*. This social custom has now attained the characteristics of a festival. In this festival two villages/two groups in the same village are involved as it has already been noticed. In a particular month, especially during the winter when movement in the hostile terrains is comparatively easy the young boys of a particular village/group go to the *Raseng* of another village/group and propose for *Nogin Angong*. If the girls accept the proposal they immediately disperse to their house to collect rice-beer and offer to the boys; if the proposal is not accepted for certain reasons they make it known to the boys through their activities. On acceptance of the proposal the girls will give a date on which they will go to the boys' village and meet them in the *Musup*. Accordingly the boys will

make arrangement for hunting on that day. The girls on their part, prepare sufficient quantity of *Nogin* to be carried for the boys.

On the appointed day the girls dress in male's attire and go to the boy's village carrying the *Nogin*. They are received in the *Musup* of that village/group by the boys offering them rice, meat etc. Thereafter the boys go out for hunting leaving the girls in *Musup* who do cooking for the boys. In the evening the boys come back with their catches which they take to the *Musup*. After drink and meals the boys and girls make pair and roam about, some boys even taking their girl partners to their respective homes. On the third day the girl also accompany the boys in their going for hunting to some distance from the village. The idea behind the girls' accompanying the boys in hunting may be that as life-partner the girl will have to share the hardship of life with the boy. In a sense this is a mock conjugal life in practice for their entering into real conjugal life they are to enter today or tomorrow. It should not, however, be interpreted that making pair of boys and girls and roaming about in the evening is their going down to the sexual act; it is in the spirit of a custom that they make pair and move about. In their doing so they discuss aspects of life and in the process some may feel attracted to each other. In such case the boy and the girl go on helping each other in their various works including in the field. Thus a natural love grows up in respect of a few pairs, and they get married obtaining the formal consent of their parents.

Another tradition, in contradiction to this tradition of free choice of the partners is also prevalent amongst the Padams, Minyongs, Pasis and Milangs. This is child marriage or pre-natal marriage. Though all marriages aim at producing children this custom obviously neglects the test of child-producing capacity of both partners. Whereas in the earlier custom the desire for preservation and growth of the clan is dominant in this custom also preservation and growth of two families is dominant. According to this tradition there was wide-spread child- marriage in the society. Child-marriage in the society was extended to pre-natal marriage under peculiar situation.

Marriage under this tradition was motivated by various factors:

(1) Lopsided male-female ratio: Due to some physiological reasons a particular sub-tribe may have more males than females. In such case demand for girls increases. Due to a similar reason the number of female may be more than male in which case demand for boys in the marriage market is very high. This is one of the reasons of polygamy, polyandry, group marriage etc. Again, due to some peculiar social conditions mortality rate of male, varies from that of the female thus creating an imbalance on the male-female ratio. War is such a factor which shoots up the mortality rate of the males who are supposed to go to battle-field. The tendency of the parents is to engage a male baby for their daughter if the male is lower than the female in ratio. This sort of marriage is frequent among the Galongs. Its vice-versa is also possible.

(2) *Strong desire for marriage tie between two families:* Sometimes two families of equal status become very friendly and they want to cement their relation permanently through marriage tie. Amongst the Padmas there is a tendency to believe that some sub-clans are of pure blood and of high caste. The people of the so-called pure blood do not want to pollute their blood by marrying with people of impure blood or of low birth. This even leads to clan endogamy which generally is a taboo amongst the *Adis*. Due to this strong desire to establish marriage relation between two families the family having a boy engages a girl of the other family in their child-hood so that in their maturity they may not have relation with others. Its vice-versa also happens.

(3) *Exchange Marriage:* In the *Adi* society exchange marriage system is also prevalent though not very common. As per this system when a family proposes to marry a Kill from another family for their son the latter family may lay some condition: they will give their daughter in marriage to the boy of that family in case that family gives their daughter in marriage to the boy of that family.¹² Speaking about this course Oshong Ering writes: "According to tradition a marriage between a boy and a girl also forestalls the marriage between

*'bride and 'groom' within brackets are my own insertion for clarity.

the brother of the girl (bride) and the younger sister of the boy (groom). * this marriage is pre-arranged and when the boy and the girl attain maturity, they consider themselves wedded to each other almost automatically.”¹³ In Adi dialect this system is known as *Mime Apeng Ginam*.

All these traditions necessitate engagement of a girl or a boy, as the case may be, in his/her childhood. In certain cases this is done even in pre-natal stage. In case of pre-natal engagement they take the help of divination: whether the issue of the expectant mother of a particular family will be a boy or a girl is decided by the priest, whom they call *Dondai/Miri/Nybo*, through egg-divination. If this happens in reality as desired by the two families they consider themselves to be lucky. In certain cases, however, the divination fails in reality or the baby dies immediately after birth. In such case also the marriage contract stands waiting for the expected baby to be born in that family. The marriage contract made during pre-natal stage of one of the partners becomes complicated when the expected issue is not born in that family for a long time. It becomes more complicated when the expected baby is a girl. For, in case of bride ‘bride-price’ (*Mime Are* in *Adi*) is paid at the time of marriage contract. In respect of the *Galongs* and the *Minyongs* the ‘*Mime Are*’ is in the shape of *Mithun*, *Arem*, *Tadok* etc. given to the parents of the bride; in case of the *Padams*, the *Milangs* and the *Pasis* it is the amount of meat (may be *Mithun*, pig, buffalo etc.) dry squirrels, field rats, *apong* etc. It may so happen that the expected issue is not born to that particular family for a long time. In such case the marriage contract has to be snapped. The problem comes to the expected bride’s parent in repaying the bride-price they took from the groom’s parent. The system of keeping the account, though not in writing, is so accurate in details that not even a single minor item is missed. It is interesting to note, in respect of the *Padams*, the *Pasis*, the *Milangs* etc. that they maintain detailed accounts of how much *apong* of what kind, how much meat of what animal are given to the bride’s parents. For, all these are required in case of divorce because of the fault of the bride, in case of the bride eloping, after marriage contract is made.

The repayment of the bride-price by the parents in case of snapping the marriage contract for reason stated above. "That was the marriage contract that could not be violated either by the bride or by her guardian without paying back the value of the '*Mime Are*'.¹⁴ It is seen, sometimes it takes many years in complete repayment of the articles.

It may not be out of place to discuss here the effects of child marriage or pre-natal marriage under these traditions. Every society evolves certain system for the convenience of that society at that time. No society takes resort to a system which may go against the interest of the society in its face value. The time these systems evolved in the *Adi* society was really hazardous time: a minor clan or sub-clan settling on a lonely peak in the hostile mountain ranges was under constant fear of extermination by some powerful tribe or clan. It was but natural for them to keep the social tie well-knit and the valorous blood unpolluted. Guided by such motive the founder fathers of these systems did not, perhaps, see their longrun consequences. What was important was the immediate benefit for the survival of the clan or the tribe. Moreover, it was a time when woman was considered a lower being not more than a child-producing machine and a machine to do all the chores of the family inside and outside the house. Since all the bad affects of these systems are to be borne by woman, man being master with freedom to do whatever he wants according to his convenience, the founder fathers did not, perhaps, like to burden their brains with such would-be problem. So far as the purpose of the society was served, at that time, by these systems, they definitely had the merits.

Demerits have, however, appeared at a later stage when the situation and social attitude to women gradually changed. Marriage under these systems very often result in vast age difference between man and woman. Age difference itself is a biological problem so far as sexual satisfaction of both the partners is concerned. But, as it has already been noticed, the male being free he may lake resort to another marriage; simply the woman suffers if her husband is too old

for her age. In respects of the *Galong* and the *Minyong* societies it is generally found that in child marriage, even in post-natal marriage-contract, the age difference between the groom and the bride is too much. For one of the partners, when the marriage contract is made, is too young to understand what has been done to him/her by the parents. Unlike in the marriage contracted through pre-nuptial courting and sex-relations, in this marriage system the question of choice of the boy and the girl is not there. From his experience in his magisterial position Oshong Ering says that a girl thus married is tortured even by her own parent's family not to speak of by her husband's family for her not adjusting with a husband who is of her father's age or a brute. To drive home the problems that arise out of such marriage I cite below some case histories:

(i) Family A had a son M who was 14 years. Since his sister was married to a boy of, family B he was to get a girl from family B as per exchange marriage system. Family B had a one year old daughter O. According to the prevailing system marriage between M and O was contracted and Family A paid the bride-price to family B as per social system. Payment of bride-price meant marriage for all purposes, and it is inviolable from both sides. After two years M dies, O being now free for marrying somebody else. Family C paid bride-price for O at her age of three now for their son N who was 15. O gradually grew up into a young girl. As there is social permit for free mixing between boys and girls O did the same and developed love for P who was four years elder to her. On the other hand N claimed his right over O and he got all the supports from B and C. But O was not agreeable. On her insistence her guardian B ultimately agreed to return the bride-price to C as per social system. Then only O and P were married.¹⁵

(ii) Family D had a daughter Q who was 12. Family E had a son R aged 1 year. Due to friendly relation between D and E they wanted to have a marriage alliance between Q and R. Accordingly E paid bride-price to D as a marriage agreement

between Q and R. As a grown up girl Q used to carry R the little boy knowingly that R is her husband, whereas R did not know anything about their relation. With his age R started going to school, but Q did not have any education at all. At school though he came to know his relation with Q he did not at all feel attracted to his wife who was much older to him. Rather he paid his attention to a girl S who was younger than himself. His parents, however, asked him to bring Q as his wife, for they had already paid bride-price to D, Q's parents. R was not agreeable to this even if the bride-price paid by his father for Q was gone. On his insistence to marry S his parents had to pay bride price to S's family without getting back the same from D. D would return the bride-price only when some one comes forward to marry R after usual payment to bride-price. The refund of the bride-price takes a long time in this case.

These are examples of social and financial problems that may arise out of such marriages. There are innumerable ruses of physical torture caused to the bride because of her in refusal to go to her husband married under such system. Usually a woman refuses to go to her husband if her husband is an old man, sick man, married to a number of women and so on. Sometimes she refuses if, during her stay at her parents house after marriage in childhood, she falls in love with another boy.¹⁶ In modern time it may so happen that she gets education and her husband remains a rustic. In many cases the girl is forcefully, with the consent and help of her guardians of course, taken to the husband's house, put in stock and then raped by her husband.

So far as polygamy is concerned it may be said that there is nothing against a man's marrying more than one wife. Yet monogamy is very common amongst the *Adis*. Amongst the Milangs polygamy is not at all favoured. The Head Gam of Milang village, M. Ngupok, said in December '91 there was not a single case of polygamy in his village of about 200 houses. One reason for not marrying more than one wife is that a marriage involves cost of *Mithun*, *Arem*, *Tudok* etc., and a common man cannot afford to do that if he is not forced by circumstance such as barrenness of the first wife. This is justified

by the fact that those who have married more than one wife are very rich and influential people. There is no polyandry in *Adi* society except amongst the Galong *Adis*. There also polyandry is confined to the brothers only. However, there is a strong social custom that on the death of the husband at the young and child bearing stage of the wife that widow is to marry one of the brothers of the deceased. Amongst the *Adis* there is a superstition that once a woman has gone out of her parents' house on marriage she is not to come back to her parents' house; for that may bring misfortune to the parents' house. Another implication is that in marriage a woman becomes a property of the husband's family since that family has paid bride-price for the woman to her parent's family. Amongst the Pasis, the Padams and the Milangs the bride-price is not at all heavy; yet the bride becomes a property of the husband's family and his clan by virtue of what has been paid to her parents family. As such, she is not supposed to go to any other family, especially out of the clan. The most ideal course in such event is to marry her brother-in-law who would look after her and her children, if any, by her earlier husband. If there is no such brother-in-law in the family she may marry a paternal cousin of her deceased husband; and if that is also not suitable or available she should marry one brother-in-law in her husband's clan. This is an implied compulsion; in reality she may not also marry any one from her deceased husband's family and choose some one outside the clan of her husband thus incurring a problem which will be dealt with soon. So it appears that a widow's marrying someone from her husband's family/clan depends mostly on her willingness to do so, though the social tradition demands she marries one. Sometimes a widow may remain unmarried by virtue of her character and strong will which is respected by her in-law's family /clan. Such a lady is usually respected by the society as a whole in spite of the tradition of marrying someone in the family/clan. Tradition emphasises on preserving the property, involved in marrying that lady, from going out of the family /clan.

As to prohibited area for selecting partner it is said, in general

that the *Adis* are strictly clan exogamous. No one can have sex relation within the clan members, for they are all brothers and sisters. But no student of *Adi* culture is specific about the compact clan within which such relation is prohibited. While speaking about Tribal ideas about guilt and punishment in NEFA' (now Arunachal Pradesh) Verrier Elwin passes a general remark, "The crime of clan-incest, to have sexual relations with a woman of the same clan even if she is not a relative in the conventional sense at all, is a most serious offence."¹⁷ Here he is not specific about the tribe in which this is a 'serious offence'. L.R.N. Srivastava, however, comes down to the tribe and clan in this particular regard—the Minyongs of the *Adi* group of tribes. But then, he also mentions about two groups amongst the Minyongs, one group having a number of clans, one blood group thus prohibiting marriage within that group. He writes. Marriage within the clan is treated like an incestuous marriage and the same procedures (punishment) are followed to deal with the offenders as in the case of Incestuous marriages."¹⁸ But while referring to example he mentions matters almost blurring his this statement: When Kuming functioned as a strictly exogamous group, a man of Taggu clan married a woman of Lomtung lineage (both falling under Kuming). They gave birth to a son who was deaf and dumb. Another man of Talom clan married a girl of Lamtung lineage of Mije clan (both Kuming). They gave birth to a dwarf girl. These instances were enough to show that endogamous marriages bear fruit in such horrible ways. But since then, contrary to exogamous and common logic, Taggu and Mije and Talom and Mije formed marriage groups and started inter-marriage."¹⁹ This change of social attitude will be discussed later. What I intend to point out is that it was the Minyongs who were so rigid in insisting on perfectly exogamous marriage from which the neighbouring *Adi* sub-tribes adopted exogamous marriage. The Pasis, the Padams and the Milangs earlier were clan endogamous avoiding blood relations upto minimum three generations: When I talked to Ogom Dai, Lagling Dai, Kaling Dai and Kepem Yomso, all Pasi of village Balek, in 1990 they said that amongst the Pasis in their interior

village *Adi Pasi* the marriage within the clan is very much there; but coming over to *Pasighat*, near the *Minyong*, they have been influenced by their exogamous custom. They also said they followed endogamy on the basis of conjugal life of *Karpung* and *Karduk*, sister and brother respectively of their mythological past. The *Minyongs* argue *Karpung* and *Karduk* had to marry under compulsion to preserve human race; they were the only man and woman on the earth at that time. Though all these sub-tribes follow a sort of endogamy there is still a difference between the *Minyong* endogamy on the one hand and the *Pasi-Padam-Milang* endogamy on the other: whereas the *Minyongs* have now entered into marriage alliance within the clan they restrict to the same clan with different sur-names, the *Pasi*, the *Padam* marry within the same surnames. A *Dai* boy of *Adi Pasi*, for instance, can marry a *Dai* girl there. Similarly a *Pertin* boy (*Padam*) can marry a *Pertin* girl. In very recent time *Batem Pertin* (*Curator, State Museum, Itanagar*) married *Jeuti Pertin*. Some *Padam*, however, explain the reasons for such marriage alliance in a different way. They show two reasons for this, (i) *Clan Property*:---The *Padam* attach too much significance to the preservation of the clan property. In a marriage a girl takes a good number of valuable items like precious bead (*tadok*), brass metal dish (*arem*) with her as marriage gifts. These articles become the property of the groom's clan. As all these properties belong to the bride's clan her clan cannot accept it easily and try to find a means to preserve the property in the same clan by marrying the girl to a boy of the same clan with sufficient generation gap. (ii) *Preservation of blood purity*:—This issue has already been discussed.

Other restrictions on marriage alliance are: (a) *Maternal uncle's* and *aunt's* children, (b) *Paternal aunt's* children who are considered *brothers and sisters*, (c) *Paternal aunt's* grand children who are supposed to be one's children and so on. It has already been noticed that sex relation between slave children and free men's children is a serious crime and as such marriage alliance was impossible. In the past such pair was either thrown into the river or excommunicated.

Divorce

Divorce is a social problem of every society in the world. In the western countries, after education and much material progress, divorce has been made legally so easy that no marriage partner feels it social castigation, Everything relating to sex and marriage has been made as common as any other things of life. In the last, however, divorce is looked down upon in spite of legalisation of it. In the tribal society of North-east India also divorce is not taken easily by the society. In addition to social castigation and such an act there were certain other factors for which people do not go for divorce very easily. Oshong Ering seems to be right when he says, "To the Adis, marriage a sacred knot of Donyi-Polo or upholder of truth, and as such it should not be vitiated by the fear of divorce."²⁰ Ering himself being an Adi, may exaggerate the sanctity of marriage in his tribe. But the belief in the existence of spiritual wife and spiritual husband in respect of a couple may make one believe the sanctimony of an *Adi* marriage. In addition to this spiritual and sacred aspect of marriage there are certain other factors which are not congenial for seeking divorce.

In fact, the commonness of divorce depends on the conditions a man and a woman get married. It is already noticed that an *Adi* marriage, in general, involves bride-price whatever may be the value of this. This implies a sort of purchase of the girl by her husband's family/clan, In case of divorce, particularly due to the woman's fault, all these are to be returned to the husband's family by her parents or guardians. Usually, the parents, who have exhausted the bride-wealth for their daughter, are not desirous to give back the same. If the girl's fault leading to divorce lies in her infidelity the social chastisement, before actual divorce takes place, is so severe that even torture on her private parts was inflicted in the past. All these circumstances are not at all encouraging on the part of a girl for indulging in certain things that may constitute reasons for her being divorced by her husband. For all these the *Adi* woman surrenders to their lot in spite of strong passions and desires otherwise. If, however, some woman cannot control her passion and indulges in adultery with a person favourable, from all social angles for remarrying, she does so with

the advantage of getting a shelter and paying back the bride-price to her first husband. In view of all these Srivastava's argument why divorce is not very common,—“The family ties, specially coming of children becomes so strong that the ultimate step of divorce is generally not taken unless the matter becomes very serious,”²¹ seems superficial.

From the fact that Sachin Roy, in his long treaty on cultural aspects of the Padams and the Minyongs, did not mention about divorce in the chapter on Social Life, but in the chapter on Political Life, it may appear that divorce in this tribal society, does not create a social problem as such; simply it is mentioned as a possible legal problem. In reality also it is a fact that there are hardly a few cases of divorce in this society. From the etymological sense also marriage is an inseparable union. Oshong Ering informs us “they (the Adis) call their brother-in-law (elder sister's husband) ‘*taram*’, meaning unseverable tie.”²² Yet traditions have provisions of divorce thus acknowledging individual right for both man and woman in this regard.

Thus it is to be admitted that divorce cases, whatsoever be the number, are there in *Adi* society in spite of bride-price and sanctimoniousness involved in a marriage. After all the *Adis* are also human beings and there may be dozen of reasons for misunderstanding and quarrel leading to divorce. We may study now the possible causes of divorce in the *Adi* society. It has already been noticed that most of the *Adi* marriages follow love affair, a sort of probation in conjugal life, before a couple's final union, As such there is rare scope for maladjustment, misunderstanding and quarrel. In Oshong Ering's language, “Both boys and girls enjoy a romantic life, love each other, exercise their free choice and finally come into wed-lock entirely to their satisfaction.”²³ But living two close members in a family they may develop serious misunderstanding. That may be the reason for divorce. Moreover, there are other kinds of marriages, as it is noticed, in which the choice of the boy and the girl has no place. In this background we study the reasons. (1) There may not be any issue out of marriage. Since there was no means to determine who the

husband or the wife— is actually barren, the husband usually blames the wife; but when the wife counter-charges the quarrel becomes very serious and leads to divorce, (2) The couple may have children but no male-issue which is very important for inheritance and pall bearing of the parents. That may cause serious misunderstanding between a couple leading to divorce, (3) In a particular couple one of the partners may be an impotent causing sexual (Millering on the part of the other, (4) In child or pre-natal marriage the parents of both the groom and the bride very often do not pay attention to the age factors of the couple. By the time they actually enter into practical married life one may be too old causing sexual discontentment of the other. One may not even love the other sufficiently as an adhesive for their permanent union. That may also lead to divorce (4,a). In addition to all these, there is the permanent cause of man's desire for change in taste. In this either of the couple may have tin extra-marital relation with somebody else which in the long run develops into an inseparable love affairs. That may lead the erring partner to seek divorce from the original partner (4,b). Further, there are some human characters who are incorrigibly immoral. Such characters always go on seeking sex enjoyment with more and more partners to the impatience of the original marriage partner. In the language of Oshong Ering "Divorce becomes Imminent if either of the couple leads a life of immorality and corruption. For example, if a wife maintains illicit connection with others and thereby becomes corrupted, the husband may approach the *Kebang*... to allow him In divorce the lady. Likewise, if the husband keeps concubines, co-wives or tortures, ill-treats and gives no security to the wife, she may lodge a complaint to the *Kebang* for separation."²⁴

From all these it appears that in the *Adi* social system there is a provision for 'divorce' of married couple which is known in *Adi* dialect 'mepakminsinam', and it takes place occasionally, though rarely, to the cause of worries and anxieties of the society as a whole. For, traditionally such problems had to be solved by the village council only; and the village council deliberate on the faults of the partner

complained by the other partner and then give verdict of permission /fine as per their customary laws. Many social issues emerge from the complaint of divorce: (a) Who—the husband or the wife—is responsible for the divorcee? (b) What will be the punishment accordingly? (c) What will happen to the children, if any, born to the couple before divorce? (d) What will be the position of the divorcee? The *Kebang* (village council) find out answers to all such questions within the framework of their customary laws.

On receipt of a complaint from either of the partners the *Kebang* sit and prove the veracity of the complaint. If it is found that the husband is responsible for the proposed divorce the wife is allowed to leave her husband without compensation (refunding the bride price) from her guardian/parents. Rather she gets something from the husband for his degrading her social standing. For this she is “allowed to receive some part of the movable property for the husband,” “Annying Nyitak or payment of a fine for desgracing her dignity and respect in society,” “or fine called *Mepak Ajeng* which is paid for actual divorce,” her claim over the female children only, not over the male children, born to them.²⁵ If, on the other hand the *Kebang* find the wife responsible for the divorce the wife is to pay back the bride-price to her husband in addition to the *Annying Nyitak* and *Mepak Ajeng*. In this case also the wife has got the right over the female children only born to them before the divorce. As it has already been stated the parents usually do not want to refund the bride-price already consumed; the wife is lucky if the divorce is the result of her love with somebody who is ready to accept her as his wife; and this man bears all these fines imposed on his would-be wife. He has to pay to the original husband the following in addition to the above: (a) *Tipir*—axe for his deprivation from use of his wife’s clitoris, (b) *Tilong*—a sword for the pubic bones. (c) *Timmit*—a bear skin for pubic hairs and (d) *Link Pure*—compensation for loss of production.

Inheritance

With the Adis the issue of inheritance in respect of the female is a complicated one. In this respect two aspects of inheritance are

involved: (1) the property inherited by a woman after her husband's death and (2) the widow herself who is inherited.

On the death of the husband the question of right of the widow over her husband's property or maintenance of the widow and her children comes up. As per *Adi* customary laws the woman herself does not have the inheritance right over her father's or husband's property. That really puts an *Adi* woman in a peculiar situation so far as the property right is concerned: she is a mere working machine for production on the capital of her father or her husband; she cannot possess that capital as her own. But, at the same time, she is not in the position of a slave to produce only without any right of enjoyment of the produce; she has the right, though limited, of enjoyment of produce as per her needs. In limited there is no scope of her being uprooted from the family property of her parents or her husband. The males and the females go on working with the capital with an equal sense of possession and they enjoy the fruits equally. What is peculiar in the law is that a woman does not have inheritance right over the permanent properties over the permanent property even if she is the only issue of her parents, and over her husband's property even if her deceased husband is the only son of his parents. She may however, earn a temporary right of possessing her deceased husband's property by virtue of the children born to her by deceased. But here also there are conditions. These conditions under which she can enjoy the property right, though temporarily, are discussed below:

In his long Treatise on *Adi* Culture, Sachin Roy has covered this complicated issue in two short paragraphs only. In the first paragraph he says "Widow and daughters do not inherit any thing. In case a man dies without any issue, the property may remain in the possession of the widow until she marries again."²⁶ The statement in the second sentence seems not to have given the correct picture. In fact a widow without any issue is taken care of by the brothers of the deceased until she is remarried and continues to live in the house of her husband. The situation, however, changes when she has at least one male issue. With that male issue if she decides to remain un-married in the

deceased husband's house she acquires the position of a guardian of the male issue, in his minority, who is the actual inheritor of her husband's property. As such she can possess the property of her deceased husband till her son attains maturity. If, however, she has got only female children the landed and permanent property of her deceased husband are looked after by her brothers-in-law/kinsmen giving a maintaince expenditure to the widow's family. In extreme necessity in running her family she may seel a small portion of her husband's property in consultation with the brothers or kinsmen of her deceased husband.

If a widow remarries someone other than her deceased husband's brother or close cousin she losses her right of ownership over the properties of her dead husband even if she has got a male issue. If the male issue is in its infancy she may carry the baby to her second husband's house, but will have to give the child back to its father's brothers or kinsmen when he grows up. The female issues, in such case, may be taken permanently to her second husband who would bring them up as his step daughters. It would, perhaps, not be out of place here to discuss the issue of her bride-price paid by her original husband to her parents. The second husband who is not related to her deceased husband is to pay back the value of bride-price to her dead husband's brothers/close relatives/ lunsmen. If the widow decides not to go back to her unlive relatives and to marry second time instead of staying til her dead husband's house she loses all her right on the properties of her husband.

The second issue of inheritance involved in case of the husband's death claims a serious attention. In fact, as per bride price system, very acute with the *Galongs* and the *Minyongs* as has already been noticed, a woman when married to a man is purchased by his family and the clan. So, on her husband's death, as a general customary laws, she is to be inherited by one of the brothers of the deceased or his close cousin or close clan-man. The widow can be inherited by both elder or younger In other, though usually preference goes to the unmarried younger ones. Even she may be inherited as second wife

if the willing brother of the deceased is already married. But, as it has already been noticed at many places, it is not compulsive as L.R.N. Srivastava tends to believe when he says "The widow is not left with any other choice to select someone other than any of the brothers of her deceased husband."²⁷ However, as also suggested by Srivastava, if she marries someone other than her own brother-in-law her second husband has to pay compensation, in addition to the bride price, to her original husband's family. The compensations are: (a) *Lisik Pure*, (b) *Tipil*, (c) *Tiling* and *Timit* as in case of divorce due to fault of the wife.

Notes & Reference

1. L. R. N. Srivastava : *Social Organisations of the Minyongs*, p.127.
2. OshongEring : *Adi Marriage System, NEFA Information*, July-1970, p. 21.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Talom Gao : Dere and Raseng -- *NEFA Information*, Oct. 1969, p. 26.
5. Sachin Roy : *Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture*, p.198.
6. *Ibid*, pp. 197-8.
7. L. R. N. Srivastava : *Social Organisations of the Minyongs*, p.127.
8. OshongEring : *Adi Marriage System, NEFA Information*, July-1970, pp. 19-20.
9. Sachin Roy : *Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture*, p.199.
10. *Ibid*, p. 201.
11. *Ibid*, pp. 199-200.
12. L. R. N. Srivastava : *Social Organisations of the Minyongs*, p.202.
13. Jogendra Nath : *The Young Panther*, p. 68.
14. OshongEring : *Adi Marriage System, NEFA Information*, July-1970, p. 20.
15. Jogendra Nath : *The Young Panther*, p. 69.
16. *Ibid*, p. 69-71.

17. Lummer Dai : *Kanyar Mulya* (Assamese).
18. Verrier Elwin : *Democracy in FEFA*, p. 28.
19. L. R. N. Srivastava : *Social Organisations of the Minyongs*, p.206.
20. *Ibid*, p. 206.
21. Oshong Ering : *Marriage System of the Adis, NEFA Information*, Aug. 1970, p. 14.
22. L. R. N. Srivastava : *Social Organisations of the Minyongs*, pp. 188-89.
23. Oshong Ering : *Marriage System of the Adis, NEFA Information*, Aug. 1970, p. 14.
24. *Ibid*, p. 14.
25. *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.
26. *Ibid*, p. 16.
27. Sachin Roy : *Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture*, p.229.
28. L. R. N. Srivastava : *Social Organisations of the Minyongs*, p. 207.

Chapter V

Self Administrative System

With the growth of a human society there grows a kind of institution for regulating the social life. The basic need of a society is to maintain some order for peaceful living so that development as a unit might take place. But human nature, at individual level, is such that it tends to violate that order for some personal gain. At this stage, perhaps, the norms of staying together are codified for smooth conduct of the society. All the members of that society are supposed to abide by the codified customs. The institution that maintains this social order is called administration. In absence of administration, whether imposed or inherent, the society becomes chaotic and such society does not last long. So it is observed every society has a system of administration.

Like other societies the *Adis* have also their own administrative system from time immemorial. The administrative system evolved by them is democratic in nature and it is well-developed. It is interesting to study the growth of the *Adi* system of self-administration evolved over the centuries. By the twentieth century this has ' established as a well-developed and self sufficient administrative system.

Several papers and books have been written on the aboriginal administrative system of the *-Adis* since the middle of the last century. No attempts, however, seem to have been made so far to trace the back-ground for the growth of such a well-developed system.

In the following passages an attempt will first be made to trace the back-ground leading to the evolution of such a well-developed administrative system and then proceed with an account of the same.

It has already been noticed that the *Adi* group of tribes of

Arunachal Pradesh have been in their present habitats for slightly more than twelve centuries. Peculiarity of the situation is that out of these twelve for about eleven centuries they were without any authority to impose law and rule over them. Rather, it may be said that to escape the dictatorial impositions of rules by the Tibetan king they entered into this area of hostile and inaccessible nature. It may be presumed that the group of tribes came either in different hordes through different routes or they came sojourning upto a certain stage of their migration together and then took different directions. One thing can, however, be said with definiteness that some clans of the *Galong* and *Minyong Padam* sub-groups came down to present Bomdo-Janbo region together. Then they separated and went in different directions. After their separation they hardly came into social contact due to inaccessibility of hostile mountain ranges and had to live separately for centuries. For, Arunachal Pradesh is an extensive area covered with high mountains and deep gorges allowing big, turbulent rivers to flow. Once a batch left the parent group it was bound to become a separate unit having no relation with the parent group other than foreign relation if ever they came into contact as friend or foe. These sub-groups thus separated became independent states in course of time. Like the city states of Greek civilization these sub-groups established their village states in Arunachal Pradesh. In absence of a supreme power these village states became sovereign states in the fullest sense of the term. From neither Tibet nor China nor Assam nor Burma was there any serious and persistent efforts to extend their sphere of administration over these village states till 1910.

As independent states these village evolved their own customs and laws demanded by the situations for a society to live on. "In absence of some administrative system imposed on them by a higher authority either from Tibet or from Assam these states had to evolve some administrative system for regulating social life for peace, security and development."¹ The evolution of their rules and laws may take one back to their sojourn in Tibet. It is to be noted with interest that this sort of self- government system of various sub-groups of the *Adis* is more or less same though these sub-groups moved separately

either from Tibet itself or from Tibetan border area. From this it can very well be said that the system evolved even when they were sojourning in Tibet. But the stage of development attained by the *Adis* now seems to have reached within Arunachal during the last five/six centuries. Till the beginning of the seventh century the vast land of Tibet was inhabited by innumerable tribes either under some chief or as nomads independently. In the seventh century when Tibet was being consolidated under a powerful chief in the Yarlung Valley the nomadic tribes began to move southward. Further consolidation and the king's attempts to impose a new religion—Buddhism—seem to have driven them to the area beyond the king's political sphere as it has been noticed.

The self-administrative system evolved in the *Adi* society is known as *Kebang* (council). “*Kebang*” is a term in *Adi* dialect with much wider connotation and socio-ethical significance than it is usually understood by the common people, especially the people from outside the *Adi* major tribe. Original meaning of the term ‘*Kebang*’ is an intelligent, wise man well-versed in history, tradition, knowledge—mundane and spiritual.”² In fact reference of *Kebang* is there even in their mythology. In the chapter on “Religion and Festivals” one *Kebang* is alluded in the court of Donyi-Polo to try the dispute between Dadi Somi and Medeng Sene over the claim on the mithun. In that highest *Kebang* the other gods and spirits were also present. This implies righteousness, wisdom, impartiality and justice, are the attributes of the gods. Even today a *Kebang* to the *Adis* is an impartial body of wise, intelligent people with socio-ethical purpose to maintain the society in order.

Of the *Adi Kebang* the first mention made by the European writers is in 1825-26, by Wilcox. He writes, “These singular people acknowledge no other authority but that of the Raj (from Assamese word Raj means the people), or people generally, who make laws at the councils, Assembled in the Morang, where every one has an equal vote; . . .”³ Though Wilcox did not use the *Adi* word *Kebang* he meant by the above exactly this. The French Missionary, Father

Crick, also saw a *Kebang* session in progress in 1853 at Mebo and deduced from what he saw, “Laws are framed by the people, sanctioned by the council, and promulgated by the president. Every decision must come from the people; the chiefs have no right but to approve and enforce it.”⁴ Such remarks as these made by the European authors at the spot in the very first contact with the people for a very short time are not without flaw which is but natural. Wilcox, for instance, remarks, ‘every one has an equal vote’ In fact there is no question of vote since the decision is arrived at through arguments, for and against the issue involved. The strength of argument is always derived from the customary laws and reference from similar incidents in the long past, including the mythological period; no one is allowed to bring references from outside their customary things. In such debate on an issue of dispute ‘every one’ has the equal right to participate. And it is this right, perhaps, that Wilcox might mean by “equal vote.” The *Adi* method of arriving at a decision is a kind of catechism which ultimately leads to a consensus, not to resort to voting. Similarly, E.T. Dalton, in Mebo in 1855, seems to have stretched his imagination while observing a *Kebang* in session and likened it to a ministry consisting of different ministers in charge of different portfolios. He writes, “there was first, Bokpang, a short, stout, jolly- looking individual, who I was inclined to consider was the chairman or president, and in charge of the foreign relations of the state; second, there was Looitem, the Nestor of the republic . . . third, Jewlung, the War minister, a young man of stalwart frame, tall and well- built, with a fine open countenance.”⁵ This is not, however, the correct situation, so far as an *Adi Kebang* is concerned. “In fact, in *Adi Kebang* there is no division of charges and everybody has got the equal right to speak Unlike the government of a modern state which goes on changing, making laws to suit the new situations an *Adi Kebang* chiefly functions as the interpreter of the existing laws already framed on the basis of traditional customs.”⁶ The *Kebang* again differs from a modern government in that whereas in a modern government there are different agencies for different functions, the

Kebang is all in all for all the functions. In short the *Kebang* has the administrative, judicial and executive authority.

(a) Administrative : The widest function the *Kebang* is invested with is the administrative functions: it extends from the general administration for maintaining law and order for day to day activities of the community. As regards the administrative function of the *Kebang* there seems to have no change till recent time from what Crick saw in 1853. I cannot do better than to quote: "Every evening all the men gather in the spacious council- room (*Musup*) to discuss the topics of the day, which means : (1) to inform one another of what has been seen or heard; (2) to discuss the political questions put forth by one of the chiefs; (3) to settle what the village will do on the next day"⁷

What I can do here is to elaborate for driving the point home. During the day the people go to different places in pursuit of their calling ---and in doing so someone might come to know about some stranger's arrival in the vicinity of their village or something about possible attack on the village by some enemy, appearance of a ghost of a man belonging to that village who died an unnatural death, fall of a bridge across a river on their way to their hunting place, blocking of a road leading to their agricultural field due to erosion and so on. All these require thorough discussion in the *Kebang* for arriving at a decision. Generally, the issues are of developmental nature, like mending a cane suspension bridge, making/ repairing a road, erecting fencing in the agricultural field, making linking arrangement for bringing water to some spot in the village through bamboo aqueduct etc. Occasionally, and in the past frequently, somebody might raise the issue of enemy attack. Such things are discussed with more seriousness for arriving at a decision: whether they would play the defensive or offensive role. Occasionally the village is to decide the policy on its trade relation with other village (villages), a sort of foreign relation. Then also the matter is discussed in the *Kebang* and decided thereon, even the reception of a guest of importance, especially when.

the guest is from outside the tribe to which the village belongs, is received in the *Kebang*. Wilcox writes in 1825 “we had little more success with the Bor Abors,* when they arrived, though they seemed equally well- inclined towards us. They assured us that they could not venture to take us to their villages without having prepared the people for our reception by the *Miris*”.⁸ It may be said in short that the *Kebang* is a sovereign body which has the authority to take up any administrative matters in relation to the people falling under the *Kebang*.

(b) Judicial : The *Kebang* of a village of a particular community is a law-court which tries all civil and criminal cases. The *Kebang* adjudicates justice to the aggrieved on the interpretation of laws based on mythology and social tradition. On receipt of any complaint from a member of the community against someone the *Kebang* acts as a regular court. Oral summons are issued to the involved parties regarding the date of trial of the case in the village community-hall, known as Musup/ Dere. On deposition of the case from the complainant in the hearing of the respondent the latter is asked to depose his/her statement. After this the issue is opened for debate in which each and everybody present in the *Kebang* has the right to participate. In practice, however, the knowledgeable, intelligent, persons with oratorical capacity only argue for and against the issue. As in a regular law-court the advocates, on both sides, refer to some past law- court cases with reference to a particular law so do the speakers in *Kebang* refer to the decision in a similar case in the past. One peculiar thing is that unlike in a law-court where there is a judge sitting and listening to the arguments forwarded by the lawyers of both the sides there is no particular judge in a *Kebang*. The whole *Kebang* is the judge and the individual members all assessors of the guilt as per traditions and customary laws. All the elderly members attending the *Kebang* can speak for or against the

* Bor Abors – The Padams.

case. After long orations alluding to the exhaustive references of old cases the *Kebang* arrive at a consensus and the guilty thus found is penalised as per customary laws. What is meant by Father Crick when he says, "Laws are framed by the people, sanctioned by the council, and promulgated by the president,"⁹ is that the most influential *Gam* (*Kebang* Abu) announces the decree arrived at by the *Kebang*.

In judicial matters the *Kebang* is the supreme authority exercising maximum power to deal with the problems of the society for its peaceful living. There is, however, differences of opinion regarding the power of the *Kebang* in inflicting penalty. Some tend to opine that the *Kebang* does not have the power to take the life of a free-born man as the law-court has the authority to decree a death sentence to a criminal. It was Dalton, for instance, who wrote, "There is no power vested in the community to take life or inflict corporal punishment on a free-born citizen but slaves may be put to death."¹⁰ If by 'community' Dalton means the '*Kebang*' which naturally is, he seems to have been wrongly informed by his informants. It might probably so happen that to his query whether the *Kebang* has the authority to award death sentence to a man someone casually said the slaves could be but not the Free-born man. It is all but natural that the villagers would not expose the whole truth about their society to a foreigner who had just come for a visit. In reality the *Kebang* has the unlimited power to take even the life of a free-born man if the occasion demands. Ogom Dai, Inin of Balek, well-versed in traditional matters says that lie *Kebang* occasionally had to pass death-sentence on it hardened criminal. It may be that a free-born man's life is not taken for light crimes as in case of a slave.

Ogom Dai gives the situation under which a free man may also be awarded death sentence. Sometimes there may be a hardened criminal committing heinous crimes. At the first instance he may be fined. Since the fine is paid, in case of his family's inability to pay, by his clansmen he may repeat the crime. His clansmen may get fed up with the incorrigible nature of the man and they express it in the

Kebang. In such case the *Kebang* pass the death sentence on that criminal and throw him in to the river with his hands and feet tied. The *Kebang* excised this power till 1945 in which year 'The Assam frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulations' was promulgated in this area. This Regulation curtailed this power of the *Kebang*. Verrier Elwin appears right when he says, "Girls may still have their hair cut for immorality, but they are no longer stripped naked and beaten. offenders are no longer buried alive, rolled over cliffs or pushed into river to drown."¹¹ The change has taken place after the introduction of the said Regulation. However, it appears that the *Kebang* still inflicts corporal punishment on even the suspected criminals to prove the Veracity of the crime.

(c) Executive : It has already been noticed that there are no different organs of the *Kebang* for different functions. As such the *Kebang* executes its own decisions. The whole community being involved in *Kebang* it is not to face any difficulty in executing it. Moreover, the *Kebang* judgement is an impartial one. From a statement made by Dalton it appears how execution of the decisions in the *Kebang* by the *Kebang* itself is easily carried out. He writes, "Suppose it is decreed that in expiation of the offence a pig is to be sacrificed; the *Raj* that is the community (*Kebang*), appropriate for the purpose the first animal of the kind, in good condition, and private property that comes to hand. The owner is at liberty then to fix his own value upon it, and recover as best he can from the culprit."¹² In *Kebang* even private members, are so sure of the culprit's payment that they would not hesitate to kill even somebody else's pig. The *Kebang* is so powerful that no one dared to violate the decision of the *Kebang*. It is this power of the *Kebang* which, perhaps, makes the people very law-abiding. Or the nature of abiding by law has been so instilled in them that private sentiment is not important in comparison to abiding by law. On 1st April 92, Ogom Dai stayed with me; he casually told me that *Kebang* had fined him Rs. 150/- the day before

and he paid it very gladly. When I looked at him with critical eyes he said smilingly: "I have paid it showing respect to the *Kebang* decision." Otherwise he had something to say about the impartiality of the judgement on him. What he respected is the decision of the *Kebang*. Speaking about the Padams Father Crick says, "these injunctions (the resolutions of the *Kebang*) are obeyed to the letter, for this people is so law-abiding and respectful to the power that be, as it is proud of its liberty."¹³

It would be proper here to see the significance of the *Musup* in which all the village *Kebangs* take place.

It is not an exaggeration when Sachin Roy says, "the *Moshup* and *Rasheng* are central institutions where boys and gills get practical training in the traditional mode of life."^{13A} We will show how the *Musup* boys discharge their social responsibilities from the *Musup*. It has also been shown how a *Musup* is constructed at the beginning of establishment of a new village. Since the construction of the *Musup* in a village it becomes the centre of community life. All the community festivals are celebrated in the *Musup*. Community begins and ends in it? The young boys of the village from the age of seven/eight get all sorts of practical training in building their career. The very old men of the village bask in the *Musup* doing some handicrafts and gossiping away the rest of their life. But the most significant use of the *Musup* is the holding of all kinds of village *Kebangs*. The significance of *Kebang* can not be exaggerated so far as the administrative, political and judicial matters are concerned. Seen from that angle a *Musup* in a village is the administrative building and a law court.

In short a *Musup* in an *Adi* village is a training ground for young boys, temple for the festivals, guard-house for security, dormitory for the young un-married boys, guest-house of the whole village, administrative building and law-court—all rolled into one. Dr. Guha rightly says, "the *Moshup* is the most distinguishing feature in the life of the group of tribes of the Siang Frontier Division . . ."¹¹

As the only highest body of the state the *Kebang* considers itself responsible for the fall of the society as it result of its failure to maintain peace and order in the society. The *Adis* consider the fall of a society as the result of wrath of some spiritual power. So the *Kebang* also sees that such a wrath is not incurred for the whole community indulging in the crime of an individual. As such the *Kebang* exercises the maximum power as an when it is called for without any discrimination between high and low, rich and poor; it is for the sake of this that the *Kebang* sometimes takes resort to corporal punishment or turns to superstitious practice even today to eliminate criminal element from the society. Wherever there is some doubt regarding the veracity of a crime as reported by the complainant the *Kebang* take resort to a kind of bet (*amki-penam* in *Adi* dialect). Some of these bets are physically risky and some are superstitiously fatal. A good number of such bets are in practice in the *Adi* society out of which only a few are listed below for milking the point clear.

i) Bringing out of an egg from boiling water (*Edung Rokpi penam*):- In absence of proper witness of a crime committed by a man as reported to the *Kebang* it resorts to it and the suspected person is to pass through this ordeal. Water is boiled in a bamboo knot with an egg boiled in it. To prove his innocence the accused is to bring out the egg from the boiling water with his bare hand. If he can bring out the egg without any burn/blister/ scalding in his hand his innocence is proved; otherwise his crime is established. Then he gets the punishment inflicted by the *Kebang*.

ii) Cutting of fingers (*lakkeng-- lakkeng*):- In this both the accused and the accuser are to cut their own finger. After the cut from whosoever's cut finger blood oozes out is proved to be in the wrong. He who is innocent will not bleed much from his cut finger. Accordingly punishment is inflicted on the wrong person.

One peculiarity to be noted here is that the accuser is also to undergo the same ordeal. This indicates that no one will falsely accuse

a person with a crime for some other grudge.

(iii) Eating soil (*kede-doki*):- This is usually applied in case of land dispute between two persons when they claim the same land as their land. If no other proof could be found to ascertain the actual owner of the land the *Kebang* takes both the disputants to the disputed land. Both of them are to eat a lump of earth from the disputed land saying in the name of *Donyi-Polo* that he will die a violent death within a stipulated time if he has claimed the land falsely.

The belief is that the liar dies a violent death within the period.

From the statement made by Wilcox on the *Kebang*, as quoted in this chapter an *Adi Kebang* appears to be a democratic institution. As we have indicated, though Wilcox may not be right in his statement regarding voting system in an *Adi Kebang* he is very much right in his remarks about *Kebang*, that it is democratic in nature. The *Adis* indeed evolved a democratic administrative system for their own purpose. It may, however, be proper here to throw some light on the possible back-ground in which a democratic institution could grow up. It has been noticed in the Chapter I that before their coming down to their present habitats in Arunachal Pradesh they sojourned in Tibet as a semi-nomadic tribe. It appears from their nomadic nature that they did not welcome kingship concept even when they were there. As nomads they did not come under the spell of any chief or king; though they might, perhaps, be under the wider canopy of some authority, it was almost without any tangible impact. We have also seen that they had to leave Tibet to escape the dictatorial imposition of something on them. As such, they developed a natural antipathy towards kingship. They would rather have a system of administration involving all the people. During their sojourn they seemed to have faced the requirement of a system for judicial purpose only. The number of people in a village being a few involvement of all the people was no problem. This sort of council seemed to have developed in Tibet. Over the centuries this council within the village developed into a well-knit self-administrative institution.

It may not be out of place here to examine the functioning of this democratic institution in practice. "All the bonafide members of the village are the members of *Kebang* of that village," says Katan Borang, an *Adi* and mi administrative officer in the Govt, of Arunachal Pradesh. (in a paper presented in a seminar organised by the directorate of Research, Arunachal Pradesh.) Borang does not make it clear whether by bonafide members of the village he means all the adult members or all the tribal people in the village. By 'bonafide members' he may mean I lie adult tribal people in the village and they are all members of the *Kebang*. A. C. Talukdar, who has written a book on the administrative system of the *Adis* has limited the scope of *Kebang* membership when he says, "All adult male members of the village are automatically the members of the *Kebang*."¹⁵ However, Talukdar says, "Theoretically every adult woman of the village is also a member of the *Kebang*" Then he elaborates that a woman can also attend a *Kebang* and participate in its deliberations, simply in practice it is very rare. In all probability Talukdar is mistaken in considering a woman's attendance in a *Kebang* either as a complainant or as a respondent in a dispute or as a helper of one of the parties in distribution of *apong* etc. as her attendance in the *Kebang* as its member. My informers, especially Ogom Dai, is emphatic when he replied to my question why a woman does not participate in a *Kebang* deliberations: he says, "how can you involve a woman, who is a lower animal without any judgement, in so serious a thing, called *Kebang*?" – Here we arrive at a peculiar situation: an *Adi Kebang* is not a democratic institution on the basis of universal adult suffrage—for it precludes woman from its perview irrespective of age of the woman. Not only this; an *Adi Kebang* precludes the slaves also from participating in its deliberation. The position is something like the Greek democracy in the ancient time. The Greeks considered the slaves and the common mass as 'things' and the things had no share in the democratic administration. They considered that the things are devoid of intelligence and judgement the prerequisites for administration. The *Adis* also consider the slaves and women as devoid of qualifications

required for administration—the slave being originally coward and criminal and the woman being a lower creature. Verriee Elwin's remarks, in this regard, is somewhat confusive. He tends to believe that in all the tribal councils in Arunachal Pradesh the local priest is a member because the priest's service is very often required.¹⁷ If that is the case the *Adi* woman should also be a member of the council: for, mythologically the first *Miri* (priest) is a woman, and in the upper areas there are a good number of women *Miris* even today. And according to Elwin's own statement, "there are some tribes such as the *Daflas*, who do not allow their women to do so (to speak in the council).¹⁸ The *Adi* women are not allowed to speak; for by 'tribes' he naturally includes the *Adis* also.

It is, perhaps, safe to say that like the democracy in ancient Greece and Rome, the democracy in the *Adi* society is a limited democracy of the patriarchs plus the free-born adult male members of the society. Regarding attainment of adulthood and entrance into the *Kebang* the scholars are not of one opinion—some say the male children of free-born parents of the village are the members of the *Kebang* from very early stage whereas some others say they enter into *Kebang* membership after they attain the stage of puberty. B. Benarjee, for instance, goes to the extent of saying that the membership in the *Kebang* begins with the birth of the boy in the village.¹⁹ This sounds exaggeration, or he may be confused with a boy's entrance into *Musup/Dere* life as his entrance in *Kebang*. Benarjee, of course, seems to have corrected himself when he says that the boy automatically involves in the *Kebang* deliberations when he attains the age of reason. Talukdar, making a reference to Oshong Ering, defines the criterion of attainment of adulthood of a boy and says, "a boy is regarded as an adult after two or three years of his attainment of puberty, if he also shows the normal sexual and mental capability."²⁰ This is plausible. In fact the *Adi* concept of adulthood of a boy is identical with pre-Buddhist Tibetan concept of male adulthood. In Tibet it was determined by the boy's capacity to ride a horse. The Capacity to ride a horse with sufficient control over it is

considered as attainment of reason and judgement. At this stage one can enter into the serious affairs of life, both social and individual. At that stage a boy is considered to have understood responsibility by the aboriginal Tibetans. At this stage a boy becomes a member of the *Kebang* if he is not otherwise handicapped with in sanity, stupidity and criminality. With the *Adis* it is a process rather than attainment of a particular age, through which the adulthood of a boy is determined. The process starts at the age of about seven in the *Musup*, the boy's dormitory-cum-council house. From that age an *Adi* boy is to perform the *Musup* duties like collection of firewood, lightening fire in the *Musup* hearth, announcing the *Kebang* decisions in the village at night, driving away the evil spirit supposed to be there in a *Nipong* death (*Nipong* is a spirit causing death to man, particularly pregnant woman), and so on. The boy who can show adult behaviour in these is considered an adult member of the society, and thus of the *Kebang*. For participation in *Kebang* deliberations, however, one should know the art of oratory and sufficient knowledge in traditions and customary laws.

The most salient feature of democracy in *Adi Kebang* is the way the leaders of the *Kebang* are chosen. The involvement of all the adult male members of the society in a *Kebang* does not mean an *Adi Kebang*. It is a disorderly gathering of people; there are leader(s), known as *Kebang Abo* to conduct the council. The *Kebang Abos* are usually the Gams (headman) of the village. In a village there are a number of Gams depending on the number of clans living in the village. One of the Gams initiates the *Kebang* and the others participate in the issue. The gamship in the *Adi* society is not a hereditary institution, though the son of a Gam stands better chance of becoming a Gam after the father's death. Since there is no voting system in selection of a Gam the choice is made on a general consensus of the clan. To arrive at a consensus in selecting a particular man as Gam depends on the qualifications of the man. To get oneself selected one should be a *Kebang* expert, that is well-versed in traditional knowledge, customary laws, history of the tribe

and so on. The more expert one is in these, the better is the chance for selection. Mere knowledge in all these, however, may not help him at all if he is not an expert orator in the traditional way. With one's skilful oratory he must carry the *Kebang* with him.

Another term used for *Kebang-Abo* in the past is *Nikok* a man who can speak in a domineering tone like the leader-cock in a herd of fowls. Such a man is the consensus *Gam*. The village *Gam* thus selected conducts the *Kebang* in the deliberation of which all the bonafide members have the absolute right to participate. Occasionally some young men are also found putting forward their argument in the traditional way. Usually a *Kebang* is dominated by the influential, experienced *Gams* well-versed in the traditional laws.

It would be proper place here to clarify one point: whether *Gamship* is an aboriginal institution or an imposed one by the British administration in Assam. In our parleys with the elites of Arunachal Pradesh the point is occasionally discussed; most of them hold that this is the imposition from the British Government on the analogy of *Gam-burha* in the Assamese society. (In Assamese *Gam-burha* means village head-man, which is an appellation from *Gaon-burha*). Dr. T. Nyori, himself an *Adi* holds that following the system of local self-administration in Assam in which the *Gam-burha* plays a significant role, the British administration from Assam introduced *Gamship* in Arunachal Pradesh. It seems a coincidence that the Assamese *Gam-burha* and the *Adi Gam* are identical in their meanings and functions. Even the first part of *Gam-burha* of the Assamese and the *Adi Gam* are same. That should not, however, make one forget the historical fact that *Gamship* had been there in the *Adi* society even before the British administration was introduced in the *Adi* area. Dalton, for instance, mentions of *Gaum* in 1855, "we now introduced to the *Gaums* or leading characters."²¹ In fact 'Gam' is a Tibetan word which means leader, as 'Gam' in the word "Gam-po" (Gam = leader, po = people) to mean king or leader of the people. This also indicates that the *Kebang* system among the *Adis* evolved even when they were in Tibet.

This is what a *Kebang* is and how it functions in a well-knit village. The *Kebang* confined to one village is known as Dolung *Kebang*. Occasionally, however, the jurisdiction of the *Kebang* is to be extended beyond the bound of a particular village community. The situation is such that a particular sub-tribe, originally settled in a big village has to be branched off as a result of over population. In such case a portion of the village go and settle at a reachable distance from the parent village. Such branched off villages are satellites of the parent village and a kinship relation is maintained. Riga, for instance, was once the parent village of the *Minyongs* from which so many satellites like Rieu, Paron, Sitang, *Kebang*, Ledum etc. branched off. Similarly the off-shoots of Damro are Bodak, Silli, Mebo, Dambuk, Rowing etc. After the initial stage of dependence on the parent village is over these satellites form their own *Kebang* for the respective villages. Sometimes, however, there arise some issues involving more than one such village—the issues are mostly of dispute nature, only occasionally of developmental nature. To settle such issues they form a *Kebang* comprising a group of villages belonging to the same sub-tribe. This *Kebang* is known *Bungo Kebang*. A *Bungo Kebang* consists of the *Kebang Abos* and the influential other members of all the Dolung *Kebangs* involved. What Talukdar says, “The Bungo *Kebang* is composed of all the Gams, leaders and Milum amis of the component village,”²² is plausible in this regard. Inter-village disputes of all kinds like boundary dispute, stealing of mithun, abduction of girl, encroachment into fishing right, hunting right and so on, are settled by the Bungo *Kebang*. The functions of a Bungo *Kebang* are generally of judicial nature. Administrative function is rarely performed by the Bungo *Kebang*, if, occasionally. The executive power of the Bungo *Kebang* is vested jointly on the Bungo and the Dolung *Kebang*(s) of the involved parties. The Dolung *Kebang*, however, exercises more power in realisation of fines etc. from a culprit belonging to that Dolung (village).

The jurisdiction of the *Kebang* has to be further extended to cover more area inhabited by different sub-tribes of the same tribe.

The principle behind extension of the Bango Kebang is to cover the whole tribe inhabiting in a well-knit area for both security and development purposes. Such an extended Kebang is known as *Bogum Bokang*. It consists of a number of Bango Kebangs and its members are all Gams and the influential members of the Dolung Kebangs involved. According to Sachin Roy Bogum Bokang is temporarily constituted to settle inter- Bango disputes,²³ which seems to have given the correct picture. What I want to add is that it was necessitated for the protection of the tribe from any other tribe. The peculiarity of the *Bogum Bokang* is that it does not cover any village or area inhabited by people other than their own tribe. Like a league of nations the *Bogum Bokang* took steps to maintain peace in the world of the tribal states. This was necessitated by the frequent internecine conflicts. In absence of a supreme intervening authority such conflict tended to crush the tribal states and the Kogum Bokang served a good purpose. As such the functions of the *Bogum Bokang* are both judicial, developmental and administrative. In the traditional *Bogum Bokang* the responsibility of execution vested with the respective Dolung Kebangs. During the British days however, this wider Kebang was utilised to contain the internecine feuds for their own administrative purpose. A C. Talukdar's statement on this aspect is plausible. He says, "The British were concerned about the maintenance of frequently disturbed inter-village peace in the area but found it both undesirable and uneconomical to extend their administrative and judicial paraphernalias to the largely inaccessible and scattered villages. They therefore felt the need of continuation of the indigenous system of tribal councils to the inter-village level."²⁴ But, at the same time, his view that the *Bongo Kebang* and *Bogum Bokang* are of recent origin seems self-contradictory.²⁵ He seems to have dittoed Sachin Roy without investigating much about the issue. Sachin Roy holds that the *Bogum Bokang* was introduced by the Administration.²⁶ In fact the growth of this institution was in the long past. Talom rukbo, himself an *Adi* and an expert in traditional history, says that the *Bogum Bokang* system was there even when they

were in Tibet. Kuttik Moyong, Political Interpreter, who retired and died a few years ago, also held the similar view. The reminiscence of such a system is there even today in Bomdo-Janbo area. That area is known as *Bogum Bokang* area to indicate it as the centre around which many sub-tribes of the *Adi* tribe lived as a wider unit. In this *Bogum Bokang* of earlier days are covered Tuting, Niging, Pango, Miging, Mosing, Janbo, Bomdo. Local tradition says under that *Bogum Bokang* lived the *Minyongs*, the *Padams*, the *Galongs* and other minor groups. The system became dormant as a result of the satellites' going to certain areas beyond reach. The British administration came to know about the existence of such a system and revived it for their own convenience. A reference to almost a similar thing by Dalton in 1855, when the British administration was not introduced in this area may bear with the fact. He says sometimes a council comprising many villages is convened and on a common agreement these villages become a 'confederate of states.'²⁷

In conclusion it may safely be said that the *Adi* *Kebang* system is a well developed Administrative system on limited democratic principle for social order and security at both clan and sub-tribe, and tribe levels. The democratic principles developed in the society for centuries helped, to a great extent, induction of the Panchayati Raj system, with the extension of the right to the slaves, which by the time this Panchayati Raj was established, had already been abolished, and to the women.

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Chapter-VI

The *Adis* responsible for Geographical Boundaries to the Terra Incognita

The students of Arunachal History who think that the present Arunachal Pradesh had been bounded by international and inter-state boundaries since the British occupation of Assam in 1826, as per the *Yandabu Treaty* between the British and the Burmese are definitely mistaken till that years, in absence of a name of its own the total geographical area covered by present Arunachal Pradesh, the whole area was known as a *Terra Incognita* (unknown land); and that same *Terra Incognita* status of the region continued even beyond that said treaty. For, during the weak Ahom Rule from 1229 to 1826, the Assam rulers did not venture to even the wrath of the various savage tribes occupying this *Terra Incognita* by any effort to bring there tribes under their control. Rather the various tribes, mostly of Mongoloid origin, occasionally attempted to make some forays into the plains for one reason or the other, mostly with the intension of occupying the land in the Assam plains for easy cultivation and and grazing fields. But that did not lead to a permanant occupation of Assam by the tribes of Assam. Rather, as per Lakshmi Devi occasional firendship was established through extension of help to the Ahom Rulers controlled with the outsider enemies like those from Burma.¹

After the British occupation of Assam, however, the situation began to change gradually bringing in so many issues which the Ahoms did not seem to have been concerned. The specific issues involved for being concerned with by the British are (a) Their expansion of the British Indian empire; (b) Their coming into contact with the international issues; (c) Their tea gardens demanding protection from any outside power which might come by way of occupying the no-mans land.

Though East India Company was basically a trading company found and sanctioned by Queen Elizabeth (I) in 1600AD, it had got a close connection with the British Kingdom; and in very many cases the company had to have permission from the Crown in case of expansion of their business and territorial expansion. So, in case of this Himalayan region occupied mostly by some unknown tribes, seemingly very savagious in their appearance and behaviour. The British Government in London was not interested in pushing forward to a mountain region, with less possibility of agricultural adventures and business venture unless some more important pressing demand arose in the situation. The British Crown, which was not directly concerned with the company's affairs, unless security problem with the company did not arise, did not interfere with the company's activities. That position of the British Crown in relation to the East India Company, however, suddenly began to feel concerned when in 1857, after Indian first war of her independence, the government took over the company's charge thus India coming directly under the British Government. Since then the British Government started examining minutely every activities of British Administrative functionaries in India so that nothing goes wrong in the international arena because of some rash decision taken by that functionary. Since then there came up two distinction bodies so far as the affairs of India were concerned : the British Government in London and the British Indian Administrators like the Viceroy, Lt. Governors, Army Officer etc. Secretary of States to India etc. No doubt the Viceroy, Lt. Governor, Political Officers posted in India were in the better know of the ground reality than the Crown, the Prime Minister and his ministry were supposed to know sitting in London So, though clash of decisions occasionally came up, broadly speaking it must be said that whichever way the Administrative functionaries in India were directed action was more or less taken accordingly here in India.

In the process there appeared occasional conflict between the decision for some action to be arrived at by the Administrative

functionaries in India and the action to be sanctioned there in London. It is but natural that the ground reality here in India was better understood by the British Administrators posted in India than by the British Government sitting in London. The results are, in most of the cases, the Administrators sitting in India had to take action on a particular issue and approval was taken from the Parliament in London.

In respect to the North-East Frontier of India, the Administrator at Shillong, Calcutta had a natural tendency to give proper protection to the people, their business inside their occupied territory. On the other hand they could realise until and unless some push-forward policy was adopted the hills dwellers themselves or their people with the help of outside people might inflow the enemy to thwart their business.

With the discovery of some wild tea plants by a Singphow Gam in 1835 in Upper Assam another new trade for the company came up in Assam with the plantation of tea on commercial basis within a short period. So, for the protection of the British tea gardens in Assam from any possible occupation of Assam by foreign enemy became a new fact for the British Administration of Assam. On the other hand without good knowledge about the savage cooking tribes on their north and the south-east also raised its ugly head. So, the British Administration in Assam began to be very very cautious about maintaining a good relation with the tribes on the north and the south. All such cautiousness, however was thwarted by the tribal people by the occasional swoops of some ferocious tribes for one reason or the other.

Speaking about the tribes on the northern hills, i.e. on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra one particular problem began to raise its head again and again; and it is the problem arising out of the *Miris* who had come down from the hills since about thirteenth century onward. The reasons of the *Miris* (now they call themselves as *Misings*, a cultural tribe) coming down to the Assam plains remain forever a controversial one: the *Miris* claiming that they had come down to the Assam plains subsistence in the plains, while the *Abors*

claim they (the *Miris*) were the runaway slaves of the *Abors* (now they call themselves *Adis*). To make the point clear we can not but point out some opinions of scholars on the issue. Because the issue is very significant which ultimately led to the laying down a recognised boundary between Assam and NEFA, now known as Arunachal Pradesh. Dr. Nomal Pegu, himself a *Mising*, avoids the issue regarding the reason of their coming down from the mountains to the Assam plains and comments that the *Misings* came down to Assam long back assigning no reason thereof! One Khagen Pegu, a knowledgeable person from the Jonai region of Dhemaji district admits that they had to come down to Assam because of a quarrel between themselves and the *Adis* about agricultural plot of land.² But, from what Alexander Mackenzie's, an authority on the tribes bordering Assam, comments in this regard gives a plausible reason: 'The *Miris* of the plains are here claimed by the *Abors* as their dependants and runaway slave.'³ The present *Adis*, then known as *Abors* had the tradition that when a particular tribe was defeated in a war that might result in very many things: (a) the vanquished one was exterminated from the world. But still then some woman and children remained as a residue; this residue is very often merged with the victorious tribe. That happened in case of the *Milangs* of the upper hills of the Abor Hills. When the *Milangs* came down from the upper ridges there still remained a very weak tribe in present Milang region; and that tribe was known as *Soi Sotem*; and in the ensuing battle the whole tribe except a few minor people were exterminated; and the remaining children and old people got absorbed in the *Milangs*.⁴ Similar tradition is still there amongst the *Wangchows* of Tirap district, i.e. when the *Wangchows* arrived there in their present site there confinned a very weak tribe, whom they vanquished in a war; and the residue got absorbed with the *Wangchows*. (b) The vanquished tribe was so much subordinated that they were to serve the victorious tribe almost as slaves, they were allowed to continue as a subdued tribe who were supposed to work for the victorious tribe though they (the defeated tribe) were allowed to continue in some nearby area. (c)

Both the victorious and the vanquished entered into some treaty as per which the vanquished were allowed to stay along side the victorious one; in such case the vanquished one would not have right on their landed property except their right to cultivate the land; but they were to give major share of the harvests to the victorious party. What Khagen Pegu said about their departure from the hills would be one of the consequences of their quarrel with the *Abors*; but their clandestine escape from their settlement within the area of the *Abors* would not free them from the responsibility of serving the *Abors* for an indefinite period; and that condition still persisted as per the *Abor* demand even after the *Miris* departyre from the hills and their belonging to live in the Ahom territory. After the British occupation of Assam in 1826 that posed a serious problem. The weak Ahom Rulers did not interfare in the affairs of the *Abors* in relation with the *Miris*; and as such there was hardly any confrontation between the Ahom and the *Abors*; whenever the *Abors* came down to the plain areas for extracting their dues from the *Misings* the Ahom Administration did not consider it a trespass on the part of the *Adis* into the Ahom territory. But, with the British Occupation of Assam the situation became quite different: the British would not allow the *Adis* to enter into British territory into Assam and extract forceful realization of their dues from the British citizen in Assam plains. But the *Adis* also would not leave the matter at that. That ultimately became a serious conflict between the *Adis* and the British for about three quarters of a century since the British's occupation of Assam.

To this was addes another conflict between the *Adis* and the English. To the Englishmen there was an unfathomable demand of the *Adis*; and here is the conflict between the law of a wider society and the tradition of tribal society. The *Adis* still have the tradition that whatever resourses are there in a river flowing through their land from the upper region to the plain areas they should get some tax from the people enjoying the benefit. And along the courses of the river from Tibet down the Abor Hills and then to the Assam plain they have the right in the fish and the gold dust which could be collected

from the sands in the river bank. Prior to coming of the British Administration in Assam the *Adis* could collect their shares from those who collected gold dust from the *Beeheas* or *Sonowals*; for, the Ahom administration did not object to any collection of taxes from the *Misings* and the others as it has been noticed; but after occupation of Assam by the East India Company the British Administration would not allow the tribal people any forceful collection of taxes from their citizens in Assam. That angered the *Abors* against the British Administration in Assam. And whatever ensued out of that conflict is the history of Arunachal since the time in the middle of the nineteenth century. History records that during the period from 1850s to the sixties there took place three incidents of *Adi* forays on the British citizens of Assam. The first foray as described by Alexander Mackenzie is as under: 'In 1858 occurred the first serious outrage. On 31st January of that year the civil station at Dibrugarh was started by the news that the *Beeheas* village Sengajan only six miles distant from the station, though in the north of the river Brahmaputra, had been cut up by *Abors* from the hills.'⁵ On enquiries it was found that the attackers were the *Minyang Adis* from a village called Kebang, beyond Rottung. What explains may things: (1) The *Miris*, who had tried to escape from the *Abors* overlordship were not near the Assam border; rather they were within the British territory. So, it seemed the *Miris* entered into some social understanding that they owed something to the *Minyongs*. And the *Minyongs* would not allow the *Miris* to escape unscathed without paying their annual taxes. (2) At the same time, on the other hand, unlike the Ahom rulers, the British Administration would not afford to allow the attacker and abductors of their own citizens; once that is allowed there would be no end to such attacks on the British citizens this challenging the British in their own land by some savage tribes of the Himalayas. So, the British Administration decided to sent an expedition to the *Abor* hills for teaching a lesson to the *Abors* and to get the *Beeheas* released from the enemy. But it was a sorry plight of the British Administration in Assam that the British attempt to punish the abductors of her citizens

ended in a fiasco. Mackenzie narrates the fiasco: 'An attempt was made to follow up the raiders to the hills, but, owing to the extremely inaccessible character of the country, and various mischance... the troops did not succeed in overtaking the *Abors* or in reaching the village of *Kebang*. It was indeed with difficulty and with some loss of credit to those who commanded that they got back to *Dibrugarh*.'⁶ This failure of the British expedition had repercussions not only among the *Abors* but also in the British Government. The tribal people so far having some notion that the white sahibs had their superior army equipped with better weapons, so they would easily defeat the local people less in number and equipped with their traditional weapons like spears, bows and arrows with poisoned tips. But in reality the attacking *Abors* proved themselves in better fighting position to the extent of making the most powerful enemies, the British army, to go back without making an attack on them. This sort of British vanity over the tribes of the Himalayas was not confined to the British officers in the Assam valley; rather a similar attitude was erected by the people on the ground amongst the ruler sitting in London. Quoting from the *Pioneer* as in 1865, Verrier Elwin writes: 'The only idea most of which men had, with reference to the hills and forests (of Assam) was that they were the habitat of the savage tribes, whose bloody raids and thieving forays threatened serious dangers to the cause of tea.'⁷ Really interesting to note, as if for the protection of British tea planters' interest in Assam that British East India Company was engaged in India not the British Indian Empire! The British Indian Empire was there very much in their agenda till the first half of the next century, i.e. the Second World War; but they generally used to be concerned with certain very minor issues keeping aside tracking the main one from the public view. As if to protect the interest of the British tea industries, the British Administration in Assam, keeping in touch with the Viceroy, began their preparation for a record attack on *Kebang* taking all aspects of a punitive expedition under their scrutinising eyes. Accordingly, preparations were on with the agreement of the local government. Forces were sent up to *Pasighat*

for making the final attack; and the final attack was made on the *Pasis* to the defeat of the tribe. That gave the open signal that the expedition would ultimately proceed to *Kebang* to punish them. But the *Padams* of Mebo saw things from a different angle— they wanted to avail the benefits of a friendly relation with the British Administration and accordingly made an overture for friendship with the British Administration; though the Administration did not accept the terms of the *Padam* they were well-received taking the situation as it was at that time the *Pasi* crust at Pasighat, the *Padams* coming to a friendly relations with the Britishers, the British Administration went on with full preparation for making a final attack on the *Kebang*. But then came suddenly the order from the Secretary of State refusing to the fiasco in the first attempt, 'He forbade the undertaking of any second expedition to save upon trustorthy information. and with an adequate force.'⁸ Deterionised their time not to deter from punishing the *Minyongs* of village *Kebang* the expedition reinforced adequately to proceed towards *Kebang*. With that determination to proceed further the expeditionary force attacked the *Pasi* villages who defended their stockade valiantly only to admit defeat in the hands of the expedition army. Thus the enemy at the base being defeated in 1859, the expeditionary force began proceeding the hills in 1860. But surprisingly the *Minyongs* of *Kebang* made a daring attack on the British citizens, this time across the river Brahmaputra on the south bank. Alexander Mackenzie put it as: 'The *Beeheas* were part of a body of ryots who had deserted the side of the river after the former *Minyong* massacre in 1858, and the present appear to have designed partly to show them that they were not beyond the reach of their *Abor* lords, and partly to take vengeance for aid rendered by the *Beeheas* to the troops in the campaign of 1859.'⁹ The harm done to the British citizens is much more than the previous. No doubt it was a severe challenge to the British authority to the British power in India. And British Administration in India had to think twice before their coming to a decision, how to takle the situation; that too in view of London's reluctance for granting a punitive expedition to the hill to

punish the tribal people. Morally speaking the Minyongs were, as to the tribal judgement; justified: they had the right over their offenders in the past, their men going to some other country would not absolve them of their fault. On the other hand more civilized people's judgement rest on a different footing: the *Beeheas* were by this British citizens and no others have the right to punish them without the permission of the British authority. Here is the clash between the judgement of a civilized society and that of a tribal society without any education to their credit. In this situation the civilized society (the British Administration in India) was to decide first; and their decision was to despatch a punitive expedition to the *Abor* hills not only to teach the tribesmen a lesson that they would not do a wrong to the British Administration and to go not free without any punishment.

The prestige issue on the part of the British Administration not only in Assam or India but even in London stood as a serious one. A small tribe in the Himalayas had challenged the very authority of the British Administration had the necessary courage to attack on her citizens not only outside her territory but inside the British territory also with a high degree of impunity. Sometimes the civilized people also behave like tribesmen when the prestige is found to be at a stake: and the *Abors* really put the British prestige at a stake through their attack on a village within British territory and carrying her citizens to the hills after setting their houses on fire. So, the British Administration in Assam in consultation with Calcutta decided to despatch a punitive expedition into *Abor* hills. Preparations were on collecting all secret informations from different places. But, just before the moment of their strike on the *Abors* a few dozens of *Minyong* gams made a manovering for friendship with the British Administration. That seemed to have saved the face of the British Government not only in India, but of London also; for, they immediately welcomed the proposals of the tribal people on condition of maintenance of peace. 'The Government directed that any such advances should be favourably received and endeavours made to bring the chiefs to enter into a binding agreement for the preservation

of order along the frontier.’¹⁰

What has followed accordingly has got so much of importance in laying a regular boundary between Assam and then *terra-incognita*, now Arunachal Pradesh, that its importance simply can not be exaggerated a fixed boundary was laid between Assam and these hilly tracts came gradually to be known as scheduled Tracts, Frontier Tracts, North-East Frontier Tracts and finally Arunachal Pradesh. One may like to see how the things happened stage by stage.

Mention has already been made that against the British Administration’s preparation for a punitive expedition to punish the *Abor* tribe for their repeated attack on the villages under British Administration the *Minyong* gams made an overtures for coming to a sort of understanding between the two sides. The government did not like to throw away an opportunity of coming to terms with the hill tribes very often creating problems with the British citizens of Assam. Accordingly the Treaty was signed between the British Administration in Assam and a number of *Minyong* gams on 5th November, 1862 at Lalee Mukh after seven day’s deliberation on issues raised by both the sides. The principal terms of understanding between the two parties are concerned with the demarcation of a borderline along the foot of the hills from Charduar to Nizam ghat at the initial stage, to be executed gradually to Khamti, Singphow and Naga areas on the border of Dibeugarh and Sibsagar. The terms and conditions were as per Bengal Frontier Resolution passed by the appropriate authority in council. So, the whole Treaty at Lalee Mukh on 5th November, 1862 was to be amalgamated under the Bengal Frontier Regulation 1873 thus laying down all Rules and Regulations regarding the boundary of the Frontier Tracts between Assam from Charduar to the Tuensang region in Nagaland. This is known as the Inner Line Regulation of Bengal 1873 promulgated for the benefit of the Assam Frontier Tracts.

Seen from a common point of view the amalgamation of the Regulation sounds an ordinary Regulation; but once the students of Arunachal History look into this as an ordinary single act between some British officer in Assam and 37 *Minyong* gams, its importance

climbed up to the pinnacle of Arunachal History so far its geographical boundary is concerned. Till 1862, as it is said at the beginning of the Frontier tracts were a sprawling area in the CisHimalayan region stretching from Bhutan border to Tuensang district, now merged in Nagaland (earlier it was in NEFA). Now promulgation of the Bengal Frontier Regulation 1873, basing on the Treaty of Lalee Mukh 1862, earned tremendous significance which the ordinary students of Arunachal History do not seem to attach much significance. This act, instigated by the *Ahor* tribes, now has assumed so much of importance for the history of Arunachal Pradesh that it can not simply be exaggerated. One thing associated with this the Inner Line Regulation generally appears have escaped the view of the general students of history with a minor clause in the Regulation. It is not only an Inner Line Regulation by which the outer boundary of the Frontier Tracts was fixed with Assam to bring down the border conflicts: there is a provision of Outer Line also incorporated in that Bengal Frontier Regulation. It is Dorothy Woodman, who has elaborately discussed the significance of the Outer Line in the history of Arunachal. But for the Outer Line provision incorporated in the Bengal Frontier Regulation 1873, the students of Arunachal history would have to grope in darkness as to how the British Administration in Assam throughout the 19th century to the year 1914, the year of promulgation of the McMahon Line, had to push British Administration into Arunachal Pradesh in spite of constant Chinese eyes and occasional Tibetan eyes on this *terra-incognita*.

It is this Outer Line provision in the Inner Line Regulation which has a significant role to play in the history of Arunachal Pradesh. It is again the *Ahors* (Adis) whose lot is assigned the duty of bringing that into the focus of the world in the History of Arunachal. The Outer Line was a sort of imaginary line agreed on by both the British Administrative officers and the Tribal chiefs of NEFA—laid at an average distance of ten to fifteen miles from the Inner Line inside the Frontier Tract. In the region in between the Inner Line and the Outer Line the British Administrative officers would have the right to

tour on friendly terms with the local people; and situation depending on the British Administrative officer might take up some cases of social violation for trial in some nearby court of law like at North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Jorhat etc. In short, historians tend to comment that the provision of the Outer Line was an unnecessary ornament to the Principal Bengal Frontier Regulation which was, infact, not rather the provision of the Outer Line is an important appendage which would help British India, and after Independence. India.

The Outer Line incorporated in that Regulation was done by some very intelligent British officers for future expansion of the British India Empire to further north covering the total *terra-incognita* except the Tawang stripe since 1670, the year of completion of the Tawang Monastery which brought that stripe under the Dalai Lama both spiritually and secularly.

By the beginning of the twentieth century many things began to happen in connection with the vast Himalayan stripe from Tibet to the Assam border China began to keep an eye on this with the strength of her sugereinty over Tibet, thus having a control over the Tawang strip. Charles Bell, the British officer posted at Gangtok had the responsibility of Chinese movement in this area. Finding no definite information Capt. Young Husband was despatched with a string escort to Lhasa. That strived the whole region covering China, and even Russia. Immediately, however, China could not do anything whereas British India could obtain the right to maintain a British Police post for the protection of the trade unit there. China and Russia objected against the British high handedness in securing a sort of a treaty for safeguarding the interest of the British trade in Lhasa. On the basis of China's objection against British Indian government trade treaty without Chi;a's knowledge she (China) secured another agreement with Lhasa counter balancing the British authority in Lhasa.

While these things were going on in the international arena the British Indian Administration was not sitting idle: It started its 'push inside' policy securing her hold on the tribes between Tibet and Assam.

And to instigate British interest in this nomans land China had also been extending its activities in the region between Tibet and the Outer Line. Once China's suspicion was stirred by Young Husband's march to Lhasa in 1904 China would not like to except the situation lying: she also started making her move into the region, especially through her south-western provinces of Yunnan and Zchesuan which touched the *Mishimies* and the *Khamtis* under the loose administration sanctioned by the understanding at Lalee Mukh in 1862, which was regularised by the extention of Bengal Frontier Regulation, 1873.

The whole situation increased manifold the duty of the Assistant Political officer posted at Sadiya since 1882. And each Assistant Political officer posted at Sadiya since that year—Needham of Bengal police, Wilcox, Capt. Noel Williamson were in the actual field of Empire building sitting in the malarial region in the North-Eastern tip of Assam. These three administrative officer contributed their own ways as much as they could. Needham penetrated into the *Mishimi* areas as a simulated friend of the *Mishimies* upto Rima near Chinese province; Wilcox in addition to his maintainance of friendship with the *Mishimies*, made his dangerous trip across the Patkai to examine whether the Irrawady river is the main water of the Tsangpo flowing length wise from Manas Sarowar to Bay of Bengal across Tibet and Assam. And Capt. Williamson paid his more attention to make friendship with the indomitable *Abors* for the sake of empire-building. We are more concerned with Capt. Williamson and the Chinese expansion policy during the first decade of twentieth century. To study Capt. Williamson's murder case in 1910 without studying the Chinese movement in the region may simply end in a zero. It has already been noticed the Capt. Young Husband's march to Lhasa in 1904, killing a good number of Tibetan soldiers at Chigatche, woke up the Chinese sleeping dog for activities in the present Arunachal Pradesh. From 1909 China began to send Chinese troops to Tibet under Chao-Er-Feng to occupy Lhasa. And the poor Dalai LamaXIIIth had to escape to Mongolia; and after the Treaty, though he came back to Lhasa, he could not study in his Potala for a long time because of Chao-Er-

Feng's occupation of Lhasa; and this time he made an escape to Darjeeling under the care of Charles Bell, the British officer in Gangtok. Instead of sitting tight in Lhasa Chao-Er-Feng got busy in despatching his spies to this mountain region in the south of Tibet, which is now called Arunachal Pradesh. To have a check what actually was going on in this no-man's land, except the stripe between the Inner Line and the Outer Line, Capt. F M Baily made a foot-march from Peking to Sadiya: and on his way he came across Chinese and Tibetan spies working in this stripe of land (Arunachal), amongst the *Mishimies*.¹¹ Capt. Williamson, Capt. Noel William seemed influenced by the general atmosphere and was very much anxious to explore far north beyond the Outer Line. And that was the view of what London had come to know the situation in between Tibet and the Outer Line— i.e. the present Arunachal Pradesh. It is interesting to note the general view in England: On February 10, 1919, the *Morning Post* reported: 'A great empire, the future military strength of which no man can foresee, had suddenly appeared on the North-East India.'¹² That was the British Press report based on the activities going on in the North-East Frontier of India in relation to China. It is but natural that when informations were pouring from different corners regarding the Chinese move keeping her eye on the era between Tibet and the Outer Line. And the reports were trustworthy. Capt. Baily for instance, while marching on foot from Peking to Rima, and then to Sadiya in 1909-10 came across the Chinese officers trying to persuade the *Mishimies* not to follow the orders of the British Administration in Assam. The Capt. even came across some *Mishimi* chiefs going to meet the Chinese officers as they were asked to go and meet. But the Capt. persuaded them not go to the Chinese side without asking the British officers at Sadiya.¹³ Similarly was Capt. Noel Williamson worried about Chinese activities amongst the *Abors*. So, this Assistant Political officer at Sadiya took every opportunity to travel in between the Inner Line and the Outer Line making friendship with the *Abors*. In 1909 this Capt. toured the Pasighat region and went upto Kebang village on the right bank of the Siang making

friendship with the *Abor* chiefs. While turning back he had discussed with the *Abor* gamas regarding his going further interior next year. Accordingly he, accompanied with a Missionary doctor friend, Gregorson by name. Capt. Williamson set out on tour in 1911. From the very beginning the *Abor* gamas, particularly one Manmar from village Yagrung, some six miles from Pasighat, together with others, accompanied the visiting group upto Rottung. There the Capt. Williamson decided to leave his doctor friend with some coolies carrying their rations, he going forward with some police guards and tribal friends. But on arrival of Capt. Williamson at Komsing Manmur Jamoh of Yagrung and others from Komsing while accommodating the visiting guests all in friendly terms, suddenly attacked them treacherously killing the Capt. and most of his guards, except a few coolies who jumped in the Siang and one or two coolies swam across the river, who only could carry the message to Dibrugarh going on foot. Later on it was found that the Dr. Gregorson and all his coolies were massacred in the camp except a few *Miri* kataki.

This treacherous murder of Capt. Noel Williamson and his Dr friend Gregorson with all their escorts and coolies became a great issue not only in India but also in London. The British Indian Administration asked permission for a serious punitive expedition to punish the perpetrators of these serious crimes. And while the supreme government was discussing how the serious incident took place against so powerful a country called Great Britain, offended by a small hilly tribe in the Himalayas. Many things were supposed to come out. In 1986 I wrote a seminar paper to be presented in the annual conference of the North East India History Association held in Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat, in which I expressed doubt that the whole incident of massacre of the British Administration and his Missionary doctor friend there was the hands of Chinese spies, which could be proved from the Capt. Baily's reports of what he had seen on his way to Sadiya from Peking and some local *Abor* leaders report of myself collected information from one Apel Perme, originally from Damro, later joined as Political Interpreter at Pasighat. He and some Chinese

looking people laid cairn in Yamne/Siang etc. and they (Apel Perme and others) had to demolish these on the advice of the British officers.

Any way the issue became a serious one threatening the very existence of the British Indian Empire in the jungles of North-East Frontier Agency. Though in the British parliament Capt. Williamson's audacity in going beyond the Puter Line was seriously blamed by the opposition the Secretary of State to India had tough time in convincing the the opposition explaining that the Chinese movement in the region since Chao-Er-Feng's occupation of Lhasa from 1909 had changed the whole situation in this corner of the world.

To me one peculiar situation arising in Peking saved the lot of the British Indian Empire in the forest of the North-East India. And that was the popular movement against monarchy in 1911: as the French Revolution in 1789 led to the massacre of the Emperor, Empress, Ministers and all so the Chinese Revolution in 1911 led to the murder of the Emperor, the Empress and all in the royal government.¹⁴ Chao-Er-Feng was compelled to leave Tibet for China taking advantage of this situation in Peking two things occurred in the region. The Secretary of State to India, Sir Henry McMahon's despatch Lt. General Hamilton Bower, the commandant of the British expedition to punish the murderers of Capt. Williamson and Dr. Gregorson, to the effect that in case of the expedition's success on penalising the murderers the expedition team would make a survey for a possible boundary line between Assam and Tibet. It was a good fortune for the British expeditionary was successful in punishing the murderers of Capt. Williamson and Dr. Gregorson and their escorts. After the Hamilton Bower sent different team to different places of this region by way of surveying boundary line making the watershed line and submitted to report to Sir Henry McMahon in 1913.

On submission of the survey reports of various missions and promenades Henry McMahon, in consultation with the supreme government decided to convene tripartite conference of the Government of India, China and Tibet at Simla in 1913. SPEking about the suitability of McMahon as the Chairman of the conference Dorothy

Woodman written that since the conference was to be held at Simla, India, his lost country. Moreover he has sufficient experience in such matter as: 'From 1890 till 1914 he was in the Indian Political Department and served continuously on the frontier, on the commission for demarcation of Afgan-Baluchistan boundary and as Political Agent at Gilqit, Chitral and Baluchistan.'¹⁵ He decided the members from Great Britain, China and Tibet should be plenipotentiary status. Though China had some objection in having a Tibetan member of a plenipotentiary status later on she also agreed to Henry McMohan's proposal. Accordingly the three representatives from three countries were— Ivan Chen of China, Lonchen Shatra of Tibet and Henry McMohan himself representing India (Great Britain). As expected these things did not happen smoothly because of Chinese ambivalence from the beginning. McMohan's introduction of the convention was aimed at safeguard of the Assam Himalayas for the protection of the Tea industry in Assam, so that China could not come easily and occupy the present Arunachal Pradesh which might leave Assam in Chinese mercy. The initial talk in the conference started with the decision of Tibet into Inner and Outer Tibets, the Chinese having more control over the Inner Tibet, Outer Tibet enjoying maximum autonomy, though Chinese suzerainty over the outer Tibet also would remain. Ivan Chen, the Chinese plenipotentiary, still had some difference of opinion as to the boundary of the two Tibets. Correspondences from Lhasa and Peking and London and Delhi continued for minute informations and corrections at different stages. On the basis of a general agreement on the partition of Tibet a draft agreement was prepared and all the three plenipotentiaries initiated not only on the Agreement Papers but also in the sketch map of partition of Tibet. Henry McMohan suggested minor changes in the partition of Tibet in Inner and Outer Tibets could be effected.

After the initiating session when McMohan invited the other two members and their helper Ivan Chen began to fumble referring to Government's calling him to Peking. Ultimately Ivan Chen did not sign in the final draft of the Simla convention. McMohan and others

had the notion that China would ultimately come to terms i.e. Chen would put his signature when he and Shatra would put their signatures and seal without the signature of the Chinese representative. But, to the end nothing happened.

My purpose of writing this chapter, however, not to criticise the merits and demerits of the Simla conference of 1914 itself; my purpose is to see how the *Abors* now known as *Adis*, were directly involved in laying the boundary on all sides of Arunachal Pradesh which had no specific boundary at all separation from Assam from inside India and from Tibet, Bhutan, China and Myanmar from outside; and as we have noticed here the process of laying down the inside boundary with Assam started with the *Minyong Abor's* attack on the *Beeheas* village of Sengajan in 1961 leading to the Inner Line, i.e. the introduction of the Inner Line and Outer Line process ultimately demarcating her from Assam with the promulgation of Bengal Frontier Regulation of 1873. And then the process of NEFA's international boundary was also kicked up by the *Abors* at Komsing in 1911 leading to the *Abor* expedition of 1911-12, followed by a number of survey mission for a possible boundary with Tibet first, followed by a boundary with Myanmar too. That ultimately compelled to laying down the geographical boundary of a state—the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Now she can claim she has her specific boundaries, both inter-state and international. And in both the case it was kicked first by the *Abors* only.

Now the students of Arunachal history can also proudly claim she has got specific geographical boundaries as any state or a country should have.

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Chapter : VII

Veil of Mystery Over Birth, Death and Diseases

As all primitive societies the *Adis* are also hazed with mystery, superstitions and taboos with regard to birth, death and diseases. To their belief there exists soul—‘*ayit*’ in *Adi* dialect—which plays a significant role in forming their concept of good conduct. Though it is difficult to determine the ultimate destination of the ‘*ayit*’ they have a vague notion about its transmigration from one being to the other, particularly from the predecessor to the progeny. The *pengey*, a song sung on the death of somebody describes the migration of the soul from the body of the deceased to a vague place variously known as *Regam*, *Donyi-Polo Among* or *Sitking Kede*, the place of birth of the deceased. The *pengey* singer, not necessarily from the family of the deceased, sings from the coming of the— ‘*ayit*’ to the mother’s womb till the man’s death. Then it continues further the journey back to the place where it is supposed to have taken shelter after the earlier birth and before the present one. This is, however, interpreted by Oshong Ering in a different way. He says the soul of the deceased goes to *Donyi-Polo among*—heaven in a different sense. The tradition, however, remains vague in that it cannot describe *Donyi-Polo among*. By the time the *ayit* reaches the borderland the atmosphere becomes hazy and the *Miri* cannot penetrate into it. The people simply believe the *ayit* will go beyond that hazy atmosphere, that is the borderland and enter into *Donyi-Polo among*.

Another tradition, very distinct with the Galongs, however, says that the *Donyi-Polo among* is a beautiful land abundant with things of enjoyment for all kinds of beings. That is the abode of all the deities of the *Adi* pantheon with *Donyi-Polo* as the presiding power. This tradition says that the *ayit* of all good men and the sacrificed animals

in propitiation of the benevolent deities go there. It is for this traditional belief that the *Adis* do not feel sad at the sufferings of an animal at the time of sacrifice through either strangulation or blows of a sharp instrument. They have a concept that an animal sacrificed in the name of god or goddess is freed from the earthly life. Since the animal will go to the land abundant with materials for its enjoyment there is no point in feeling sad for it. A further belief in this tradition is that the soul of the animal thus freed will keep on showering blessings on the family sacrificing the animal. When I asked Dr. T. Nyori about the motive behind sacrifice of a mithun he said these things. Then I got the idea confirmed by other experienced men in traditions.

When a woman is conceived it is believed that a soul has migrated from the land of dead to that mother's womb. Then one of the parents of the foetus sees in dream whether the baby will be male or female. Such things are, of course, not direct – these are shown symbolically through different signs. If, in dream, the mother or the father sees an axe, an ebar egin (a basket usually carried by woman for carrying load) or some other house-holds meant for the use by woman then the baby will be a female one; if, on the other, a bow^r is seen the baby will be a male one. It is believed that the soul of a man or a woman of that family who died earlier comes back to the family again. Since then a close watch is kept on the pregnant woman so that no malevolent spirit, especially *Nipong* (a spirit which causes diseases particularly in woman) can do any harm. A pregnant woman is particularly vulnerable to *Nipong* which is always in look out for a chance to possess the baby through death of either the baby alone or the baby and the mother. That trouble caused at the time of delivery is made by *Nipong* in its attempt to possess the baby. Whenever there is sign of trouble in delivering a baby the 'Miri' is immediately consulted who finds out through divination the position of the baby and the mother and suggests ransom to get them back. Usually the ransom is a pig which is sacrificed in the *Kodang*, a portion in the inner floor opposite the *Risik* (space near the hearth for guests). Speaking about the *Minyong Adis* on this particular aspect L.R.N.

Srivastava says that in case of complicated delivery a dog or fowl is given as ransom to the spirit responsible for blocking the passage of the baby.² The *Padams* and the *Milangs* in such case, start with fowl and goes upto a pig for ransoming the baby. Sometimes a live baby is delivered after ransom offer. The problem is then also not over; rather the danger is imminent—the possession of the baby after its delivery is much easier than when it is in the mother's womb. To check such possession of the baby by Nipong a human name should be given immediately after birth of it. "According to *Adi* social belief the baptising of a baby should be done immediately after its birth. To them the baptising of the baby means possession of the baby by the human beings, otherwise, if late, the baby may be possessed by 'uyu' (spirit) which would mean death of the child after sometime."³ In fact male/female names of the child would be kept ready with the elder males waiting for the delivery; the moment the sex of the baby is announced by someone attending the woman, the elderly relatives immediately give him/her a name. By christening a baby it is possessed by man from whom it is always difficult on the part of the spirit to possess. That some attempt is made by the Nipong to possess the baby is reflected clearly in the death of either the mother or the baby. Such death is known as Taleng Sina. Whenever such death occurs the villagers immediately prepare to drive away the spirit. The Musup boys have a special responsibility to drive away the Nipong from the family. At the time of taking out the dead body the Musup boys will come with spear, dao and beat the wall or the roof with a peculiar whooping sound in chorus. Sometimes even the roof is pierced with spear so that the Nipong runs away out of fear. This fight between man and evil spirit for possession of the *ayit* on earth is almost at the sub-conscious level; and at the time of birth of a baby the relatives of the pregnant woman get automatically ready for it. Thus Sachin Roy's remark "Birth in *Adi* society creates less stir than death,"⁴ seems not correct. What he says immediately after the above remark, however, is plausible. He says that an *Adi* pregnant woman goes on with her usual work upto the last moment of labour pain. Occasionally the

baby is delivered in the working field and the baby is carried home without much of a hubbub. That is natural with a people whose sustenance depends on work, particularly of the women folk. That does not necessarily remove the fear generated by religious faith. They are always alert at their subconscious level.

After 3 or 5 days,—the Minyongs after 3 and *Milangs* and *Padams* after 5 days (the number of days may vary from village to village or even family as per their convenience)—there is another small ritual function which creates a stir in the family. On that day the mother is cleaned of the dirt and the baby is formally taken out of the house. The function is called *Gibat* in *Adi* dialect. The rituals observed in this connection is indicative of future career of the baby. Among the *Milangs* and the *Padams* the baby along with the mother, is taken to the nearby stream. While washing the baby an elderly person holds the *emul* (a flat flower-shaped ritualistic article made of brass metal) dangling from his hand with the help of a rope. The person jingles it to the tune of some charm uttered by the person. It is believed that the *emul* has the quality of warding off the spirits and when jerked to the tune of the charm it becomes more efficacious. At home, in the meantime, some old ladies and very young children gather to attend the function of the baby's formal entrance into the world. The old ladies supervise the preparation of rice, meat, ginger, bow, arrows or weeding implement etc., and the children get ready with *eppon* (a belt made of split bamboo or split cane for carrying a baby on the carrier's back). The items of the ritual are different for male and female baby: if the baby is male these are imitation bow and arrows, and in case it is female it is weeding implement; the symbolic edibles remaining same. The young children of the neighbourhood are anxious to carry the new born baby on their back one after another. On the completion of washing etc., in respect of the baby the children start carrying it on their back. "It is customary of the *Adis* that on the third day of the birth of a baby on which the baby is supposed to be out of house, it is to be carried by the children of the village on a sling belt called *eppon* as described above hung

from the head of the carrier—the belt put across the baby's thighs causing it to come to a sitting position leaning the baby against the carrier: a wrapper, is thrown around the back of the baby and the two ends of the wrapper, one going through the left arm-pit and the other over the right shoulder of the carrier, are tied in the chest of the carrier so to attach the two bodies together.”⁵⁵ This longish statement is quoted to avoid description of a technical sort of thing employed by all in the *Adi* society. At a certain stage the new born baby is taken to a slight distance towards the jungle. In this three/two persons are involved—the carrier of the child, the carrier of a basket with ritual articles, and some elderly people to supervise the procedure. If the baby is a male one its carrier holds a bow and arrows in his hand occasionally making the baby touch these. At a distance some target is arranged with mattress for shooting. The carrier shoots at it. If the carrier shoots at the target correctly it is considered a good luck of the new-born baby. Some portion of rice, meat, ginger etc. carried by the second carrier are thrown into the jungle and the rest is taken by themselves. At home the ladies and the children gathered for the purpose are feasted with rice, meat, *ginger, apong* etc. In case of female baby the carrier weeds symbolically. The other rites remain same.

Thus an *Adi* child formally enters into this world. He is now to face all sorts of supernatural troubles. As in Christianity man is to suffer for the original sin committed by Adam has in *Adi* faith, man to suffer for the original rivalry between Nibo (Tani - first man) and Robo, Tani's brother turned evil spirit. Due to Nibo-Robo's rivalry and subsequent quarrels at the beginning of man's life in this world man is constantly under the fear of harms inflicted by Robo. In *Adi* faith the evil spirits are for ever in look out of some chance to attack man. The attack comes in the shape of different disease and misfortunes. Whenever a man is caught by some disease or he meets with some accident it is believed some evil spirit has attacked him.

This belief goes back to a hoary past when the *Adis* were in Tibet during their sojourn. As noticed earlier their belief is reminiscence

of the *Bon-Po* faith that flourished in pre-Buddhist Tibet. In their study of Tibetan culture Snellgrove and Richardson found that all troubles and diseases of man are caused by local gods, demons and various spirits. The Bon (priest) is to discover by sortilege, trance or dream the god/demon/spirit responsible for the trouble of the particular man and then to prescribe some rites for remedy.⁶ With the *Adis* also, the *Miri* (priest) finds out mostly by divination and trance the spirit responsible for ailment of the man or his misfortune and then to prescribe remedy. The remedies are usually ransom sacrifice of animals and birds. The belief behind is that a particular spirit has induced the *ayit* (soul) to leave the man and to come with him. Accordingly the *ayit* goes leaving the man sick or unguarded for which misfortune has occurred. When some animal is sacrificed as ransom for release of the *ayit* the spirit releases it and the man is cured. Sometimes the spirit which is supposed to have caused the disease or misfortune is exorcised by a priest called *ayit Miri*. A description of a Bon in his attire while curing a patient is as follows:

The great speaker of the original exorcising Bon Binds the turban on his head.

In his mouth he receives the draught to be drunk, In his hand he offers the thing to be offered with his voice he intones with ululation the exposition.⁷

An *Adi Ayit Miri*, when proceeding to bring back the soul which has gone astray due to inducement or allurement by, some spirit or demon, does as follows: “standing on the floor, holding a sheathed sword across the shoulder or waist or carrying two bunches of *Bisi* kiting or *ghunghur* around the neck the *Miri* starts with (i note of exclamation.”

“He He

Nane---Nane Aba Nane Nane Taiya me Namu Aoe me Leleni”.⁸

As regards married man there is another belief amongst the *Adis* that in addition to his human wife there is a spiritual wife known as “*Uyu meng*”. The ‘*Uyu meng*’ is always on the look out of a chance to take her husband from the clutch of his human wife. At any

unguarded moment the man may commit something for which his *ayit* is caught by her and taken temporarily. So the man appears physically sick; but, actually, according to their belief, the man at home is only his physical body his spiritual being is alright and may be enjoying with his spiritual wife. Occasionally, however, the indications may be had in dream, if in dream the spiritual wife, *Uyu Meng*, is seen in a happy mood then the man's condition may improve; but if she is found sad and melancholy his condition may deteriorate. In case of the husband's ailment the immediate treatment is a ritual called *Uyu Meng kepel*. In this ritual *apong*, some rice, ginger paste and an egg are packed in a leaf and the packet is tied in the top of the main post of the house. It is believed that the *Uyu Meng* is satisfied with this offer and releases the *Ayit* of the man. Then the man gets cured gradually.

There is a mythological story behind this belief of *Uyu meng*. There was once a good hunter called Kari. Once he went out for hunting along with his human wife Ane Morornodo. In the game he killed a boar. Ane Moromodo packed the boar nicely and it was carried by Kari. While coming out of the jungle his *Uyu meng* Sinki Riming separated Kari by a trick. Ane Moromodo then went ahead. Sinki Riming loosed the packet and tied it with a rope made of some green leaf. While thus the packet was being carried by Kari the rope tore and the meat fell on his leg. The sharp tooth of the wild boar cut the vein of his ankle thus letting out profuse blood. Sinki Riming took the blood and possessed Kari's *Ayit*. She took it to the land of the spirits.

Ane Moromodo, when she failed to see her husband following her, came to know her husband was taken by his *Uyu meng*. She then turned into a bird called *pengu* and went to the land of the spirits. She sang mournfully in that land from a tree. Hearing the song of a bird the spirits wanted to kill it. When they failed to hit it with their arrows they asked Kari to shoot at it. When Kari shot the arrow *pengu* pretended the arrow hit her and she fell in the jungle. Kari went in search of her. On his approach the bird took her original shape of Ane Moromodo and catching hold of Kari came out of that

land.

This belief is better reflected in practice during Disang, a ceremonious going to the snow-covered mountain to collect the poison plants grown in such high mountain. It is believed *Uyu meng* takes chance when their husbands are away from their human wives and so they follow their husbands up the high mountains. If someone falls sick there in the mountain it is believed that his *Uyu meng* or Dimu Taya (god of high mountain and owner of *emo rinko*, the poison plant) has induced his Ayit to come away from him. In such case the other elderly person acts as a ferocious fighter and making quick leaping movement around the sick man brandishes his sword as if he has seen the *Uyu*. On their way back the group take more care so that no *Uyu*, including *Uyu meng* can accompany the people. To remove their foot marks which are usually followed by the *Uyus*, a Tapkek (wiper consisting of two persons) is arranged. These two persons are completely covered with tree leaves so that they are not recognised as human beings. They follow at the party's heels wiping their foot-prints. It is also interesting to note how on their way back from the mountain they are received by the human wives at a distance from the village with the belief that if the *Uyu meng* and the other wild *Uyu* follow them upto the village then cure will be a lengthy and difficult one. Opinion, however, varies regarding the purpose of the human wives' going out to receive them outside the village. Some say that out of love for their husbands the ladies go with rice etc. to receive them. It is, of course, true that they carry rice and some other edibles for the menfolk coming down from the mountain. Oshong Ering and some others tend to believe that it is because of fear that the *Uyu meng* may accompany their husbands. The earlier they possess their husbands the better.

In spite of all these precautions and prevention man becomes sick and man dies of very many reasons. Death occurs as per two things described in their mythology. (1) It is *Tani's* agreement with Bomong (Donyi—sun) that the Sun will take some men everyday. The story goes back to Donyi's (Sun's) refusal to rise for man's

audacity in killing her partner *Boh* (Polo-- Moon). Boh was actually killed by frog *Ettutikling* on Tani's suggestion; for Bomong and Boh (Sun and Moon), by turn kept on rising thus blazing the earth all the time. After Boh was killed Bomang also stopped rising thus leaving the earth in complete darkness. Then man was at a loss and started sending messengers with request to Bomong for rising at least for sometime in a day. Man's last messenger *Pyak* (crow). somehow persuaded *Donyi* to rise for sometime on condition that she will take a number of people when she rises and some more people when she sets in the evening. In short she will take man whenever she desires. In other words man dies or man is mortal. (II) Misum Miyang, man from Engo Takar, dies. This story something like deductive-logic. Misum Miang was a man. Till then there was no mortality in man. Kirti, a Variety of poisonous rat, bite him one day while he was going to *Kine Nane*. He died of the poison. That is the beginning of man's mortality. Since *Misum Miang* died every man born on earth must die.

But the question to man's mind,-- how does man die? He finds the answer also: man dies in many ways, natural death, unnatural death, like suicide, in delivery of a child, accident, drowning, death before birth etc. The *Adis* believe that these various deaths are due to good and bad causes. Accordingly they have gradation of treatment given to different deaths. The highest treatment is given to the natural death of a very old man, and it is followed by a natural death of an important man in the society though that man is not very old. All unnatural deaths like deaths caused by snake-bite, drowning, falling from a tree, in storm, thunder, child birth, suicide, epilepsy, leper etc. are called *taleng sina* and these are treated with negligence. The death of a young man or a child in the natural course of a disease is given, again, different treatment.

Let us examine the different treatments given to deaths by the *Adi* society under review. The death of a very old man in the village in the natural course is shown the highest respect. In fact, such an old man, if oldest and respectable in the village, is also seen from

spiritual angle. In Chapter II it has been noticed that such an old man is the Pator Babu (spiritual guardian of the village); and on his death the Pator is to be repaired ceremoniously. In addition to that the whole village is to observe taboo for a few days by abstaining from any movement out of the village. During that taboo period the next old and respectable man is installed as Pator Babu of the village. All the elderly village people go to the burial ground with all solemnity. The *ago*, a one-roofed house constructed on the grave of the deceased, one end lengthwise supported by the ground and the other by two bamboo posts of about six feet height,—for such a man—is constructed better. In such case the two sides of the structure are walled with split-bamboo and the side of the raised portion is covered with low fencing of bamboo sticks. I have seen an *ago* at Balek in which the front portion is also walled keeping a door for entering into the house by his relatives for ritual purposes. In the *ago* fire is lit every day for about a month and symbolic food stuff is also kept there for a similar period. In other cases of normal death the two sides of the structure are not covered with wall like in a regular house for protection—but fenced with bamboo sticks. In case of *Taleng sina* generally the *ago* itself is not constructed; even if it is constructed it is a mere shade without any protection from any of the three sides. Suicide and Nipong (death in child-birth) deaths are the most neglected deaths in the *Adi* society. In these cases no *ago* is constructed—simply the grave is marked with some bamboo sticks fixed around it. In a Nipong case even the dead body is given such treatment as if she herself is the *Nipong*. Usually, in a *Nipong* case the lady dies inside the house and the whole house is considered to be possessed by *Nipong*. Immediately after death the dead body is taken out of the house. At the time of bringing out of the dead body, treatment of exorcising is given to the whole house. The young people of the village will come to the house in all seriousness with dao (short sword) and spears. They attack the invisible *Nipong* near the dead body if not the body itself with their weapons and acting as driving out the *Nipong* from the house they would come out along with the

dead body carried by some others. Then again they will search for the *Nipong* in the *Kumbang*, (the ceiling for keeping certain households) in the roof, under the floor platform with their daos and spears. When the dead body is carried to the graveyard that young group follow it brandishing their weapons as if they are chasing an enemy. On the night, following the death, the Musup boys do the same thing starting from the house to the grave with the chorus of *hei hei . . . hei*!

Similar is the gradation in giving the gifts to the dead in the grave. On the death of an important person in a natural course mithun, pig etc. are sacrificed so that the same things he gets in the other world. In Taleng sina cases usually no such sacrifice is made, especially in case of *Nipong* and suicide there is no question of doing it. In fact, it is believed an *Ayit* of Taleng sina people does not go beyond the atmosphere of the earth. As an *urom* (ghost) the *Ayit* of such a man hovers over the atmosphere for ever. As such they are not given anything on their death. Sachin Roy mentions of such sacrifice as a funeral rite with the similar belief; what he does not mention is the differentiation in the sacrifice for different people.

Another tradition among the *Adis*, which seems a reminiscence of Tibetan Bon-po, is burying the articles of use along with the dead body as it has been noticed in Chapter I. As to the belief of burying articles with the dead body opinion varies amongst the *Adis* themselves. Ogam Dai and others believe that if the articles associated with the deceased during his earthly life are not given him/her in the grave the *Ayit* will not be happy and it will come as *urom* to disturb the family. This, however, does not seem the whole truth in the faith. Oshong Ering, Talom Rukbo and others say that the things offered to the dead in his grave will be had by him in the life after death. This seems plausible. Similar was the belief and practice in Bon-po faith. In the pre-Buddhist Tibetan society also, as it has been noticed, a dead man's grave is stuffed with the things of his association during his earthly life. In Bon-po faith it is believed that life in the other world after death corresponds to the life on earth. A man is believed

to have a life in the other world identical with the life he has lived in this world. If he is rich in this earth he will be rich in the other world, and if poor, poor. Snellgrove and Richardson write that Bon-po faith, “seems to be entirely concerned with affairs of this life”, with the belief of that whatever kind of life is lived in this world will be had in the other world. This belief is responsible for putting the things of one’s association in this earthly life in one’s grave after death. They also write with reference to some case “the offerings made at the tomb of the deceased represented goods and chattels which were thought of being useful to them in the life beyond.”¹⁰ The French author, R.A. Stein, referring to a Chinese record in this respect, says, “the ruler and his subjects enter a pact of friendship embracing five or six persons who are called ‘common destiny’ (life and death). When the ruler dies they commit suicide to follow him in the tomb.”¹¹ All these were done on the faith, in Bon-po, that in the next world the king will get his companions.

It is on analogy of this that the opinion expressed by the second school in respect of *Adi* faith seems justified. I have seen the burial of Kuttik Moyong, an influential man of Pasighat, himself a Pasi. Many valuable items like arem (Tibetan plate of brass metal), a few tadoks, cloths and currency notes were dumped by the side of the dead body under the grave. But in case of Taleng sina, so many valuable items are not given. In case of suicide and Nipong the bare minimum necessities like the deceased’s own cloths and cheap utensils are only given.

Another discrimination shown to different deaths can be seen in the choice of site for the burial. The burial for aged and respectable man is always in the higher side of the road and for the less important and younger people the grave is on the lower portion. The grave for the very young child are at a further lower portion. Sachin Roy, however, records that the difference between a grave of an elderly man having a normal death and that of a child lies only in the days of kindling fire in the grave—he says that in a child’s grave the fire is kindled for a much shorter period.¹² Speaking about the Minyongs

L.R.N. Srivastava tends to have a similar view.¹³

All these may lead us to the *Adi* world of superstitions, dream and taboos. In the passages that follow attempt will be made to present that world.

From the above and the Chapter on Religion it may be clear that due to their confinement to the high mountain ranges and deep gorges for centuries without any light of education and science they maintained that world *grudgingly*. All societies have to come across such a period in their way of evolution and progress simply different societies may have different set of superstitions depending on the circumstances they had to live through. With the coming of light of education such superstitions are gradually dispelled.

The *Adi* environment is such that till recent time they led a primitive life in nature in her pristine shape. In that environment they wove their mythology of creation of gods, spirits and other things, animate and inanimate, including man himself. In that texture of mythology inscrutable things, both visible and invisible, reign human life. To the extent of the material world whatever they could control they exploit as their own and beyond that they leave to the invisible power trying to follow the dictats of that power according to what he weaves to be the dictats. A high mountain peak, for instance, is under the guardianship of a spirit called Dimu Taya. Whenever one goes there to bring something it is but natural, they believe, Dimu Taya will resist it by all means. So the *Adis* go there to bring *emo rinko*, poisonous plants for the arrow tip, in the form of a troop equipped with every thing, both prayer and fight. While collecting the plant each individual remains extremely alert to defend in case of any attack. Similarly they have the belief in every step of their life. A list of such belief is prepared below, though it cannot be exhaustive.

To the *Adi* belief anything, big, animate or inanimate, develops *Urom*, a sort of soul of its own; any harm done to such a thing is believed to be retaliated with sickness, accident etc.

1. A man has his own *Ayit* (soul). When a man is killed individually or in war his *Ayit* becomes *urom* which may

disturb/kill the killer. So, to stop that the killer sacrifices at least a fowl as a ransom and offers it to the *urom* in place of the killer. This is called *koson*.

2.If in a hunting a tiger or a big bear is killed in the jungle it is believed its *urom* may attempt to kill/disturb the hunter. Here also *koson* is performed.

3. Killing of a very big snake may have a similar effect. They say that a man who kills a big snake is bound to suffer from some disease or misfortune. So *koson* is to be performed. In J.N. College, Pasighat, an Adi peon named Atem Libang once laid a trap for porcupine. A very big snake was, however, trapped and killed. After a month Atem fell sick. He never got cured in spite of various treatments allopathic, homoeopathic, ayurvedic, tantric, nature cure etc., till his death after about six years. They believe it is the *urom* of the snake which is responsible for it.

4. A big tree also has an *Ayit*. When it is fell by somebody its *urom* may disturb the feller. So a *koson* is to be performed.

5.Any sort of accident is considered to be the displeasure of some *Uyu*. The accident is an indication of that wrath. So they perform a ritual at the site of the accident, where the spirit is supposed to be, for appeasement so that nothing may happen in future. Even if the accident proves to be a fatal one the prayer is that no other member of the family should be harmed.

6.*Koson* is also performed on the eve of hunting so that more preys are killed. This is with the belief that if the spirit of hunting is not pleased he may not give any prey to the hunter.

7.When somebody goes to war his mother or some elderly woman arranges two winnows in which some cooked rice, ginger and *apong* are kept. One is for the warrior going to the battlefield and the other for the enemy. It is believed that some spirit comes at night and eats one of the offerings. If in the morning it is found that the share meant for the enemy

is taken, then the indication is that the warrior has killed some enemy. If, however, the other share is taken that the warrior himself is killed.

8. The owner of a house gutted in fire is believed to be a sinner. To get the sin removed from his body he and his family are banished from the village for a few days. He is to construct a shelter outside the boundary of the village for the period of penance. Whenever more than one house is gutted in a fire incident the owner of the house in which the fire originates is to bear the brunt—the others' penance is very light.

9. Amongst the Milangs there is a belief that a man wounded by a tiger or a bear is spirit possessed. So before the entrance of village by such a man some ritual is performed to extricate the person from the spirit/urom. Usually at the village gate called pator, a fowl is sacrificed and it is dangled from the gate. Again the gate is further reinforced with new arrows fixed in the direction away from the village. This implies that any spirit/urom attempting to enter the village will be shot by the arrows. After that only the wounded man can be brought to the village.

10. Similar ritual is performed in the Pator in case of entrance of any stranger. It is believed by the *Adis* that a stranger is accompanied by some spirit or urom. If it is not driven away from the stranger before he enters into the village the urom may come and harm some people in the village. If such visit by a stranger is pre-arranged then the village folk prepare the gate accordingly. In 1984 I accompanied a party from Pasighat to Bolung in Roing sub-division in connection with a literary conference. Before the entrance of the gate of the village by the public thorough-fare (a PWD road to Roing) we observed a gate constructed on the road from which a sacrificed dog with the intestines protruding was dangling and arrows fixed ready to fly in the direction of our coming to the village. On inquiry I came to know it was to check any spirit/

urom, accompanying us, from entering into the village. (It may be noted that Bolung is a modern village in the plain area having no Pator as such—the main entrance to the village is the PWD road itself). Father Crick's experience of entering into a Padam village in 1853 is interesting in this regard. I cannot check the temptation of quoting it in full: "As I emerged from the forest I was made to pass under an arc (this is Pator) bristling with bows and arrows, and decorated with all sorts of devilries and monsters pierced with arrows and is striking attitudes that baffle description. The piece of architecture was fearful to behold, as well it might be, for it was to expel from my body the more stubborn devils."¹⁴

11. Some oath-takings conducted to prove the veracity of doubtful cases may be mentioned as pure pieces of superstitions:

(a) pakde-Penam: For immediate result in proving a doubtful case this is applied. A piece of banana plant, about 3 feet in length, is fixed on the ground. Then the accuser and the accused put one egg each at the top of the piece and after invoking Donyi-Polo as witness, beat it severely thus crushing the eggs and the banana piece. The belief is that the guilty one will decay as quickly as the eggs and the banana plant and then die in severe pain. His death is followed by the deaths of other members of his family.

(b) Perok iyi tinki: This is also a method applied in case of dispute having no definite proof for veracity of the truth. In this both the parties bring one fowl each. Invoking Donyi-Polo they chop the fowls and their gushing out blood is caught in bamboo knots. Then they boil the blood and take with the announcement that if he is guilty he will have an immediate unnatural death. They believe that the guilty person suffers from dysentery, diarrhoea etc. and dies within that stipulated time.

(c) Pagrang Tolik: To prove certain crime of a suspected

man, for which there is no sufficient witness, this method of pouring molten lead on the palm of the man is adopted. With the usual invoking of Donyi- Polo the molten lead is poured in the man's palm. It is believed that in case the man is innocent the lead will pass through the flesh without any harm to the hand; and if guilty the lead burns the hand and blister and scald appear accordingly.

Some other such beliefs are mentioned in the chapter on Administration.

In relation to birth, disease, death also there are innumerable superstitious beliefs among the *Adis* under review. Many of them have already been discussed in this chapter while dealing with disease and death. Here we will focus on their belief in dream: like many other societies the *Adis* also have their own interpretation of dream. A list of their interpretations of dream is given below, though it may not be exhaustive. The *Adis* have their own interpretation about how a man dreams. They believe that during sleep the *Ayit* (soul) goes out of the body temporarily and goes on doing certain things as per its desire. Whatever the *Ayit* goes on doing the man sees in dream. Accordingly they interpret the dream.

- (1) Manes are symbolic in dream. When a man sees in dream he is thickhaired then he will get more property within a short time. But if he sees pulling out of a mane then he will loose some valuable articles of the house.
- (2) Seeing of night soil in dream is a forecast of getting meat for eating the next day.
- (3) If in a dream a man sees yam, ripe banana he will get meat next day.
- (4) Putting of fowls in a petir (basket made of bamboo stick with a device of opening and closing for fowls) in dream is an indication of his catching more fish next day in his traps, net etc.
- (5) If in a dream one sees he is bitten by dog, snake, fowl etc. in reality one will have malaria.

- (6) If in a dream one sees reception of guest one will get more preys in hunting in his next outing.
- (7) Collection of fire-wood in dream is an index of guests' arrival in reality.
- (8) Felling of a tree in dream is a bad sign; for, in reality someone from the village will die. Again the direction the tree falls in dream decides the portion of the village from which the man will die.
- (9) If a man sees in dream his house is blown by wind or immersed the floor in water in reality he is to face Kebang against him.
- (10) Enjoyment with songs and dance in dream is a sign of suffering or loss in reality.
- (11) If laying of a new aqueduct in the village is seen in dream there will be good harvest in the next crop.
- (12) Tooth-fall in dream indicates that some fowls of the family will die.
- (13) If one enjoys sex with a woman in dream he will get more preys in hunting.
- (14) In dream if one finds himself going for latrine and performing the act in a nasty way he will get more prey in hunting.
- (15) Sacrifice of Mithun or pig or any other big domestic animal in dream is a prediction of death of some one in the family.
- (16) Construction of a stone-wall in dream indicates he will purchase some more mithun in reality.
- (17) If ripe chilies are taken in dream in reality he will have eye trouble.
- (18) If one sees leeches in one's body in the dream he will get more fowls in reality. If, however, he sees in dream the leeches are removed from his body then some fowls of the family will be lost.
- (19) If in dream one tries to cross a turbulent river but fails

to do so because of deep water and strong current in reality he will be defeated in Kebang case. If, however, he finds in dream the turbulent river as a shallow one and crosses it he will win the Kebang case.

(20) If in a dream one sees a gale (female dress from waist to calf) of one's wife flown away by wind, one of their children will die.

(21) Catching of snake in dream indicates getting of tadoks (precious bead procured from Tibet) in reality.

With these superstitions the *Adis* observe certain taboos, (Nyonam or Gena) to escape some of the misfortunes. The attempts to escape from the misfortunes are almost always indirect and the ultimate aim of observing these taboos is welfare of the people. If these taboos are not observed, it is believed, definite harm will be done to the individual or to the society. It has, therefore, been observed that these taboos are observed not only at the time of misfortune but also in festivals of merry-making. "Taboos are usually observed when traditional seasonal festivals are celebrated, spiritual offerings are made, tragic incidents occur in the society, epidemic breaks out in the village, a person dies in the village/family, abortive child-birth takes place, heinous offences are committed etc."¹⁵ From the above it may appear that taboos are observed at both community and individual levels. Most of the community level Nyonams are usually refrainment from works and going out of the village. But there are some taboos by which some people are restricted in doing certain other things.

We may begin with construction of a village. In a new village site they celebrate a festival called Rogum by the Pasi and *Erin* by others after completion of the *Musup* (male dormitory). In that festival usually 5 day's Nyonam or Gena is observed during which the people cannot go out of the village. Occasionally the males go for hunting. In that the women folk observe Nyonam. At the beginning of Rogum the villagers collect food stuff among etc. for 10 days so that no body need to work. This Nyonam is of general nature which is observed by the whole village refraining from any productive or remunerative works

and going out of the village. Similarly the Nyonams observed in celebration of festivals, out-break of epidemic etc. are of general nature. For, on the festival day in a particular village the day of Nyonam is fixed in the Kebang which is binding on everybody. Certain taboos are there which are automatic. No Kebang decision is required. Say, for instance, when a still born child (on) is born in the village, the whole village observe *Nyonam* for one day considering this as a community sin. The family in which such a child is born however, observe 2 days' *Nyonam*. Similarly when a respectable old man of the village dies *Nyonam* is to be observed automatically by the whole village.

The Adis believe in the existence of innumerable ghosts and spirits who, like hungry skeleton, hover around human beings to do harm by causing disease, accidents, misunderstanding, epidemic and so on. To get remedy from these misfortunes they perform *Ipak*.¹⁶ In every *Ipak* there is *Nyonam*. If the *Ipak* is in the Pator for a general remedy the *Nyonam* is also common. For individual *Ipak* performed when some one in an individual family is sick then the *Nyonam* is individual.

On the eve of going to Kiruk (community hunting) one day *Nyonam* is observed with the belief that they are to propitiate some spirit for better game. In some villages there is a particular function called *yokmo* which is performed three days before going to kiruk. During these three days the members of the „hunting party refrain from other works, sleeping with woman and taking juicy curry.

In addition to the taboos mentioned above and a few others mentioned in different chapters there are some other taboos mostly followed individually. A list of these are given below.

- (1) during war certain taboos are observed in the families from which some warriors go to the war. On the eve of going to the war the warrior does not sleep in his house. Nor does anybody sleep in his bed. The belief is that somebody's sleeping in his bed is symbolic of his laziness: and as such the warrior will not be able to move swiftly.
- (2) When a man kills an enemy in the war he is to perform

keming, a ritual to propitiate the *urom* of the killed man. In that a pig is sacrificed; the meat of the pig is taken by others, but not by the killer himself.

There are some taboos in connection with bringing poison plants from the mountain peak and its preparation upto the poisoning of the arrow.

(a) On the eve of going to collect emo (poison plants) the males observe *Nyonam*. After their going to the mountain the women folk observe the similar taboo as in hunting and war.

(b) They also believe that 'Siye' (rice powder cake mixed with various roots and leaves of different plants having the quality of intoxication and is used in preparation of intoxicating drink) spoils the poisonous plants. So Siye is never kept near emo.

(c) Similarly, at the time of poisoning the arrow tip no among is prepared in the family.

A woman is to observe certain taboos during her pregnancy to avoid giving birth to a defective baby. Regarding this Dunbar made an enquiry, and whatever he observed has been on check, found correct. He says that a pregnant woman is (1) not to take water from yam leaf to avoid defective eye-sight in the expected baby, (2) not to take meat of Dorik to avoid spots in the body of the baby, (3) not to kill snake or frog to avoid the birth of a child with darting tongue like that of a snake or limbs like those of a frog.¹⁷ After child birth also, in respect of the Minyongs Srivastva has recorded some such taboos and on check with the Pasis and the Milangs it is found that these are also observed, in general. He says that after a child is born the father is to abstain from taking fresh vegetables and meat for one day and the mother is to abstain from taking the same for five days with the belief that the child may also shrink like vegetable and raw meat when cooked. Twin babies are ominous in the *Adi* family. In such case the whole family abstain from taking any intoxicating drink for a few days.¹⁸

Notes & Reference

1. Oshong Ering : *NEFA Information*, January. 1971, p. 11.
2. L. R. N. Srivastave : Social Organisation of the Minyongs, p. 67.
3. J. Nath : *The Young Panther*, p. 5.
4. Sachin Roy : *Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture*, p. 18.
5. J. Nath : *op. cit.* p. 7.
6. David Snellgrove & H. Richardson : *A Cultural History of Tibet*, p. 54.
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8. Oshong Ering : *Arunachal News*, Nov. 1975. p. 18.
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11. R. A. Stein : *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 133.
12. Sachin Roy : *op. cit.*, p. 252.
13. L. R. N. Srivastave : *op. cit.* p. 235.
14. M. M. Crick : *op. cit.* V. Elwin in *NEFA in the 19th Century*, p. 237.
15. Oshong Ering : 'Taboos in Adi Life' *Arunachal News*, Feb-March, 74, p.10.
16. *Ibid*, p. 11.
17. G. Dunbar : 'Abors and Galong' *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1913. Vol.5,p. 57.
18. L. R. N. Srivastava : *op.cit.* p.69.

Chapter VIII

Religion and Religious Festivals

Religion itself is an abstract subject dealing with a people's faith on some doctrine to that people in their way of life. Usually a religious doctrine suggests to a supernatural being on which the people rest their ultimate end. The doctrine decides the way of life for the people. Within the bounds of the faith innumerable customs and laws are framed for the people to observe, and violation of these would mean the displeasure of that supernatural being. Displeasure of that being means his wrath on the violator of the order. Having deep faith in a supernatural being that controls the cosmos and accords justice to all the followers of a particular religion develop a strong sense to preserve and protect the way of life shaped by the religious doctrine. That gives birth in the followers the strongest sentiment for which they can even sacrifice their lives.

The need of religion suggests to deeper thing than a mere sentiment. That deeper thing is known as salvation. In other words it may be called the ultimate solace to the human mind when all the material things of the world fail to satisfy it. There lies the origin of all religions. In its quest for this solace the human mind seeks to establish a relation with a supernatural being and find all the attributes in it that can give the required solace.

In his search for this he acquires a comprehensive knowledge over the visible world and then goes beyond reality to a spiritual world. And there he finds the existence of a spiritual being controlling the universe and willing to give solace to the seekers. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica the idea is put thus: "Religion is not merely a claim for a broader and more comprehensive view of the reality. Fundamental to religion is the conviction that through a right relation with a cosmic

power or powers man will find his salvation. Various views of such salvation have been held. Salvation has been regarded as something attainable only after this life. Other views, however, tend to posit a salvation for man through escape rather than fulfilment. Alternatively salvation may be viewed as something anticipated in the present and fulfilled perfectly after this life.”

The *Tani* group of people of the Himalayas have also faith of their own. The *Adi* tribe is a major tribe of the *Tani* group. The *Tanis* of Arunachal Pradesh believe themselves to be the descendants of the common father, *Tani*. The *Tanis* spread over an area from East Kameng to Dibang Valley.

As to the religion of the *Adis* nothing concrete has so far been written. The early writers on the *Adis* seem to have failed to penetrate into the depth of their religion. It is, perhaps, natural for the early writers to dwell on the periphery of this aspect of the *Adi* life since there is no written scriptures of this faith nor do the *Adis* have a definite form of worship easily visible to the foreigners. Whoever comes to their country for a visit or study hears some mythological anecdotes which vary from village to village. Then they may see some incidents of treatment of ailing person or loss of a person attributed to some spirits. On the basis of such experience a few British explorers attempted to give some account of the *Adi* faith. And the result is a mere description of some portion of their mythology or a vague comment on such incident without entering into the essence of religion—a faith in some supreme supernatural force to whom a person of that faith turns for ultimate solace. E.T. Dalton who visited the *Adi* area in the fifties of the last century, for instance, came to know an incident of loss of an *Adi* boy from an agricultural field and the way the *Adis* searched for it in the jungle with the belief that the boy was possessed by *Epom*, a spirit. Then he wrote, “The religion of the Abors consists in a belief in these sylvan deities (*epoms*) to each of whom some particular department in the destiny of man is assigned.”¹ Though superstition itself is the basis of religion this sort of belief in some spirit cannot constitute a religion which should provide

an ultimate solace to the human mind.

Attempts have, however, been made by Dalton with his limited knowledge during his first visit to the *Adi* area for a very few days to show that besides their faith in the 'sylvan deities' the *Adis* "acknowledge and adore a supreme being as the great father of all and believe in a future state, the condition of which will in some measure depend on the life led here below"² and then he admits that this supreme being is very vague. Here actually lies the problem of identifying the creator, the Supreme Being, The Saviour and so on.

In the first quarter of this century another British writer, G.D.S. Dunbar collected a considerable information about *Adi* life. While dealing with the religious beliefs of the *Adis* he says, "His (Abor's) untutored mind hits a demon every where, in the sun, and the thunder, the earth and the water. It is a spirit of evil that takes life from all things that have breath, that smites with sickness, that, in the questionable shape of a kinsman from some distant village, lures the unfortunate to his doom in the dark recesses of the forest."³ This is superstition true and simple. Then he makes a sweeping remark. "the present day religion of the hill-tribes is polydemonism"⁴ which does not seem correct. After some elaboration on this Dunbar, like Dalton, comes round and admits, "There is, however, an undoubted belief in a great and benevolent spirit who is all powerful. A most interesting feature of the hill man's faith is a comprehensive belief in a future state."⁵ Dunbar also could not be sure who is that all powerful spirit in the hill-man's pantheon nor could he have a clear concept regarding the future state. Then he comes to dwell on the causes of diseases, man's misfortunes and measures of superstitious cure without coming to the clear picture of *Adi* religion.

In the mid-twentieth century Dr. V. Elwin made a comprehensive study of the tribal culture of India in general and of North East India in particular. He seems to have come nearer the issue when he says, "there is a general belief in a Supreme God, who is just, benevolent and good. For example, Domi-Polo, the Sun-Moon God of all the *Adi* groups, is regarded as the great witness in the sky, the up-holder of

truth.”⁶ Then he goes to elaborate on Sun-Moon’s position as natural phenomena and as such to be attributed with divine qualities without, however, referring to the evolution of the Sun-Moon God dominating the tribal mind so far as truth, justice and salvation are concerned.

In the sixties of the twentieth century J.N. Chaudhury and Sachin Roy have made considerable studies on the cultural aspects of the *Adi* societies in general and their religious aspects in particular. Chaudhury, in his treatise, *A Comparative Study of Adi Religion* calls Dunbar’s statement on Apor religious belief ‘negative appraisal’ and holds the view that it was an injustice done to the *Adi* religion.⁷ But then Chaudhury himself seems not to have penetrated into the essence of *Adi* religion. His is only a comparison between some aspects of *Adi* religion with those of vedic religion of the Hindus. In doing so he picks up certain characteristics of the *Adi* faith seemingly similar to those of the vedic religion without any attempt on the core of the faith. Like Elwin he emphasises on the hostile nature in which under that circumstances, the *Adis* had to weave their mythology depicting the different phenomena of nature as malevolent spirits. And then he gives the texture of the mythology. Mythology, with hundreds of stories spoken differently by different people, may be a basis of religion—but mythology itself cannot become a religion. He also dwells on the causes of diseases and their treatment as per the *Adi* faith,⁸ yet he does not come to the ultimate solace to the soul for which the *Adis* have a definite concept. In spite of a clear concept of the soul and its ultimate aim as per Hinduism, the Hindus worship or exorcise many gods and goddesses and spirits even today; but Hinduism is not confined to the cause of disease and treatment for these—but it is a cultural efforts for attaining the height of perfection of the soul. Similarly, the *Adis* may have some efforts for attainment of this in spite of their belief in spirits and gods and goddesses; and peculiarity with Chaudhury is that he also admits this position in many religions.

Before going to the *Adi* concept of solace posited in a particular supernatural power we may study the view of Sachin Roy in this

regard. Like V. Elwin, Roy also starts with “The *Adis* have been placed by historical circumstances in a most difficult country,”⁹ and then goes on to say how the *Adis* wove the texture of their mythology out of their belief on the phenomena of Nature as spirits and ghosts. In fact he begins with a quotation from V. Elwin, “for centuries the real ruler of the tribal people here has been environment.”¹⁰ He also repeats the stories of creation, man’s situation amongst the hostile spirits, then coming to the causes of diseases and cure and so on.¹¹

Of all these writers J.N. Chaudhury seems to have come to the point when he mentions Donyi-Polo as one spirit to whom the *Adis* turn for seeking truth and justice. Here even he draws it from L.R.N. Srivastava (from his study of the Galongs) almost as a passing remark without giving this aspect of *Adi* faith the treatment it deserves.

By quoting “Oaths taken in the name of Donyi-Polo— Sun and Moon are the most sacred and binding,”¹² Chaudhury attempts to draw an analogy between *Adi* oath-taking and the ancient oath taking amongst the Hindus. Invoking of a spirit or a Natural phenomena for making an oath definitely implies seriousness and turning to that object for justice or right. It however, does not indicate whether that object is the supreme being or ultimate truth so far as man’s religious faith is concerned.

In our study it has been found that Donyi-Polo is the ultimate truth and refuge for ultimate solace in the *Adi* faith. In the following passages an attempt will be made to show evolution of this supreme God, man’s position in *Adi* cosmogony, and a present movement to give a complete shape to the faith by the *Adis* themselves. It should be mentioned that in their practical life they have been seeking from Donyi-Polo justice, truth and ultimate solace. For, in addition to their invoking Donyi-Polo in an oath, they turn to Him for spiritual protection and ultimate solace in spite of a pantheon of gods and goddesses for relief in particular difficulties. A man, for instance, while he is going to the jungle alone, may be reminded of the danger of wild animals in the jungles. If, however, he intends to go he will say, “Donyi-Polo a kaye nena,” (Donyi- Polo will see me safe). If a couple is without an

issue for a long time after marriage they, in their conversation on this with others, will gravely pass the comments “Si Donyi- Poloke iname ngolu Tanie ati ikenmaye” etc. (This is Donyi- Polo’s doing, we human being cannot do anything). An impartial man with a sense of justice is usually praised as “Donyi-Polo amiko” (man like Donyi-Polo). Peculiar aspect of this faith is that no propitiation is made to Donyi-Polo in any of their festivals nor in treatment of any ailment. In most such occasions they propitiate or worship a particular god or spirit for welfare of their family, their household, their crops or cure for the ailing persons. In Solung festival they mainly worship Kine Nane, the goddess of crops. for better crops on the Binyat day, in addition to Gumin Soyin the god of household. In *Aran*, Gumin Soyin is particularly worshipped for the welfare of the domestic animals etc. In the midst of various gods, goddesses and spirits they seem to have forgotten their supreme god. What happened to the Bon-Po faith of Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism there seems to have prevailed in the *Adi* faith also. In fact, the aboriginal Tibetan faith Bon-Po has got striking similarity with the faith of the *Adis*. It could very well be that the *Adis* practised the same faith during their sojourn in Tibet before their migration to their present habitat. Helmut Iloffmann says that the Tibetan people, during their centuries of sojourn, forgot their original God and eventually they took resort to various spirits.¹³ It might so happen that as a result of their concentration on various spirits for immediate relief the *Adis* lost sight of their Supreme God Donyi-Polo to whom they turn as a matter of habit for the sake of justice, and ultimate solace.

It is, probably, in the situation stated above that the *Adis*, after their coming into light of education since Independence and into contact with other societies, have started an enquiry. In their search for the Supreme God on the basis of their mythology and faith in practice they might have found Donyi-Polo as the Supreme God. The search has been on since the beginning of the seventies of twentieth century. In this respect two social organisations— (1) Donyi-Polo Mission with head quarters at Itanagar and (2) *Adi* Cultural and

Literary Society at Pasighat— have been playing a significant role. Basically a service oriented organisation with education and public health programmes, Donyipolo Mission has taken leading role in giving concrete shape to the faith by collecting various myths regarding this faith and by publishing them in book form. Similarly, the *Adi* Cultural and Literary Society has been doing the yeomen service in bringing out pamphlets, books etc. A few learned *Adis* have also started writing articles on Donyipoloism for magazines and newspapers.

From these writings and popular opinions it may very well be said that Donyi-Polo is the Supreme God and the title of this faith is after the name of the God. Some controversy was, however, raised regarding the title for quite sometime, but by now the controversy seems to have subsided. For, on the initiative of the Donyi-Polo Mission, Itanagar, this faith entered into the International Association of Religious Freedom in 1985 as Donyipoloism: A Religion, in Delhi. Since then Donyipoloism has been represented in this World Forum in its annual conference in different parts of the world. In the regional conference of this Forum, Donyipoloism is represented in 1986 in Bombay, in 1987 in Bangalore and in 1988 in Calcutta. In 1990, three of its exponents went to Germany and further elaborated on the scope of this religion.

It will, however, be worth-while to study the controversy regarding the title of this faith. In fact the controversy is not on the doctrine, but the title of the doctrine emanating from antithetical interpretations of the mythology, the basis of the doctrine. There are chiefly two schools: (I) the school of *Donyipoloism*, and (II) the school of *Sedism*. The first school is advocated by Mr. Oshong Ering backed by popular support; for Mr. Ering says that this is the faith practised by the Tani group of people with utmost sanctity. The other school is initiated by Mr. Pajing Pertin and Mr. N.N. Osik and supported by a few.

The argument put forward by the former school appears to be based on popular belief, as it is claimed by Mr. Ering. This school argues that the Tani group of tribes turn to Donyi-Polo whenever they are to seek truth, justice, love and light. Hence they call this

faith the doctrine of Donyipolism. This, however, does not make the argument of the other school worth-rejectable without giving any consideration and weight. For, this school argues that Sedi is the supreme creator of all including Donyi and Polo—Sun and Moon respectively. Even the former school admits this interpretation of mythology. Mr. Oshong Ering, the staunch advocate of Donyipoloism writes—“According to tradition, Sedi is considered to be the greatest of the great—*Sedi Dimyang Myane*—who embraces the universe. He is the creator or originator of all the objects of the cosmos and beings on the earth.” Going a step further he says—“Being so, Sedi is the supreme spiritual authority of the tribe.”¹⁴ Again, “Having conceived of the Almighty, the *Adis* believe in the existence of various Gods and Goddesses (gods and goddesses), deities and spirits. Sedi, the Supreme God lives above the sky of all belief and faith.”¹⁵ Here Mr. Ering, seems to have accepted the view of the other school. But in reality he does not. He argues that Sedi is a spiritual entity beyond the reach of human realization. To realise this divinity there is a viable medium. This medium is *Donyi-Polo*. For, *Donyi-Polo*, in addition to its being a spiritual *Donyi-Polo* are two visible phenomena of the cosmos. This argument of Mr. Ering amounts to the Christian realization of Godhood or divinity through the medium of Jesus Christ, or the Buddhist realization of divinity through the Buddha. So *Donyi-Polo* is a sort of incarnation or a messiah for the salvation of the *Tanis* or mankind.

The argument the second school puts forward is based on the interpretation of mythology. Before going to the interpretation of mythology I shall discuss the general trend in modern time to interpret religious mythologies from a rationalistic point of view. In all religious mythologies interpretations are suggestive of various directions; but still the core of faith is based on the interpretation at a mystic level which is understood popularly. For rejecting the faith on *Donyi-Polo* Mr. Pertin and Mr. N.N. Osik interpret one portion of *Tani* mythology in such a way that *Donyi* and *Polo* turn to be “killer of man”, and “day of death” respectively. This interpretation rejects down-right

the spiritual concept of *Donyi-Polo*. This interpretation seems to be too literal and materialistic to be accepted by all the Tanis. It is comparable with Bertrand Russell's interpretation of Jesus Christ. Bertrand Russell says that Mother Mary conceived before her marriage and it is really so as we read in the Bible. The issue born as a result of that conception is Jesus Christ. So Christ is a bastard; and to worship a bastard as representative of God is to degenerate all social morality, not to speak of religious ethics. In Hinduism the interpretation of Shri Krishna's role in the Battle of Kuru Kshetra is similar. In that battle Shri Krishna plays the role of an instigator to Arjuna to kill his kins for the sake of politics. The interpreters argue that a man fond of war and killing cannot be a source of love and justice. Such interpretations of mythology seem too rationalistic and, therefore, do not hold water with the people who have a deep faith in the spiritual message of these great Messiahs.

As to the title to the faith of the *Tanis* the controversy is shaped by some other things. One important thing to be noted is that in the faith there is no prophet, no messiah in the form of an incarnation. At least, the oral tradition of the *Tanis* does not point to any such individual. Had there been one formulating and preaching the tenets of this faith it would probably have been called after his name as Christianity after Christ, Buddhism after the Buddha and so on. Or it may be called after the people that follow the faith as Hindusim, a religious faith followed by the Hindus, or Sikhism, a creed followed by the Sikhs. From that point of view this faith may be called Adism (from the argument that present controversy is only amongst the *Adis* as if this faith has been evolved by the *Adis*). But the word 'Adi' at least in its present use as proper noun to cover only a tribe, does not comprise all the people following this particular faith. Nor is it possible to prove that this particular faith was evolved first by the *Adis* and then it spreads, like Buddhism or Christianity, to other areas and tribes.

This lands one in a position from which one is to search for a suitable name for this faith. The school led by Mr. Pajing Pertin tends

to call it Sedism, instead of Donyipolism of the popular notion. Backing the popular notion another argument may be forwarded. This argument is based on the scientific concept of this religion. In evolutionary scheme of the world Sedi is a blind life force which creates things and beings. But Sedi does not grow in her the necessary intellectuality/spirituality to generate other divine attributes. This can be seen from the common concept of Sedi as the earth. In the *Adi Kristian Dharma* this concept of Sedi as earth is widely used. The *Adis* call the earth *Sedi Gite*. This Sedi—the earth—is the creator which is scientifically true. But Sedi does not have the attributes of God. God implies not only a creator, but a being invested with many other divine attributes. To the common concept God is one in the culmination of intellectual (spiritual) growth, omnipotence, omniscience, love and justice. God is one to whom one can turn to for protection, love and justice whenever one is subjected to torture, cruelty and injustice. But, in this particular faith, unlike in most of the major religions of the world, the creator Sedi is not the same being invested with the divine qualities of justice and protection. Arthur Hertzberg, in his *Judaism*, writes of God as one, “who is more than a first cause or the order of the cosmos. He has to be conceived as the creator who has not washed his hands off creation, who cares for and speaks to man to whom what man does is not a matter of indifference”.¹⁶ In Judaism the creator and God are one and the same being, whereas in Tani faith the creator and the God are two different beings. Sedi seems to have washed his hands off the creation; and there emerges a being *Donyi-Polo* to speak to man, to hear his cries, to accord him justice and to take care of him.

So the *Tanis* look to *Donyi-Polo*, not to Sedi, for seeking justice, truth and protection. So, unlike in other major religions of the world, in this faith the creator and the benefactor of man are two separate beings; Sedi, the creator and *Donyi-Polo* the protector who sets the moral purpose of life for the followers of this faith.

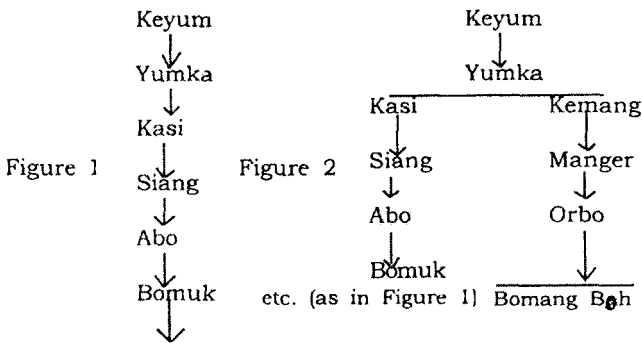
The concept of Donyipoloism is evolutionary. The doctrine of Donyipolism is the culmination of an evolutionary process in the growth

of a religion. The mythology, that weaves a faith, of doctrine starts from even the pre-conceptual stage called Keyum which suggests to that stage when the earth itself was not there. Unlike in many other religions of the world in which God is the Primordial Law Himself being the cause and effect—in Donyipoloism the Supreme God Himself is the culminating stage of evolution of the Gods. According to this faith the universe also came into existence through an evolution. In this respect Donyipoloism may be called a religion based on science. Charles Darwin holds, with sufficient scientific experiments, that everything on earth, particularly the living organisms, is the result of evolution. The founders of the faith in *Donyipoloism* were human beings with limited knowledge, if rich in spiritual aspect. With their knowledge they enquired and enquired about the mystery of the universe and of life. Their enquiry led them to the formation of the earth where Tani lives, so far as the universe, so far as the material aspect of it is concerned. This is Sedi, the creator of the universe. So far as its spiritual aspect is concerned their query led further than that. With a clairvoyance they could see that earlier than Sedi the earth, congenial for growth of living organism there were some other stages. To their knowledge there were many stages corresponding roughly to the stages of the earth from melting lump to the stages suitable for living organism. It is to be noted that as per the popular mythology to the stage of Sedi there is no God. There are stages only leading to the attainment of a status of a Creator— Sedi. A careful study of these stages lands us at a stage suggesting to a time prior to the existence of earth. With the final stretch of their spiritual knowledge the founder fathers tried to see further, but their vision failed. They simply saw a vast nothingness, the space. As their knowledge could see nothing beyond that they called it Keyum infinite nothingness. The *Adi* cosmogony starts here, but it is to be noted, without any starter as the God of Judaism and Christianity, Brahma in Hinduism. After six stages from Keyum came Sedi. Sedi, after coming into being, created the earth, the air, the water, heat and some benevolent Gods while existing in floating condition. Then she

retired from creative activities leaving all responsibility on *Donyi-Polo* to govern the natural activities as her substitute. *Donyi-Polo* is also a creation of Sedi as her sole representative to control her own creation. Thus Sedi is the real creator, but she remains obscure and inactive and *Donyi-Polo* becomes preserver and maintainer of truth, justice and peace over the creation of Sedi. For, comparison with the halo of spirituality of *Donyi-Polo*, Sedi's spirituality is insignificant. And this is the popular notion of the mythology. According to this interpretation it may be said that Sedi is the blind life force coming into being without much consciousness. Mythology also throws some light in this direction. It tells us that from Sedi came out the whole pantheon of Gods and Goddesses. Gods and Goddesses are generally conscious and intelligent beings. The Abang is vocal about the consciousness and intelligence of them, whereas it remains silent about Sedi's consciousness, except it being praised as creator. Among the Gods and Goddesses born of Sedi, Donyi and Polo attained the culmination of intellectual development.

In very recent time attempts have, however, been made by some people to put *Donyi-Polo* as the primordial cause in their mythology. In 1990, in a meeting organised by the *Donyipolo* Mission, Itanagar, to discuss on the concept of Donyipoloism, Tumpak Ete and Oshong Ering, expressed their view that *Donyi-Polo* is there before the beginning of the creation though they could not refer to any Abang (mythology) to that effect. Rather, their mythologies are vocal about the birth of Donyi and Polo, and their attainment of importance. Tumpak Ete and Oshong Ering are, perhaps, influenced by the present concept of godhood in relation to the cause of the creation. In many great religions of the world the concept is that the Supreme God is the cause of the universe. After this I made search in their Abangs for any such reference of *Donyipolo's* entity even before keyum. Since there are hardly any written Abangs I had to go to the village folk and approach the *Miri* and some other knowledgeable persons regarding traditional matters. My repeated questions regarding *Donyipolo's* entity prior to Keyum put Senor Lego of Damro in an

angry tone to say that there was nothing like that in their mythology. Mutkeng Ngupok of Milang also became sentimental considering that I did not believe in what he said. Similarly other Miris and experts in mythology view that *Donyi-Polo* was the creation of Sedi only. There is one person, however, who points to a new branch in the genealogy from Keyum downward and says that *Donyi-Polo* came into being in that line much before Sedi. He is Tagum Mengu of Berung. He says that from the Kasi stage of the geneological tree of creation a different line branched off. (See figure 2). In this case certain factors are to be seen. Tagum Mengu belongs to a village near the border of Assam and there is possibility of his being influenced by the Hindu culture. The discovery of the new line is very recent which suggests to a deliberate exploration. *Adi* terminologies in geneological descendance is such that any name can be derived convincingly. Until and unless it is supported by popular tradition a doubt may hang forever on it. As per figure 1 Bomong comes from Sedi like—Sedi—Diir—Irbo—Bomang/ Bah/(Donyi-Polo); as per figure 2, they come, Kasi/Kamang/ Mangor—Orbo—Bomong/Boh. So far as system of derivation is concerned both seem convincing. But whereas the former is popularly known the latter is told by Tagum Mengu only.



(Figure Contd. on p. 147.)

Whatever may be the controversy about the age of *Donyi-Polo* one thing is certain that these two cosmic phenomena grew in spiritual

importance. These two phenomena, according to mythology, are given all the divine attributes or in other words, they have attained these attributes. So they have taken to themselves the responsibility of establishing order, administering justice, setting moral purpose of life and revealing truth to the world. Hence the founders of this faith praise him as the protector of humanity. The word 'Donyipolo' without a hyphen between Donyi and Polo is used to convey a spiritual entity. Materially speaking Donyi and Polo (Sun and Moon respectively) are the two visible phenomena of the cosmos. These two objects of the universe see everything on the earth equally. There is no biasness in their observing things differently. The founder fathers of this doctrine observed that these two phenomena are omniscient and omnipresent. As such these phenomena stand for truth, justice and set the moral purpose of life. So the Tanis praise these two phenomena. Their praise of them ultimately spiritualised the two objects. At this level Donyi and Polo cross the bound of material existence and lose their separate entity. To the Donyipoloists these two, because of their commonness of power and function, weave themselves into a synthesis implying a spiritual entity. The table given below shows that Sedi's immediate creations (children) are at the top of the hierarchy of gods and man. All the beings created on this stage figure in the *Adi* mythology as benevolent gods and goddesses; and amongst them all *Donyipolo* rules as supreme.

After four generations from Sedi namely Diling, Litung, Tuye and Yepe the most important stage, so far as man is concerned, comes in the birth of *Pedong*. For, *Pedong* is the mother of *Tani* (Man) and million other beings. Many of the other beings are evil spirits doing harm to man.

From the table it appears that *Tani* (Man) finds himself in between the benevolent gods and harmful evil spirits. As such the Donyipoloists find themselves in a world hovered by two supernatural forces. One is good force and the other is evil. Both these forces are represented by innumerable gods and spirits. To name a few of these elements mention may be made of justice, truth, love, charity, honesty etc. and

crime, injustice, hatred, jealousy, avarice, destructivity etc. respectively. Guided by the former set of elements man is to maintain peace, order and prosperity and while guided by the latter set man is sure to create chaos and destruction in the society. In their faith the characteristics of these two elements— good and evil or benevolent and malevolent—are represented by two sets of gods and spirits respectively. They are *Doying Bote*, *Kongki Babbu*, *Boki Mone*, *Kine Nane*, *Daadi Bote*, *Gumin Bote*, *Bisi Bote*, *Dende Sobo*, *Uteporo* etc. and *Biri Bik*, *Dimu Taya*, *Nomgu Nomnang*, *Banji Banmung*, *Medeng Sene*, *Pollung Sobo*, *Niji Nipong*, *Epom* etc. The former ascertains the purpose of the society whereas the latter fails man to attain the target. Between these two forces man has to struggle for existence constantly. The struggle is not, however, for existence only but it has other aim to achieve. The aim is to attain godhood or realise Donyipolo to place oneself in the kingdom of the supreme power. Donyipoloism sets this purpose before *Tani*. According to the Donyipoloists there is a place called Donyi among or *Donyipolo among*. The picture of *Donyipolo among* may not be similar to Christian heaven or Hindu swarga, but the concept is same. *Donyipolo among* is a place where Donyipolo can be seen as we see another man standing in front of us. This lands us in a position leading to nowhere, as if we want to go to Donyipolo among just to see Donyipolo and nothing else. But it is not so. Similar to the concept of sojourn of the human soul in many other philosophies the Donyipoloists have the concept of the *Ayit's* (soul's) sojourn in this earthly life. This concept is very clear among the Donyipoloists. A *pengey*—dirge,—which has been there from time immemorial gives the clear picture of how the soul comes to earth to take shelter in a newborn baby and how, at the man's death, it goes across the other world. Towards the last part of the *pengey* the Miri deals with the soul's attainment of Heaven or Hell or other world. The Miri vision goes upto a sphere beyond which it cannot go. But there he says with clear vision of the soul's eternal journey pointing to different roads leading to Heaven, Hell, stormy land or snowy land. It is the

belief of the Tanis that a pure *Ayit* deserves heaven and it naturally goes there. In the Tani concept, however, there are various worlds representing hell. The worlds are Dorung Lisam— the abode of soul of man who dies in accident; (i) Niji Nipong = the abode of a soul of a mischievous man; (ii) Banji Banmang - the abode of a soul who dies in a war; (iii) Silli Sidong the abode of a soul who dies drowning; (iv) Nomgu Nomang = the abode of the soul of a man who dies of swelling disease.

The Donyipoloists believe that Donyipolo among cannot be attained by each and everybody. One must deserve Donyipolo among by his worldly activities, and those who do not, cannot go there inspite of any amount of yearning.

The natural question is, who deserves Donyipolo among, and who does not? Donyipoloism answers to this question. For this faith lays down certain rules following which one can deserve Donyipolo among. Here lies the principle that a religion sets the rules for good conduct for attainment of something beyond this worldly life. Donyipoloism inspires definite salvation, in other words attainment of Donyipolo among, through his fulfilment of life as envisaged in the faith. The faith is that man can attain salvation through the attainment of a certain level of wordly success by his activities approved by social customs. If a man is successful in material and spiritual aspects in this worldly life he is supposed to attain divinity after his death. It, in order words, means that success in the mundane life means a success in life after death. This should, however, not be misunderstood that any kind of success in this worldly life would earn one divinity that one desires. One must attain one's mundane success through the consciousness of his righteous activities as approved by the faith. Once one violates the tenets of Donyipolism one is subjected to commit mistake. And such a man cannot attain salvation inspite of his success in mundane life. It is, however, the belief of the *Donyipoloists* that one who follows the tenets of Donyipoloism is favoured by *Donyipolo* for one's success in mundane life.

Donyipoloism lays maximum emphasis on the good conduct of

the members of the society. For, without the good conduct of its members a society cannot exist. The tenets of good conduct which the Tanis give highest value are truth, justice, love, peace and so on.

Based on the broad outlines of these tenets there are some commandments which are grudgingly followed by the Donyipoloist.

1. Always speak the truth.
2. Never tell a lie.
3. Never commit theft and corruption.
4. Love everybody as you love yourself, when you love others Donyipolo will love you.
5. Be self-dependent with final reliance on Donyipolo.
6. Begging is a sin, never resort to it.
7. Don't harm anybody.

It is believed that the violators of any of these tenets are subject to punishment from above in this wordly life itself.

The *Adis* believe that a man who violates any order of the faith is bound to suffer in the worldly life and will die an unnatural death which they call '*Taleng Sina*'. '*Taleng Sina*' includes death caused by accident, suicide, murder, heavy swelling, leprosy, cholera, childbirth and others—any death which looks abnormal. This belief is reflected in amki-penam. Amki-penam is an oath-taking to prove the veracity of a misdeed like theft, lie etc. There are various amki-penams. In all the amki-penams the guilty person meets an unnatural death. It is customary that any kind of amki-penam is to be done invoking Donyipolo. It is believed that if human beings could not see the performance of an evil deed committed by some one, Donyipolo sees it. And when Donyipolo is invoked to prove who actually is the evil doer, he proves it by penalizing him with unnatural death. Thus an evil doer is exposed to the society. But it so happens only when there is a controversial issue leading to amki-penam. There are some other evil deeds the secret performance of which do not raise any controversy in the society. Even then Donyipolo sees these and He inflicts punishment with leprosy, accident, some other serious diseases causing swelling of the body etc. Kabang Borang, now a minister in

Arunachal Cabinet, says that one becomes diabetic as a result of sin one commits in this worldly life. Sins committed may be accumulation of property by unlawful means, by deception of others, incestuous act etc. It is believed that leprosy comes to a man who accumulates property by deception of others; and they say the punishment Donyipolo gives cannot be remedied with any amount of money.

The *Donyipoloists* are not fatalist. In their faith an individual is allowed initiative for his deeds; and an individual himself is responsible for his deed—good or evil. Unlike in many other faiths, in Donyipoloism one can hardly hear a person say that for his luck or misfortune he is not responsible. So he does not surrender himself to Donyipolo for his deeds; he does his deeds in own initiative with sincere faith in reaping the harvest. If the crop is damaged by some human activity he seeks remedy from those who inflict the damage. But if he fails to find out the culprit he leaves it to Donyipolo. But when the damage is caused by natural forces he tries to stand against them through some means. The means are either physical force or appeasement. Whatever he can he tries to save it by his hand and whatever is beyond the human capacity he tries the policy of appeasement. He propitiates the god responsible for causing the damage by sacrifice of animals, birds etc. By no means does he shift the responsibility to Donyipolo.

The individual initiative for doing good or bad and shouldering the responsibility of the result of his deed gives maximum safeguard to the order of the society. One rarely violates the good conduct prescribed by the faith. Exception may be there, but exception itself is rare. A violator of any rule is looked down upon by the society, and severely punished. Occasion sometimes demands killing of a perpetrator of evil deeds. This, the Donyipoloists believe, is sanctioned by Donyipolo.

From what we have come to know about this religion we may further discuss on what kind of religion it is. Speaking of the growth of religions Encyclopaedia Britannica suggests two notions of its origin. Though the notions are contradicting to each other they help us

understand the notions of human civilization. The two notions are: (1) Originally there was one God and later on only man developed faith in different gods; (2) Religion has an evolutionary growth coming to monotheism after much purification. "The two approaches sponsor, respectively, two contrasting myths about primitive man. According to the one, there was once a golden age of innocence and harmony; according to the other, the life of the earliest man was hasty, brutish and short."

The second notion appears to be applicable in the growth of Donyipoloism. As we have seen there are many gods, in this faith, to look after the well-being of the different aspects of human life. Examining the process of civilization also it may be observed that the Tani group of tribes were originally the nomadic hordes of the Himalayas and beyond that always on their move in search of better habitats. A rustic and savage people, they had to face various forces of nature during their movements through snow-covered mountains, torrentous rivers, craggy rocks and thick forests. In absence of medicine man among them (among the Tanis there is hardly any medicine man even today) they had to believe that these forces are evil spirits causing harms to man. But human mind is such that he is not ready to suffer the pains indifferently. He tries to find some power—material or aetherial—to which he can turn when pain is inflicted on him. Thus he invented different gods corresponding to the nature of suffering. Gradually he wove some myths around the gods and spirits. In the myths he wove himself in relation to the other *supernatural beings*. *It is, in fact, for him that he had to invent all these, and so he must have woven himself the complex texture of the mythology.*

It is but natural that Donyipoloism is polytheistic. In this faith there are innumerable gods and spirits which should be kept satisfied by man for his own welfare.

Considering all these, perhaps, some people have the tendency to call the faith of the Tanis as heathenistic. They seem, however, not correct in their judgement. For, the Tanis have a deep faith in

Donyipolo. It has got some mythological background also. With a deep faith on Donyipolo the other gods and spirits approach Him for deciding to whom actually the methun belonged—to Dadi Somi or to Medeg Sene. The methun originally belonged to Dadi Somi as he took all the care for its growth. But Medeng Sene, the shrewd female descendant of Pedong Nane claimed a share of it as her right of inheritance. Dadi Somi was not agreeable to it. All other gods tried to settle the dispute, but the case was so complicated that they could not give a verdict. Ultimately all the gods referred the case to the highest court—the court of Donyipolo. In the court of Donyipolo also all the gods took their seats to hear the verdict. Trying the case with all the impartiality Donyipolo decided that the methun belonged to Dadi Somi. The gods' reliance on Donyipolo, the Supreme God, indicates Tani's faith in Him. To term such a faith as heathenistic seems not to have gone deeper into the matter. They simply have the superficial knowledge of it.

Some people again point to a notion that there is no prayer in Donyipolo faith. One thing that is observed in the Tani society is that there is no permanent place like temple, church or monastery for regular praj'er. Making this a basis some people tend to say that there is no prayer in this faith, A serious study may, however, reveal that prayer is there in this faith. Though the ordinary meaning of the word 'prayer' is to ask something earnestly from some one, it also means the yearning to commune with some supernatural power. In the Tani society both the ideas of prayer are beautifully conveyed through their invocation of Donyipolo on various occasions. It is not only the desire for something, but also the realization of communion with a spiritual force, which is expressed when a speaker in a Kebang invokes Donyipolo with his upturned eyes. There cannot be any deeper prayer than this in which the desire to commune with a spiritual power itself is materialised instantaneously. One is to see to believe how an Abe speaker looks up while invoking his god with his eyes carrying all the signs of communion with god. This is the real devotional prayer. In Donyipolism there are both petitional prayer and devotional

prayer. In Kiruk (community hunting), Mimag ginam, (going to war), *Ayit miri* (charms for curing ailment), Emo-rinko bomnam, (collection of herbal poison) and in individual Kepel, (rites observed in offerings to some deity) the petitional prayer is offered. In case of justice of an impersonal nature devotional prayer takes the highest form and this occurs in Kebang for settlement of dispute.

Donyipoloism is a kind of animism. Speaking about animism Risley says in his *Outlines of History of Ancient Religions* that it is a "belief in the existence of souls or spirits of which only the powerful—those on which man feels himself dependent, and before which he stands in awe—acquire the rank of divine beings and become objects of worship."¹⁷ Risley further elaborates the scope of animism. In this connection he discusses the animistic practice of the Limbus. While doing so he holds that animism is the refined form of shamanism. For he says, "Among the Limbus . . . the belief has given birth to a number of primitive miscellaneous divinities whose functions are very vague and who do not owe allegiance to any centralised authority."¹⁸ In a sense *Donyipoloism* may be called a shamanistic animism, as Risley calls the religion of the Limbus. One interesting thing is that as in case of *Donyipoloism*, as noticed earlier, the religion of the Limbus has its origin in Bon-po. Till today the Miris, Shamans, conduct the faith suggesting the spirit or deity to whom the layman is to turn for some relief. It believes in the existence of a spirit or a soul in everything. As to human soul, in normal case, it is believed that after the death of a man the soul goes to a world where the souls of his forefathers, his relatives live. In other words it may be said that such a soul goes to *Donyipolo* among. Sacrifices of animals and birds—methun, pig, fowl etc. at the death of a man are made on the belief that the soul of these animals would go to the same world where the soul of the man goes, so that the man does not feel poorer even in the other world. It is also believed that the things given as token at the burial of a man would go to the world where the human soul goes, so that he does not feel the want of these things.

A few examples of ritual performances of different occasions

may give an idea of worshipping by the *Adis*.

Coming of a snake inside a dwelling house is ominous according to the *Adi* belief. They believe that Dadi Bote or Kine Nane is dissatisfied with the family (into whose house the snake enters) for some wrong committed by the family consciously or unconsciously. The snake is sent as an expression of that dissatisfaction. They either kill the snake or drive it out of house as it is natural. But in doing so they perform some rites: they throw tan leaf, takeng (ginger), apong etc. on the snake or on its carcass. Dadi Bote or Kine Nane does not mind killing of the snake, because its soul would go and live in that land. The rites performed are reported by the soul of the snake to the god or goddess; and the rites indicate that the family has agreed to perform Solung or Mopin to satisfy the discontented god or goddess. Similar rites are performed when a particular bird enters into a house. After a reasonable time of that ritual Solung or Mopin is performed by the family. If the god or goddess is satisfied the family is spared of the sufferings, if not the family will suffer from diseases, bad luck, extreme poverty etc.

The worship of the lower gods, the agents of *Donyipolo*, amounts to worship of the supreme authority. For, the ultimate solace it is always sought from *Donyipolo*. In other words it may be said that the divine qualities of justice and impartiality of *Donyipolo* influence the Tanis in shaping their good conduct. This good conduct safe-guards the social order and peace.

FESTIVALS :

Initially all social festivals are basically festivals for welfare of man. In the hoary past man's knowledge of the material world was very much limited. He rather divested his attention to some supernatural force for his protection and well-being. Stretching his imagination to the supernatural world he tried to trace the history of man—how he was created by some force, how he had to fight the evils that presented themselves in the shapes of natural calamities—like storm, thunder, earthquake, flood, various diseases etc. In his

imagination he traced back his origin or his relation with this supernatural world. While weaving this texture of relation between himself and the supernatural forces he found himself surrounded by some inscrutable forces both good and evil. Good elements are not so tangible as the evil are, since the latter makes him to suffer. Whenever he suffered he turned to the benevolent ones which, he considers, could give him the required relief. To record or to make mental consolation permanent in human society he called such things by various names according to the nature of relief he considered he got. Then he fixed a particular time for celebrating the occasion. This sort of thing later became festival. Thus all the festivals have a ritualistic base.

The *Adi* society also had a number of festivals grudgingly celebrated by them with all sanctimony and seriousness. We shall study these festivals, in brief, to show some sort of religious base in them.

1. Solung: Mythologically speaking *Solung* is the festival to commemorate the creation of *eso* (Methun - *Bos frontalis*) by Daadi Somi assembling different parts in a worm found in a gourd. The gourd in turn is the fruit of a plant grown out of some organ of Limir Sobo, the great methun of Donyipolo. As such the methun is the most sacred animal in the *Adi* society; and so they consider it to be the best offer to the benevolent deities like *Doying Bote*, *Kine Nane* and *Gumin Soyin*. *Doying Bote* is the god of knowledge in art and craft, *Kine Nane* is the goddess of crops and wealth and *Gumin Soyin* is the guardian-spirit of the house-hold. To propitiate these three benevolent deities the *Adis* celebrate the Solung festival. From three distinct parts of the festival celebrated with three different Abangs (Myths) it may appear that Solung is the lore of *Adi* faith. The three different Abangs are known as *Limir Sobo*, *Binyat* and *Taktor*. These three Abangs are chanted at three different stages of the festivals.

The *Limir Sobo* Abang is the mythology of creation of the world with its air, water, plants, animals, and man. The *Binyat* gives the

story of agriculture brought to the human world. In this Abang, *Kine Nane* is especially worshipped in the field of crops itself offering blood, meat, rice powder and apong. The last *Abang—Taktor Abang*—is regarding Tani's (man's) struggle for existence, his attainment of supremacy over all other animals and evil spirits. In his struggle for all these Tani was helped by *Kine Nane*, *Doying Bote*, *Gumin Soyin* and other benevolent gods and goddesses. All these gods and goddesses are worshipped in this last Abang.

2. Aran: *Aran*, or *Unying* as it is called by the Minyongs, is a festival celebrated at the advent of spring season. The *Adis* have different stories regarding the occasion of this festival—the story varies from area to area, sub-tribe to sub-tribe. Oshong Ering says it is to commemorate the arrival of *Nyani Mete*, the beautiful girl from *Kojum Kojia* who floated in the deluge which completely destroyed *Kojum Kojia*, into *Doni-Dongor* the land of Tani.¹⁹ Talom Rukbo, on the other hand says that it is the wedding day of *Nyani Mete* celebrated in *Kojum Kojia*. Later on this was brought to the land of Tani by *Kine Nane* and *Doying Bote*.²⁰ He further says wherever she went during her honeymoon this festival is celebrated as an welcome. Another version of the mythology says that it is the reception of *Aran*, the young son of *Siking* goddess of the Hades, (*Siking* = *Kiran* or *Aran*) who was sent to earth by his mother to play with Tani for Tani's pleasure. In fact, it is the combination of both these which is celebrated as *Aran* or *Unying*. Whatever may be the origin of the festival it is celebrated with all religious sanctimony worshipping their celebrated gods and goddesses like *Doying Bote*, *Kine Nane*, *Gumin Soyin* etc.

3. Etor. It is a festival to worship *Dadi Bote* for his gift of methun to man through the land of *Engo Takar*. Mythologically it originated from a quarrel between *Dadi Somi* and *Engo-Takar* for the former's imprisonment of *Gamro*, the hunter. Through a trick the *Engo-Takar* people caught *Dadi Bote* in an act of touching a lady. So they demanded the release of *Gamro* and a methun as compensation. *Dadi Somi* complied with it. Thus the *methun* came to the land of *Tani* for the

goodwill of Dadi Somi. In the festival Dadi Somi is worshipped for protection of methun and other house hold animals. Originally this festival was celebrated only in the land of *Kine Nane*.

4. Mopin: Mopin is a festival celebrated at the advent of spring. It is also a festival for better crops and thus goddess Mopin is propitiated for good crops. It was, of course, at her advice that Tani invites every year at the seedling time of crops. Earlier Tani tried to cultivate crop but failed because of his ignorance how to do that. Then he went to *Mopin* and asked her how to do it. Mopin became sympathetic to Tani, gave her daughter in marriage to Tani, and taught him the art of agriculture. Hence is man's worship of goddess *Mopin* in the *Mopin* festival. There is, however, some difference between the same festival when celebrated by the Galongs and the Minyong-Padam-Pasi group. The former chiefly propitiate *Mopin* herself whereas the later propitiate *Kine Nane*, *Doying Bote* etc., together with Mopin.

5. Mopun: The Padam-Pasi group celebrate another festival called *Mopun*. This is a festival of preparation of the soil for growing crops. Talom Rukbo says Kine Nane herself instructed Tani to perform the festival, while preparing the earth for sowing of seeds or planting of seedlings. In this festival *Kine Nane* and *Doying Bote* are worshipped for their sanction of a good harvest. *Mopun* is also celebrated wherever there is a signal of epidemic incident and ominous signs in the area. The idea behind this is that man should not be allowed to suffer—hence all various means.

6. Tapu: It is a festival for warding off the evil spirits that cause diseases and other human misfortunes. Details of it is given in the chapter on construction of the individual house. Here, however, one version of the mythology behind this festival will be given. To test *Tani*'s intelligence, valour, calibre in war etc. Gumin Soyin sent him out equipped with war impliments. He, in his bravado, went on fighting and killing each and everybody who came on his way. In his enthusiasm he even attacked the land of the epidemics and diseases and got himself caught by these. It resulted in his diseases both physical and

mental. Seeing his condition *Doying Bote* and *Kine Nane* asked *Gumin Soyin* to take care of him. *Gumin Soyin* called him back in that haggard and lunatic condition. On his return to his own house he was received ritually with *Sumpa* (a part of hand-loom), beads and emul. After that the *Tapu* was arranged to exorise the evil spirits believed to have been dining to his body. In that festival *Tani* had to dance in all his war dress brandishing his sword occasionally as if to show he was fighting with evil spirits. In his song and dance he was to invoke *Doying Bote* and *Kine Nane*. Even today the Adis perform the festival for the welfare of man and other animals.

7. *Ampi Dorung*: It is a festival which, according to mythology, gives an idea of *Tani*'s maturity as a man of the world. Looking back when *Tani* could see that it was the good wishes and benevolence of the gods and goddesses especially of *Gomin Soyin* that he could survive in his struggle for existence and attainment of supremacy, he felt grateful to them. To show his gratitude to the gods for all these he arranged good feast and invited *Gumin Soyin*, *Doying Bote*, *Kine Nane* and other benevolent gods and goddesses and spirits. In this festival preparation of rice-cake is one of the salient features.

8. *Pime*: It is a festival to mark the end of summer, the season with all injurious and harmful insects and flies. Hence this is celebrated towards the end of summer—somewhere in September.

Mythologically however, *Pime* implies the end of one civilization, known as *Kojum-Koja* in a deluge (*Pumu* in *Adi*). The *Kojum-Koja* unknowingly killed the son of *Sili-Sidong* (the god of deep water); and to avenge his murder *Silli-Sidong* caused a deluge in which every body of *Kojum-Koja* was washed away. Thus, *Pime* has the property of wiping out everything which is reflected in wiping out of the insects and flies though temporarily.

9. *Eso-Dorung*: This is a festival without much mythological background; and it is confined to the *Milangs*, the *Pasis*, the *Pangis* and the *Padams*. From the habitation pattern of the sub-tribes it is seen that this festival is prevalent only in the left bank of the *Siang*. It is traditionally said that once it was feared an epidemic would break

out in that area, which would finish all the animals. So the people of the area decided to eat all their methuns (eso) before they are killed in the epidemic. So they killed and ate their methuns. The epidemic, however, did not break out. But a belief is established that if a good number of methuns are sacrificed no epidemic breaks out. Accordingly this festival is celebrated even today at a gap of 5/6 years when the people have sufficient methuns to sacrifice.

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Chapter IX

The Adis in Their Transition

The natural tendency of any human society is to develop for its own comfort and security. Development itself is a process in which the social behaviour, both material and abstract, and attitude go on changing. Left to itself this tendency, however, functions sluggishly and the change brought about in the society under this process may be called evolution, not transition. *Adi* society, for instance, remained almost static so far as its social structure, morality, ethics and ethos are concerned for about eleven centuries, from their migration to their present habitat in earlier eighth century AD to the advent of the British to this region. Some material changes in minor aspects of life, like housing materials according to the availability of materials in their southward movement, might be noticed here and there. In food habit also there might be changes depending on the availability of fertile land and on peace that was frequently disturbed by internecine wars. Such things may not be called social changes. These are material changes as per need of life without any impact on their social ethos.

The *Adi* society with the ethos that continued almost statically during the eleven centuries till the advent of the British is the one described in the preceding chapters. With the advent of the British the gates of changes seemed to have been opened gradually.

There are some factors responsible for bringing about changes in the society in its attitude and behaviour. These are:—(1) Contact with other society more developed or otherwise; (2) Light of education; (3) Communication development; (4) Political growth.

(1) Contact with other people: When a particular static backward society comes into contact with another people of advance nature and continues to maintain that contact for various reasons for a considerable time it is but natural that the former is affected by the latter. The general rule is that as a backward society it tends to imbibe certain things of the

advanced society with the psychological belief that these things of the advanced society are responsible for their advancement. The *Adis* had no such contact with other societies for many centuries due to their geographical situation. Locked in the high ranges in high Himalaya they remained cut off from both Indian (Assamese) and Tibetan societies. Indian society because, the tribal habitation was inhospitable from nature's point of view, and the Tibetan society that neglected them as beings, savage (Lopa). After the spread of Buddhism in Tibet and establishment of a strong administrative centre at Lhasa by the 7th century some Tibetan officers seemed to have paid their periodical visits to the upper Adi villages for collection of taxes. Some old Adi villagers say that it was not actually tax as such, it was a sort of presents (*aman* in Adi) given to the visiting guests who also gave some gifts brought from Tibet. But that cannot be called a social/cultural contact in the real sense of the term. After the departure of the guests who came after two/three years the *Adis* were left to themselves with their age-old customs and traditions too rigid to be effected by such visits. One major change that may be perceived is mentioned, in their mythology. It says that *Tani* (Man) in chasing his prey once appeared in the land of Mopin, a land in which agriculture was well-developed. *Tani* was attracted by the crops there and was successful in persuading Mopin in giving him the gift of paddy seeds. *Tani* came back to his land with the paddy seeds tucked in the ears of the hunting dog that followed and started crops in his own land. It may very well be interpreted that while still in Tibet they came into contact with some tribe with the knowledge of agriculture from whom they learnt this art. This revolutionised the society so far as their food habit and material security were concerned. Prior to that they used to gather their food through hunting and from the wild plants. Even now there are some people in the upper region like *Adi Pasi*, *Peki Modi*, *Likor*, *Paling* etc. where they grow a special wild tree called *Tache* the soft stem of which is boiled and taken in slices. That stage was

known as 'uyu' stage of man. The use of the term is very interesting. Generally the term is used to mean 'ghost', 'goblin' etc. But the same term is used to mean that man at a stage when he could not be called man with the intelligence for civilised activities. Then man was not only naked but also could not speak with any sense. So the getting of knowledge in agriculture and paddy seeds marked one stage of their evolution in their social life. In all probability they came down from Tibet and settled extremely sparsely in different sub-tribes and even different clans, except on occasions of clashes and conflicts for various reasons. Hence slightly different social customs and traditions amongst the same *Tuni* group of tribes. They rarely had excitement of lives so far as their material and mental growth till the coming of the British to the north-eastern region in the first half of the nineteenth century. History tells us that the British also adopted a policy of non-interference in the tribal life of the region so long their own commercial interest was not affected. Their commercial interest so far as the tribal people of this region were concerned was mainly the tea gardens they planted along the foot hills of the tribes. The tribal people, particularly the *Adis*, came into lime light *vis-a-vis* the British East India Company. The *Adis* had two grouses: (i) Their vassals, the *Mishings* were not only given shelter in the British territory but also given protection from the *Adi* exploitation of their vassals and (ii) The Assamese people, under the protection of the British, washed gold in the sands of the rivers flowing from the hills which they claimed to be their own. Their troop led the *Padams* and the *Minyongs* to raid the villages under the British territory since first half of the nineteenth century. Though Capt. Wilcox, Father Crick paid their visits to Mebo in 1825 and 1853 respectively, their visits were too short to have any cultural impact on the *Adis*. Even some *Adi* people's contact with the Assamese and the British people in *Sadia* business mart was not much effective for any influence. It may, however, be said that their such contact in the periodical mart might cause an excitement to

those *Adi* people who went there for some business towards development. But that remained as a remote stir without any effect in reality till the turn of the new century. In the later half of the nineteenth century the *Adis* caused concern to the British administration resulting in the introduction of Inner Line and Outer Line system by a Regulation passed in 1873 and promulgated in 1875. A loose administration in the area between the Inner Line and the Outer Line and Trigonometrical survey created more suspicion in the *Adi* mind about the British intention and they became more wary. By 1911 they became more aggressive and murdered a British officer who went upto Komsing, much beyond the Outer Line, together with his doctor friend and the porters. The resultant punitive expedition, the Anglo-Abor war 1912, and subsequent survey and McMahon Line 1914, introduced, actual administration inside Arunachal Pradesh. In the *Adi* area, particularly in Pasighat area, however, the administration came in 1912, just after the Anglo-Abor war, when the British office was set up at Pasighat. The *Adi* people's actual social contact with other society began since then and the thaw of cultural stagnancy for centuries began to be broken. Coming into contact with some doctors, Assam Rifles personnel and administrative officers, clerks they saw people reading and writing and some youth desired to learn these. Such willing students were sent to Sadia school till 1920, the year in which the British opened the first school in Arunachal Pradesh at Pasighat. All these must have begun to break the thaw of *Adi* cultural stagnancy. Confined to their own cultural world for centuries the people really became rigid in their own traditions and customs. It may be said that it was the first knock to their cultural slumber; it would naturally take sometime to break the crust of that culture which was too strong to be easily molted. One example of such hard crust can be cited in an incident of the Dafla, now known as Nishi, another tribe of the Tani group. In 1870 there was a clash between two Nishi families regarding engagement of a girl for marriage.¹ A Dafla

chief engaged a girl for his own son and paid the bride price as per their customs. After sometime he came to know that a strong and wealthier chief came and engaged the same girl for his son. What is more was that the bride price., paid by the first chief was refused to be returned as per their custom. The agrieved party complained to the Deputy Commissioner, Darrang, who refered it to the Law Court at Tezpur. As usual it started its lengthy process beyond tolerance of a tribal mind. The Chief first took his own action by attacking the village of the other chief and taking a number of villagers as hostage for return of the bride price. The village council immediately settled the case giving verdict that the bride price was to be returned and the hostages be released. It was done accordingly by both the chiefs.

The rigid customs and traditions deep rooted in their faiths and superstitions would naturally take time to be influenced by other culture through such weak contact of a few boys' going to school in a quite different set up. However, it may be also said that cultural change is very subtle at the initial stage. A few *Adi* boys going to Sadia school definitely effected a change in the cultural outlook of the people. There were a few boys from Pasighat like Kuttik Moyong, Oyom Yomso and others. Putting up with the Assamese boys in the hostel and coming in contact with the Assamese families in the area they were influenced by the Assamese culture. Two important aspects, in this regards, may be mentioned here, (a) lighting a lamp under a *Tulasi* plant in the evening and (b) giving up beef eating. The Assamese people usually light a wick in a small earthen pot in the evening under a *Tulasi* plant planted for that purpose in the front of the family court yard. Oyom Yomso says that even today they observe that ritual. The *Adis* take all kinds of meat including beef for which they don't have traditional restriction. But a few families at Pasighat like Kuttik Moyong, Talom Rukbo, O. Yomso (all Pasi) and others cannot think of taking beef even today. In a sense these two things have almost a tradition for the *Adis* of Pasighat and the new generation is again for shunning such customs. These form some subtle impact effected by their first contact with the Assamese society at Sadia.

Their next major and frequent contact with the Assamese society occurred at Pasighat itself after its establishment in 1912. when Assamese clerks and gradually officers, doctors, nurses and others began to mix up with the local people who used to visit frequently the Assamese houses. And since the Assamese was the medium of instruction in the school education upto 1972, it became the lingua franca for almost all the Arunachalese. That also required the non-Assamese people who came to Arunachal Pradesh in service and business to learn Assamese and encourage Assamese culture. A particular item of Assamese culture, *Kirtan*, is frequently performed by the Assamese families. And those *Adi* families which were in constant touch with the families like Kuttik Moyong, Tajom Koyu and others used to perform this semi-religious function in their houses. Assamese *Bihu* became an annual affair of some families at Pasighat and a few *Adis* learnt *Bihu* songs and dances as their own.

Constant contact for a longtime may, however, have a different impact. In this respect the case of Borguli, Seram, Namsing etc. may be pointed out. These villages are on the border of Assam and the people are in constant touch with the Assamese society. The Assamese villages in that area are the followers of the *Bhagawati* creed preached by Sankardeva of Assam. Through their social intercourses the *Adis* got gradually influenced by the *Bhagawati* creed of Hinduism. One Rongmon Kardong, an *Adi* expert in *Adi* traditional matters and mythology, got attracted to that creed and became a staunch follower. He entered into the fold in 1941-42, and came to be known as Ramananda Kardong. Going a step further he began to preach the new creed amongst his own people and converted some people in the above villages. One such converts is Lipok Yirang, now in his sixties, father of Mrs. Bormoti Dai, the first lady graduate of Arunachal Pradesh. He informed me that in the three said villages there are a good number of followers of this creed all of whom were brought to the fold by Ramananda Kardong. In all these villages the followers of the creed have constructed a *Namghar* each with all the traditional things like a *Thapona*, the *Bhagabat*, *doba* etc. as in an Assamese *Namghar*.

One thing to be noted here with interest is that in spite of conversion

these people have their cultural values almost intact. Lipok Yirang, when I met him on February, 1992, evinced all the *Adi* cultural traits in him. He also told me that Ramananda Kardong himself was an expert in *Adi* tradition. Even in the people now converted to Christianity the *Adi* cultural traits are very much there. In fact, all their social customs and traditions, as we have seen in the preceding chapters were intact to a great extent to the middle of this century. But yet that was a beginning of changes in their culture and there came up a number of factors bringing about the changes in the cultural ethos of the *Adis*.

These factors are, as the Manns assess, are diverse. The Manns detect the following factors for bringing about changes in the tribal societies in India: (a) Historical background, (b) Ecological adaptation, (c) Planned programmes of change, (d) Cultural contact, (e) Course of cultural evolution, (f) Urbanisation, (g) Communication etc.² The joint authors, when they write, "The flux of change among tribal societies, chiefly because of planned and non-directed forces of change, is now of larger magnitude than ever before,"³ have seen more changes during the post-independence period. What the joint authors intend to say about social changes during the post-independence period, especially caused by the planned factors, is more applicable in respect of the Arunachal Pradesh tribes. We have already noticed in the preceding Chapter, and in this as well, how the Arunachale tribes remained completely aloof from the extraneous administrative forces for a long time. In respect of other Indian tribes falling within the jurisdiction of Indian administration for a long time the changes took place much earlier. The Mizo tribes, for instance, came under the direct influence of the administration long back and taking advantage of this the Christian missionaries almost transformed their cultural ethos. Similar is the case with the *Khasis*, the *Giaros*, the *Nagas* in the North-eastern region. But with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, remaining outside the perview of actual administration of the Indian Govt. almost to the eve of Independence, the case was quite different. Except some sort of administration operating in the foot-hills areas the bulk of the tribal people remained untouched by it. Even the Christian missionaries, after the murder of

Father Crick in Mishimi Hills in 1854 were not attracted to the hills particularly north of the Brahmaputra. Whatever Christian missionary activities are seen in this area today it is of recent beginning.

Yet, it will not be right to say that the impact of British administration is not there in bringing about the social changes among the *Adi* till India's independence. There are a few historical events before 1947 vis-a-vis the British administration at Pasighat which might have caused some changes, at least caused stir, for that change, among the *Adis*. In 1912, after the British victory in the Anglo-Abor war, the British administration in Assam established a trading centre at Rottung, some seventy kilometres inside mainland from Pasighat, providing therein medical facilities etc. But the local people were very sulky and did not like to co-operate. So it was shifted to Pasighat soon after. To attract the people of the upper areas the government passed order to the Pangis at Pangin to lift their blockade of upper area people's movement for their own business interest. The *Pangis* had to abide by the Administrative order though at the beginning of the thirties there was again some blockade. This resulted in movement of the upper area's people to Pasighat for sales and purchases. Thus they were exposed for the first time to currency system in place of their age old barter system. To make it clear how this contributed to bringing about some social changes it would be proper to know the significance of economy in determining social status of a man in the society. In the barter system a man's social status in *Adi* societies was determined by the number of *arem-tadoks*, *dankis*, methuns and domestic animals a man possessed. Possession of more of all such items by a man does not, however, help by any means, increase his material comfort. That was a mental satisfaction only. Exposed to this trading centre they realised various material items made available in the trading centre and obtainable through money could really increase their material comfort. This realisation resulted in their desire to collect more money for enhancing their standard of living which, in turn, determines the social status. They began to pay attention for producing such items which may earn them money, whereas, earlier, they were satisfied with the mental possession of such items having no value in adding physical comfort. Possession of twenty

wreathes of *tadoks*, a good number of *arems*, *dankis*, methun and so on hardly enhances physical comfort of a man. But when they found that items like cloth, lamp, water carrier and others really enhance the standard of living and which could be easily obtained against money they began to turn their attention to money. In a people content with whatever they had can be seen here the beginning of a mad race for money and other material comforts for the sake of social status.

In the sphere of administration something was introduced before 1947 which gave the first jolt to the traditional administrative system. We have already noticed how in absence of any authority to impose administration on the people, the *Adis* evolved a democratic self-administrative system known as *Kebang* (village council). In 1945 a Regulation as "The Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation" was introduced in Arunachal Pradesh then known as Frontier Tracts. Though Verrier Elwin, the staunch advocate of preserving tribal culture, praises the Regulation for its extension of recognition to the tribal councils, so far as sovereign self-administrative machinery is concerned when he says, "The Regulation does in fact give the council very wide powers, for it is recognised that they will function and inflict punishment or order compensation according to their customary law,"⁴ he himself mentions in the next paragraph about limiting the council power, "The 1945 Regulation has already limited the type of 'Punishment that can be inflicted'⁵ by the council. In fact, the actual terms of the Regulation curtail the powers of the tribal councils. The Council shall not have the power to take, in case of minor criminal cases, more than Rs. 50/- as fine. What is more is that it provides for appeal to the political officer. The council which had the sovereign power to adjudicate all kinds of criminal cases and to execute the verdicts have now no power to try murder case, and even when such case is tried one of the contending parties may take it to the political officers. This has led to the people's consciousness to the Articles of the Indian Penal Code, and negligence to their rigid customary laws. By the sixties a number of such cases were pending in the offices of the Political Officers. Though the Political Officers were to be guided as per the terms of the Regulation.

by the spirit and not by the letter of the Code of Civil Procedure in actual execution the Code of Civil Procedure had to be followed to the chagrin of the tribals. In short it may rightly be said it was the first step towards application of the Articles of Indian Penal Code at the cost of the tribal customary laws. This also attracted a section of the people, inclined to crimes, to go to court where loop-holes for escaping from punishment—both physical and financial—are many. In 1986-87 there was a case of suspected murder in village Rani, Pasighat sub-division. The aggrieved party called a *Kebang* at Berung, on the bank of the river. I wanted to avail the scope of recording the proceedings of an *Adi kebang* trying a murder case. I spent the whole day there with the *Kebang Abus* expecting the other party to arrive; but it did not come. Then the people gathered there remarked that the other party might not come with the notion that the case would be moved in the court where loop-holes for escape from fine are there.

In respect of clothes and fashion a considerable change has been observed. To quote some of the observations made by the visitors to the *Adi* areas during nineteenth century and then followed by observations made by some people coming from outside since the beginning of this century. Speaking about the *Adi* dress particularly of the *Padams* of Mebo which is a representative tribe of the *Adi* group, in 1825 Wilcox writes: "The dress of the *Abors* consists of a *Choonge* (Assamese name for *dhoti*) made of the bark of the uddal tree. It answers the double purpose of a carpet to sit upon and of a covering. It is tied round the loins and hang down behind the loose strips, about fifteen inches long, like a white bushy beard. It serves also a pillow at night— beads round their neck are not uncommon. Some wore plain basket caps, some had the cane cap partly covered with skins and others wore them ornamented with stained hair."⁶ It is however, interesting to note Wilcox's remark on the *Adi* dress and its functions. He writes, "The purpose of the primary article of their clothing is vitiated every time they sit down; but of this they are perfectly careless. Indeed... the bachelors are in the habit of basking by the side of their wood fires without any covering at all, and... in the most of a crowd on both sides the men did indeed avoid wetting

their next neighbours' legs."⁷ It is a remarkable comment on the *Adi* social notion about the procreative organs of man. To Wilcox the unconcern about these organs became very striking because of the other societies' attitude different from that of the *Adis*. But the fact is that socially to the *Adis* these organs have nothing to do with secrecy. Similar attitude is still there in very interior villages where the impact of other societies is very much negligible. In my recent visit to Milang I made a round in the village with the Head Gam of that village. We arrived at a point in the village at which the front open verandahs face us. People were on all the verandahs. Suddenly the Gam halted by my side and watered in standing position. I observed if there was reaction from any corner. They were found unconcerned totally. As seen above this was the dress used by the *Adi* males, at the beginning of the 19th century. But it was not the 'uyu' stage as some old *Adis* tend to believe when they did not put on cloth at all. In 1947, the year of Indian Independence after a century, J. Butler saw some *Adis* at Saikhowa when they went to see him. It is but natural the guests put on the best dress they put on such occasion. Still, it was not an improvement over the 1825 ones. He recorded: "The dress of the Abor chief consists of Tibetan woolen coats and a simple piece of cotton cloth, about a foot square, which is passed between the legs and suspended by a string round the waist; but not so effectually as to screen their persons from exposure every time they sit down."⁸ In the same report Butler recorded ladies' fashion also: "The hair of the women is cut short, like that of the men in a circle round the crown of the head it is two inches long, but the hair in front and behind, below the upper circle, is only about half an inch long. The ears of the men and women are perforated, the aperture one inch in diameter, being distended by a piece of wood, worn as an ornament; and the necks of the *Abor* women are loaded with innumerable glass bead necklaces of all colours. Their arms are likewise adorned from the wrist to the elbow with brass rings: the legs are exposed from the knee downward, the calf of the leg being bandaged with cane rings to the ankle."⁹

What Father Crick, the French Missionary, described as *Adi* dress in 1853 as he saw in Mebo, seems to be the war dress except the

hair style. He writes about hair style : “Neither women nor men are fond of long hair. They do not allow it to grow beyond two or three inches in length.”¹⁰

But one salient feature of the *Adis* was observed by Major Vetch in 1848 and Father Crick in 1851 That is a cross tattooed on the forehead or on the hollow of the nose. Major Vetch’s : “Many of them have the mark of the cross tattooed on their forehead’, and Father Crick’s “Most of them (the *Abor*) wore it (the cross) on the forehead, others on the nose.”¹² is more or less the same thing.

E.T. Dalton, who visited Mebo in 1855, refers to Willcox’s observation of *Adi* male dress and comments, “the garments described by Wilcox is seldom now seen in the plains, but is still worn by the *Abors* of the interior.”¹³ He appears to have given an idea of change in dress within quarter of a century, that too without their coming into too much contact with other society. But what Dalton speaks about the female custom is of interest : “ The dress of the females as ordinarily seen consists of two cloths, blue and red in broad strips. One round the loin for a petticoat just reaching to the knees; it is retained in its position by a girdle of cane work; the other is folded round the bosom, but this is often dispensed with, and the exposure of the person above the waist is evidently considered no delicacy.”¹⁴ He also mentions about the *Adi* women decoration of their necks with bead-wreaths, and their calves with rings of cane- work. At the same time he spoke about a waist ornament used by the women: “All females with pretension to youth wear suspended in front from a string round the loins a row of from three to a dozen well-shaped embossed plates of bell metal from about six to three inches in diameter, the largest in the middle, the others gradually diminishing in size as they approach the hips,”¹⁵ Actually Dalton saw *beyop* put on by unmarried girls. In fact, *beyop* is a sign of unmarried stage of an *Adi* girl though a similar thing is used by married women also; but there is quite distinction between the one used by unmarried girls and the other used by married women. Two other things observed by Dalton about *Adi* characteristics are of interest for a comparison of their present state with the past : (1) He wrote about the female attitude to their dress and exposure of the body, “very young girls, except for

warmth wear nothing but these appendages (*beyop*), but the smallest of the sex is never seen without them and even adult females are often seen with no other covering. At Bomjir I witnessed a dance in which they divested themselves of everything else, and behaved in a very indecorous manner.”¹⁶ In fact what Dalton mentions as ‘indecorous manner’ is traditional/natural with the tribes. (2) The other he mentioned is regarding the *Adi* use of water for cleanliness purpose : in spite of perennial source of water supply to the villages “water is seldom used for ablutionary purposes. The *Abors* consider dirt an antidote to cold, and positively cherish it.”¹⁷ Oshong Ering also says that one of his relatives did never take bath in his life except being dripped occasionally in rain water when outdoor or while crossing a river. Writing in the first quarter of the twentieth century A. Hamilton seems to have heavily borrowed from Dalton about the *Adi* dress and use of water.¹⁸

We may now refer to the real observations made by some people who came to this region when it was known as Assam Frontier Tract and then as NEFA. U.P. Mishra, retired as Lecturer from J.N. College, Pasighat, who came to this region in the early fifties claims that he saw some people, both male and female, come down to Pasighat from the interior places completely naked. The Political Office at Pasighat then issued a circular to the effect that a bamboo knot would be used by the males and a flat tree leaf by the females for covering their secret organs, whenever they come to Pasighat. It was easy to implement, if not always successfully, through the children studying in Pasighat High School. In the interior villages what was going on is easily understandable. Basu Deo Singh, a businessman, who came to Pasighat in the thirties tells the similar stories. When I joined NEFA service in 1966 I saw Kebang Borang, now a Minister in Apang ministry, on his loin cloth. In 1982, when I went to Adi Pasi, an interior village, I saw a young girl of about 18 without a single thread on her body. On my enquiry I was told that she did not like to put on cloth and the society was indifferent to it.

Ogom Dai bears whatever has been said above. He says people from Karko put on tree barks which have a bushy look.

Observing the *Adi* people at Pasighat today one may not believe

the people were at such stage some forty years back. It may look like a transformation taking place in the society within these years. One may not see a single man, male or female of the above description at Pasighat today. Exception may, however, be noticed in gent's putting on loin cloth, in place of 'bark of uddal' or uncovered female body above the waist. But that will constitute less than one percent of the total population of Pasighat, and that too confined to old people coming to the town from the village. A list of such changes may hold the pictures to the reader's eye.

(i) *Hair Style*: Even today old people, both male and female, have their hair cut in round shape, as observed above, in the villages. But it is difficult to find one with that hair cut who is below forty or so. In the vicinity of the towns like Pasighat, Mebo, Ruksin, Pangin, Boleng, Yinkyong, Mariang, Roing, Tuting and so on even the village folk have adopted modern hair style as prevalent in India. If some ladies have their hairs cropped to 2 to 3 inches it is not traditional *Adi* hair style; it is the modern style of keeping short hair. Mrs. Rongili Mibang, M.A., an officer in the Education Deptt. maintains short hair—but it is by no means a traditional *Adi* hair style. Traditional hair style is a round-shaped cut including the front inproportion—whereas Mrs. Mibang's is a short hair style as the universal gent's hair-style. In October 1991, when I went to the upper region to a village near Yingkiyong I saw ladies of 30 years age group, sporting in long hair using hair pins, clips, though they have not shunned the traditional collection of fire-wood in big basket carried on their heads. The change is definitely caused by the school going girls and by the video cassettes very often shown in the video halls cropped up in every nook and corner of the state.

(ii) *Decorative Ornaments* : Earlier *Beyop*, the sign of unmarried state of a girl, bamboo bangles or brass bangles put on by ladies from wrist to the elbow, heavy bamboo piece expanding the hole in ear-lob with a ring to dangle on the shoulder, the canerings put on by ladies from the calf and the cross are not to be seen. Talom Rukbo's main complaint is

that by shunning the *beyop* the unmarried girls pretend to be married these days. Though he may not be correct in complaining that the *Adi* girls do not want to show themselves as unmarried; because in the modern long gale (a petticoat like cloth earlier put on upto the knee only now falling at the ankle) and a shirt there is no much scope for the *beyop*. The bamboo/brass made bangles have been replaced by artificial glass or lac bangles put on in the wrist only. Similarly the heavy ear-rings have given way to the artificial nickel alloy-coated iron/aluminium ear-rings available in the market. As to the cross it may be said that not only the new-borns are not tattooed with cross, but the tattoo is erased from the face of those who were tattooed some thirty years ago. This has proved that there is no religious significance attached to the tattoo as Father Crick and Major Vetch tend to attach.¹⁹ In place of the cross the young girls today are fond of using the artificial coloured beauty spot in their forehead as the Hindu girls put on vermilion spot. From the seventies of this century the gale earlier put on by ladies upto the knee has been extended to the ankle under the influence of Galong girls.

- (iii) *Superstition and Cleanliness* : As it is natural for the primitive society to have superstitious the *Adis* had also superstitions as it has been noticed in an earlier Chapter. Than along with the coming of an outsider to a village some spirit might come to cause disease, epidemics etc. So from such an outsider the spirit was removed with an exorcism as described by Father Crick of his own experience in his visit to Mebo: We have seen how his body was purified and cleared of all spirits putting on some leaves on his body.²⁰ This performance of exorcism is not to be found today. In cleanliness the *Adis* have changed to a great extent. I am not sure whether there is anybody in the interior village taking no bath in life; but the people having education and having contact of town life make use of water for cleaning purpose. In the students hostel the boys and girls raise hue and cry if water flow is not there in the morning hours.

Another interesting thing observed by the first British visitors—the tribal curiosity to know a stranger in person is not there. On the arrival of stranger in a village he is usually taken care of by the *Gam* or the responsible young boys; nobody would come to see him in person. But a century ago it was quite different: “Our hats were pulled off our heads and went round of hundred heads in as many minutes .. Each and every thing we wore was felt, and then we were asked to take off our things. We took off our coats, and explained that we had got nothing on under our *banions*, but untill we had opened these also the gaping crowd were incredulous, and they appeared to disbelieve their eyesight, as they put their hands on our skin and felt our chests. Then we had to take off our boots and socks, as they declared we had no feet, and when we had done so the girls got hold of our feet and patted ... The women are excessively rollicky and jolly, and the unmarried girls have apparently any amount of latitude given to them.”²¹ This is said by J. Needham who had been in touch with the tribes for twenty three years. Even in the twentieth century that curiosity was there in the *Adis*. Talo Kado, now a political leader, in his last forties said they had even gone to see the white man’s stool to satisfy their curiosity as to the shape, size, colour and smell of the stool. This was, probably, not because of their check of a foreigner what they might carry, but because of their ignorance about what other human beings may have as their physical features. They might, perhaps, be guided by their mythological knowledge about existence of improved people in the land of Engo Takar, and there appeared in front of- them a completely different man in colour, dress, fashion, language and other. They got curious to know him with feeling of touch on him and all that he had got. Now, with the frequent appearance and personal mixing up with such outside people the tribal people do not have that curiosity. For, since 1912 to 1948 British people were frequently seen at Pasighat and around it—and they are followed by the presence of Indian people.

It is interesting to note that the European visitors till the beginning of the twentieth century have not mentioned the existence of Raseng. Could it be that none of them was interested to know about it or that in spite of their asking about existence of a girl’s dormitory they were

not told about it. Positive argument can be forwarded in support of both the cases. The Europeans were shown not only the *Musup* or *Dere*, but they were also told about marriage. When they were shown the *Musup* and explained its function the visitors must have asked about the existence of a similar dormitory for the girls. They might not be told about its existence out of fear or a complex. And when the local people told about marriage system they could have told about the *Raseng* which is an inseparable part of marriage. Simply the visitors did not take note of it. We also cannot believe that *Raseng* was not there at Mebo in 1825—they definitely had *Musup*. The *Adis*, of course feel hesitant to show the *Raseng* in their village. After coming into contact with the non-tribal people they might have considered *Raseng* as an obnoxious custom and so they are not enthusiastic in showing it to the non-tribal outsiders. Then after the administrative system was introduced in Abor Hills in 1912 the Britishers gradually advocated the abolition of this institution. With the introduction of education this institution is facing the problem of slow death. In 1982, when I visited Damro I found very much the existence of *Raseng*. In 1987, when the local people told me that the school going children do not have the tendency to go to *Raseng* i was not to be surpriseb. And in a few years' time this institute may disappear from the society as a whole. In 1991, during my third visit I found *Raseng* has become a different institution, not a one playing significant role in marriage.

Musup has also faced the problem of slow death. Many *Musup* buildings in different villages have been, found rusted and cobwebbed for non-use of these buildings. This is caused by various factors.

(i) *Disappearance of internecine wars*: It has already been noticed that there were frequent inter-tribal wars. In the language of Apel Perme. an *Adi* from Damro, who retired as Political Asstt. at Pasighat, 'Konning manning Ngolu situm simiyope yetonena' (in the past we lived like bears and tigers). Whenever some unknown people from other village were seen in a village they were pounced on and killed. For such enmity amongst the villagers eveiy village had to be guarded by the young people sleeping in the *Musup*. In absence of such things at present it is not felt necessary for the youths to pass

their nights in the *Musup*.

(ii) *Spread of Education*: Along with the spread of education the families have either arranged room in their main houses or constructed separate small hut for study of their children. In Balek and Ayeng, near Pasighat, - many such small huts can be seen where the young boys sleep at night instead of going to the *Musup*. It has been observed in the village that the *Musups* are not properly walled for sleeping and no hearth in the *Musup* is lit for days together.

(iii) Unlike in the past the day to day village activities are not practically decided by the *Kembang* everyday in the *Musup*.

The people have become individualistic to a great extent and instead of working as per the common decision in the *Kembang* every day they do as per their own convenience. And so *Kembang* is not an everyday affair thus leaving the *Musup* hall unutilised; it is used only when there is a community festival or when some common guests for the village pay a visit to a particular village. Even the festivals have these days started becoming ritualistic; for the young generation do not have faith in the efficacy of the festivals and see these with an indifference. They appear attracted towards the modern things outside their own culture. This has resulted in the young generation's ignorance about their own mythology, culture, traditions, customs etc. It is this which actually has made Talom Rukbo to compose a song for his singing in many social functions: "Adie nyokdak bong" (the *Adi* society is lost). Due to development of communication every new thing introduced in the town travels far and wide have been made easier within a short time.

This attitude to the modern things has led to the general change of attitude towards medical department. Earlier the *Adis* took resort to their superstitious belief in sham for cure of a disease. As it has been noticed in the Chapter on Religion the *Adis* had complete faith on the efficacy of exorcism or on ransom through *ipak* to the spirit causing disease in a man. Father Crick in 1853 was considered by Mebo people as an efficient *Dondai* (priest mendicant of Europe in the mediaeval ages) who was in great demand for curing their all sorts of diseases and ailments. Father Crick carried with him some tablets and ointments for common diseases and muscular pain. And when

he could relieve some patients of their ailments the *Adi* exclaimed: “you are the most powerful Dondai, no spirit can resist you; your hand cures everything.”²² Seeing such attitude of this tribal people Father Crick commented: “The only remedy these people ever heard of is religion. They have recourse to neither drugs nor medical treatment of any kind: even the use of simple medicine is unknown. Such things are according to them perfectly useless, as all disease, both internal and external are directly caused by either bad spirit or good spirits having some good reasons to show their dissatisfaction. Exorcism is therefore the only remedy and the only doctor is priest.”²³ In the sixties of this century local people were hardly seen in the General Hospital at Pasighat. The doctors and other social organisations had tough time in convincing these people to take recourse to medicine for their cure. Even when some patients with serious disease were brought to the hospital they performed *ipak* (rituals) even in the hospital. Today, however, the attitude has completely changed and Pasighat Hospital is full with tribal patients. So are the hospitals in the district experiencing treatment of tribals. The tribal doctors engaged in the hospital did their job unknowingly, perhaps, in bringing about this change.

The impact of education practically introduced in Arunachal after independence is tremendous in bringing about social changes. When India became independent in 1947 Arunachal, then Frontier Tract, had only one L.P. School. Seen from time factor Arunachal has very speedy development of education. It has spread in every nook and corner of the state within a short time. From a single primary school in 1947 there are now more than eleven hundred L.P. schools, two hundred seventy Middle Schools, seventy three Secondary Schools, forty nine Higher Secondary Schools, four colleges, one University, four training institutes. In addition to these one Technical Institute known as North-East Regional Institute of Science and Technology meant for the whole Northeastern Region is also situated in Arunachal Pradesh (at Itanagar). The result in bringing about social, economic and cultural changes in the society is tremendous.

It has already been noticed that in spite of women *Miri* (priest) which plays a significant role in the social life of the *Adis* the *Adi*

woman did not have any role in administrative, judiciary and executive spheres of their social life. One unique aspect of *Adi* society is the democratic attitude traditionally coming down from time immemorial. That helped a lot in growth of female education without a hitch as in many parts of India. Unlike in U.P., Bihar, Assam etc, the *Adis* did not raise a question regarding the propriety of female education. In the lower level equal number of boys and girls are sent to the school. But due to social systems of early marriage the girls are to drop their studies in the higher level whereas the boys continue to execute their higher studies. Yet, a good number of girls have come forward resisting their parent s' /guardians' schemes of marriage etc. to their study; some of them have completed their study even after marriage and child-birth. This is an indirect impact of education on the woman in raising her status in the society.

The woman in *Adi* society was in a degraded situation so far as her status in marriage and administrative aspects was concerned. As to marriage it has been noticed that she becomes a sort of clan property of her husband. It has also been noticed that she has no place in the *Kebang*, the aboriginal administrative system of the *Adis*. As in a patriarchal society, as the *Adis* are, the males have a very low opinion about women. In marriage, she suffers as a being becoming the property of her husband's clan, and on becoming widow without a male child being deprived of the right on landed property and valuable *tadoks* of the husband. And in *Kebang* I am told by my informer- she was debarred because of her low position to be able to give judgement.

Willi the introduction of British Administration, and at a later stage, education, there is noticed a sea change in this concept. In respect of marriage and family life woman has been freed to a great extent. The picture of the wind of change, in this respect can be had in Lummer Dai's *Kainar Mulya* (in Assamese). With the coming up of education the old tradition of child-marriage is shaken to the root. The death knell to such tradition was rung by the protest of the young generation against the evils of such tradition. The refusal by Gumba to go to Dakto, her husband, both married in their innocence of childhood, was supported by the young generation and educated

youths. The young generation shouted slogans like: (1) To sell daughter—Great sin (2) Child-marriage—Throw out (3) To take price of daughter—equal to take her blood.”²⁴

Child marriage, today, has come down to a great extent, if not completely abolished.

Similarly, education has its impact on the administrative system of the society. Though woman, in general, has got no place in *Kebang* even today but as a Panchayat member a lady can participate in the *Kebang*. The *Adi* democratic attitude has made it possible for woman to take part in the Panchayat and other election without any hitch. Mrs. Omem Moyong Deori, now an M.L.A. in the Arunachal Assembly, was awarded Padmashri for her social welfare activities done as leader of some social organisations. Though Omem has not yet occupied a place in traditional *Kebang* she has become influential member in various social organisations of the society thus exerting tremendous influence in shaping a new society. Mrs. Bormoti Dai, Mrs. Aroti Tangu, Mrs. Rongili Mibang are active members of some social organisations like *Adi Agom Kebang* (Adi Language and Literary Society) and other organisations aiming at improvement of culture and at reformation of the society. There are many such influential social organisations in the small town and urban villages of both the Siang and Dibang Valley districts. These organisations are indirectly very much responsible for their shunning of old superstitions and taboos.

We have already noticed the innumerable taboos strictly observed in the society in the past. With their exposure to the world of material comforts and education these tribal people have gradually realised the value of works for earning money. Added to this -services in government and industrial departments the people today do not have sufficient time to waste by sitting idly at home for days together observing the taboos. So they have given up these taboos to a great extent except in some private aspects like observation of taboos by women, in general, and pregnant women, in particular, Nyonam (taboo), for instance, is observed by the whole community during epidemic broken out in a neighbouring village. But a school teacher or an other department employee cannot afford to stay back at home for days

together for out-break of some disease in the next village. Thus the society under compulsion, started violating the taboos, and once one relaxation was allowed the people take advantage of it. In the mean time they could see that nothing tangible effect is there for violation, of a taboo. So, these days it has come down to the minimum which are essential.

Introduction of Christianity has played a role in this particular respect. Though attempts were being made to convert the *Adis* to Christianity since the middle of the last century nothing tangible could be done upto the Anglo-Abor war of 1911-12. With the defeat of the *Adis*, the British Indian government utilised the scope to make a survey of the whole area of present Arunachal Pradesh and on the basis of the report submitted by the expedieionary team the McMahan Line was laid in 1914. That authorised the Missionaries to go inside for their works. By 1945 quite a number of *Adi* people from Dambuk, Roing and foot-hills area of Pasighat were converted to Christianity. Taking that as a base the Missionary works of conversion have been going on with ever expanding manner.

Conversion to Christianity is to strike at the root of superstitions, the basis of taboos. At the time of conversion a person is persuaded that no spirit, ghost etc. (Uyu in *Adi*) can come near one if one bears the name of Jesus Christ in one's heart or the Bible in hand. It is Dana Pertin, M.A., who told me that since his conversion to Christiantiy he has become free from the disturbance of ghosts and goblins. In fact he lost one of his sons in- a jeep accident. According to *Adi* aboriginal faith the soul of an accident victim (taleng sina) does not leave the earth's atmosphere and keeps on disturbing the family and others. Pertin says he was haunted by the spirit, but since his conversion he is free from any such disturbance. It is but natural that he would not observe any traditional taboos relating to such matters.

Another important factor observed in the introduction of Christianity is that it has started changing the cultural nature of the society. In 1984, I asked a peon, Tanya Koyu, for arranging rice powder and Apong for the festival. Expressing his inability to do so he explained since he had become a Christian he would not do these. Simple minded

man he was! Otherwise I have seen educated Christian *Adis* at Pasighat welcoming and receiving with apong, people going to their houses for the festival greetings. Mr. Bakin Pertin, (a Christian) an Ex. M.P. and now the vice-chairman of the Scheduled Tribes Commission, India, is an example. In 1984, again, I went to Roing in Dibang Valley to attend the *Adi Agom Kebang* conference. There at Parbuk which was the actual venue of the conference, I preferred to stay with an *Adi* family, instead in the government I.B. where my stay was arranged. For 3 days of the conference I observed the perfect *Adi* cultural way the family lived. The old lady of the house was all appreciation of the things done in the conference. She also appreciated with wonder the *Adi* mythological drama presented by Talom Rukbo as a part of the cultural function in-connection with the conference. Next day after the closing of the conference, however, was Sunday and Dana Pertin's mother took me to the village church. I was rather surprised to have seen the old lady of the house and many other ladies who were mad for dancing to the Miri songs of Talom Rukbo attending the church. Christianity, as such, is a mere religion to them, culturally they remain till then as *Adis*. What I mean to say is that though the old generation with their deep-seated *Adi* culture are sticking to the old cultural traditions the younger generation is gradually giving up the traditional things. Hence is the difference between the change in the peon and the old lady.

It should also be pointed out that the young generation's coming away from cultural traditions is not due to Christianity alone but education also. The young generation, exposed to the outside culture, have the psychological tendency to believe that whatever they have are inferior to the outside things and as a result they pick up other's things at the cost of their own. The young generation do not want to know their mythology, their traditional dances and songs, their age old customs. It is not that all the traditional customs are worth inculcable, but it is the nature of culture and discarding the whole edifice is the death of a culture. That the *Adis* are doing that is reflected in Talom Rukbo's sarcastic song—*Adi nyokdak bong*—(*Adi* culture is lost). The song is sung by Rukbo satirically so that the young generation's conscience is stricken and they fall back upon their own

culture.

The introduction of political system amongst the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh has also caused a considerable change in social aspects. In a speech, as a chief guest in the valedictory function of the Annual College Week of J.N. College, Pasighat, 25.11.91, R.K. Khirme, Education Minister, has outlined the changes brought by politics in Arunachal Pradesh. So far as the impact of active politics on the tribal societies of India is concerned the situation in Arunachal Pradesh is unique. In the other tribal regions of India the political activities has been either revived or intensified since independence. The tribal societies of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya had the tests of practical politics since the later part of the thirties and after independence they entered into the party and election system. But in Arunachal Pradesh election was not known till the promulgation of the North East Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation of 1967 in 1969. Till then Arunachal was administered by non-Arunachalese under the Advisor to the Governor of Assam. R. K. Khirme says, till then Arunachal people did not know how to ventilate their grievances in respect of development in education, economy and culture. Whatever development took place till then were the results of the political officers' initiatives in the Frontier Head quarter, sub-division and circle offices. They, under Advisor, prepared plans and projects and executed. The local people did not have any forum to ventilate their necessities. Quite naturally the developments that took place till then were the developments as per the administrative officers' ideals. In 1969 only the people's participation in the development is registered. Now the Arunachalese know what they want and how to get them. R. K. Khirme gave the example of education system. In Arunachal Pradesh all medium of instructions have been tried, but with the people's participation in the practical politics they could have one medium of instruction i.e. English.

Practical politics, of course, have necessary impact on the social structure. The earlier social division of the people on tribe/clan line has been replaced by party line. To show it clearly we may take the examples of some sub-groups of the major *Adi* group of tribe: the *Padams*, the *Pasis*, and the *Milangs* and so on. At highest level each

of these sub-groups is strongly adhesive so far as their relation with the other group(s) are concerned. To protect the interest of the *Padams*, for example, in relation with the others every *Padam* is well-knit in the *Padam* group. Coming down to the clan level each member of the *Pertin*, *Borang* or *Lego*, clans, within the *Padams* in their social relations like marriage, agriculture, property etc. gradually protect the interest of their respective clans. This clan and group adhesiveness is very much affected by practical politics and it is replaced by party adhesiveness. At one level, the sub-group's adhesiveness gives way to party adhesiveness. The sub-group members are now divided into different parties—the *Padams* may have strong allegiance to Congress, Peoples Party of Arunachal and other parties depending on the number of parties operating in the area. At another level the *Pertins/ Legos/Borangs* are divided on the party line. Thus the *Pertin* clan people are divided into supporters of *Bakin Pertin* and *Dana Pertin* in the elections. For the interest of their own party they may be more loyal to and friendly with the *Legos* than with the *Pertins*. Coming further down the clash may be within the same family. At *Pasighat Tanya Dabi* and *Tako Dabi*, cousins, have different allegiance to and friendship “with others rather than with their own brothers. Earlier this sort of division was unimaginable. Thus, their social behaviour has undergone a sea-change. Time is not far when the husband and wife, the core of the nucleous family, will be divided on party line.

Improvement of road communications had its concomitant effects on the society. First impact of this improvement is seen in trade relations with the other societies. In this connection the local people are to go to the neighbouring states—particularly Assam—thus making friendship with some Assamese families for various reasons. Thus they have interactions in respect of social behaviours. In this the tribal people are more affected by the outside culture rather than its opposites. This is reflected in the marriage custom of the tribal people. It has already been noticed that traditionally the groom is to give more to the bride's parents—amounting almost to the bride price. Moreover, earlier there was no marriage function with feasting of the people—they have the system of collecting the clan members

only in the bride's house to share the meat, apong etc. given by the groom on the settlement of marriage. Both these things are now being changed. Almost like the dowry pattern the rich parents of the bride have started offering heavy articles to the groom. Kabang Borang, now a minister in Arunachal Assembly, has offered even a car to his son-in-law. In the marriage of Tapum Jamoh, Ex. M.L.A. and Tabar Jomoh, Vice-President, Zila Parisad, heavy feasts were organised in their houses on their marriage occasions. Days are not far when this will become a custom of the society.

Trade and commerce have also got its effect on craft and fashion. It is but universal that machine made things drive away the hand made things from their usages. The markets are flooded with machine-made cloths. The money-making business firms even produce the design of cloths used by the tribal people. The result is the great fascination of the local people for these cloth. The young girls these days, even in the interior villages, are found mostly on the gale of machine made cloths instead of their home spun one. Another fascination of the modern girls is for the Salwar-pyjama). Thus the handloom craft has Suffered a set-back. The women in the villages are rarely found at their loom if it is not for weaving *badu*, a kind of blanket woven with hard thread and raw cotton. Similarly the men folk have gone for pant, coat and jacket instead of loin cloth, *galuk* (both shirt and coat made at home with coarse threads, shirts, of course, with design). From the speed the changes are going on it may be deduced that disuse of the loom is not at distance if some movement is not organised at social organisation or government level.

Another very important thing of the *Adi* society—Kiiipar (a wooden block with a hole of about 10 inch depth for husking, cleaning and grinding rice) has almost come to disuse. Now all these things are done by the machine which have been installed eveiy nook and corner.

As it is natural with any growing society all these have caused a change in the mental attitude of the society. Those days of contentment with whatever they have are gone. This is replaced by a mad race for earning more and more money by which they can enhance not only their physical comfort but also social status. People have lost their social adhesiveness and become more and more individualistic.

But, for want of business acumen, they have the tendency to go for easy money. For these, two/three scopes are open to them: (i) timber and (ii) contract for road construction. Lakhs of rupees have been earned by young boys and even girls, in these two businesses. Unfair means like stealing, bribery etc. have been talked of by the people. Till the other day stealing was almost unknown. But these days reports of stealing by *Adi* boys are also there. Stealing was not there earlier for fear of severe punishment including death and stocking in the past. But introduction of court and police in the administrative subdivisions and circle offices greatly removed such punishment, at least when they steal from the non-tribals and government offices.

Another effect of road communication and marketing facilities is seen in the change of their food habit. The *Adis* may be called an omnivorous people, in respect of meat especially. Whatever animal they could kill in the jungle or their own domestic animals like methun, pig, cow, goat, dog (among the Galongs) etc. they butcher and cut into big pieces and dry on the smoke and preserve for future consumption. For immediate consumption only they cut this into smaller pieces and then boil it for hours without any use of edible oil, spice, onion etc. In fact, they did not have the frying system—they knew boiling and baking only.

Another thing to be pointed out here is that they did not take milk or any milk product. To their concept, as in many Indian tribal societies, milk is the pus of the animals and so not to be taken.

Presently a considerable change has been observed in both these respects. From my personal experience I could say with certainty that they are changing towards wider Indian culture. I use to go to an *Adi Pasi* family (Ogom Dai) since 1970. When I first went to them as a guest I was received with rice, boiled dry meat and *apong*. After some time I started staying the night in their perfectly *Adi* house. Without any hesitation they cooked all their foods under my eyes (the *Adis* do not differentiate between a member of their family and an outsider in respect of- exposure of cooking; unlike the plains people who have the custom of cooking the food inside, the *Adis* will cook in the fireplace around which the guests sit) and they served me all boiled things as they cook. From the beginning of the eighties

they began to give me meat etc. cooked in oil and onion. Similarly, the family which used to give me tea liquor only without sugar and milk, now offer tea with all these; and sometimes if one item is short they beg excuse for it.

Once in 1991 the wife of one Jerang, whom I taught in the mid seventies, was seen asking a shop keeper to give her Dalda. I asked her what she would do with Dalda and in reply she said, 'Dalda ligla roti doyen-ena, Sir' Sir, we take chapati (roti) made in Dalda. Then I commented that the *Adis* do not take these things. And she said '*Silo melo takam sim ngolu dodung, Sir,*' (Sir, these days we take all these things). The shop of Bhandari Moyong in the outskirts of an *Adi* area is packed with tinned foods, edible oils etc. And when I asked him who are usually the customers of these articles, he answered '*Adi ami*' (*Adi* people). Then I remarked that the *Adi* people living in the town must have developed the habit of taking these things. And he said, 'Ma . . . a dolung kidar takame gakhir, tulaag, dalda resabomdung. Silo-melo ngolu takam a sim dodu nena', (No, no, all the villagers take milk, mustard oil, Dalda etc. These days all of us take these things). I have got the experience of taking preserved dry fish with maggots inside during the seventies and aromatic fresh fry fish in the last part of eighties in the same village.

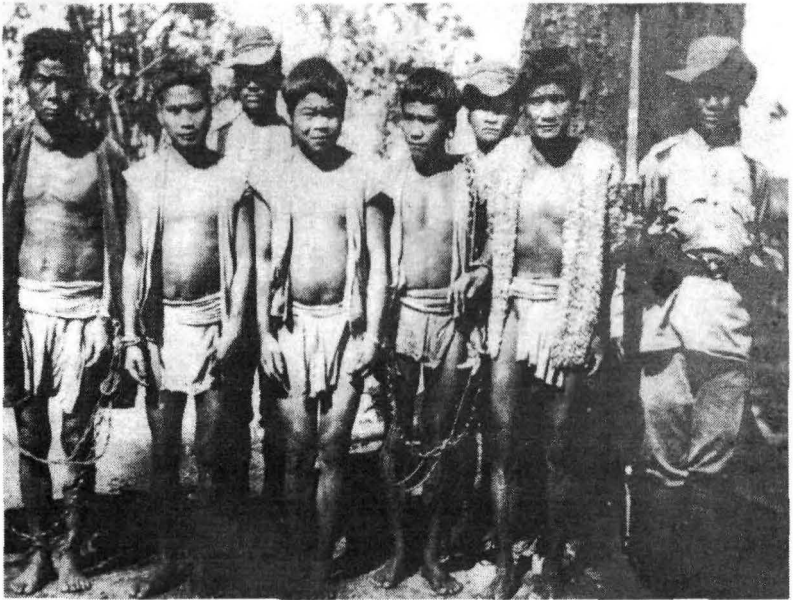
Road communication and marketing facilities have affect on still another aspect—house construction. Earlier, the housing materials consisted of articles available in the nearby jungles. Very commonly available things in almost all the jungles of the *Adi* areas are trees and bamboos. So these two constituted the common housing materials in all the *Adi* areas. These two are heavily used as posts, walls, floor, beams and rafters. For the roof the articles available in the jungles, or cultivated, are *tag* (toko-leaf), *kojing* (bark of banana tree), *tara* (cane leaf), and *tache* (thatch grass). These four items are used at different places according to availability of the material. On both banks of the Siang they mostly use *tag*; in the Yamne Valley, Mariang circle they use *kojing*; in Roing sub-division they use *tache*; and in the foot-hills area on the right bank of the Siang *tara* is used. Even today these articles are widely used. But as a result of road communication and marketing facilities articles like CI sheet, asbestos, cement, brick,

rods, tubular turss have been made available in the market. The moneyed people have immediately switched over to the new things. Initially these articles were introduced by the administration for construction of the departmental buildings. That gradually attracted the local people. They could see the merits of the buildings constructed with these Materials with minimum use of timber and bamboo. Those who entered into government job some twenty to thirty years back they got the tast of the buildings constructed with imported materials. They found these houses more hygienic and good looking. So they went for such house in their village also which are on the road side. Thus these new houses in the village initially stood as a symbol of status. So the other moneyed people also went for this after sometime. Now the village folk try as much as possible to construct buildings with these materials both as more hygienic ones and as status symbol. A traveller in the *Adi* area earlier could see from a distance cluster of houses on the spur of a rock with their deep gray colour; these days one will see these villages spotted with CI sheet or even concrete buildings.

The *Adis* are rather transforming, not merely changing, towards a new society to merge with the culturally broad-based Indian society. What is feared is that they may lose their identity at a very heavy cost of values. For, the *Adi* culture is a value-based culture with enormous good values. I am afraid this “uncouth”, ‘barbaric’, “uncivilised”, Abor’ of a century back is going to be so called civilised one stripped off all his values of honesty, simplicity, self-contentment and hospitality. He has already entered into the material competition. In the mad-race of competition if he loses the values of honesty, simplicity and self-contentment it would be a heavy loss to culture. But that is the price of civilisation. The *Adis* are in the process of civilisation; the change from *Abor* to *Adi* is a part of the process.

Notes & Reference

1. E. T. Dalton : Quoted by Verrier Elwin, in his *Democracy in NEFA*. pp. 24-25.
2. R. S. Mann & C. K. Mann : *Tribal Cultures and Change*, p. 2.
3. *Ibid*, p. 2.
4. Verrier Elwin : *Democracy in NEFA*, pp. 20-21.
5. *Ibid*, p. 2.
6. R. Wilcox : Quoted by V. Elwin in his *NEFA in the 19th Century*, p. 220.
7. *Ibid*, p. 234.
8. J. Butler : Quoted by V. Elwin in his *NEFA in the 19th Century*, p. 225.
9. *Ibid*, p. 225.
10. M. M. Crick : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* p. 244.
11. Major Vetch : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* p. 227.
12. M. M. Crick : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* p. 228.
13. E. T. Dalton : *Tribal History of Eastern Bengal*, p. 31.
14. *Ibid*, p. 32.
15. *Ibid*, p. 32.
16. *Ibid*, p. 32.
17. *Ibid*, p. 28.
18. A. Hamilton : *In The Abor Jungles of North East India*. pp. 19-20.
19. M. M. Crick & Major Vetch : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* pp. 227-228.
20. M. M. Crick : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* pp. 236-239.
21. J. Needham : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* p. 274.
22. M. M. Crick : Quoted by V. Elwin *op. cit.* pp. 239.
23. *Ibid*, p. 238.
24. Lummer Dai : *Kanyar Mulya*, p. 66.



Murderers of Williamson



Unmarrird Adi girls wearing bayops



Adi Ponung dance



A Muthon being howled in an wooden fram for sacrifice



An Adi barn with protection posts for checking entry of rat



Abor Wardance



The Author on his Adi ugon while pouring damro area



Two young Adi girls standing in front of their house



An Adi Burial



Front portion of an Adi house



A Muthon redy for sacrifice



Front open portico

About the Author



Born in the later thirties of the twentieth century at Bhalaguri, a very interior village in the erstwhile Kamrup District, now in the district of Barpeta, Jogendra Nath had his school education at Bhalaguri and then at Sarupeta. Then he did his graduation from Cotton College and Post graduation in English from Gauhati University in 1965. Serving as a Lecturer in Biswanath College, in Sonitpur for about a year he got an opportunity to serve in Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat, NEFA from 17th November, 1966; and since then he put his successful service to the Department of Education of Arunachal Pradesh in the capacity of Lecturer, Senior Lecturer etc. While still in J N College, he did his Ph.D. in English Literature from Dibrugarh University. Then he joined as Registrar of Arunachal University followed by his service in Bomdila College and finally as Principal in Changlang College from which he retired in 1999.

Though a student of English literature, Dr. Nath got interested in anthropological study on the different tribes of North-East India and has already produced anthropological books on the Adis, the Monpas, the Mijis, the Misings, the Sherdukpens etc. based on his experiences acquired during the service period in Arunachal Pradesh. Distinctness of Dr. Nath's anthropological books of the tribes lies in his intensive study of the tribes through his becoming an insider of the tribes instead of studying a particular tribe from outside. Moreover, whatever experiences he had acquired during his service career in major areas of the state which he accommodated in his book entitled 'With No Regret.'

Besides these, Dr. Nath is famous as a translator of very serious books by European authors like Bertrand Russel, Desmond Morris etc. Lastly Dr. Nath has some critical writings on social science in Assamese language. His creative writings are mostly based on reasoning on the social aspects of the Indian society.