

T. Raatan



# HISTORY RELIGION AND CULTURE OF NORTH EAST INDIA

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## **Preface**

The north-east Indian region is situated between the two great traditions of the Indic Asia and the Mongoloid Asia. The region comprises the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. They form part of the East Himalayan region which extends from Sikkim eastwards and embraces the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal. The location of the region is strategically important as it has international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Tibet.

The north east India is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. The region has a high concentration of tribal population. Each tribe has its own distinct tradition of art, culture, dance, music and life styles. The numerous fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for the visitors.

The present volume engrosses in itself are informative reading material, regarding the history, religion and culture of the beautiful land of north-east India and its people. The traditional religious beliefs, cultural practices and the diverse historical events in the

life of the hill people are described in detail. This work will prove highly informative to students, teachers, researchers and general public alike.



# 1

## Introduction

The North East India comprises the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. They form part of the East Himalayan region which extends from Sikkim eastwards and embraces the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal. The location of the region is strategically important as it has international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Tibet.

The area is characterised by rich bio-diversity, heavy precipitation and high seismicity. It is endowed with forest wealth and is ideally suited to produce a whole range of plantation crops, spices, fruits and vegetables and flowers and herbs. The rich natural beauty, serenity and exotic flora and fauna of the area are invaluable resources for the development of eco-tourism. Total area of the region is about 2,55,168 sq. km.

The region has a high concentration of tribal population. The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are mostly inhabited by a number of native tribes. Each tribe has its own distinct tradition of art, culture, dance, music and life styles. The numerous

fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for the visitors.

The North East is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions in India. Each of the states that form this part of India has its own culture and tradition. Assam occupies the lush lowlands of the Brahmaputra Valley and is the most densely populated. Arunachal Pradesh occupies the densely forested and sparsely populated foothills of the Himalayas, and is one of the major tourist attractions because of its Buddhist influence. Meghalaya, with its pine clad hills and lakes, is famous as the wettest region of the world. Nagaland has a rich war history that attracts tourists. The other three states-Manipur, known as the 'land of jewels', Mizoram and Tripura make up a fascinating area consisting of green valleys, lush hills with variety of flora and fauna.

There are about 220 languages spoken in these states, belonging mainly to three language families, namely Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan and Austric. The Indo-Aryan represented mainly by Asamiya and Bangla, Austro-Asiatic represented mainly by Khasi and the Sino-Tibetan family of languages is represented by the Tibeto-Burman and the Siamese-Chinese sub families also there are languages of the Tea-Tribes. However, the majority of languages spoken here belong to the former and the latter is represented by a few Thai languages like Khamyang, Khamti, Aiton, Phakyal and Turung. It is worthwhile to mention here that Ahom a language belonging to this Thai group, has over the years merged with Asamiya.

There is a hypothesis that the Tibeto-Burman tribes came through Burma and entered the hills and valleys of the North Eastern India in about 1000 B.C. They gradually encroached upon the Austric settlers who have been in these parts since 2000 to 2500 B.C. and forced most of them to take refuge in the mountainous area. That was how the Khasis thrived in their mountainous homes high

on the hills of Meghalaya. However, the maximum concentration of the Tibeto-Burman speakers is found in the North Eastern part of the country in comparison to any other part of the country. The North Eastern part of India is bounded by Bhutan, Tibet, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh.)

### **Cultural Plurality and Identity Crisis**

(The Northeast Indian region is situated between the two great traditions of the Indic Asia and the Mongoloid Asia. This geographical-cultural condition of "in-between-ness" is an important factor for the crisis of identity. It was only since the British period that the entire region came to be associated with India politically. Many leaders of the present day "underground outfits" of the region may argue that the political integration of the region to India was done without the approval of the people themselves. The lack of cultural relatedness, especially of the "tribal" culture, weakens the new political association, and the racial and cultural difference, thus, came to play vital role in defining the self-identity.)

While the northeasterners are politically Indian, they are racially and culturally Mongoloid. The consciousness of the two differing identities is pulling the people and shakes the political loyalty. The situation is worsened by the complex nature of Indic culture with which they have been out of political necessity-associated. The problem of acceptance on the part of Indic culture with its caste-ridden social system, and the problem of identification on the part of the Northeasterners because of the underlying cultural difference underpins the identity problem.)

When one talks about cultural plurality in India, since it shares little or no commonality in its traditional culture with the rest of India, the case of the "tribal" people in Northeast India is especially acute.

(To address the identity crisis in the region, one has to bear in mind the cultural plurality of the Northeast in general and the sharp difference between the people



assimilated into Indic culture and the unassimilated "tribal" people in particular. Out of constant interactions, cultures influenced each other and developed commonalities. While the Indic-sanskritic culture of India is as a foreign culture for a large part of the regions, there are also areas where it has been at home for centuries. The assimilation of people into the Indic culture became a defining factor for what is "tribal" and "non-tribal" in the identity of the people of the region today.

What Ananda Bhagabati calls the distinctive "geo-ethnic character" of the Northeast is helpful in clarifying the multicultural nature and the cultural differences between the people.

About three quarters of the region is covered by hilly terrain and one quarter is made up of the four plain areas of Assam's Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, the Tripura plains, and the Manipur plateau. Those in the thinly-populated hill areas are the people we now call "tribals," and in the fertile plains and plateau are mainly the "non-tribal" people who comprises more than 80 per cent of the total population.

In recognising the cultural foreignness of the "tribal" people of the hill regions, we should have in mind that the sanskritisation of the plain areas have been going on for centuries. Until the coming of the British rule in the early nineteenth century, the entire region was never linked politically with any major Indian political power, the cultural link of some plain areas with the Indic culture dates back centuries.

The Mahabharata already mentioned Assam as Pragjyotisha, and a reference to Kamrupa-Pragjyotisha is also found in the Kalika Purana and the Yogini Tantra. R. N. Mosahary believes that "the Aryan intrusion" in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam should have begun as early as one or two centuries before Christ.

The sanskritisation or Aryanisation of the indigenous people of Assam, the bulk of which are of mongoloid

race, reached its climax in the sixteenth century when Hinduism became the most dominant religion and the sanskritic Assamese replaced the native language. The Tipras, the indigenous people of Tripura, close kin of the Cachari-Bodos of Assam, are also Hindus from time immemorial. In the case of the Meiteis of Manipur, although there are claims of Hindu influence as early as the seventh century, the large-scale spread of Vaisnava Hinduism of Chaitanya school began only at the end of the seventeenth century.

(Around 1705, the Rajah of Manipur officially adopted Hinduism as the state's religion. Unlike in Assam, the Meiteis retain their native Tibeto-Burman language and do not follow a number of traditional Hindu practices such as child marriage, the inhibitions of divorce and widow remarriage, and the supremacy of Brahmin as well as caste hierarchy. Thus, the level of assimilation of the people into Hindu religion and Indic culture differs from people to people or tribe to tribe.

Whereas the Hindu-Assamese who are relatively inculturated Hindus with some indigenous festivals and practices of their own became sanskritised to the level where the people lost their native language and adopted many imported practices, the Meitei-Hindus retain many more indigenous practices and traditions within their adopted religion.

The Hinduisation of the region was limited to the plain areas as the Indic culture never reach the hill regions. Until the imposition of the British rule in the nineteenth century after the treaty of Yandabo, the hills were isolated and were preserved from the onslaught of sanskritisation. Their cultural foreignness to the Indic cultural system clearly marks off the hill "tribes" from the rest of Indians.

### **Role of British Rule in Ethnic Conflicts**

Continuing terrorist actions and violent demonstrations over the last five decades have turned India's

Northeast into a dangerous place. Large-scale introduction of narcotics and arms from neighbouring Myanmar (Burma) and China has made this strategically crucial area a potential theatre of violent secessionist movements.

Imbued with the British ideology of encouraging ethnic, sub-ethnic, religious, and linguistic identities—as opposed to the identity of a citizen of a sovereign nation-state—both New Delhi and the residents of Northeast India are marching recklessly along the very path prescribed by the British raj in 1862, when they laid down the law of apartheid to isolate “the tribals.” While it is not clear how long this fateful road lasts; there is little doubt what awaits them at the end.

Since India’s independence in 1947, Northeast India has been split up into smaller and smaller states and autonomous regions. The divisions were made to accommodate the wishes of tribes and ethnic groups which want to assert their sub-national identity and obtain an area where the diktat of their little coterie is recognized. New Delhi has yet to comprehend that its policy of accepting and institutionalizing the superficial identities of these ethnic, linguistic, and tribal groups has ensured more demands for even smaller states. It has also virtually eliminated any plan to make these areas economically powerful, and the people scientifically and technologically advanced.

A situation has now arisen in which New Delhi’s promised carrot of economic development evokes little enthusiasm in the Northeast. Money from New Delhi for “development” serves to appease the “greed” of a handful and to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, fresh separatist movements bring the area closer to the precipice.

Assam has been cut up into many states since Britain’s exit. The autonomous regions of Karbi Anglong, Bodo Autonomous Region, and Meghalaya were all part of pre-independence Assam. Citing the influx of Bengali Muslims



since the 1947 formation of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971, the locals demand the ouster of these "foreigners" from their soil.

Two violent movements in Assam, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and the Bodo Security Force (BdSF), are now practically demanding "ethnic cleansing" in their respective areas. To fund their movements, both the ULFA and the BdSF have been trafficking heroin and other narcotics, and indulging in killing sprees against other ethnic groups and against Delhi's law-and-order machinery. Both these groups have also developed close links with other major guerrilla-terrorist groups operating in the area, including the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isac-Muivah) and the People's Liberation Army in Manipur.

Unlike most other areas of the Northeast, Assam was better integrated with mainstream India prior to independence; Assam participated in the national independence movement and contributed much to India's intellectual and cultural wealth. Today, however, instead of encouraging its sons and daughters to train themselves in science and technology, and entrepreneurship, Assam has engulfed itself in mindless bloodletting.

In 1972, Meghalaya was carved out of Assam through a peaceful process. Unfortunately, peace did not last long in this "abode of the clouds." In 1979, the first violent demonstration against "foreigners" resulted in a number of deaths and arson. The "foreigners" in this case were Bengalis, Marwaris, Biharis, and Nepalis, many of whom had settled in Meghalaya decades ago. By 1990, firebrand groups such as the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo People (FKJGP) and the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) came to the fore, ostensibly to uphold the rights of the "hill people" from Khasi, Jaintia, and the Garo hills. Violence erupted in 1979, 1987, 1989, and 1990. The last violent terrorist acts were in 1992.

Similar "anti-foreigner" movements have sprouted up

across the Northeast, from Arunachal Pradesh in the east and north, to Sikkim in the west, and Mizoram and Tripura in the south. Along the Myanmar border, the states of Nagaland and Manipur remain unstable and extremely porous.

The root cause of the problem is the conditions set in place by British rule in the Northeast since 1826 and the formation of East Pakistan in 1947. New Delhi's inability to integrate the region stems from its failure to recognize that the British raj had converted Northeast India into a human zoo, where each tribe was allowed to roam free within its "own territory," but was not allowed to cross the boundaries set forth by their British masters and establish contact with the rest of India.

The British came into the area in the 1820s, following the Burmese conquest of Manipur and parts of Assam. The area had become unstable in the later part of the eighteenth century following the over-extension of the Ahom kingdom, a Burmese-based kingdom that reached into Assam. The instability caused by the weakening of the Ahom kingdom prompted the Burmese to move westward to secure their flanks. But the Burmese action also helped to bring in the British. The British East India Company was lying in wait to see the Ahom kingdom disintegrate.

The Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26 ended with the British emerging victorious. By the peace treaty signed at Yandabo on Feb. 24, 1826, the British annexed the whole of lower Assam and parts of upper Assam. The Treaty of Yandabo provided the British with the foothold they needed to annex Northeast India, launched further campaigns to capture Burma's vital coastal areas, and gain complete control of the territory from the Andaman Sea to the mouth of the Irrawaddy River.

The British claimed that their occupation of the northeast region was required to protect the plains of Assam from the "tribal outrages and depredations and to

maintain law and order in the sub-mountainous regions". British historians campaigning on behalf of two ex-viceroy, Lord Minto and Lord Curzon, assert that the defence of the British Empire in the northeast frontier was no less important than the northwest frontier, the scene of the so-called Great Game between Britain and Czarist Russia.

But the tribal territories in the northeastern borderland cover 700 miles of the Indian frontier. These tribal belts, from 70 to 100 miles deep, are almost impenetrable by any force from the north, e.g., China. The Indo-Burmese border, though crossed by the conquering Ahoms to capture Upper Kamarupa in upper Assam in 1228, was mountainous and heavily forested. There is little doubt that the British were not concerned about the enemy; crossing such difficult and hostile terrain was simply not possible for either Russia or China.

But for the British East India Company, gaining control in the northeast of India aided in gaining access to southern China's natural wealth. Significantly, in the Treaty of Yandabo it was mentioned that the British East India Company would have access through upper Burma to chart out a direct trade route between India and China through Assam. As early as 1826, a member of the Governor General's Council said: "We may expect to open new roads for commerce with Yunan and other southwestern provinces of the celestial empire through Assam and Manipore."

The annexation of Assam was also designed to "fix" the situation in Bhutan, Sikkim (an independent kingdom till 1975 before it merged with India), Nepal, and Tibet. The British role in Tibet, as reflected in Francis Younghusband's armed invasion of Tibet during 1901-04, the subsequent invasion of Tibet by the Manchu dynasty rulers for the first time in 1910, the fleeing of the 13th dalai lama, and the subsequent influence exerted by the British over the Tibetan and Mongolian lamas, will be



treated in future EIR reports. But it should be noted that the accession and isolation of Northeast India was designed to infiltrate Tibet, as part of London's greater geopolitical plan to upset China.

In 1838, the East India Company assumed charge of the government of Assam, in order to enhance trade and commerce, and sacked the Ahom king, who had been its "protected prince" since 1826. In the early years, the company had often run into trouble with the tribals, and clashes between the two were routinely reported.

The decision to isolate the tribals came about in 1873 through the promulgation of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation. However, the policy of declaring the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) a secluded area had been advocated long before. Section 2 of the regulation empowered the company "to prescribe and from time to time alter by notification, a line to be called the Inner Line and to prohibit any subject living outside the area from living or moving therein." Thus, the British policy of apartheid in Northeast India was implemented in the tribal area of the District of Lakhimpur in September 1875, and in the District of Darrang in March 1876.

Civil officers could extend their administrative jurisdiction no further than the Inner Line, and the governor-general-in-council prohibited all British subjects from crossing the Inner Line without a pass obtainable from the Deputy Commissioners of districts. Then, in 1880, the Frontier Tract Regulation was enacted, which stated that it was expedient "to provide for the removal of certain frontier tracts in Assam inhabited or frequented by barbarous or semi-civilized tribes from the operation of enactments in force therein." It was stated that the regulation would extend to such frontier tracts in Assam as the governor general might designate. The regulation was subsequently extended to cover wider areas in the Northeast.

The British plan to cordon off the Northeast tribals

was part of their policy of setting up a multicultural human zoo during 1850s under the premiership of Henry Temple, the third Viscount Palmerston.

The apartheid program eliminated the Northeast Frontier Agency from the political map of India and segregated the tribal population from Assam, as the British had done in southern Africa and would do later in Sudan. By 1875, British intentions became clear even to those Englishmen who believed that Mother England's intervention in India, and the Northeast in particular, was to improve the conditions of the heathens. Apartheid also helped the British to function freely in this closed environment. Soon enough, the British Crown introduced two other features—proselytization of Christianity among the tribal population and recruiting units of the Frontier Constabulary. The Land of the Nagas was identified as "virgin soil" for planting Christianity. "Among a people so thoroughly primitive, and so independent of religious profession, we might reasonably expect missionary zeal would be most successful," according to the 1875 document, as quoted in the *Descriptive Account of Assam*, by William Robinson and Angus Hamilton. Missionaries were encouraged to open government-aided schools in the Naga Hills.

Between 1891 and 1901, the number of native Christians increased 128 per cent. The chief proselytizers were the Welsh Presbyterians, headquartered in Khasi and the Jaintia Hills. British Baptists were given the franchise of the Mizo (Lushai) and Naga Hills, and the Baptist mission was set up in 1836. Along with this peaceful religious proselytizing, the strength of the Frontier Constabulary was increased. During Ahom rule, only nine companies of police were used to keep the bordering tribes under control, but under the new regime each company was raised to battalion strength.

By the time the nineteenth century came to an end, the British were deeply involved in the "Great Game." At

this point, Northeast India became the theatre of a new gambit. The British plan was to set up a buffer state between China-Central Asia-Russia, and British India. The British split Bengal and joined part of it to sparsely populated Assam, in order to form a Muslim-majority state as the western flank of the buffer state.

The ill-effects of the partition of 1905 began to show up in subsequent years. There was a large-scale migration of people from Bengal into Assam. The Census Report of 1931 says: "Probably the most important event in the province during the last 25 years—an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did the Burmese invaders of 1820 the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization—has been the invasion of hordes of land-hungry Bengali immigrants, mostly Muslims, from the districts of Eastern Bengal and in particular Mymensingh."

Under this British set-up, enormous animosity was fostered between the Bengalis and the Assamese, as the "tribals" now had reason to harden their stance against the "plains people." In the 1911 census, the Muslim population of the Assam Valley was only 355,320. This number had grown to 1,305,902 by 1941, according to the Census Report, the last taken by the British. A large number of violent incidents in Assam and Meghalaya in recent years are directly related to this settlement issue, and tensions have been further exacerbated by a large wave of Muslim migrants fleeing into Assam from instability in neighbouring Bangladesh.

The ultimate apartheid in the Northeast came with the partition of India and the formation of East Pakistan, which in 1971 became the independent nation of Bangladesh. With the partition of Bengal, Northeast India became practically isolated, connected to the mainland through a narrow corridor running between Nepal and Bangladesh.



### **Growth of Separatist Movements**

The North-Eastern region of India is faced with insurgencies or separatist movements from over 50 groups. Although each conflict has its own roots and antecedents, the issues raised include language and ethnicity, tribal rivalry, migration, control over local resources, access to water, and widespread feeling of exploitation and alienation. The region has witnessed more violence in the last 50 years than any other part of the country. According to reliable estimates, fatalities caused by insurgency in the North-East have gradually increased from about 400 in 1992 to four times that amount in 2002. Besides loss of human life, hundreds of thousands and more are internally displaced, forced to live in unhygienic and makeshift camps and, as a consequence, hundreds of them lose their lives due to disease and lack of basic life amenities.

The state of Nagaland bears the scars of the region's long-drawn history of insurgency, which served as a precursor and a model for other constituent states of the region. The Naga tribes are divided by state and national boundaries. The principal Naga militant group today, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), demands a united homeland, Nagalim, and claims a territory six times the size of present-day Nagaland, including most of Manipur, as well as parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Myanmar. A.Z. Phizo, the founder of the Naga insurgency, opened the Myanmar front to the insurgency in the 1950s. Phizo's group gradually established links with Chinese and Pakistani leaderships also. Tribal divisions within the Naga insurgency that surfaced in the 1960s continue to plague the movement even today.

Assamese nationalism was first articulated in 1979 as a protest against immigration from West Bengal and Bangladesh. The Indian government's efforts to settle the problem, notably through the Assam Accord of 1985,

proved unsuccessful. The United Liberation Front for Asom (ULFA), which demands secession, citing the economic exploitation of Assam has been the most prominent insurgent group in recent years. It represents Assamese-speaking Hindu descendants of the Ahoms, but has also made overtures to other groups. While the ULFA has lost some of its credibility and influence, it continues to be a major source of violence and instability.

The Bodos are the largest plains tribals of Assam, and their movement is a struggle for indigenous rights and tribal empowerment in a majority of non-tribal state. In 1987, they were mobilised to demand the creation of a separate state of "Bodoland", based on the historical precedent of forming new states out of Assam. The Bodos have a pattern of ethnic cleansing that is missing from the ULFA, and India's response to their insurgency has been predominantly military.

The spin-off effect of continued Naga insurgency has been witnessed in the adjacent Mizoram. At its peak, insurgency in Mizoram even surpassed Nagaland in sheer intensity. That is why Aizawl retains the dubious distinction of being the only town in independent India to have been staffed by the air force. The Mizo insurgency lasted for over 30 bitter years of fighting from bases in Burma and maintaining links with Pakistan. The Mizo leader, Laldenga, signed an accord with the central government in 1986, effectively ending the insurgency through dialogue and emerging as the Chief Minister in the newly pacified state. In the latest development package to the North-East, Mizoram has been given a \$38-million "peace bonus".

Organised tribal insurgency in Tripura began with the emergence of erstwhile Tripura National Volunteer (TNV) in 1978 and has been continuing since then with only one and half years' peaceful interregnum. Having signed a tripartite peace accord with the government of Tripura, the TNV insurgents laid down arms *en masse* in 1988. The



state passed through a relatively peaceful period till May 1990 when the All Tripura Tribal Force (ATTF) was formed. In September 1991 the currently outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) made its appearance. The ATTF group, widely believed to have been sponsored by political elements aligned with the then opposition, carried on operations by selectively killing leaders and workers of Congress and Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS), who were ruling the state then. The NLFT, on the other hand, continued their hit and run operations targeting unarmed civilians as well as security forces after a number of former TNV commanders who had availed themselves of all rehabilitation benefits, joined the outfit.

The background of Tripura's insurgency problem lies in the deep resentment among tribals over the demographic imbalance in the state manifested in the majority status of non-tribal Bengalis as a result of influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) and to perception of threat to their identity, culture and tradition. But it may be mentioned here that the present insurgency is a legacy of the past in that Tripura witnessed its first organised insurgency in the late 1940s. This came to an end over a period of time, but the legacy of bloodshed continued. However, what needs to be underlined is that in the North-East region, insurgent outfits fighting for independent homelands have for long received assistance from the neighbouring countries. Such assistance range from supply of arms and ammunition and other logistical support to provision of safe haven and sanctuary for camping and training facilities. There have been on record statements on the floor of the Indian parliament of the irrefutable role of foreign powers in fermenting trouble in the region.

## Arunachal Pradesh

### **Introduction**

Arunachal Pradesh—the Land of Rising Sun—is situated on the north-eastern tip of India stretching from the foothills of Eastern Himalayas to a height of about 5000 Metres. The state is known as Arunachal Pradesh because, it is here that the sun appears first in India.

Area-wise, Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state of the NE region of India. It forms a complex hill system of Shivalik and Himalayan origin and is criss-crossed by numerous rivers and streams. The state shares a total of 1630 kms of international boundary with neighbouring countries; 1030 kms with China, 160 kms with Bhutan and 440 kms with Myammar. The McMohan line defines the international boundary between India and China.

Administratively, the State is divided into 16 districts, viz., (1) Changlang, (2) Dibang Valley, (3) East Kameng, (4) East Siang, (5) Lohit, (6) Lower Subansiri, (7) Papum Pare, (8) Tawang, (9) Tirap, (10) Upper Siang, (11) Upper Subansiri, (12) West Kameng, (13) West Siang, (14) Lower Dibang Valley, (15) Kurung-kume and (16) Anjan District. Capital of the State is Itanagar in Papum Pare district.

Itanagar is named after Ita Fort meaning fort of bricks, built in 14th century AD.

About 80 per cent of the state is covered by natural forest, with numerous turbulent streams, roaring rivers, deep gorges, lofty Himalayan mountains and hundreds of species of flora and fauna. A haven to impenetrable forests, deep gorges and wide rivers, Arunachal is the largest state in the North Eastern India. For a long time the state has been isolated as the 'hidden frontier' but now it has finally emerged out as a perfect tourist destination, which also attracts pilgrims from all parts of country.

Arunachal Pradesh has been the most peaceful state among the north-eastern states of India, and its people have not been almost influenced by any forces inimical to India, or witnessed the formation of hostile groups seeking and getting support from some of the hostile neighbours.

### **History**

The history of Arunachal Pradesh is a virtual treasure trove of myths and fascinating traditions, but little is known about state's early history except that it was mentioned in the Puranas. Recorded history can be traced only when the Ahom kings of Assam began to rule in the 16 century.

Though, the history of the growth of political process in Arunachal Pradesh dates back to 1875 when the British-India Government started to define the administrative jurisdiction by drawing an Inner Line in relation to the frontier tribes inhabiting the North Frontier Tract, the area was kept outside the purview of regular laws of the country. Thereafter, the British followed the policy of gradual penetration to bring more areas under normal administration.

By the year 1946, the North East Frontier Tracts were reorganized into four Frontier Tracts namely Sadiya, Lakhimpur, Tirap and Sela Sub Agency and Subansiri area



and administrated by the Governor of Assam in his discretion. By virtue of the Indian Independence Act 1947, the Governor of Assam assumed administrative jurisdiction over North East Frontier Tracts and the Governor of Assam was divested of his discretionary powers. The Governor of Assam administered the North East Frontier Tracts during the period from 15th August 1947 to 26th January 1950.

After independence, a sub-committee headed by Gopinath Bordoloi was appointed by the Constituent Assembly of India to recommend the future pattern of administration of the North Eastern Frontier Areas. The Bordoloi Committee recommended that since the administration has been satisfactorily established over a sufficiently wide area, the Government of Assam should take over that area by the strength of a notification. However, for various considerations, particularly problem of communication and defiance, Government of India decided to administer North East Frontier Tracts as "Excluded Area" through Governor of Assam as an agent to the President of India.

In 1951, the units of the tracts were reconstituted again and Tuensang Frontier Division was created which later merged with Nagaland. The remaining portion of the Tracts after the introduction of the North East Frontier (Administration) Regulation, 1954 was designated as the North East Frontier Agency, (NEFA). Thereafter, the administration was brought under the Ministry of External Affairs and in August 1965, it was brought under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. It remained so till the attainment of Union Territory status by Arunachal Pradesh in 1972.

It was only in 1975 that the virtue of the enactment of 37th Constitutional Amendment Act 1975 that the Pradesh Council was constituted as a separate Legislative Assembly and Lt. Governor was appointed as the head of the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. The Pradesh



Council became provisional Legislative Assembly having 23 members during 1975 to 1978. The first elected Legislative Assembly consisting of 33 members was formed on 4th March 1978, which lasted only for about 20 months. In November 1979, the Assembly was dissolved and President's Rule was imposed which continued till January 1980. The Second General Election was held in January, 1980. The Third General Election for Legislative Assembly was held simultaneously with the General Election for the Eighth Lok Sabha in December, 1984 and the Assembly was constituted in January, 1986.

The Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh became full fledged State with effect from 20th February, 1987. On the persistent demand of the people of the State, the total membership in the Legislative Assembly was raised to sixty during the General Election in 1990 and thus, the First Legislative assembly of State of Arunachal Pradesh was constituted. Fourth Election to the Assembly was held in March, 1995; that was the Second Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh. The Second Legislative Assembly was dissolved by the Governor on 27th July 2000, ahead of schedule in March 2000. The third Legislative Assembly headed by Shri Mukut Mithi was constituted in October 1999. People of Arunachal Pradesh are represented at the Union Government by one MP in the Rajya Sabha and two MPs in the Lok Sabha.

### **Places of Historical Importance**

#### ***Itanagar***

Itanagar in Papum Pare district also known as the 'Land of the Dawnlit Mountains' is the beautiful capital of Arunachal. The historical city identified with the ancient Mayapur of the 14th and 15th century A.D. is scattered with light, earthquake-proof, wooden-framed buildings rising up the slopes of green hills. The residence of the Governor is situated on one peak while a new Buddhist Temple crowns the other. Between these two building lie

administrative officers, shops, daily bazars etc. The nearest airport is 67 km away at Lilabari in Assam. From Naharlagun Powan Hans Helicopter Service is available. The nearest railway station is Harmuty in Assam only 23 km. from Naharlagun and 33 km. from Itanagar.

### *Ita Fort*

This historical fort of an irregular shape, built mainly with bricks is situated at the heart of the capital complex in Papum Pare district. There are three gates on three sides viz; Eastern, Western and Southern, which is said to be built by Ahom rulers. It is estimated that more than 80 lakhs of bricks, 45 cubic metres of stone and 46,300 man-days were required to build the fort.

### *The Buddhist Temple*

This temple which is located on the top of a hill amidst gorgeous green gardens with yellow roof reflects the extensive Tibetan influence. There is a stupa erected in front of the shrine. The Dalai Lama planted a tree by the side of the shrine. The grounds of the temple afford a good view of Itanagar Town.

### *Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum*

The ground floor covers the images of tribal people. Collections include art, musical instruments, religious articles and wood carvings. The first floor contains the archaeological finds from Ita Fort, Noksaparbat and Malinithan in West Siang district. The textiles, weapons, ornaments are also kept on this floor. There is also a library and a handicraft centre which specialises in traditional Cane manufacture.

### *Tawang*

Tawang the headquarters of the Tawang district located on the Western tip of the state on a mountain side at 12000 ft above sea level, is the land of the Monpa tribes and a major centre of the Mahayana Buddhists. Tawang is famous for its 400 year old Buddhist monastery which

overlooks the wide Tawang Valley. On the way to Tawang lies the World's second highest pass, the Sela Pass through a high altitude lake of crystal blue water. Both sides of the lake are decked with miles of rhodendrons. There is also a Orchidarium at Tipi near the banks of the Kameng River in the West Kameng District, en route Tawang.

### ***Buddhist Gompa***

Tawang Monastery or Gompa also known as the 'Galden Namgyal Lhatse', is a 400 year old Buddhist monastery of the Mahayana sect, built in the 17th century. It is situated at a height of 3500 m or 10,000 ft at the Bhutan border. The monastery was founded by a monk, Mera Lama, a contemporary of the fifth Dalai Lama. It is a vast complex of 65 buildings—a treasure house of old scriptures, priceless images, painted tapestries, books and collection of gold lettered Buddhist scriptures. The 'Parkhang' hall of the monastery houses the library which holds the rare hand written and block-printed Thankas or manuscripts of revered books like 'Tangym', 'Kangyur' and 'Sungbhum'. The other rare works of Buddhist literature include 108 gold-embossed manuscripts of the 'Teaching of Lord Buddha' and 225 volumes of the explanations of Buddha's teachings covered with specially designed moth - proof silk adorned with paintings. There is a towering 18 ft high gilded statue of the Buddha in the monastery complex.

### ***Malinithan, Likabali***

Malinithan situated at Likabali, headquarters of subdivision of West Siang district is a place of great sanctity, associated with the legend of Lord Krishna. There are ruins of a big temple belonging to the 14th-15th century here. Excavations have unearthed the beautifully designed basement of the temple, valuable sculptures of Indra and Airavata, Surya, Nandi Bull and other divine images, animal motifs and floral designs, carved columns and



panels. The legend behind the place is that Krishna and Rukmini rested here on their way from Bhismakanagar to Dwarka and they were offered very fine flowers by Parvati. Krishna pleased with the offering praised Parvati and addressed her as Malini-Mistress of Garland. It is believed that, the place came to be known as Malinithan since then.

The legendary Akashi Ganga waterfalls is situated 5 km from Malinithan in East Siang District. There is a beautiful view of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries far below from here. Pilgrims come to Akashi Ganga to take a bath as the water is believed to wash away one's sins. The legend is associated with Parvathi narrated in the 8th century Kalika Purana. Parvati is believed to have been cut into pieces and her head fell somewhere near Akashiganga. The nearest Airport is Lilabari (Lakhimpur) and the nearest railway station is Silapathar.

### ***Bhishmaknagar Forts, Roing***

Roing in Dibang valley district is known for the historical fort of Bhishmaknagar named after the king Bhismaka located at the foot of the mountains between the Dikrong and the Dibang river. The Bhishmaknagar Fort which was first excavated in 1996-97, testifies to the penetration of the Aryan culture into Arunachal in the 4th century AD. The fort built with clay bricks and embellished with pottery has an elongated semi circle shape extending over an area of about 10 sq km. Accommodation is available at the circuit house and Inspection Bungalow at Roing. The nearest airport is in Dibrugarh (Assam) and the nearest railway station is Tinsukia. Buses are available from Sadiya.

### ***Parashuram Kund, Tezu***

Tezu is the district headquarters of the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh. There is a famous pilgrimage centre; Parasuram Kund some 21 km north east of Tezu. It is a shrine of all-India importance located in the lower



reaches of the river Lohit. Thousands of pilgrims, visit the place in winter every year, especially on the Makara Sankranti day for a holy dip in the sacred kund which is believed to wash away one's sins. The legend behind the belief recorded in the Kalika Purna, is that the great sage Parasuram washed away the sin of killing his mother in the waters of Brahma kund. A great fair is held to which wild cows, rare fur-rugs and other curios are brought down by the mountain tribes. There are also facilities for trekking from Tezu to glow lake which takes one day, hiking and river rafting and angling on the river Lohit. The nearest railway station is Tinsukia (120 km) from where you can take buses via Namsai. There are also buses available from Sadia. The nearest airports are Tezu and Dibrugarh (Assam).

### **The People**

With an area of 83,743 sq km, the largest of any state in the north-east, Arunachal Pradesh has a population of 1,091,117 according to the 2001 Census. The state has the lowest density of 13 persons per sq km. As against decadal growth rate of 21.34 per cent at the national level, the population of the state grew by 26.21 per cent over the period 1991-2001. The sex ratio of Arunachal Pradesh at 901 females to 1000 males is low than the national average of 933. Total literacy of the state rose to 54.74 per cent from 41.59 per cent in 1991.

Most of the population of Arunachal Pradesh is of Asiatic origin and shows physical affinities with the peoples of Tibet and the Myanmar hill region. The population is predominantly tribal in character and there are about 20 major tribes which are divided into a number of sub tribes. The principal tribes are Adis, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mismi, Khampati, Noite, Wancho, Tangsha, Singpho, Monpa, Sherdukpen, Aka etc. These tribes speak their own tongues.

The major social and cultural events of the state are very much associated with the tribal life. Most of these

communities are ethnically similar having derived from an original common stock but their geographical isolation from each other has brought amongst them certain distinctive characteristics in language, dress and customs.

The first group of people are the Monpas and the Sherdukpens of Tawang and West Kameng district. They follow the Lamaistic traditions of Mahayana Buddhism. Culturally similar to them are Membas and Khambas who live in the high mountains along the northern borders, in West Siang etc; Khampis and Singphos inhabiting the eastern part of the state are Buddhists of Hinayana Buddhism.

The second group of people Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Bangnis, Nishings, Mishmis, Mijis, Tangsas, etc., who worship the sun and the moon namely Donyi-Polo and Abotani, the original ancestor for most of these tribes. Their religious rituals largely coincide with the phases or agricultural cycles.

The third group comprises of Noctes and Wanchos, adjoining Nagaland in the Tirap and Changlang districts. They are hard working people known for their structured village society in which the hereditary village chief still plays a vital role. The Noctes also practise elementary form of Vaishnavism.

Although a number of tribal groups constitute the total population, the density of population is very less. People are Mongoloid stock but each tribe has certain distinct characteristics in language, dress & costume. They have a rich cultural heritage. The People are simple, friendly and hospitable. Their colourful festivals are manifestations of their faith and belief.

The society is patriarchal and primogeniture and the fundamental laws of inheritance with variations are not uncommon. They follow endogamy and strictly observe the rule of clan exogamy. Polygamy is socially sanctioned and is practised by most of them. The people are highly democratic, and each tribe has its own organised

institutions that maintain law and order, decide disputes and take up all activities for the welfare of the tribes and the villages.

### *Languages*

There are some 22 tribes inhabiting in Arunachal Pradesh and all of them speak different languages which are also named after the tribes. To mention a few principal languages — Monpa, Aka, Miji, Sherdukpen, Nishi, Apatani, Hill Miri, Tagin, Adi, Idu, Digaru, Khampati, Singpho, Tangsa, Nocte, Wancho etc.

Various ethnic groups in the Arunachal Pradesh have their own dialects. The state has remarkable linguistic diversity. Bilingualism and sometimes trilingualism is common in both rural and urban areas even among the unlettered. This is because when a family, a kin group or a community moves from one region to another, its members acquire the language of their new place of domicile without giving up their native dialect. Settlement of outsiders has also helped in spreading bilingualism or trilingualism in the region.

### *Occupation*

Ninety four percent of the population in Arunachal Pradesh lives in the rural belt. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. The principal crop of this area is rice, and other important crops include maize, millets, wheat, pulses, potato, sugarcane and oilseeds. The ecological conditions are suitable for horticulture and fruits like pineapple, orange, lemon, papaya, plum, pear, guava, cherries, walnut and peach thrive here. The shifting cultivation which has come to be known as Jhuming which means collective farming occupies the central position in Arunachal Pradesh in the field of agriculture. This is the form of cultivation that sustains majority of the people in the area which has been practised from earlier days.

Jhuming consist of clearing of a patch of jungle by



cutting and burning after a particular number of years called the jhum cycle, dribbling seeds into the cleared patch by the help of a poker. Weeding at least four times, watching and protecting the growing plants from the wild animals and birds and finally harvesting a meager mixed crop, normally just enough to feed the workers - men, woman and children who had put in about 5 to 6 months of hard labour into the patch.

Paddy, millet and maize are the major crops. The indigenous vegetables are sweet potatoes, brinjal, ginger, chillies, pumpkin, cucumber, and local cowpea. Pine apple, oranges, lemon, lichi, papaya, banana, peach, walnut, almond, etc., are also grown in Arunachal Pradesh.

### **Culture**

This state with an area of 83,743 sq. km comprises of a rich tribal population, which includes more than 20 major scheduled tribes along with many other sub-tribes. The principals among them are Adi, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mishmi, Khampati, Nocte, Wancho, Tangsha, Singpho etc. They speak a host of tribal languages and dialects.

The society has no caste system and is patriarchal, governed by the chief. The deciding authority rests in the hands of the older generation. However, they practise polygamy recognised by the society. A glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh portrays a very exotic, simple and kaleidoscopic life of these tribes, which to a great extent, retain their original social structure even to this day.

They are great patrons of music, art and dance. Their splendid and intensely delightful heritage of arts and crafts, enchanting and melodious folk songs is symbol of their simplicity and friendliness which embraces and unites all of them under one umbrella to keep their pristine tradition and heritage intact.

People here are imbued with religion, pious and god-fearing and believing in a host of deities and spirits. The



process of festivals sees a variety in religious rites. Festivals and fairs form an integral part of their life.

### Religion

In Arunachal Pradesh majority of the tribes have their own traditional faith and belief. The Adis; Apatanis; Nishis; Galongs; Tagins etc. follow their religion- '*Donyi-Poloism*'. The altar where prayer is offered is called '*Gangging*' in Adis. The Nishis call it '*Nyedar-Namlo*'. Some of the above mentioned tribes have accepted Christianity as their religion.

The Mishimis; Nocte; Tangsas etc. have their own traditional faith. Some of the gradients of belief might have similarity with that of the Hindus. But most of the tribes of the land believe in Animism.

The Monpas; Membas; etc. of Tawang and West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh are Buddhist by religion. The religion of the Khamtis and Singphos is Buddhism. The Buddhists have monks and monastery as a common place for prayer.

The most common religious practice is animism, in which deities of nature and various spirits are worshiped. Ritual sacrifice is also common, and the mithun is especially revered as a sacrificial animal. Hindu beliefs and practices have penetrated the region, especially among populations near the Assam lowlands. Tibetan Buddhism is found among groups near the Tibetan border, and some tribes along the Myanmar border practice the Southeast Asian form of this religion, Hinayana Buddhism.

### Customs and Traditions

The population of Arunachal Pradesh is predominantly tribal in character and there are about 20 major tribes which are divided into a number of sub tribes. The major social and cultural events of the state are very much associated with the tribal life. There are many customs and traditions which link the region to the rest of the

country and its ancient past.

Customs and traditions major tribal categories of Arunachal Pradesh is discussed below.

### *Adis*

The Adis are the major group of tribes inhabiting the East Siang & Upper Siang district. Adis are also found in West Siang, Lower Dibang Valley and Lohit Districts. The different sub tribe groups of the Adis are Padam, Janbo, Karko, Ashing, Bori, Pailibo, Minyong, Milang, Lasi, Bokar, Simong etc.

*Marriage:* Mushup and Rasheng, dormitories for boys and girls respectively, play an important role in the Adi society. Different sections of the Adis call these institutions by different names such as the Padams, call 'mushup' and Minyong 'Dere' etc. It is customary for boys and girls to become the members of their respective institutions when they attain the age of fifteen. They remain in their respective dormitories till their marriage. There is no restriction for the boys of different Moshup to visit girls in their Rashengs. In course of such visits if a boy and girl happen to like each other, negotiations are carried out between the boys and the girls parents. If approved by their parents formal marriage take place according to their custom. The bride after marriage usually continues to live with her parents till the birth of her first child. It is expected that boy in the mean time, would be able to construct a house of his own.

*Laws of the clan:* In the Adi society descent is traced through the father and the property devolves on the male line and the children belong to the fathers clan. If a child born in an extra marital relation is a boy, he belongs to the father's clan and if it is a girl, she belongs to mother's clan. But in case of girl child there is no hand and fast binding. The elder son generally sets up their separate house-holds even while the father is alive, on principle. They have equal shares on the parents property. They do not dispute with the youngest brother who stays with the

parents and inherits the ancestral house by common consent. The widowed mother is considered a special responsibility of the eldest son, but in practice, she prefers to live with the youngest under the roof of her deceased husband's home.

*Kebang*: All important decisions of political and social matters as well as the disputes among the members of the community are tried and settled by the Kebang. The various Kebangs are Bane Kebang, Bango Kebang, Bogum Bokang Kebang and Atek Kebang. In Bane Kebang all the male members of the village can take part and express their opinion freely. Bango kebang consists of the head Gams of the number of villages and it has one secretary and also some funds to manage. It mainly deals with inter village disputes and development problems. Atek Kebang is for the settlement of particular cases of disputes. The Bogum Bokang Kebang is a federal organisation. Its jurisdiction extends to the whole district. The social customs and relations of inter village, inter-bango disputes, political and economic changes affecting their life etc are discussed in this Kebang. The Bogum Bokang adopt resolutions and recommends measures to the government for meeting them.

### *Akas*

The Akas are inhabitants of the south-eastern part of East Kameng district of the state. Their main concentration is noticed in the Thrizino area. The name 'Aka' is given to them by the plains people and they call themselves 'Hrusso'. The word 'Aka' denotes 'painted' and their customs of painting the faces profusely, served as a distinctive mark. The Akas have fair complexions, a well-built body, usually a flat nose conspicuous cheek-bones with black hair and brownish to pale blue eyes. Men grow scanty hair on the face as well as over the body. Their stature varies from medium to tall. The language of the Akas is quite different from their neighbouring tribes. The Aka language belongs to the Tibeto Burman group of



languages. Akas are one of the main jhum cultivators among the tribes of India.

*Marriage:* Marriage in Aka society can take place either by way of negotiation or by the romantic way of capture. The marriage by negotiation is generally initiated from the boys side. The boy may give an indication of his choice to his parents. They then call the Mugou (village priest), to examine the auspiciousness of the proposal. The Mugou makes his diagnosis by killing a fowl and reading through divination the favourable or unfavourable signs contained there in. The go-between or the Mukhou, as he is known, may be a relative of a boy or some elderly person of his village. He travels to the girl's village, meets her parents and tells them about the boys desire. If the parents of the girl agree to their proposal and bride price, the go-between returns to his village to convey the news to the boy's parents.

The date of marriage is fixed in consultation with girl's parents. The time of marriage is calculated by counting the number of knots bound with a piece of cane-string. Around the date of marriage, the marriage party comprising the groom, his parents and relatives and some members of the village starts in a procession for the bride's village, where the marriage is to take place. The bride does not accompany the groom to his home soon after the marriage. The husband may visit her during this period. At the end of the year, the husband accompanied by the Mukhou goes to bring her home. The parents or relatives of the bride may also come to escort her to her husband's place. The bride's people give a feast to them. This will continue for four days. Then they will return, leaving their daughter in her husband's charge. From now the bride assumes full membership of her husband's family.

*Marriage by capture:* This type of marriage is generally taken by youths when they are not sure about their parents consent to a marriage proposal of their choice or

avoid the traditional marriage system. A boy, who may be in love with some girl of his own or other village, elopes with her to his parental village, without giving any notice of the event to her parents. After reaching home, he sacrifices a pig and invites the village community to a feast. The local priest ties a thread of sheep-hair called fokki, around the girl's right hand along with the ancestral necklace 'aescheri'. This tying of the thread by the priest gives a stamp of the marriage and a kind of social recognition to the marital relationship. Now bride enters her husband's family as a virtual member. On knowing of the incident and her where about, the parents of the girl come to groom's house. The only thing within their power now is to put forward their demand of the bride price to which they are fully entitled.

*Slave system:* Aka society freely entertains the idea of slavery. The slaves are known as Khulo. The khulo have to till the soil, look after the palm and the jhum-field, the cattle and the house hold and do all such menial jobs as their masters may entrust them.

*Ways of punishment:* Where a case of suspected black magic or murder is brought to the notice of the village council and where the suspect denies the charges, it may arrange an ordeal to decide the case. To the Akas, the most common way of practicing the ordeal is to ask the suspect to put his hands into boiling water. The village council calls for the chief priest or Mugou to conduct it. The Mugou performs some ceremonial rites and prays to the Gods to award full justice to the sufferers and to punish the sorcerer heavily if he has practiced sorcery.

In the Aka society, there are gods, deities and spirits who rule over mankind. The Aka people periodically worship these super natural powers and try to appease them by sacrificing pigs, mithuns, chickens etc, in the form of festival where all the people get together to grace such occasion. Supreme among the Aka deities is 'Teharo', who looks after the human beings and protect the cattle. The

propitiation of the deity is made at least once in a year when sacrifices are offered along with the prayers.

### *Apatani*

The physical features of the Apatanis may be described as stout and well built of short to medium height people. They possess the characteristics of the Mongoloid people. There are two groups among Apatanis and they are found to differ significantly in appearance. Traditionally there are seven large villages of Apatanis. The settlement and dwelling system of the Apatanis are always of permanent nature. The houses are constructed during the month of August to December with the help of clan members. The construction of the house is begun after preparation of the rice beer, meat and rice. Then the building materials are procured. Usually wood is used. The height of a house rises about twelve feet from the floor and two feet from the ground. Houses are closely situated and often their roofs touch each other.

*Marriage:* Apatanis practice monogamy in general but a man may polygamise when he has no male child or his wife is barren or he is of a well to-do-family which can provide sufficient food and shelter or with the consent of his first wife. Polyandry system is totally unknown. The cross cousin marriage and cibicism practices are not approved. The Apatanis treat the wife of the elder brother as a second mother and the wife of the younger brother as own sister. The customs of the marriage of the Apatanis have no age bar. However, the practice of child marriage has ceased with the advent of civilization. Marriage is socially approved within the villages according to the class and status. Class means 'Gyuchi' and 'Gyutii' and the status means economic status.

The marriage in the Apatani society also may be arranged either by negotiations or by elopement or by the capturing. In the negotiation marriage, the boy side must test an omen from chicken liver secretly before taking any



decision and carefully examining it. The chicken omen is tested whether she will agree and lead a fruitful life with children and prosperity. If the omen favours it, the two cousin brothers of the boy go to the house of the girl's parents taking the right omen and these two brothers are known as Gyunta. The right omen of the boy is carefully scrutinized by the parents of the girl who also test an omen from chicken liver. If this omen is also right, the girl's parents arrange for a formal engagement.

After the preparation of rice beer and meat, the girl's parents inform the parents of the boy for engagement. On this occasion, the boy along with his Gyunta go to her house and the boy give a Tibetan sword known as Chiri to the parents of the girl. This kind of betrothal is like promising that she is his legal wife from that day. The girl's side also betroths a locally produced cloth known as Mabo-pulye to the boy along with a dainty meal and rice beer. After these formalities, if both the parents wish they may decide for the exchange of rice and mithun for more or less religious importance, which is known as Rutu Pini. The boys side should present a half grown mithun (sido) to the parents of the girl. In return, the boy brings 70 to 100 baskets of rice from the bride's parents and this rice is known as Arirutu.

Next day, there is an occasion known as Pyali Bani. On this occasion, the sisters of the bride bring small baskets containing varieties of rice for the bride and the groom. If the groom's parents wish, some small rites are performed in the house of the groom and this performance is called Amohini. During that ceremony, pig and many other fowls are sacrificed to God and Goddesses who bring life and prosperity to the bridegroom. Apatanis approve the remarriage of both widows and widowers.

*Slave System:* Slavery system has been in existence in the Apatni society but the Apatani have been very much

generous towards their slaves. The extravagant rich man purchases a number of slaves from neighbouring tribes as well as own tribe for his security. He prefers to purchase them from his own tribe so that they can't run away from him. Their masters provided them with some distant agriculture plots as well as a house and granary sites and even borne the cost of marriage ceremony, if they are faithful. But if their slaves were unfaithful or notorious—they would sell them to other patrician master. The child slaves were attached to their master's house till they attained their maturity. Such faithful child-slaves were nurtured like own children.

*Position of Men and Women:* The society considers that man folk is higher in status than womanfolk. But practically, equal responsibility of duties is shared by both in the field, home and the family affairs. Apatani woman carries out the duties of gathering of both wild and kitchen garden vegetables, cooking, fetching of water, pounding of rice, cleaning of houses, washing of clothes and utensils, nursing and looking after infants and children, preparation of rice beer, ginning and spinning of cotton and other jobs associated with the house hold. In the field, the Apatani woman carries out the tasks like gardening, seedling, transplanting of paddy and millet, padding, weeding of fields and or the activities. In a home managed family incomes internally controlled by a woman.

### ***Khampti***

The Khamptis are Buddhist by religion. They have their own script which is derived from the Tai language. The society is divided into classes, signifying distinct status in the social hierarchy. The chiefs naturally occupy the highest position followed by the priest who wield considerable influence over all ranks. In the past the slaves constituted the lowest rank. The Khamptis profess the Hinayana form of Buddhism but they do not abstain

from meat. Two great celebrations are held in commemoration of the birth and death of Gautam Buddha for which they take out religious procession with the idol of the Buddha.

### *Singpho*

The Singphos are Buddhist and are followers of Buddhism. They celebrate Sangken, a Buddhist festival in the month of April. On the other hand, they have not given up their shamanistic beliefs. A number of spirits are considered as malevolent and responsible for causing miseries to human being and therefore such spirits (Nats) are worshipped on a number of occasions such as Ningsenat, Multung-Dingna, Cit Hungnat, Natkum, Mainat etc by sacrificing bulls, pigs, cows and chickens.

### *Bangnis*

Bangnis and Sulungs tribes inhabit the area adjacent to the north eastern Kameng, extending to the lower Subansiri District. Marriage of the Bangni people takes place through the process of formal negotiation between the parents of both the parties. After a stipulated bride price has been paid, the girl comes to live with the husband. There are no formal ceremonies which mark the consummation of marriage. The husband and the wife are both clad in clothes and wear a number of ornaments. The marriage by employment and the marriage by service is also prevalent in their society but is practiced in rare cases. The tribe endogamy and clan exogamy is the normal rule. Though polyandry is not known to them, polygamy is very common. Bangni society is patrilocal, patriarchal and patrilineal.

### *Idus*

The Idus are the major tribe inhabiting both the Dibang valley and Lower Dibang Valley districts and one of the main three groups of Mishmis. The other groups are the Taraon, Kaman and Mijn of Lohit District. The



Idus are distinguished from the other groups by the peculiar way of dressing their hair. Both men and women shave the hair at the sides of the head and keep it long at the back. The hair in front is cut short and hang over the fore head. Because of this peculiar method of cropping hair, they are called Chulikata (chuli means hair 'kata' means to crop) by the people in the plains.

### *Monpas*

The Monpas are deeply religious minded. Buddhism is their main religion. Their social and religious life centres round the Gompas (Buddhist temple). All social and religious myths emanate from Gompas.

### *Mijis*

The Mijis, is a small group of people who live in the valley of Bichom river. According to their own tradition and belief they had originally migrated from the plains and even claim to have connections with the kings who ruled over Assam. Marriage among the Mijis usually take place by negotiation. Nominal bride price is given by the parents of the bridegroom. Other social systems like inheritance is through the male line. All the sons get equal shares of the property left by the father. The main house is inherited by the eldest son. After the death of the father, the unmarried daughters live with their brothers who are responsible for giving them away in marriage.

### *Sherdukpens*

The Sherdukpens are also a small tribe inhabiting the southern part of the Bomdila Range in the valleys of Tengapani river. The main concentration is spread over the three main villages of Kupa, Jigaon and Shergaon. However at present, some of them have settled in Kameng bari areas, a new settlement area under Bhalukpong circle. Their society is patriarchal. A greater share of inheritance devolves from father to the eldest son. Monogamy is the prevailing form of marriage among the Sherdukpens.

**Deori**

The Deoris have three distinct groups or 'khels' namely (a) Dibongia (b) Tengapania and (c) Borgoya and each of the group or khel has a number of clans of its own. There are 24 clans of these three groups or khel of the Deoris.

**Festivals*****Solung***

The 'Solung' is the main festival of 'Adis' and is a manifestation of the Adi festival cult. There are various stories about its origin, but the most commonly accepted one is that the Adis were asked by Kine-nane, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity to perform the Solung Puja. Solung celebration continues for five days, first day is called, 'Solung-Gidi Dogin' or the day of preparations, second and the main day of the celebration is called Doreph-Longe or 'Ardo-bado' (the day of animal sacrifice), third day is 'Binnayat Binam' or worshipping the goddess of plenty and prosperity. Fourth day is Taktor or Ekop when the villagers remain busy preparing bows and arrows and other weapons of war. On the fifth day the Miri (religious leader or priest) is given a ceremonial send off when the girl's sing and dance. Ponung bedang song is sung in the afternoon.

During Solung festival, every evening the Miri sings 'Solung Abang' and through the song he relates the stories about the origin of man, animals and plants, ancestry of the Adis, lives and deeds of the Adi Heroes. Solung is celebrated in the month of August or September but there is no fixed date for it in rural areas. Now-a-days in some places, the festival is celebrated on 1st September with a three day programme. Solung is celebrated to reap a rich harvest after sowing of seeds and transplantation of paddy plants, to raise more mithuns and pigs and also to be free from natural calamities, fire, accidents, diseases etc.

### *Mopin*

Mopin is another popular festival of the Galong, community of Arunachal Pradesh. This is normally celebrated in order to get rid of natural calamities diseases, effects of evil spirits and for good harvest, health, wealth and prosperity. In this festival Mopin, the Goddess of welfare, peace, wealth, prosperity and wisdom is propitiated in grand celebration. The festival lasts for three days from the fourth of April before, sowing of paddy. The popir dance is the most popular dance during the festival.

### *Myokoh*

It is the most highly solemnized community festival of the Apatani society. It is purely a religious ceremony which is observed for the general well being of the whole Apatani society and is participated by each and every Apatani with great enthusiasm, devotion and respect. It is celebrated every year during the month of March and lasts for the whole month. For full participation, the whole Apatani villages of the plateau have been divided into three major groups-the first group consist of villages like Hija Duta, Mudangtage, Bamin and Michi. The second group consist of Hong village alone and the third group consists of Hari, Kalong, Tajang and Regu. The actual solemnization ceremony is conducted alternatively among the three major groups and then the other groups take full participation with the villages who actually perform the ceremonies.

### *Dree*

The Apatanis observe a series of agriculture rites and festival by sacrificing domestic fowls, animals and eggs in different times, starting from the sowing to the harvesting periods for ensuring of bumper yield of crops in the year such as Dree, Tamu, Metri, Chandii and Yahung etc. Chandii Tamu rite is performed during the sowing period, Dree during every growing periods of crops and Yahung just before the harvest.



The meaning of 'Dree' is one who borrows or purchases food grains from others in order to meet out the shortage by addition to one's old and new stock of food grains. During Dree festival, a few rites are performed to worship and appease Gods and Goddesses, who protect the crops, and ensure well-being of man. These divinities include Tamu God, Metii God, Sky God and Danyi Polo (sun and moon). They are worshipped by offering sacrifices of fowls, dogs, pigs, chickens, eggs, mithuns and cows. The divinities associated with Dree are collectively known as 'Dree or Dri Wuhi' (Gods). For conduction of ritual of Dree, one or two persons are appointed permanently or temporarily from each clan of the village. These persons are known as Dree Kholi or Dree Gora.

On the festive occasion of Dree, every individual prepares rice beer and women present a vessel of rice beer to their elderly bothers, sisters, son-in-law etc, as a symbol of love and affection. They reciprocate by presenting a piece of bacon or roasted meat of mithun to them.

### ***Nyokum Yulo***

This is one of the major festivals of Bangnis. It is the only festival which is celebrated annually in every village on a community basis in the months of Lakhang and Leehar corresponding to the English month of March and April. The festival is celebrated for five days, but occasionally the period may extend to seven days depending on the result of divination performed prior to the fixation of the date of celebration.

The divination is done by a local priest (Nibu) by examining the liver of a fowl and the yolk of an egg respectively. The site where the festival is celebrated is called "Nyokum-Yulo-Nyengeng". They do not have a permanent festival place. On the previous day of the festival, the villagers keep themselves busy in collecting rice beer, making rice powder, egg and silk cloth.

Sacrificial animals such as mithun, pig, goat and fowl are usually purchased either from their common village fund or by collecting money or paddy from each house hold.

The festival is started with a worship in the name of god-Doni-Yulo where rice beer, rice powder and white cock are offered. Another God called Kamio-Yulo is also worshipped in the same place by offering only rice beer. When the prayers are over, the white cock is brought down to examine its liver with a view to knowing the omen of the festival. Different worships are performed on different days in the name of different gods and goddesses by offering and sacrificing different animals in accordance with the result of divination. At the end of the festival, the villagers observe taboo for five days during which period they do not go out of the village. The observance of taboc is known as *Nyokum-Arina*. The people of all areas both local and other including tribals and non tribals irrespective of caste, clan and creed uniformly participate in the Nyokum-Yulo festival.

### *Murang*

It is a festival of abundance and richness of wealth and is generally celebrated in the month of January every year. Although this is an individual family festival, the entire Apatani as well as others are also openly invited to take part with a liberty to eat and drink and enjoy freely. It is being celebrated for the well being of the individual family members alone, specially with a hope to be blessed with more wealth and prosperity for that individual family members.

### *Siron Molo Sochum*

The biggest festival of the Nishi is called Siron Molo Sochum and is celebrated in the Nishi month of 'Ram Po-Lo' every year. Before this festival all houses and granaries are rebuilt and all the crops like dry paddy, millet, maize are harvested and stored in the granaries. For the festival, house holders cook rice, meat and

prepare apong and entertain guests and receives blessing for more abundant crops next year. It is believed by the Nishis that the more guests are satisfied with food and drink, the more crops will grow in the coming year.

On the day of the festival, all singers of the village sing old history songs of the Nishi people. In the song, it is described that the God Nima Teni did not worship the goddess of crops and goddess therefore moved away to the land of summer and entreated the goddess of crops and ultimately married her. Nima Tani got all kinds of seeds from the goddess and learnt the method of cultivation from her. Prayers are offered to the goddess of crops requesting her not to go away but to fill the granaries with the crops. If some food-stuffs disappears over night or food prints of some animals are seen, it is believed that the goddess came to the people and the crops will be abundant.

### ***Reh Festival***

Reh is one of the most important festivals of the Idus. The Idus believe that they are the sons and daughters of the divine mother 'Nanyi Inyitaya'. But none can get her blessings and keep alive bond of brotherhood and social feeling strong, unless one performs the puja or celebrate the Reh festival. But it is so expensive that only a few people can afford to celebrate the festival for propitiation of the supreme creator, the great mother 'Nanyi Inyitaya'.

The festival is celebrated during February. The people who inhabit snow fall areas viz. Talo, Amru, and Dri villages of the Dibang valley celebrate it during summer and monsoon i.e. during June-August, when the climate is moderate and shoal of fishes are available in streams and rivers. The Idus in the other parts celebrate the same during February.

The festival requires a number of sacrificial mithuns for offering to the great mother 'Nanyi Inyitaya'. Presents such as money in cash and pigs are given to the relatives.



The festival being very expensive, all arrangements and preparations for the festival have to be made four or five years before the actual celebration of the festival. As such a person wanting to celebrate this festival has to take resort to the system locally called 'Ada' which is nothing but collection of mithuns, pigs, cash, money etc., even by way of loan from others. When 'Ada' is completed a tentative year is fixed about one year ahead of the actual celebration. The preparation of rice beer in large scale locally called 'Yunyiphri' is under taken, three to four months before the actual celebration.

The Reh festival is celebrated for 6 days. The first day is called 'Andropu'. It is observed by offering prayers so that the festival may pass off smoothly. The mithuns are brought and tied near the house. The 'Naya' dance is held during the night. Eyanli is the second day and may be termed as killing day of animals such as mithuns and buffaloes. The guests are entertained with rice, meat and rice beer. The third day is called 'Iyili' and on this day heavy feast is arranged and everybody is entertained. Presents of meal-rice are also supplied to the neighbouring villagers who fail to come to the festival. Ilyiromunyi is the fourth day of the festival. There is not much feasting on this day. The priest only performs the rituals in favour of worshiper for bestowing upon him wealth, all round prosperity and for general well-being. Omen is observed by pouring 'Yu' rice beer into the ears of a pig, bound and laid on the ground. If the pig does not fidget, it is considered evil and result in bad crops, epidemic etc otherwise it is good. The fifth day is called Aru-Go. On this day the remaining food stuff and other drinks are prepared for the feast and taken with co-villagers. The sixth day is the concluding day of the festival is known as 'Etoanu'. On this day the blood smeared seeds are sown in the fields and rice beer is poured at the trunk of the stump for the goddess of the house hold.

### ***The Si-Donyi Festival***

It is the most significant festival of the Tagins and is celebrated in January. Si signifies the earth and Donyi is the sun. They believe that, the sun, the moon, the earth and the natural elements around them play a vital part in their day to day functions. It is with these factors in back ground that their important festivals are performed. During the festival 'Etting', rice powder mixed with Apong (rice-beer) is made to a paste and everyone liberally applied with it.

Everybody contributes in kind and cash. Si-Donyi festival being conducted on a large scale cannot be performed individually due to huge expenditure involved. Hence, it is celebrated collectively. The local youths work day and night for about a month in preparation of the festival. The elderly person who form the members of the Si-Donyi committee direct the operations and the selected Nibu (priest) guides and performs the Si-Donyi festival like 1) Sune-Rabo, 2) Takar, 3) Gene Koni Bakar and Hoyo Penam. It is understood that by celebrating the Si-Donyi festival the creators Si and Donyi would not only be satisfied but also bless the people with good crops and prevent diseases. In fact Si-Donyi festival is the festival for prosperity, plenty and success.

### ***Bori Boot Festival***

The Bori Boot festival is exclusively performed by the Hill-Miris. The festival usually falls in February. Bori Boot means to get together irrespective of age, sex, caste to hail the spring and successful harvest. The festival also invokes the spirit of Bori Boot to bless them with prosperity and free from diseases of any kind. The festival is performed collectively. The young members do all the work under the elders guidance. The Nibu (priest) performs Puja as well as conduct sacrifice. 'Etting' is co-piously applied on one and all. The festival is of three days duration.

### *Nyokum*

The month of August every year is the time for celebrating Nyokum or the worship of goddess of crops (Lakshmi) and other Gods and Goddess by the Nishis. On the first day, before an altar of images and symbols of the gods and goddess, the priest starts the Puja by chanting prayer and girls dance and sing to propitiate the unseen god and goddess. They sing about abundant crops and good will, health and unity among all the people, joy and mutual co-operation and peace and plenty every year. On the second and concluding day, the villagers of the neighbouring villages perform their Puja in their villages and come in long procession. The sacrificial animals like mithuns, pigs and chicken are either carried or hung in long bamboo poles. On the arrival at the place of worship the people go round the altar chanting and the atmosphere seems to be sur-charged with a feeling of devotion and godliness. The animals are sacrificed and after invocation of the blessings, the Puja comes to a conclusion.

### *Yulo*

The Nishis perform a number of religious ceremonies of which one called 'yulo' is important. Yulo is performed for the welfare of the society. The ceremony is marked by a sacrifice of 'mithuns' in which the priest collects the blood of animals in a bamboo tube and hangs it in front of his house as a mark of distinction.

### *Losar Festival*

Losar is one of the important festival of Monpas. The festival is celebrated to commemorate the advent of new year. Before the commencement of Losar, they make arrangement for a feast with local drinks where all the relatives and friends are entertained and wish each other happy New Year (Tashi Delek) of the 15th day of the same month they bid good bye to Losar festival with merry making.



### ***Jomu Festival***

A religious festivals of the Monpas. This is a get together sort of festival which is observed after the completion of sowing of seeds between the 5th and 6th months of Monpa, Lunar calendar. In this festival the villagers go to the Gompa in their traditional dress. The function is graced by the oldest member of the village.

### ***Chosker Festival***

In this religious festival of Monpas, the Lamas (Buddhist priests) read religious scriptures in the Gompa (Buddhist temple) for a number of days. Thereafter the villagers carry the religious books on their back in a procession under the guidance of senior Lama. The procession goes round the cultivated fields which fall within the jurisdiction of the village. The significance of this performance is to ensure better cultivation and protect the grains from the insects and wild animals and also for the prosperity of the villagers. Normally this festival is performed during the months of April-May, after the Jhum fields are prepared. The ritual involves the suspension of all outside activities for a definite period.

Among the North Eastern States Arunachal Pradesh is also not lagging the traits in arts and crafts. From the time immemorial the tribes knew weaving, carpet making. There is good tapestry especially in the hands of woman folk. Some section of people produce galuk, gale with variety of designs. They earn livelihood by weaving and carpet making.

There is wall painting and wood carving in West Kameng, Lohit, Tawang Districts. Wood carving is also found in Tirap and Changlang Districts. They make mask of human face and animals by carving wood etc. Carving is also done on bamboo or wood for decoration.

People are also expert in making bamboo pipes of various sizes and designs for drinking purposes. Baskets, containers etc. are also produced out of cane and bamboos

for home use and commercial purposes. Hats of various designs are made out of canes etc.

Arunachal Pradesh tribal women know the works of embroidery and knitting. Women earn money from such works and improves their economic condition.

The art of tanning is seen amongst the Mishmis of Dibang Valley, Lohit District of the state. After suitably tanning the animal skin is used as shoulder bags, slings etc.

Dr. Elvin Writes, "There are no guilds or castes of craftsman, but certain families take up blackmithery or pottery, arts which are not practiced by everyone".

Archery equipments like cross-bow, arrow and bow are also made by people of Arunachal. These are made not for commercial purpose but for hunting and other defence purpose. Knives, Daos, Spears and other lethal weapons are also made by blacksmith of Arunachal. The people of Arunachal are fond of hunting, fishing etc. They prepare fishing traps of different sizes and various designs from bamboo and cane. The art work of painting, inscribing is also visibly noticed in West Kameng, Tawang District etc. as you will find plates, bowls, cups with various painting. Some painting is done on religious symbols, belief etc. and these are being used at home for interior decoration too. This art work finds market in the state.

### *Folk Dances*

The dances, performed by the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, have been broadly divided into four groups. The first group is the ritual dances which may again be divided into five sub-groups. The first sub-groups includes those dances which form part of the various rituals performed to secure prosperity, good health and happiness of the dancer, his family, village or the whole community. The second sub-group comprises of those dances performed in ceremonies related to agriculture and domestication of animals to secure a good harvest and

increase of domestic animals respectively. The third sub-group is associated with the funeral ceremony when the soul is guided by a priest to its abode in the land of the dead and to prevent it from haunting its old residence. It is generally believed that if the soul returns to its old home the bereaved family suffers diseases and deaths. The fourth sub-group consists of the fertility dances. These are magical in the sense that the imitation of the movements of coition is believed to promote fertility. War-dances make the fifth sub-group, which are on the decline with the stoppage of internecine feuds and raids. In the old days, when an expeditionary party was successful in killing an enemy or more, the victors used to perform a ceremony on return, so that the spirit of the slain could do no harm to the slayer. Only among the Idu Mishmis, the victim's family also used to perform rites praying for success in taking vengeance. Dance formed a part of this ceremony. The war-dance used to be prevalent among almost all the non-Buddhist tribes.

The one more group is the festive-dance which forms the recreational part of a particular festival. The third group is the recreational dances which do not form part of any particular festival or ritual. These are performed on occasions which inspire its participants to express their mirth through these dances. The fourth group is the pantomimes and dance-dramas which narrate a mythical story or illustrate a moral.

### *The Wancho Dances*

The Wancho tribes perform dances during appropriate occasions like festivals, ceremonies etc. Ozele festival of Wanchos is celebrated in February-March after the sowing of millet. It lasts for four days and was observed in Longkhau village. The dance is performed from about 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. inside the chief's house. Among the male-folk, boys, youths and adults take part while among women, only girls and those young married women who



have not joined the husband's family, take part in the dance.

The dancers, dressed in their fineries, stand in a circle surrounding a bonfire. The girls stand on one side of the circle holding each other's hands. The male dancers hold a sword in the right hand and most of them place the left hand over the shoulder of the dancer to the left. The male dancers start singing when all take a short step with the right foot to the right, flex the knees with an accompanying forward swing of the sword and gently bring the left foot up to the heel of the right one.

All the male dancers have a cane basket hanging at the waist over the buttocks. The basket is decorated with coloured straw tassels, monkey skulls or wild boar's tusks. The straw tassels of the baskets are decorated with coloured beads. The straps of some of the baskets are decorated with white conch-shell discs. Each basket has a bell fitted at its bottom.

### *The Idu Mishmi Ritual Dance*

The Idu Mishmis have a ritual-dance and a fertility-dance. The ritual-dance is performed by the priest or priestess in the ceremonies of Ai-ah, Ai-him, Mesalah and Rren. The fertility-dance is performed on the last day of the Rren ceremony.

There is no definite myth about the origin of this dance. According to local tradition, the first priest who officiated in a funeral ceremony was Chineuhu and his brother, Ahihiuh, was the first priest who officiated in the other three ceremonies in which this dance forms a part. This dance is associated with the priestly office. Besides the priest, there are three or four other dancers who are selected from amongst the spectators. In addition it is the usual dress which consists of a loin-cloth, a short-sleeved coat, and a sword slung on the right side, a leather bag slung on the left side and a few bead-necklaces, the priest wears a few other articles.

These articles are an apron with particular designs, a head-band decorated with two or three rows of cowries, a necklace studded with the teeth of tiger and bear and a few metal bells. A priestess wears these special articles in addition to the usual Mishmi woman's dress of a skirt, a long sleeved coat and bead-necklaces. The priestess is generally accompanied by female dancers. The accompanying dancers wear the usual dress.

### *Digaru Mishmi Buiya Dance*

The Digaru Mishmis have two types of dances called Buiya and Nuiya. The Buiya dance has two types of movements and it is performed for entertainment while the Nuiya is a ritual-dance performed by a priest. It is performed on any festive occasion like the Duiya, Tazampu and Tanuya festivals which are performed for the prosperity and good health of the performer and his household. This dance may also performed after a feast arranged by a family to entertain the fellow villagers who co-operate with it opening a new field.

The dance is performed in the passage which runs along one side of the house from the front to the rear. Men and women take part in this dance. There is no limit to the age of the dancers although generally children and old persons do not take active part in the dance itself but merely sit by, as spectators.

There is no special costume for this dance, so they perform this dance wearing their usual dress. The male dancer wears a loin-cloth a sleeveless jacket, a turban and ear-rings. The female dancer wears a blouse, a long skirt reaching down to the ankle with a short one wrapped over it and a side-bag on the left side. They wear necklaces, large silver-ear-plugs and a silver fillet with its strap studded with coins or cowries.

### *The Khampti Dances*

The Khamptis, who are Buddhists, have many dance-dramas through which they unfold some stories or depict

mythical events bearing ethical lessons. These dramas are generally staged during the religious festivals of Potwah, Sangken or Khamsang, constituting the entertainment part of the festivals.

The dance is called ka and the dance-drama is called kapung (ka-dance; pung-story) and actually means a story depicted through the dance. The rehearsal of a drama starts about one month before a festival. This may be done in the monastery or in any house of their choice. The well-to-do-villagers invite the drama-party when the drama is staged in the front courtyard or in some suitable open space near their house.

Women do not take part in the drama. The female role, if any, is played by a man in woman's costume. After the performances, the party is given a remuneration of seven, fourteen, twenty-eight or forty-two rupees-always an amount divisible by seven. They purchase with this money the costumes and masks used in the dramas. The surpluses, if any, is shared by the members of the drama party.

### *Ka Fifai Dance-Drama*

The Ka Fifai drama is woven round the theme of the traditional belief that ghosts appear and kidnap girls or men and trouble them. The participants in the drama consist of a man, his daughter who is kidnapped, the ghost who does the kidnapping, the Ministers of the State who make preparations for war against the ghost, the King of the stage in which the girl's father is a subject, and the king's men who go out to capture the ghost.

The drama opens with a man and his daughter walking in the garden. The ghost appears and captures the girl, and immediately the man greatly aggrieved rushes to the king's court to inform him of the incident and beseech him the rescue his daughter. The king's anger is aroused at this news and he calls for his Ministers and asks them to prepare for war. The King's men go in search of the ghost and bring him before the king, who



severely warns him never to do such a thing again. The ghost frightened bows before the king and with this ends the drama.

### ***Ponung Dance***

Adi village has a rich cultural life. The tribal people are famous for their Ponung that is dancing with the accompaniment of songs. A group of girls dance in a circle holding each other by stretching their hands over each others shoulders while the leader-usually a man called the Miri-dances and sings in the centre-holding aloft and shaking a sword like musical instrument called 'Yoksha'. First he sings a line and then it is repeated in chorus by the maidens rhythmically in circle at a low pace. On all important occasions Ponung is arranged.

### ***Sadinuktso***

The Akas have a number of dances and songs for the different socio-religious festivities. One of the well known dance among the Akas is the Sadinuktso. A member from the boy's group comes forward, gives his performance for a short while and recedes. A girl then comes and she also dances all alone. This relation goes on till all the boys and girls of the group have danced. No song is sung with this dance. It is generally performed in marriages, guest, entertainments or on the construction of a new house.

### ***Crafts***

Arunachal Pradesh is a land of beautiful handicrafts comprising a wide variety. Artistic craftsmanship has been passed on from one generation to the other and sense of aesthetics has been manifested through a variety of crafts such as weaving, painting, pottery, smithy work, basket making etc. The people make beautiful masks. They periodically stage pantomimes and masked dances. They also make exquisite painted wooden vessels and silver articles. Carpet making is a speciality of the Monpas, the Buddhist community.

### *Textiles*

The textile patterns found among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh such as Adi, Mishmi and Apatani are invariably of geometric pattern. Most popular motives are Zig-Zag lines and angular designs. The floral and Zomorphic patterns are more or less geometric form. The simple and straight lines, stripes and Aa bands and similar other patterns are most common. Contrasts and combination of colours are quite popular.

The Adi have a great variety of straight forward patterns. There are arrangements of red and black strips on white ground, white and yellow strips on a black ground alternate bands of red and black ground, white bands of red and black or of olive green and brown, broad border-bands of brown with a central narrow strips of black and white and the body of the cloth being black with brown black and white strips at a three-inch interval.

The Gallong still continue the traditional design on the white clothes with broad rectangular design across the centre. The most popular Padam Minyong skirt is of crimson yellow colour with a vertical band which runs down the centre. The different varieties of bands and colour make the Apatani cloth different from that of the Gallong. The Mishmi weavings is however, more elaborate though the straight lines and bands are in use.

### *Wood Carving*

Wood carving is a tradition with some of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Monpas, Khamtis, Wanchos, Phom, Konyak tribes occupy significant place in this art. Wood carving like in the case of Nagaland finds expression mainly under three categories; firstly, with head hunting, secondly with the decoration of the morungs or men's youth dormitory and thirdly, the funerary images erected for warriors and other important person.

In carving of the human figure, special attention is paid to the head. The features are carved in low relief

and are fairly realistic. Usually the image depicting a warrior is decorated with special cowerie belt and several other artefacts. The top of the head is rounded and usually has some indication of haircut. Tattoo marks are carefully represented, and most figures are dressed up with little bits of cloth and even ornaments with tufts on head or beads in the ear.

Wancho woodcarvers have deep sense of proportion, despite their preoccupation with the head. Of late departure from the traditional fixed form is noticed in many carved figures. Symmetrical postures are replaced by asymmetrical ones, relief works are experimented in various themes. The Monpa wood carver make beautiful cups, dishes, fruit bowls and carve magnificent masks for ceremonial dance and pantomimes. The Sherdukpen, the Khampa and the Monpa make masks which appear almost like real faces, while other represent birds and animals and some represent apes and men twisted mouths, women with goire to drive away the evil spirit.

### **Wooden Mask**

The cane and bamboo industry of the state has made a name for itself. As a matter of fact most of the domestic requirements are made of these materials—hats, baskets, canes vessels, cane belts - woven and plain, bamboo mugs and carvings, a wide variety of ornaments and jewellery items are all crafted by workmen. The shawls and jackets, shoulder bags and coats all stand for the perfection that the people have attained in this art.

The Monpa wood carver scoopes out beautiful cups, dishes and fruit bowls and magnificent ceremonial masks for dances and pantomimes. Another tribe that is framed for this art is the Khamptis who carve out beautiful religion images, figures of dancers, toys and other objects. They weave beautiful bags and loin cloths too. Goat's hair, ivory, boar's tus, beads of agate and the stones as well as of brass and glass are specialities of the people of this zone.



### *Weaving*

Weaving is the occupation of the womenfolk throughout the territory. They have an excellent sense of colour. The basic colours that dominates the weaves are black, yellow dark blue, green and scarlet - all put together in the most fascinating combinations. Originally natural dyes were used which today have given away to synthetic dyes.

### *Pottery*

Dafla women are skilled in this craft. The legend is that Abo Takam was the first Dafla potter and from him the art passed on to the women. The process involves pounding a specific kind of earth called dekam on a big stone with a wooden hammer. When it turns into powder, water is mixed and it is hammered till it gains the required softness. Clay lumps are taken home. The woman sits with a piece of gunny bag, or old fibre blanket spread over her thigh. She takes a lump and shapes it with her finger into a crude pot with a shallow opening at the top and rim round it. When several such crude pots have been shaped they are kept in the top-most tray over the hearth to dry. Next day they are ready for the final processing. This is done by pushing a stone deeper and deeper through the hollow of the mouth to get the right bulge of the sides, which are beaten on the outer side with a kamgi to flatten them thin. The kamgi is a bamboo stick with a lineal design on it. It leaves the marks of the design on the body of the pot. The process is continued till the desired round shape, size and finish are obtained. Finished pots are not subjected to any polishing or burnishing. They are carefully kept in the shade while drying. When completely dry, they are put in a fire out-side the house.

### *Basketry*

Considering function, i.e. the utility as the basis, the whole range of basketry taken into consideration, can be

conveniently classified into the following divisions: (1) Carrying basket; (2) Storage basket; (3) Receptacle; (4) Straining basket; (5) Decorative basket; (6) Fishing basket; (7) Mat; (8) Miscellaneous objects. Besides these, there are a large number of objects produced through basketry technique. They are used for miscellaneous purposes such as objects of personal adornment, dress, defense, etc. This group of objects may be classed as basketry objects of miscellaneous utility.

Baskets of conical shapes are invariably used for carrying purposes. They are commonly found among the Daflas, Hill-Miris, Tagins, Gallongs, Noctes and Wanchos. There are sufficient reasons to show that here is definite relationship between the topography and the conical shape of these baskets. The Dafla carrying basket, which is locally known as ege, may be regarded as one of the perfectly suited basket from technical point of view, as far as adaptation to the topography is concerned.

### *Making of Sudhum*

The Apatani smoking pipe is called sudhum. The bowl is made from a cane called tarre while the stem is made from the reed bamboo called pepu. The hollow of the bowl is created by burning, to remove the soft pulpy centre of the cane. A similar pipe is made by the Apatanis where the bowl is made from bamboo. The Nishi tribe of Subansiri District in Arunachal makes a pipe similar to the Apatani one, and is called hutusilli.

### *Making of Yatee*

The Yatee, the Apatani rain shield from Arunachal, is made in two parts, held together by long loops of twisted bamboo rope. The top part is rectangular. The second part is a flat rectangular piece that shields the back. Both parts have braided bamboo straps that rest on the forehead. When the top part is not required, it is pushed back to hang suspended from the back shield by two long loops of twisted bamboo rope. Both parts are made with two

layers of an open-hexagonal weave, sandwiching a layer of leaves between them. All the edges are held between two half splits of cane tightly bound together.

### *Making of Monpa Hat*

The Monpa tribe of Arunachal Pradesh uses a shallow conical hat to protect them from the sun and rain. The hat is made in two layers. The outer layer is woven in close diagonal twill, while the inner layer is made in an open-hexagonal weave. To make the hat waterproof, a layer from the stem of a banana tree is dried and sandwiched between the layers. The layers are held together around the edge which is sandwiched between two strips of cane, tightly bound together. A braided bamboo headband is fitted inside the hat, which is held on to the head by a strap looped below the chin.

### *Making of Bopa*

The Apatani and Nishi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh use coiled hats that fit close on to the head like a skull cap. The bopa is slightly conical in shape. These hats are decorated with twisted cane ropes, and a hornbill beak that is dyed red.

### *Making of Bolup*

The bolup is a hat used by the Galong tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. It is made by coiling lengths of cane to obtain a semi-elliptical bowl with a horizontal boat-shaped rim. The hat is extremely sturdy. A similar construction is used in hats made by other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The form and decorative elements vary, but the basic structure is similar. The Adis also make hats out of cane strings. They call it 'dumlup'. There is variation shape and design of the Adi dumlup and the Galong bolup.

### *Ornaments Making*

Ornaments making is a craft widely practised in



Arunachal Pradesh. The work of a silver smith is more intricate and artistic. Wanchos make ear-ornaments from glass beads, wild seeds, cane, bamboo and reed. The gallong women wear ear-plugs and the earring. Plugs are generally of leaf, wood or bamboo, while the rings are heavy for they are made of iron. The Aka women wear number of ornaments of silver. The common silver ornaments are melu- a flat-shaped ornament worn over the chest, rombin- the big ear bulbs, gichli- the ear- rings and gejjui-the wristlets. Well-to-do women specially wear a fillet of silver chain work called lenchhi. Along with these ornaments, women also put on around the neck a number of coloured bead-necklaces. Ancestral necklace called aesheri, is worn invariably by women and often by men. It forms a necessary part of a girl's dowry to be given to the groom at the time of marriage. It is regarded as sacred and more valuable than other ornaments since it is a part of the ancestral property of the house.

The ornaments of the idu mishmis are few and simple. The men and women wear necklaces of various kinds of beads. The most common necklace is the arulaya, which consists of forty to sixty white beads strung together. Another kind of necklace is the lekapon made of small white beads in twenty strands. Usually both men and women wear a cylindrical piece of bamboo in the extended lobe of the ear: some wear silver rings adorned with either silver coins or beads of red and blue. Akakhre are earring made of thin silver-plate and worn by women.

### ***Weapons Making***

Weapons are an integral part of the tribal life since the times immemorial. Although certain weapons have become obsolete and replaced by modern weapons yet traditional weapons have a place of their own. Weapons are used in war and chase and day to day task. All such weapons are produced locally. The most important weapon of Akas is bow and arrow, known by the names of tkeri and moo respectively, and used extensively in the chase.

Weapons may vary in size according to the user's requirement. The bigger ones used in hunting are fitted with tips of iron and smeared with aconite poison. The bows are usually hung over the shoulders while the arrows are carried in a case of bamboo called Thouvou. Another weapon, originally of war but now of defence, is a kind of crude harpoon, one end of which is barbed with sharp iron nails. It is hurled at the target from a distance. The most common weapon used both in war and peace is the dao. It is of extensive use to the people in their day-to-day task such as cutting wood.



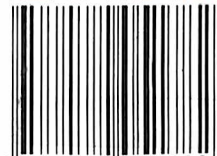


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