

Dera Natung Government College Research Journal**CONTENTS**

Sl No	Articles	Author	Pages
1	Agricultural Rituals as the Ceremonial Cycle of the Nyishi Tribe	Tame Ramya	1
2	A Study on Attitude of Pre-Service Secondary Teachers toward Human Rights Education and Peace Education.	Sony Dupak TageAmpa	17
3	The Socio-economic life of the Nyishis' of Arunachal Pradesh	Bengia Tada	23
4	Some Scientific Customary Health Practices of Hindu Brahmins of Nalbari and Barpeta Districts of Assam, India.	Hiranmaya Sharma	33
5	Historical perspective of trade relation between the Nyishi and Tibetan	Yab Rajiv Camder Dr Philip Mody Tok Kumar	47
6	Role of Taklung Dzong among the Monpas of Kalaktang Area: A Preliminary Study	Dr Tage Habung	53
7	Implementation and Monitoring of Rural Development Schemes –A Study of Select Districts in Arunachal Pradesh	Millo Yasung	65
8	Mopin And Its Sacred Ritualistic Aspects	Eli Doye	75
9	The Buffer Zone: British Perception of the Khampti and Singpho in the early 19th Century.	Rubu Tani	81
10	Status of Women in India and in Arunachal Pradesh	Dr. Ram Krishna Mandal	90

Mopin and its Sacred Ritualistic Aspects

Eli Doye

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Dera Natung Government College, Itanagar

Abstract

This fieldwork-based article provides an ethnographic overview of the Mopin festival of the Galos and its underlying ritualistic aspects. The Galos have a rich, multi-faceted and distinct culture of their own. Among the diverse types of traditional cultural expressions (TCEs) of the Galo tribe, Mopin is the most popular and significant. In fact, it forms a part of the identity and heritage of the indigenous community. Mopin has certain established sacred and religious rituals which are usually accompanied by hymns and incantations chanted by the nyibo (priests) and the bo (co-priests) from their memory. Regrettably, due to modern education and the influence of other religions especially Christianity, rituals associated with Mopin have undergone immense changes in the contemporary time.

KEYWORDS: *Galos, Culture, Mopin, rituals, nyibo, bo, Christianity*

Introduction

Festivals form an integral part of the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. Most of the festivals are celebrated to thank providence for the benefits received. As there are myriad of tribal communities in Arunachal Pradesh, the festivals are celebrated throughout the year by one community or the other.

The Galo people have many festivals and occasions to celebrate but most of these festivals are religious. In fact, all these festivals are not celebrated every year unless the nyibo makes prophecies of their necessity. These festivals are either directly or indirectly related to different stages of jhum (shifting cultivation) cultivation. Some of the important festivals are Mopin, Mari, Pintum, Nyojir, Ampir, Modh, Amo Mamanam, Donyi Bonam etc. Additionally, today, the Galo have started some important occasions which are celebrated under the aegis of Galo Welfare Society (GWS), the apex organization of the Galo community. These occasions are Galo Day celebrated every year on 10th January, Nyirmen Alo (dedicated to Galo women) on 15th October, Kargu Gamgi Day on 5th December and Donyi-Polo Day on 31st December which bring all Galo people together. Dance and music form an important aspect of celebrations either as an expression of joy or a ritualistic submission to the supremacy of deity. Both men and women participate in a vast array of dances like Popir during Mopin, Mari and Pintum, and Ponu, Ja-jin-ja etc. during various other occasions of festivity. Besides, most of these dances are performed to the accompaniment of songs sung generally by the dancers themselves in chorus.

Discussion

Among the festivals and occasions, today, Mopin is the most popular and significant festival of the Galo. It is celebrated annually during the 1st week of April. It is a fertility festival in which Ane Mopin (Mother Mopin) and eternal sisters Pinku and Pinte are invoked to shower their blessings to the people for rich agricultural harvest and good health. The Ane (mother) Mopin is offered with animal sacrifice (preferably mithun or pig) for appeasement. It is believed that after such invocation, the Goddess Mopin employs her daughters Pinku and Pinte to take rich harvest to the land of human beings that would ensure peace, prosperity and happiness. During the celebration, the people put on pure white dresses, which are symbols of peace and purity. Popir, a type of dance, to the tune of the Popir song specifically meant for Mopin festival are beautifully and enthusiastically performed by all. The people drink poka (brewed rice beer) supplemented by variety of tipak (food items) comprises of meat, fish, iti (pulverized rice cake), amin (mixture of boiled meat, grinded rice and dried bamboo shoot) etc. and make merriment for more than a week.

In fact, Mopin has certain established sacred or religious rituals which are usually accompanied by hymns and incantations. These are chanted by the nyibo and the bo from their memory while performing the rituals. These different rituals are discussed hereupon: -

Pip Chikanam

Pip chikanam means divination using eggs basically performed by the priest and villagers to find out a suitable dates for the celebration, to select a right priest for the celebration, to determine the Pingi-leri/neri¹ and to determine the type and number of yidum of Mopin festival. Nyibo invokes the deities by chanting hymns using eggs which is then boiled and examined. If no result is shown, then another egg is repeated till proper and final result is found. Thus, sometimes more than a day or two is required to perform this ritual. In olden days, it was mandatorily carried out before the celebration of Mopin festival but now-a-days, it is hardly performed by the people in urban areas. Moreover, it has become a yearly event particularly after fixing 5th April every as Mopin holiday. Thus, determining the date, priest, yidum, pingi-leri/neri etc. as traditional practice has been disregarded in urban areas. But in most of the celebrations in villages all these traditional practice are still maintained properly.

Roksin or Reksin Kokkanam

Roksin or reksin kokkanam or hepatoscopy is generally performed after the failure of pip chikanam in giving an accurate result. It can also be performed directly without the pip chikanam. As such, this examination has the same purpose like that of pip chikanam. Galo performed hepatoscopy either on pig or chick only. So it is from Porok (Chick) – Roksin (chicken liver) and Ere (pig) – Reksin (pig liver). Unlike in urban areas, this examination is still continued in most of the villages of Galo areas.

Hikanam

Hikanam or oblation is one of the important events that take place on the third and

the main day of celebration known as yidum alo which is dedicated for sacrifice of animals and fowls. During hikanam, the elderly ladies come to the altar with kamtu-kamlam containing poka, iti and dopak-tipak packed in oko/ekkam carrying in their doyi ginsi. Each woman representing own house deposit 25 numbers of boiled iti packed in oko/ekkam. These packing oko/ekkams are used in the images of Mopin altar and iti is distributed and consumed by the people. The poka and dopak-tipak are separately arranged for distribution to the nyibo, bo and all other participants and above all, for the images at Mopin altar. Women pour poka into the komar a bamboo tube which is placed in between the images of Pinku-Pinte which flow down on a circular enclosure. Here the flowing poka represents rain and the enclosure represents earth, thus, enacting the act of love between nyido jore (the Rain God) and Teri-Jimi (Mother Earth, the ultimate cause). Oma garnam hymns are chanted to cure a barren woman to conceive. The same hymns are pronounced by the nyibo beckoning mother earth to conceive and give a good harvest. Hikanam ritual is still performed by the ladies sincerely to get the rili-bongo and ai-gam² from Mopin Ane and Anyi Pinku-Pinte.

Yidum Nam

Yidum nam means sacrifice of animals and fowls at the altar after performing necessary sacred rituals by the nyibo and bo through chanting hymns. Such sacrifices are made for Ane Mopin, Anyi Pinku-Pinte and other spirits both malevolent and benevolent. Galos believe that spirits must be appeased with sacrifices to their favour in return. Yidum is an essential part of Mopin celebration. In olden days, yidum can be either a mithun³ or a pig which is ascertained only through a pip chikanam or roksin-reksin kokkanam.⁴

Riga Nam

Riga nam is a farewell ritual performed on Riga-Alo of the Mopin celebration. It is carried out to bid farewell to Ane Mopin and Anyi Pinku-Pinte. Nyibo and bo carry their anchi (branches of tree) march towards a nearby river or stream. They are followed by popir parties dancing popir and other village folks. On the bank of the stream, they build a small boat which is sprinkled with iti (rice paste) and then it is let to sail in the water carrying Mopin and Pinku-Pinte back to their world. Having performed this, small community cultivation is performed in the field of Pingi-leri/neri or near the Mopin altar. This ritual is still performed in rural areas but rarely performed in urban areas.⁵

Tadok Neenam

After carrying out Riga Nam, all gathered at the residence of pingi-leri/neri for Tadok Neenam (immersion of beads in Poka) which is performed to ascertain the longevity and good health of the owner of the beads. Nyibo chanted hymns and immersed the beads into the bati (brass bowl) containing poka. It is believed that the owner of beads may survive longer with good health when there are no drops of poka but if poka drops a lot from beads then the owner of the beads may not survive long.⁶

Layap Nam

Layap Nam (Purification ritual) is the last and concluding ritual of the Mopin festival.

Nyibo performed this ritual to purify all people of the village. It is performed for purity, well-being and security of all. Nyibo chanted hymns and sacrificed a fowl which is consumed by all. With the performance of layap nam ritual, Mopin celebration comes to an end.⁷

Litup Tubnam

Litup tubnam (first community cultivation) is a ritual performed by the pingi-leri/neri of the Mopin celebration. In fact, it is performed even after several months because it is the first actual community cultivation done in the field of pingi-leri/neri so suitable sowing time is waited. This symbolizes the beginning of the seed-sowing for the community. Litup tubnam is hardly performed now-a-days in urban areas but some villages in rural areas do perform this till today.⁸

Undeniably, today, Mopin celebration in urban areas have immensely deviated from many established practices and set traditions of the villages. The divination of egg or hepatoscopy is hardly carried out as a part of traditions since 5th April has been fixed as Mopin day and mithun has become a commonly accepted or permanent sacrificial animal. In many cases, it is sacrificed without any ritualistic performance by the nyibo. As such, it can safely be surmised that a different conventions have already been started for celebration of Mopin in urban areas. Different organizing committees and sub-committees are constituted to arrange the whole celebration. It is constituted by selecting from among the senior citizens and youths. From amongst the members of organizing committees, pingi-leri/neri is randomly selected who also designated as the President of celebration assisted by a few others. Nyibo is engaged but he is simply a titular head and important functions are carried out by committees constituted for the celebration. Hence, it is seen that all ritualistic performance as well as ritual objects and images assume a secondary importance and celebration becomes rather a showcase of cultural extravaganza by inviting VIPs and VVIPs as guests. Of course, one reason for such leniency in the ritualistic performances may be to entertain all Galos in the celebration irrespective of their diverse religious backgrounds and identities. This is particularly true in the case of celebrations organized by students in different colleges and universities within and outside the state. No nyibo and bo are engaged and no any kind of sacrifice of animals as such is done by the students celebrating Mopin outside our state. Special menus are prepared without any sacrifices. Lots of merry-makings in the form of smearing iti, popir dance, foods and drinks are hallmarks of such celebrations.

Conclusions

Before the advent of Christianity in the lives of the Galo people the whole concept of Mopin as a festival was never misrepresented or misunderstood among the Galo but with different religious influences, growing religious consciousness, large scale conversion of people to Christianity, and to some extent direct or indirect influence of Hinduism, the traditional concept of Mopin as a festival has lost its secular and cultural identity and endowed with a touch of religious colour and significance. Today, most of the Galo people especially those practising Christianity and living in the rural areas have failed to understand Mopin festival as a cultural concept different from its religious connotation. As a result of such ignorance and misconcep-

tion, they tend to remain aloof from its celebration as they could not differentiate between the two terms – culture and religion. In fact, another reason for their aloofness is the ritualistic performances which are associated with sacrifice of animals and fowls. Hence, in spite being Galo, these people have completely ignored Mopin celebration and rarely participate in the celebration. But with modern education, slowly awareness among the Galo Christians is growing appreciatively and there are spectacular changes in the celebration as Galo Christians living in urban areas participate in Mopin celebration in one or the other way and started to claim Mopin festival as one of their unique socio-cultural identity. Apart from this, many Galo Christians have come forward to document different aspects of Mopin and other cultural aspects of the Galo in vigorous ways.

Acknowledgement

The author is grateful to the AITS, Rajiv Gandhi University, DNGC Itanagar and UGC-NERO for various facilities and constant encouragement. The author is also thankful to all Galo nyibo, nyikok and other respondents for providing relevant information on this topic as required.

Notes :-

1. Pingi-leri/neri is head of the whole Mopin celebration. Sacrifice of animals and fowls, beginning and ending of popir, layap nam, litup tubnam, tadok neenam etc. are performed only at the residence of Pingi-leri/neri.
2. Rili-bongo and ai-agam mean blessing endowed by Ane Mopin and Anyi Pinku-Pinte for all-round prosperity, peace and well-being of the whole humanity.
3. On the mithun (*Bos frontalis*), see Simoons (1968).
4. Interviews with Nyakar Koyu, 20-21 March 2014. Seren village, East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh.
5. Ibid.
6. Interviews with Marto Doye, 22 March 2014. Seren village, East Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh.
7. Ibid.
8. Interviews with Miken Doye, 18-19 March 2014. Dari village, West Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh.

References :-

1. Bagra, Gumken. "Myths about origin of Mopin and its celebration in a broad perspective," Digo-Yamo, April 5, 2009, 17-20.
2. Behera, M.C. and S.K. Choudhuri. (Eds). 1998. Indigenous Faith and Practices of the

- Tribes of Arunahcal Pradesh. Itanagar: Himalayan Publishers.
3. Ete, Tomar. "Mopin: Its Origin and Celebration." *Rainbow*, June 15, 2001, 44-45.
 4. Ete, Tumpak. 2009. *Mopin*. Aalo: Central Mopin Celebration Committee.
 5. Nyori, Tai. 1993. *History and Culture of the Adis*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
 6. _____. "The Religious Beliefs and Practices of the Adis: A study with reference to Galos". In *Indigenous Faiths and Practices of the Tribes of Arunahcal Pradesh*, edited by M.C. Behera and S.K. Chaudhary, 36–45. Itanagar: Himalayan Publishers, 1998.
 7. Padu, T. 2010. *Moopin Poopwr Poonu Nwwtom and Mvmmvn Gogrv of the Galos of Arunachal Pradesh*. New Delhi: Farsight Publishers & Distributors.
 8. _____. "Mopin Mythology," *Ai-Agam*, April 5, 2011, 11.
 9. Simoons, F.J. 1968. *A Ceremonial Ox of India: The Mithan in Nature, Culture and History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
 10. Taju, China. 2012. *Mopin & Gospel Syncretism*. Likabali: China Taju, 17-18.

* * * * *