

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Donyi-polo: An Indigenous Religion

**Priyanka Tamuli**

Student, Tezpur University, Gohpur, Assam, India

**Abstract:**

*Religion lies in every human mind. Tribal people have their unique religion. Donyi-polo is an indigenous religion of most of the Arunachal community. The Adis, Gallos, Tanis, Mishings are the main follower of Donyi-polo religion. Donyi is considered as mother and polo as father. Donyi-polo is the root of truth and beauty for them. Donyi-polo is the creator, controller of universe. Sometimes myth is encountered and sometimes scientific facts are negotiated with the religion of Donyi-polo Myth and scientific fact both make Donyi-polo very strong. This paper gives an overview on Donyi-polo religion.*

**Keywords:** *Donyi-polo, The Adis, supreme power, Sedi-melo, Deities*

Among the larger tribal community, supernatural belief is a universal feature. Belief and worship in supernatural being is deeply rooted in tribal community. Donyi-polo a faith on unseen Supreme Being with supreme power is existing belief system of Arunachal Pradesh. Tani group of Nyishis considers Donyi Polo as a primitive religion. For the Tani group Donyi-polo is indigenous religious identity. Donyi-polo preserves and maintains all the law of nature and truth for existence. Among the Tani groups Donyi-polo lies to adjust themselves with the environment which around them and where they live. The natural phenomena remained mysterious to them and they wanted to live in peace and free from disease, sufferings and misfortune. But they did not know who was the creator, controller, maintains the natural phenomena and their curiosity to know about the whole process helps to give rise to the notion of natural belief and faith in Donyi-Polo. They worship supernatural power which prefers belief in Sun, Moon, water, fire and other natural object. Donyi- Poloist also belief in Sun, Moon, earth, light, air, water, and stone. This omnipotent and omnipresent Supreme Being called as Donyi-polo. Donyi-polo is the truth, beauty of life which enlightens the mind of people and it is the bright stone which attract the mind of Tani groups.

Donyi-polo is primitive as well as unique religion. It has distinct characteristic in term of value, belief, practices. Donyi-polo is the source of light, creator of universe and protector of all creatures. It provides the essence of truth, justice, beauty, faith, morality, love, goodness which means it is the source of life for all human being, animals and plants.

In the Donyi-polo religion, Donyi is considered as mother and polo as father. The universe is considered as the kingdom of these father and mother. They do not want total darkness on the earth therefore half the world is in day and half in night. Donyi -polo lives in the sky and blesses the humanity. Along with donyi-polo, number of benevolent a malevolent deities are there in Adis religion. That are - Padam-Minong, Yidum Bate, Pedong nane, Boki-Mone, Yidem Bote, Dadi Bote etc. Most of them considered as grandchildren of sedi.

The faith of Donyi- poloism started since time immemorial, no one gave the clear or exact time of beginning of donyi- poloism. Donyi-polo has three classified meaning, one is physical, second one is spiritual, and third one is ideological. Physical meaning refers donyi-polo as the Sun and Moon. They had sign of light and provide warmth and heat. Without ray of sun and Moon, human being cannot exist. Spiritually, donyi-polo begin before creation and representation of nothingness, which known as "keyum" which beyond the human knowledge, which is also unseen, unknown regarding the sex of it, it is not sure whether Donyi-polo is a male or female deity. Some of the Adis believe that donyi-polo is a single deity with double personality. While some of them believe they are two, donyi is the husband of polo. The ideological Donyi-polo is the universe which is infinite or unlimited. He has authority of love, justice, peace, kindness etc. He has supreme power or authority around the universe.

Among the different Tani group, the Adis, for the first time worshipped Donyi-polo as their indigenous religion. In the article, "Adis faith through the Ages" by Shri Paijing Pertin refers Donyi-polo as religion of Adis. He termed Donyi-polo as "man eater". According to him, the Adis consider themselves as descendants of Donyi-polo. Sedi has supernatural power and was the creator of universe, of all beings and things. Sedi the creator himself transformed parts of his body into river, valley, air, water, the sun and the moon etc. Sedi's hair was transformed into vegetable on the earth, his tears into rain and water, his bones into rocks and stones and eyes becomes donyi (sun)-polo (moon). Sedi becomes silent after creation of those natural things. According to Galo myth *jimi* is creator of universe including the *Melo* (sky) and *Sidi* (earth), the sky including the Donyi-polo.

For Adis donyi-polo are the supreme god, they believe the human beings are creation of donyi-polo. In case of a period of dry water, some rituals occurred by priest, called as "Padong Pumpong" and release water to the earth. After the sufficient rain the Adi worship another rite called "Donyi-Bonom" to sun to send sun ray to the earth. These rites performed at night and a white chicken invited the sun and moon to rise. The "Donyi Bonom" has got a special application that is recited to stop continuous rain. These are...

1. Mopin
2. Hurin
3. Ji-de
4. Ni-peha
5. homen peka
6. Kale peka
7. Mo-de
8. Ali peka

The faith in the supreme power that is represented by Donyi- Polo and the practice of it, is called Donyi- Poloism. There are two separate aspects of Donyi- Poloism, one is Material Donyi- Polo and spiritual Donyi- Polo.

Another important phase of donyi-polo religion is system of priesthood, which called as *nyibo* or *nyibu* or *miri*. He known as intermediary between the spirituals world and human world, performs divination, offers sacrifices. One's inherent qualities and talent are the eligibility for profession of a *nyibos*. *Nyibos* have two categories, one is *mumin nyibos* and other one is *nyigre nyibos*. *Nyibos* put on different types of dress and ornaments.

Almost all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have faith and belief in Donyi-polo. For Adis Donyi-polo is central religious cult. Sometimes myth is encountered and sometimes scientific facts are negotiated with the religion of Donyi-polo. Adis believe the sun and the moon are great granddaughter of Sedi Melo and donyi-polo born of Pedong Nane which considered as rain mother. According th Sachin Roy "Donyi- the sun and polo the moon, are twin of Pedong Nane". The luminous eyes of irmyam Miteko, a son of sedi-melo, were grafted on them one of each by Irsiya of same family and so they become the luminaries. So that donyi-polo directly affects the human being, animals and plants life on the earth various phenomena of earth directly connected with solar and lunar cycle. The Adis believe that all beings and things of universe have been created by a supreme power or creator who is called Sedi by Padam-Minyongs and *jimi* by the Galos (Nyori: 1993, p.9). On other hand Nyishi are strong believers of Donyi-polo. According to their belief system, Donyi gave birth to real human being. According all Abangs, which narrates the creation of universe, starts from sedi (Ering, series vii). It is a belief that all tani people of Arunachal Pradesh share a common ancestry from the Abotani. In this religion, coral tradition is there which passed down each generation to another. They have no written sacred text. Followers of Donyi-polo believe in oneness of all human, animal, plant etc. or all living being because everyone has role to play on his life, which is interconnected with each other. Donyi-polo comes next to sedi or *jimi*, the creator and creator becomes obscure and silent after the creation (Hyori: 1990, p.9). The two eyes of sedi Donyi and polo manifested, which considered as the sign of the creator and protect of mankind. Donyi is addressed as Ane Donyi (mother sun) and polo as Abo polo (father moon). A description given in Adi Dooying (Aibang: 1995. p.5) goes on like this:

"doni ane didune  
Loodi e tumi e giili kaane  
Tikling mite olung me  
Tikdong migome abong me  
Nanne kile bilet doop  
Lulik to"

According to Shimongs the sun and moon were sister, they wore galle skirt of flaming red and yellow. Etung Tikling, an enemy of them, stole and burnt the skirts and sisters hid themselves for shame. The whole world became dark until the craftsman Bisi Ada made two beyops to cover their nakedness. When the sun came back into the sky, it was day. But the moon is still shy, even with her disc, and appears at the night. (Elwin: 1998, p123). But in Penge Aabong (song of lamentation) Donyi-polo is described as man-eater and polo as the day of death. So the theory of Donyi- Poloism is just like an egg without yolk. Peijing Pertain strongly opposed the Donyi-Polo as religion.

Talom Rukbo the founder of Donyi-Polo movement wrote that the origin of Donyi-polo is beyond the human knowledge. According to him philosophical foundation of donyi-polo is

- It is the universal truth and brotherhood
- It is the supreme governing power of universe
- It is the divine light, wisdom and knowledge
- It is the source of life and energy of all living being
- Goals of donyi-polo are oath of right, justice and kindness
- Purity, openness, love and peaceful, co-existence are the eternal laws of donyi-polo

Donyi-polo maintains justice by punishment and reward. Donyi-polo is invoked at the time of sickness. If a person becomes sick the traditional methods of worship is preferred for the person to be cured. It is performed by the uncle, parents and grandparents. In time of hardship donyi-polo is invoked for strength and courage. In hardship donyi-polo provide guide and show them the correct path. On the other hand, in terms of undecided offence, Donyi-polo is witness for all the rewards and punishment between two parties.

Donyi -polo is present everywhere and witnessing everything. Donyi-polo has Almighty power, which will save from all the ruin. Donyi-polo is source of right and truth. It is regarded as the saviour. Donyi-polo is invisible and he gave authority.

Donyi-polo is a source of happiness and sorrows, fortune, wealth. Poverty and sorrow are also blessing of Donyi-polo. For Donyi-Polo, all human is created as equal. In Donyi-polo there is no shrine or place of worship. For most of the communities of Arunachal Pradesh Donyi –polo become their way of life because through their belief they link this world and the supreme deities are very close to their daily life. In one sentence we can concluded that Donyi-polo are link between the supreme and mortal world. Mr. Kakkar writes; “Donyi-polo is in fact, a kind of nature-man-spirit complex: while nature is supreme, man is central to the cosmos and spirit a link between two.” Donyi- Poloism root deeply in the mind of the Adis, it inspires people to achieve good personality and character, so it strongly represents truthfulness.

Donyi-polo is the source of truth as well as of energy. Followers of Donyi-polo worship sun and moon to get energy. Certain amount of scientific knowledge is also there. Scientifically, without that supreme power or without the light of sun and the moon, we cannot survive in this earth. In another way, if a woman worships sun, she gets energy from it which helps her to activate her hidden, dormant yang. In case of moon, if a man worships moon, he gets energy from the moon so that the dormant feminine principle becomes alive.

The Donyi-polo cult is interwoven with Hinduism, animism and Buddhism. Elwin has commented today Donyi-polo is the nearest approximation to a supreme duty known to Northern Adis. Donyi-polo is the supreme deity which shifts the ideology of faith of plural manifestation to the dual manifestation. On the other hand, Donyi-polo represents the theological evolution of Animism. But several changes have occurred in donyi- poloism. Ganging is the social institution of every village for regular prayer and sermons on Saturday. In Arunachal and Assam 189 Ganging have been constructed.

Donyi-polo is the supreme god, a ways of life, which create social stability among the different groups of people in Arunachal Pradesh. Myth and scientific fact both make Donyi-polo very strong. It is a primitive religion as well as a unique religion of world. So every Arunachalee tries to preserve that religion.

### References

- i. ABRAHAM, P.T. 2010, "Donyi-polo - expression of an Indigenous religion" in "Understanding tribal religion, edited by Tamo Mibang and S K Choudhuri, New Delhi: Mittal publication.
- ii. Borang, Gindu Tinling. 2008. " The genesis of Donyi-polo: A socio-religious History of Adis" in Religious history of Arunahal Pradesh edited by Byomakesh and S. Dutta, New Delhi: Gyan Publication House.
- iii. Burch Hamlet (ed. s), 2001, Encyclopaedia of North-east India: Assam, New delhi: Mittal publication.
- iv. Elwin, Verrier. 1998. The art of Northeast Frontier of India, directorate of Research, Itanagar.
- v. Ering, Oshong. 2010, "Philosophy of Donyi-polo, in "Understanding tribal religion, edited by Tamo Mibang and S K Choudhuri, New delhi: Mittal publication
- vi. Ering, Oshong. 1994, "The concept of donyi-polo", Itanagar: ARSI, Vol-5
- vii. Nyori, tai. 1993," History and culture of the Adis", New Delhi: Omsons publication.
- viii. Nyori, Tai. 1998. "the religious belief and practice of the Adis: A Study with reference to galos, in "Indigenous faith and practice of tribes of Arunachal pradesh"edited by M. C. Behra and S K Choudhary, Itanagar: publication.
- ix. Prakash,Col Ved. 2007 (eds.), "Encyclopaedia of North-east India", vol-1, Atlantic Publication
- x. Regunathan, Sudhamahi. 1991. "Sunshine on faith: lief and belief in some Arunachal communities, India International center, Vol- 26
- xi. Rikan,Nabam Todar. 2005. "Emergence religious identities of Arunachal Pradesh: a study of nyioni tribe",, New delhi: Mittal publication.
- xii. Roberts, Keith A and Yamane, David. 2016. "Religion in sociological Perspective", Sage Publication, 6th edition
- xiii. Rukbo, Talom. 1985, "Donyi-poloism: A religion", Arunachal review
- xiv. Rukbo, Talom. 1998, "Donyi-polo faith and practise of the Adis", in "Indigenous faith and practice of tribes of Arunachal pradesh", edited by M. C. Behra and S K Choudhary, Itanagar: publication.
- xv. Sinha, Raghuvir. 1977. "Religion and culture of North-eastern India, New Delhi: Abhinav publication.