



Spiritual beliefs and practices of Adis

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Abstract

The rites, rituals and prayer are called religious ceremony and conduct in spiritual life. Every society needs spiritual life for the survival of man. In spiritual life man's needs faith, belief and prayer etc. which altogether called worship to keep contact oneself with God. Therefore, to get peace and happiness man has to perform rites, rituals and prayers in the form of worship as means of spiritual aspiration. In Adis also there are many rites and rituals as per their faith and beliefs system like occasion of festival, healing ailment, natural calamity, birth and death etc. This paper highlighted their religious beliefs and practices. Rites and rituals make the religious faith and visible. But in tribal society they are much more than that. Rites and rituals are very closely related with social relations and the maintenance of reciprocal behavior. Besides, the rituals reflect their conception of nature, supernatural, and also their value. Moreover, in order to distance themselves from the alien beliefs and practices their own rituals get more intensively emphasized. In the process the observance of their own rituals gets revitalized. This paper focuses how each spiritual belief system is linked with the rituals and highlighted their practices and process in every aspect of spiritual belief system.

Keywords: Spirits identification, myths, beliefs system

Introduction

Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state of the North-East India. It is known as Land of the Dawn-Lit Mountains. The Adi is a major collective tribe living in the temperate and sub-tropical regions of Arunachal Pradesh. The literary meaning of "Adi" is the Hill or mountain dwellers and people of the hill. In real, Adi is a common name of many sub tribes like Bori Bokar, Padam, Minyong, Milang and Simong. Officially, they were known to the tribes of the plain as Abors, which mean an Independent, remote and unknown people. They are of mongoloid descent, who speaks the language of Tibeto-Burman family of north eastern states of India.

They are festival loving people. They observe a variety of festivals throughout the year in accordance with their religious beliefs and customary rites. The festivals are a remarkable feature of their socio-religious life. Each festival has distinct purpose for which it is celebrated. Their festival is seasonal corresponding to different phases of agricultural production or connected with fertility rites, marry making and religious in character irrespective of their observance by individuals, families or community as a whole. Their most popular festival is the Solung. It is being celebrated annually in the month of September. Besides, there are many minor festivals like Aran, Etor etc.

The indigenous faith of Arunachal Pradesh is defining in the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act 1978. According to this act indigenous faith means such religious beliefs and practices including rites, rituals, festivals, observance, performance, and abstinence, performed by the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Regarding the faith and belief of Adi, Tai Nyori's book History and Culture of the Adis wrote that the Adis while living in the inhospitable environment tried to adjust themselves with nature and wanted to live in peace and free from diseases, suffering and misfortunes. Their strong desire to know the creator of the natural phenomena led them to compose a series of myths, legends and traditional ballads called

Abang. Thus, the origin of faith, belief, and practices of the Adis like most of the primitive tribes lies in their constant attempt to adjust themselves with the environment which surrounds them.

Origin of Human and Spirits

The Adis believed that there is an unseen supreme power of the universe which is the sources of heavenly objects like sun, moon, stars, earth and the source of organic ingredients of life element like air, water, heat and light. For them supernatural world consists of spirits malevolent and benevolent called as Uyus. These spirits are very closer to the physical world. As a result of this closer relationship, effects of their bad intention are repeatedly encountered by man in form of disease, suffering, and all form of misfortunes. There are numerous deities and spirits controlling various aspects of life, and the various sub-tribes have their own pantheon of deities. Animal sacrifice is the principal attribute of all their festivals and rites. The village priest looks after the proceedings of the several rituals that mark their social and religious calendars.

The main malevolent spirit is Epom (spirit of the Jungle), believed to be residing in the Rotne (Banyan Tree). Their attribute is the habit of carrying human being alive. Sometime the Epom kill the human beings in the jungle when the person violates the code of behavior expected within the jungle. They believed that Epom (spirit of jungle) and Tani (human being) was descendants from the Pedong Nane. That is why they considered Epom as their own brother. As per their myth Pedong Nane gave birth to Nibo and Robo. From the Nibo, human beings were descendants. Robo and his descendants are known by a special name as Epom. It is believed that all the malevolent spirits are the descended from Epom.

There is a reason of attack by the Epom toward human being and caused for the death. There is also a reason for the invisible of Epom for them. As per their myth once upon a time Tani and Epom lives as neighbor settled respectively

on the banks of the Siang river and in the large trees of the forest. But both were the economically competitors that was why the relationship between the Nibo and Robo was unpleasant. The two brothers decide to share game: each one thus sets his own traps. Tani however, jealous of the preys of Epom, so the Tani uses to steal them.

Spiritual Beliefs

The disappointment of Nibo upon Robo could not settled. To take revenge, Robo hijacked two elder sons of the Nibo. Nibo then traced his two elder sons in every corner of the mountain. At last he only found the bone of his two elder sons. Right from that onwards till today they believed that the descendants of Robo that is Epom hijacked alive the human from the village. Regarding the reason behind the invisible of Epom, they believed that the Robo was killed by the Nibo as per well made planed with his wife. But the soul of Robo had always visible by the Nibo. Whenever Nibo saw the soul of Robo, he always used to cover his eyes from the Ekkam leave due to that Tani unable to see Epom. But Robo found nothing else to cover his eyes due to that still Epom able to see Tani.

They also believe in spirit called Biri bit (the spirit of water). The legend about the spirit goes their one of the generals of Biri Bit who was Biri Biak moved with high flood current and commanded the waves and current to knock against the bank and cause erosion. Another general Ladang Layu causes all kinds of accident related to water. They believed that whenever a person drawn toward the water, Biri Bik hack him with an axe on the forehead. Those who have no cuts mark on their forehead, it is believed that they got drowned in water due to their own fault. The spirit of beast is one of the most dreaded spirits to them known as Banji Banmang. This spirit is a blood thirsty and takes pleasure form with destruction of life. They also believed in female spirits called Niji Nyipong. It is believed to be responsible for sickness, mortality, abortion etc. There is also another spirit of a female called Lesi Letang who causes accidents, crime, injustice, jealous, and destruction.

The spirits of the dead form a separate category in the supernatural world called as Urom. They believe that every individual after death turns into a spirit. Sometimes, they cause illness to human being, which is called Urom-Kanam. Remedy to this, the priest has been hiring for the driven out the Urom in which the chaff should filled in a container with the ekkam (leaf) and put a bone of any animals with edible materials like tobacco, sugar, tea, etc and must say "sina taleng siyor urom koyike, si ammo narang ko moko, bone letik komoko, sim gelangala enkalangkuka, ai motokuka". It means oh spirit! Whoever you are, we are presenting you a basket of rice, thigh of a mithun. Take this and go away. They believe in such activities and perform practically when such cases occur in the villages. They also believed in the Asi Among Uyu (the spirit of earth). The Asi Among spirit causes Amo Kinam (failure of crops) or cause damages to the house by lightening, storm, earthquake, flood etc.

Another belief system is Gamsi which means when a person ancestor appears in his/her dream, it is construed that it is an expression of fondness of the dead person towards the living. Symbolism is that the living shall be affected by ill health. When the cause of a person's affliction is identified as gamsi, the priest is summoning. After a process of divinity by the priest the soul cursing the ailment is identified. Remedy to this, take an ekkam leaf and put on it

a handful of Apong (alcohol), rice and a piece of meat and then roll it. After that invoking the name of the ancestor responsible for Gamsi "gamsi tunam eyike aimolangkuka, gamsi yikumapeka sim bidakkunemoko" which means release your affectionate bondage and take this package. Till today they perform Gamsi practices.

The benevolent spirits were nearer to Donyi-Polo according to their genealogy of creation and beliefs. They are Kine Nane, the spirit of grain. Doying Botte, the god of wisdom and knowledge and the spiritual guardian. Kongki Botte, the god who designs the physical form of man and the life. Dadi somi, the spirit of domestic animal. Gumin Soyin, the spirit of the village and protector of the man. Bomong Mone, the spirit of warm and light. Ute Poro, the spirit of luck. Regarding the Kine Nane, they believed that when the man started to clear land for cultivation, they asked Kine-Nane, an underground Uyu, to provide them seeds. In the next day a white dog came to their village. They carefully noticed the dog and found a single piece of grain from the ear of the dog. Then they realized that the Kine Nane had really heard about their asking and provided them a single piece of grain. Since then, the annual sacrifice of Mopun is offered to Kine-Nane in exchange for good harvests.

The spirit of Yakjong is also worships by them. To recall the soul of Yakjong the Aran festival is celebrated by them. Regarding Yakjong they said that Yakjong was also a human being. He was a man of fortune and blessed. His cultivated land was also very fertile and was high product. He was also a great hunter as well as great fisher of man. So, after his dead, they started worships his soul to became fertile them cultivate land, luck come to every house of the villages and became a great hunter. In this way on the eve of the Aran festival all the male member engaged in the hunting. They exchange the hunted animals to fulfill their aspiration from the soul of Yakjong.

They also believed that the universe and all the living beings have been created by a supreme natural power or a creator which is called Sedi. It is believed that this supreme god has created a number of gods and goddesses who in turn have given birth to so many invisible spirits who control the various sphere of human life. It is believed that the entire universe is the physical embodiment of Sedi. The Abang (ballads) narrate that the Donyi and the Polo (Sun and Moon) are the two eyes of the creator with which he keeps a vigil on universe and humanity. The name of the Donyi-Polo comes next to Sedi in the Abang. As per their myth the creator becomes silent after the creation.

The Donyi-Polo thereafter becomes the protector or savior. But Tamo Mibang Opinion that Donyi-Polo is neither God nor the two celestial objects nor an object of worship but the spiritual, ideological, and philosophical aspiration to lead peaceful and meaningful life on the earth. In other words, the faith on supreme power that is manifested in the form of the sun and the moon and the practices associated with this absolute power is called Donyi-Polo.

Ruma Roy's (Nee Chowdhury) thesis *The Donyi-Polo Cult of Arunachal Pradesh a Study in Textualising Tribal Oral Tradition* analyzed the religion of the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. Further she analyzed that the Donyi Poloism is a channel, through which human aspiration and faith which are traditionally cultivated by the Adis.

Conclusion

The sacredness of the natural environment sometime expressed in a form of animism, the belief that the spirit

resides within all organic and organic substance. The religion associated with tribal are based on oral traditions. The tribal religion as cosmic religion. Cosmic religions are intimately associated with nature. The natural cycle of seasons, inorganic matter such as rocks, water and mountains and the other feature of the natural environment are invested with sacred significance. Spirit and matter are inseparable.

Religion is a human activity that can be easily accepted only within the framework of reality that it creates for itself. If you accept the existence of whatever myth, god, spirit, or supernatural force that a religion proposes, then you can see the logic of all that follows. However, most of the entities, gods or whatever, that are the basis of religious thought and action cannot have their existence validated by direct observation

The religion of all denomination has their origin in the same kind of emotional upsurge and symbolic process of reasoning as underlie a common human approach to the problem of existence. He further said that man always attempt psychological adjustment with his surrounding and thereby builds up a body of beliefs, which in their turn, form, shape and regulate his behavior. These beliefs and the resultant behavior go by the name of religion. Regarding the tribal religion he wrote that the tribal saw the various phenomena of the nature such as the rise and setting of the sun, thunder or raining and the trees. They came to worship these unseen powers

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Their village council called *Kebang* is the political institution of them, and works on a highly developed system of democracy. Important and the elder persons of a village are council members and are provided judiciary power over deciding disputes and social issues. It dispenses justice and decides all social, political and cultural matters after much debating and thoughtful consideration. It's a parliamentary democratic institution enjoying full confidence and respect of the community. Sometime if any issue arises related to spirits then the *Kebang* decide the matters.

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