CHAPTER V

BELIEF SYSTEM

The man is a mysterious creature among the living beings on
the earth. Through the ages, he has evolved a spiritual world of his
own from which he derives inspirations, solace and guidance for his
everyday life and that brightens the stark realities of his life. Though
his nature and mental make up is different, his physical feature is the
same everywhere. His thought process begets new ideas and that
leads to inventions, which become the means of his sustenance and
growth. However, as observed Westropp, similar and analogous ideas,
beliefs, and superstititious practices are frequently evolved
independently among different peoples. These are resulted out of
suggestions arising spontaneously in the human mind at certain
stages of its development (Westropp: 1970, p.11). In the words of J.N.
Chowdhury, "Religion of all denominations have their origin in the
same kind of emotional upsurge and symbolic process of reasoning as
underlie a common human approach to the problem of existence
(Chowdhury: 1971, p.xi). Man always attempts psychological
adjustments with his surroundings and thereby builds up a body of
beliefs, which in their turn, form, shape and regulate his behaviour.
These beliefs and the resultant behaviour go by the name of religion (Roy: 1960, p.231). In short it may be said that religion originated as a human requirement. “The primitive man saw the various phenomena of nature such as the rise and setting of the sun, the clap of thunder or the down pour of rain. He saw the trees bear flowers and fruits. These observations led him to belief that there was some inherent power in the sun, in the thunder and the trees. He came to worship these unseen powers for it was of daily concern to him as science and technology had not yet unravelled the mysteries of nature” (Luthra, P.N. in foreword of Chowdhury: 1971, p-v)

It is seen that the Padams, while living in the inhospitable environment, tried to adjust themselves with nature and wanted to live in peace and free from disease, suffering and misfortunes. Their curiosity to know about the creator and controller of the natural phenomena led them to compose a series of myths, legends and traditional ballads called Abang (Nyori: 1993, p.266). Thus, the origin of the faith, belief and practices of the Padams like most of the primitive tribes lies in their constant attempt to adjust themselves with the environment which surround them.

All forms of indigenous faiths, beliefs and practices supported by myths, legends and Abang constitute the indigenous religion of the Padams. Indigenous faith has been defined in the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act 1978(Act No. 4,1978) as follows:
"Indigenous faith" means such religious beliefs and practices including rites, rituals, festival, observance, performances, abstinence, custom as has been found sanctioned approved, performed by the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh from the time these communities have been known and includes Buddhism as prevalent among the Monpas, the Membas, Sherdukpons, Khambas, Khamtis and Singphos, Vaisnavism as practised by Noctes, Akas and Nature Worships, including worships of Donyi-polo, as prevalent among other indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh."¹ The indigenous faith of the Padams called Yekor dakkor ayon or Yeyang manyang revolves round man's faith in the supernatural forces. It is not only the most influential forces of social control but also the most effective guide of human behaviour. Thus, their faith is also closely associated with morality and has elaborate rules of conduct. As a way of life, compartmentalisation of culture, tradition, festival, etc., from religion is very difficult in Padam society.

The Padams believe that there is an unseen supreme power of the Universe which is the source of heavenly objects like sun, moon, stars, earth and the source of organic ingredients of life elements like air, water, heat and light (Rukbo: 1998, p.57). This Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent Supreme Being is called Donyipolo (God). The Padams believe that God is supreme, He is one, eternal, without beginning and end. His Sovereignty is unique, beyond all

likeness and unlikeness, and He does not resemble anything nor does anything resemble Him. That is why, they did not create psychological image of *Donyipolo* and address Him either as male or female according to suitability of sentences. For instance, when the word *Kaki* (uncle) is suffixed to *Donyi* He is addressed as male and when the word *Ane* (mother) is prefixed to *Donyi* she is addressed as female, likewise, when the word *Yayo* (aunt) is suffixed to *Polo* she is addressed as aunt or when the word *Abo* (father) is prefixed to *Polo* He is addressed as male.

In the opinion of Mibang, "*Donyi-Polo* has three different meanings. It is used to refer to the Almighty God. It is also used to denote the sun and the moon. Further, it is the name given to the traditional belief system of the people. He further writes, "*Donyi-Polo* is neither God nor the two celestial objects nor an object of worship but the spiritual, ideological and philosophical aspiration to lead peaceful and meaningful life on this earth. In other words, the faith on the Supreme Power, the God, that is manifested in the form of the sun and the moon and the practices associated with worship of this absolute power is called *Donyi-Polo*" (Mibang: 1999, p.8)

In *Abang*, *Donyi Gangging Siring* and *Polo Gangging Siring* is mentioned as gathering place but never refers to community worship of *Donyipolo*. It seems that earlier the Padams like early Hindus turned to Him when they were in trouble, in all their sorrows and suffering but never when prosperous (Chaudhuri: 1979, p.149). There
was no organised system of worship until the formation of Donyipolo Yelam Kebang at Pasighat. Now the so-called Donyipolo religion is itself a theoretical reconstruction from oral literature of the Adis. The early writers, therefore, faced lot of difficulties in gaining reliable information from the Padams. The traditional experts of those days were orthodox and never volunteered to give their secret to outsiders. Those semi-educated people who were ready to give information were lacking in traditional knowledge and their information were bound to mislead foreigners both consciously and unconsciously.

The general attitude of the European writers towards the tribal religion is that, the tribals did not have any religion at all, or that it was a mixture of all the various idolatries and superstitions (Mibang: 1994, p.17). In fact, it is a wrong comment on the tribal people, for they have their indigenous faith and practices. Those who attempted to give an account of the Padam’s belief system on the basis of some incidents have also failed to penetrate into the depth of their religion. They therefore, gave different opinions regarding their religion. E.T. Dalton writes, “The religion of the Abors consists in a belief in these sylvan deities (Epom) to each of whom some particular department in the destiny of man is assigned” (Reported Nath: 2000, p.135). However, the Padams, as per their legend, considered Epom as their Ani-abing (brother) and often offer propitiatory rites to appease them.

G.D.S Dunbar, while dealing with the religious beliefs of the Adis writes, “His (Abor’s) untutored mind sees a demon every where,
in the sun, and the thunder, the earth and the water. It is a spirit of evil that takes life from all things that have breath that smites with sickness that in the questionable shape of a kinsman from some distant village lures the unfortunate to his doom in the dark recesses of the forest” (Dunbar: 1913, p.62). He further remarked that, “The present day religion of the hill tribes is polydemonism” (Dunbar: 1913, p.62).

Dr. Verrier Elwin, who made a comprehensive study of the tribal culture of India with special emphasis on North East India, writes, “There is a general belief in a Supreme God, who is just, benevolent and good. For example, Doini-Pollo, the sun-moon god of all Adi groups, is regarded as the great witness in the sky the up-holder of truth”(Elwin: 1957, p.210). His attempts deserve appreciation for, though an outsider could reveal the general characteristic of Donyipolo of whom the tribal people worship and now also called religion. Thus he writes, “He is the lord of truth and oath taken on his name is the most binding of all. Though he is not offered special sacrifices, for he does not need them, his name is invoked on every ritual occasion” (Elwin: 1957, p.211). The succeeding writers like Sochin Roy, J.N. Chowdhury, and indigenous writers dwell at length about Donyipolo. J.Nath writes, “Donyi-Polo is the ultimate truth and refuge for ultimate solace in the Adi Faith” (Nath: 2000, p.136). He further observes, “As a result of their concentration on various spirits for immediate relief the Adis lost sight of their supreme god Donyi-Polo to
whom they turn as a matter of habit for the sake of justice and ultimate solace. The Adis, after their coming into light of education since independence and into contact with other societies, have started an inquiry. In their search for the supreme god on the basis of their mythology and faith in practice they might have found Donyi-Polo as supreme God” (Nath: 2000, p.139). The Adis do not have institutionalised form of worship to DonyiPolo, but they never forget and never start a new search for the Supreme God. He is remembered in the time of need and shall always be remembered.

Pajing Pertin writes, “The most shocking news of the Adis is that they are marching on the wrong way. Please look around where is the right way? Research is going on but confounded! Many people have written but misinterpreted. What is mistake? Adi faith through the ages can clear up your cloudy mind’ (Pertin: 1980, p.12). But his explanation of ‘Sedi’ made the cloudy mind cloudier. He writes, “the term ‘Sedi’ is composed of two words- ‘Sekokom Dimang’ = Se + Di = Sedi, word by word translation is “nobody was planted,” meaning Sedi spontaneously originated” (Pertin: 1980, p.12). Here Sekokom + Dimang = Sedi he undermined the general rule of Padam word formation. As per general word formation of the Padams, the first syllables of the two words would be omitted and the last two syllables would form the new word (Roy: 1960, p.44). Thus, Sekokom Dimang would form Kommang, which has no related meaning with Sedi. Further, the Abang says, ‘Keyum Kamange Mone ke, Mone Taying e
ginpit dakla Sedi belie piname Melo beloe yatname,’ which means Sedi (the earth) and Melo (the sky) are made by Keyum Kamang Mone (the unseen Mone). Sedi may be the creator, but created under the direction of Donyipolo, the unseen, all pervading Supreme Being.

In Padam belief Donyipolo is so great that He never resent for accusing or ever gives undue favour to any one. His greatness lies in His capacity to give justice to all\(^2\). Man-God relation is so strong in all faiths and therefore He is remembered all the times.

Yorang Borang, a very religious and god fearing man says Donyipolo and SediMelo is one and is called Runa-Pina in Padam. He has the characteristics of a creator, preserver and destroyer. As Donyipolo He takes the part of Runa that is instructor or designer and preserver and as SediMelo He plays the role of Pina, that is, creator. He has the power of destroying every thing that does not go to the path of truth. This faith was first professed by Doni (Tani) and therefore, like Buddhism after Buddha and Christianity after Christ, the faith of the Tani group should be called Tanism in general\(^3\). Dr. Nath, while taking the example of Hinduism followed by the Hindus and Sikhism followed by the Sikhs suggested Adism as alternative title of this faith (Nath: 2000, p.142)

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2. An extract of interview with Shri Yorang Borang at Damro on 18. 5. 2003.
Concept of Donyipolo religion

The Donyipolo concept itself reflects the culmination of an evolutionary process in the growth of a religion. Thus, like any other religion of the world, Donyipolo concept has possessed a vast mythology of its own with all its mundane and supernatural elements (Chandran: 1994, p.16). The mythology that weaves a faith of doctrine starts from the pre-conceptual stage called 'keyum' which suggest that the earth itself was not there. Here 'keyum' refers to a sort of existence beyond the reach of human knowledge and imagination. Keyum as reflected through traditional treasures, that is, myths, legends, rhapsodies, folk songs, etc., means nothingness or darkness or vacuum and is narrated in the Abang as “Keyum kamange yayang ko, Kero tatmange yayang ko” which means unseen of the unseen and unknown of the unknown. The silence of the vacuum was shattered by Divine vibration (Ering: 1976, pp.50-51). The divine vibration or cosmic vibration underwent many stages with indescribable slowness and is counted as Keyum—Yumkang—Kasi—Siang—Abo—Bomuk—Mukseng before the emergence of Sedi. During these stages of development of the cosmic vibration something emerged out of darkness. Thus, a creaking sound echoing the divine vibration breaks the silence of Keyum in the first stage. This stage of development is called Yumkang. Then flickering dim light sparked off from the darkness in the stage of the Kasi. The watery substance then emerged in the horizon in the stage of Siang. In the wider and greater
development vapour evaporated from watery substance in the stage of Abo. In the Bomuk stage of development the vapour evaporated from Abo turned to fog and filled the vacuum turning it cloudy. The stages of development emanated from Yumkang reached the acme in Mukseng. In this stage all properties of matter required for making the universe took its final shape. Through the prolonged and steady waves and frictions of vibration appeared Kamang Mone, the unknown and unseen believed to be a super woman. Kamang Mone while flying in the dingy mould Sedi (earth) out of mud, water and air and is referred in Abang as Sedi repim repyom dodem.  

According to tradition, Donyipolo was the supreme power or authority that caused the divine vibration and ultimately the appearance of Kamang Mone who moulded the earth (Sedi) and sky (Melo). Every thing that happened beyond the human knowledge is the work of the Donyipolo, the Supreme Being.  

According to another version of the Abang, all celestial bodies and earth are originated from one source that is ‘Keyum’. From Keyum through cosmic vibration-Yumkang—Kamang—Mangor—Orbo—Bomong (sun) and Boo (moon) were evolved. And from another branch of evolution Keyum—Yumkang—Kasi—Siang—Abo—Bomuk—Mukseng—Sedi (earth) and Melo (sky) were evolved. According to Rukbo, Bomong and Boo and Sedi and Melo originated independently from separate lineage of evolution. He further observes, “Because of

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4. An extract of interview with Shri Apyang Perme at Damro on 17. 5. 2003.
5. An extract of interview with Shri Toki Pertin at Damro on 20. 5. 2003.
the sole representative of unseen Donyipolo the name of Bomong (sun) and Boo (moon) are replaced and carry the name of Supreme Being as Donyipolo" (Rukbo: 1997, p.3). Yet another version of the Abang reveals that the physical sun and moon are later creation of Sedi. It is said that after the death of Myane (Sedi—Dir—Irmyang—Myane) his eyes which were lying at the valley of Sedi Yarung was washed at the water point of Sedi Irbo Sikol by Kongki Yokmo (Sedi-Irkong-Kongki Yokmo), the blacksmith of repute. They (two eyes) were grafted at the metal axis of the spirit of earthquake and trained to revolve round the earth as Sedi—Dir—Irbo—Bomong and Boo, the two suns (Megu: 2001, p.15). By the heat of Bomong and Boo, the water of Sedi repim repyom evaporated out and the earth became habitable for all living things. However, these two suns that rise alternately and focussed the universe round the clock soon became inconvenient for living beings, that is, giving no time to sleep and all plants began to dry up. Finding no way out they decided to kill one of the suns. As decided, Ettung tiklung, a small frog shot Boo and injured one of his eyes and hid himself inside the hollow part of bamboo. The One-eyed Boo became weak and pale and transformed into less light producing celestial body, then acquired the characteristic of the present moon. At this stage these two heavenly bodies were not worshiped or called by the name Bomong and Boo.7

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5. An extract of interview with Shri Yorang Borang at Damro on 18. 5. 2003.
In the course of ever tiring evolution, these two objects existing in the distant sky with their warming rays and pleasant light rendered useful and selfless services to humanity. As a result, these two heavenly bodies became prominent and came nearer to the life of the people. The simple and innocent tribal derived immense benefit from Bomong and Boo. For their selfless services to the cause of humanity, the Tanis (human beings) were grateful to Bomong and Boo and personified them as God. Since then Bomong and Boo are called Donyi and Polo respectively. Thus the two heavenly bodies got the name of Donyipolo the Supreme Being.

However, some elders present a different view. According to them Sedi-Melo is the creator God but became inactive after creating Donyi and Polo to look after the universe. They are of the view that the people worshipped the physical Donyi and Polo since time immemorial. In support of their contention they cited the example as “Tena Ane Donyie kadune, tena Abo Polo tatdune, Ngo lusi lutung milo luo lutung milo Donyi Poloe kaye mangalo. Meaning from above the sky Donyi is looking and Polo is hearing if I have made wrong allegation against you, Donyipolo will punish me. That is why at the time of swearing in the name of Donyipolo they look towards the sky.

Here the concept of Donyipolo has two aspects – Physical and spiritual aspects.

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Physical aspect of Donyipoloism: In the physical aspect Donyipolo is represented physically by Donyi (sun) and Polo (moon). And the conjugation of the Donyi and the Polo is Donyi-Polo (Ering: 1998-99, p.22). According to some Padams, there is nothing above Sedi-Melo and Sedi and Melo are both husband and wife. In their creation process, they created all living and non-living things of the earth and heavenly bodies like the sun, the moon, the stars and others planets of the universe (Osik: 1982, p.13). They created Donyi-Polo in the hope of chasing away darkness that enveloped the earth at that time and then they became inactive. And the Tani (human being), seeing of its positive role paid more attention and high esteem to planetary Donyi-Polo (Tanut, Tago1983 p.32). “The primitive Tani society began to understand that man had an assigned time limit and whenever he cried and mourned, the physical Donyi-Polo, either rose or set in. His doubt on the movement and covert and overt regulation of Donyi-Polo, let him convince of it as the factor causing sufferings, basing on the assigned time limit, and hence came to confess that everyone had to bow before the material Donyi-Polo. This suffering was understood, not as a mere infliction but either as a punishment for unjust or as an avoidance from this illusive world” (Tanut: 1983, p.32). It is also the common experience of all primitive people that in the absence of these two objects worldly lives on the earth would have been well nigh impossible. K.A.A. Raja former Lt. Governor of Arunachal Pradesh opines, “The concept of Donyi-Poloism was based on a scientific and
rational belief on universal truth” (Anon: 1978, p.69). Without Donyi and Polo no life can survive on the earth. That is, if Donyi goes a few hundreds kilometres away from its present position this planet would freeze to ice and if it comes nearer everything on this earth will turn to ashes.

Taking into consideration its occupation of unique position in the universe and, an un-matching work of generation, the heavenly bodies Donyi-Polo, can certainly be viewed as base for the concept of Donyipolo religion.

If their belief is confined to the moral and spiritual aspects only, but not the physical and material aspects. They believe

**Spiritual aspect of Donyipoloism:** On the other hand, the spiritual interpretation is based on their belief in the supreme spiritual entity, which they called Donyipolo. Donyipolo religion is, in fact, a primitive religion and practised by primitive people. Primitive people lived nearer to nature and their life is largely influenced by its over whelming forces. The primitive man saw the various phenomena of nature such as the rise and setting of the sun and the moon, the clap of thunder, the down pour of rain and the trees bearing flowers and fruits. These observations led him to believe that there is something invisible super natural power controlling the course of nature and influence their mind and thought (Sinha: 1971, p.40). Like many great religions of the world, the Padam concept is that the Supreme Being, Donyipolo, is the cause of the universe. He guides, controls, protects and punishes those who commit sins, injustice, corruption and
violation of His law. He loves and helps those who are true to Donyipolo. In spiritual aspect Donyipolo represents truth, wisdom, love, purity, selflessness, compassion, omnipresent and all pervading. According to Padam belief eternal happiness lies in Donyipolo, that is why, they leave things to Donyipolo when human efforts fail to resolve a knotty discord. They simply swear in the name of Donyipolo as "Donyi-Polo e Kaye or Tatye," which means truth will reveal itself in due course of time.¹⁰

The reality of their belief is confined to the moral and spiritual aspects only, but not the physical and material aspects. They believe that the two powerful eyes of Donyipolo are like the sun and the moon that illuminate the universe. Mr. Tamut in his article, ‘Concept of Donyi-Polo: popular side must be accepted,’ writes, “The spiritual Donyi-Polo indicates a single ritualistic symbol, immaterial in creation and mystic in entity, which is beyond the reach of ordinary human knowledge. He is an unseen being, who never fails to punish for perjury and reward for the right; and from whose sight, no one can escape —may be inside the earth, inside water, in a room or anywhere else (Tmut: 1983, p.34). According to their faith part of Donyipolo is present in the soul and spirit of an animate and inanimate and therefore, no one can hid himself from Donyipolo. In this point one can distinguish the characteristics of planetary Donyipolo and spiritual Donyipolo. As Ettung Tiklung, after killing Boo (one of the suns) hid

himself in the hollow part of bamboo but this little frog who has a soul in him could not hid himself from the spiritual *Donyipolo*. Still *Donyipolo* destines him. When misfortunes occur, his hiding place (bamboo) is destroyed by man and other natural forces. In defence of the true concept of *Donyi-Polo* Mr. Tayeng writes, ‘According to the *Adi* concept the *Donyi-Polo* is a something far superior, and has a supernatural power and it is not visible’ (Tayeng: 1981, p.39). Thus, invisible *Donyipolo* is all in all in the concept of Padam religion.

Beneath this supreme ruler (*Donyipolo*) there are numerous spiritual representatives or emissaries to govern various domains of His spiritual empire. Mr. Kakar 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 the two. The more we understand about anyone of the three, the more noble will appear this relationship” (Kakar: 1997, pp.18-19). The *Donyipoloist* does worship nature and believe in spirit. The prolonged and close association with the objects of the nature has enabled the Padams to choose the *Donyi* (sun) and *Polo* (moon) as the symbol of their faith and aspiration. *Donyipolo* faith, therefore, derives its sustenance from nature mainly from the sun, moon, air and water. They offer sacrifice to *Bomong Mone* (Goddess of light or sun) to give sunshine when rains continue for months together and to God of rain, for down pouring of rain when there is no rain in the sowing season.
They also believe a host of lesser gods and spirits and offer sacrifice to propitiate them. These gods and spirits are creations of Sedi. All beings created by Sedi and their progenies excepting Diling became benevolent gods and goddesses and among them, all including the progenies of Diling, Donyipolo rules as supreme. The progenies of Diling, who stood sixth in generation from Sedi, is Pedong Nane (Sedi—Diling—Litung—Tuye—Yepe—Pedong), the mother of Doni (first man) and millions of other beings, most of which are evil spirits doing harm to man (Nath: 2000, p.148). It appears that Tani from the very beginning find himself in between the benevolent gods and malevolent gods. The benevolent group of gods and goddess were nearer to Donyipolo according to their genealogy of creation and beliefs. They are—Kine-Nane, the goddess of grain who reigns Kine-Dene (the world beneath the earth); Doying Bote, the god of wisdom and knowledge and the spiritual guardian and guide of human beings; Kongki-Komang or Kongki-Bote, the god who designs the physical form of man and the life span; Dadi Somi or Dadi Bote, the god of domestic animals; Gumin Soyin, the god of protection or saviour of man; Bomong Mone, the god of light and warm; Ute Poro, the god of luck, etc. They are very kind to man but stop blessing when one deviates from the principles of Donyipolo and abstain from performing periodical offerings. Different evil spirits take advantage of this unresponsive period and cause all types of suffering/misfortune to men. But, others believe that some benevolent gods turned hostile
spirits when people violate the rules of conduct. The man could get back their mercy and pardon only by atonement in the form of offering acceptable to them.\textsuperscript{11}

The malevolent group of gods and spirits, commonly known as \textit{uyus} in Padam belief are closer to the physical world of the \textit{Tanis}. As a result of it closer relationship, effects of their bad intention are repeatedly met by man in the form of disease, suffering and all forms of misfortunes. The main malevolent spirits of the Padam beliefs are the \textit{Epom} (spirit of the jungle and progeny of the \textit{Robo}) believed to be residing in the \textit{Rotne} (Banyan) and \textit{Lokne} (hollock) trees. Their most sinister attribute is the habit of carrying off human beings alive. \textit{Biri Bit} is the spirit of water. One of his generals \textit{Biri Biak} moves with high flood current and commands waves and current to knock against the bank and cause erosion. Another general \textit{Ladang Layu} causes all kinds of accidents in water. The Padams believe that whenever a person drowns in water, \textit{Biri Bit} hacks him with an axe on the forehead. Those who have no cut marks on their forehead are not destined by god, that is, they got drowned in water due to their own fault. \textit{Dimu Taya} or \textit{Dimu Bote}, is the lord of snow-clad mountains. All the herbs, animals and birds found in the snow falling areas are his property. When man encroaches his kingdom and causes annoyance, he may freeze such person to death. So when the Padams climb up high altitude for collection of aconite called \textit{emo disang} (aconite

\textsuperscript{11} An extract of interview with Shri Loknik Saring at Damro on 18. 5. 2003.
expedition) in the Aborka ranges, they use typical language (code language quite different from normal language eg. -Tasol solye means Esi Siye i.e., I wants for pee) and conduct themselves politely to avoid the untoward incident. Banji Banmang, the spirit of beast is one of the most dreaded spirits of the Padams. He is blood thirsty and pleased with destruction of life. Niji-Ngipong, believed to be a female fairy spirit lives in marshy places and small streams amidst wild plantains. She is believed to be responsible for sickness of women, mortality, abortion, etc. Medeng Sene or Medeng Mone is a female spirit reputed for foul play. She, by her trick, can provoke a person to commit crimes or involve in bloody fighting. Lesing Letang is a female spirit who causes accidents. Crime, injustice, jealous, avarice, destruction etc., are attributes of these evil spirits.

Between these two groups of gods and goddesses man has to struggle for existence constantly. He has to keep the benevolent gods and malevolent gods with good humour by faithfully following the tenets of Donyipoloism and offering sacrifice in appropriate occasions. On the other hand, the evil spirits are trying to do harm to man by inflicting disease, bad luck, extreme poverty and disadvantages in all fronts. So he has also to perform propitiatory offering to ward off the evil spirits. One could lead a peaceful life if he becomes a man of Donyipolo (truthfulness) who acquires all noble qualities i.e., truthfulness, wisdom, enlightenment, blissfulness, compassion,

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12 An extract of interview with Shri Pontem Ratan at Damro village on 15. 5. 2003.
charity, love, etc., of a perfect man. They believe that a righteous person never breaks the laws of nature and so he leads a peaceful life.

One of the universal features of the indigenous faith of the Padams is the concept of human soul (Ayít). In the words of Roy, "There is a land beyond the grave and man continues his existence there in a subtle form which corresponds to a certain extent to the concept of soul. The land beyond the grave is but a shadowy replica of this material world. It is divided into several regions, which are the domains of the different uyus. The soul of a man after its separation from the body goes to the domain of that spirit who has been the instrument of his death" (Roy: 1960, p.251). It is believed that after the death of a man, who had died a natural death, his soul goes to a world where the souls of his forefathers and relatives live, known as Uyu Among\textsuperscript{13} or Donyipolo Among, that is, the world of death. This journey to ethereal world is called Uyu bedang ennam or Ayít bedang ennam. The Padams, however, consider Riga area, a Minyong village as the abode of their ancestors.\textsuperscript{14} "The picture of Donyipolo Among may not be similar to Christian heaven or Hindu Swarga but the concept is same" (Nath: 2000, p.148). According to their belief, those who are true to Donyipolo will last longer (live up to old age) and dies a natural death and his soul will automatically go to Uyu Among. It is believed that the ancestral abode of the Uyu Among is a place of everlasting joy and happiness. A sinner’s soul may, by virtue of his

\textsuperscript{13} The spirit of a man dying a natural death is called Uyu and its spiritual abode is called Uyu Among.

\textsuperscript{14} An extract of interview with Shri Kompu Pertin at Damro on 15. 5. 2003.
natural death, go to *Uyu Among* but he will be denied heavenly peace and happiness. They believe that a man suffers in this world because of the sins against the divine wish. They also believe that the sinners' soul will face the same in the *Uyu Among*. The *Ngipong Urom* (female spirit) sometimes hijacks the soul of a young man and denies his reunion with ancestors in *Uyu Among*. Therefore, living members always guide the departed soul of a young man not to come under the influence of evil spirits at the time of burial rite. They believe that the soul of a man who dies a natural death deserves *Uyu Among* and automatically goes there unless obstructed by the evil spirits. The soul of a man who dies in accident, murdered, killed by animals and snakes and dies during delivery, possessed by *Ngipong Urom* and other abnormal behaviour, turns to evil spirits, commonly known as *Uroms*. The abode of this evil spirits is akin to hell of the Christians and Narak of the Hindus. In their conception, however, there are different worlds representing hell. They are:

*Dorung Lisam*- the abode of a soul of man who dies in accident.

*Nyi Nipong* (*Ngipong*) -the abode of soul of a mischievous man.

*Banji Banmang*-the abode of a soul who dies in a war.

*Sili Sidong*-the abode of a soul who dies drowning.

*Nomgu Nomang* (*Nomnang*) -the abode of the soul who dies of swelling disease (Nath: 2000, p.149).
The two principal *Uroms* of the Padam belief are *Taleng Urom* and *Ngipong Urom*. The soul of the man dying in an accident, murdered, killed by animals and snakes is believed to go to *Taleng Among* (place imagined to be above the earth) as the *Taleng Urom* and his soul is subjected to torture by the killers. *Ngipong Uroms* are believed to be the ghost of women who have died when pregnant. These female spirits happily inflict trouble during delivery and some times take the life of the pregnant woman. They also take the life of a man by possession. They believe that those *Uroms* (*Taleng and Ngipong Uroms*) who cannot reach the ancestral place roam in the surrounding and cause harm to the human beings.

It is seen that they have been worshiping *Donyipolo* since time immemorial. They worship Him and pray to Him for long life, wealth, worthy children, good health and peace in this world. Late Pakjong Borang was reputed in repeatedly praying for long life and plenty of domestic animals. He used to pray like this- "*Donyi poloe taddoyika, Agung Agame tatdoyika, ngo gidi kepel em pelling nako moko,ngom kedeng metok mayika.*" Meaning, Oh, *Donyipolo* listen to my prayers and *Agung Agam* kindly accept my offerings. As I am willing to perform *Gidi kepel* (festival rite) so, let me live a long life with plenty of domestic animals. As if *Donyipolo* and *Agung Agam* (lord of domestic animal) accepted his prayers, he was having plenty of methuns in his life and died at the age of about 110 years. However, the summum bonum of the Padams' life is to reach their ancestors in *Uyu Among.*
Late Titel Borang who was leading a miserable life in her late 90s was always praying almighty Donyipolo to send her to the Uyu Among to meet her ancestors, relatives and her husband. Maximum old men and bedridden persons pray for the same goal.  

The Miri (Priest)

In the socio-religious complex of the Padams, the presence of the Miri, priest, is inevitable in every village. He is called on all occasions- at the time of birth, death or sickness. In return he is presented the special part of the animal sacrificed and valuable beads. As per Adi tradition, Tunggi Tabe and Kipir Leni Tabe were the first miris in the world. They possessed certain spiritual qualities and were well conversant with the language of the spirits and with all technicalities of religious rites and rituals of the society (Mibang: 1994, p.18). Like the Milum or Gam in the material society, the priests are the mouthpiece of the people to communicate their grievances and sufferings to request spirits for redress. They act as an intermediary between the spiritual world and the human world. On all necessary occasions they perform the divination, offer sacrifices to and invoke blessings of the gods and spirits on behalf of the people.

Any man or woman, by virtue of having the required knowledge of the procedure and paraphernalia of the art, can become a priest.

"Women Miris are not rare if not as common and numerous as men" (Roy: 1960, p.247). The profession of the Miri is neither hereditary nor elective, but depends on the inborn qualities of a person. It is believed that Donyipolo determines one to become a priest while in the womb of the mother. Thus, one who gets divine inspiration develops special talent in foretelling things and frequently falls into trance during his or her childhood, usually becomes a Miri in the later age. The spiritual aptitude manifesting itself through signs is the passport for admission to the guild (Roy: 1960, p.247). And others get their spiritual powers all of a sudden as the gods ordain. The functions of the Miris are so varied and multifarious that he/she is priest, crime detector, doctor and spiritual guide, all in one. When he is performing the sacrifices and other rites, he is priest; when he detects criminals through divination of the liver or other materials like pebble, rice, etc., he is a crime detector; when he is attending to the sick prescribing medicines and propitiations, he is a doctor and when he is securing the blessings of the spirits, he is a spiritual guide. Their services are sought during sickness or other misfortunes. After touching the body of the sick man or divination through chicken liver, rice, pebble, etc., they prescribe the necessary rites or sacrifice for propitiating the spirits responsible for the disease.

There are various types of priests influenced by different spirits with different roles. They are – Ayit Miri, Ukki Miri, Etlik Miri, Rokyn

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17. Smt. Kamem Pertin became Miri Ane (priestess) all of a sudden at the age of 40 years. She is now one of the reputed Ayit Miris of Damro.
Ayit Miri (Necromancer): Ayit Miri is considered to be the priest of the highest order. He possesses proficiency in religious dogmas and beliefs to the maximum degree. He is capable of falling into trance and becomes conversant with the procedures of dealing with the spirits and persuades them to release the patient, whose soul is under their captivity. Usually he is called upon to treat the sick man when all possible Ipak (offering to ward off the diseases) fails. Ritual of Ayit Miri is performed at a particular night fixed by Miri himself. This ritual is called Ayit lunam or Ayit daknam. In such nights the Miri wears particular type of dress. He wears peling gale (red skirt), yoksa (sword), kiring (bell) and dumling (a string of two to five beads as talisma) in his hair. When divining the cause of a disease, he sings, dances, falls in trance and travels to the unseen world to establish communication with spirits through invoking hymns. The style of his song is classical which is not intelligible to the commoners. He sings in different tones, slow, melodious, sudden and harsh, which is supported by the members present in chorus. The hymns sung are supported by the music of a sword or sometimes, a bunch of kiring (ripum) (Mibang: 1999, p.9). Once possessed, he ceases to be himself and the familiar spirits act one after another through his body. When such a miri becomes spiritually possessed his body starts trembling
and some times he scratches his body while dancing. In such a state, an Ayit Miri loses consciousness and often eats charcoal, ash and Nyopjel (mucopurulent pus). The Padams believe that the miri uyus (familiar spirits), having possessed the body, guides the soul of the Miri to the other world and helps him to find out the truant spirit responsible for the misfortune and to strike a bargain with him. They (the soul of Ayit Miri and his uyus) coaxed and wheeled the evil spirits to ease its wrath and release the soul of the sick person in exchange of some cherished offerings. In certain cases, a powerful Miri uses his high-powered uyus and coerced the inimical spirit to accept the deal or forces the evil spirits to leave the man like Tantrik. After the soul of the Miri has contracted a deal with the spirits, it comes back to the body, and the Miri uyus leave him. When he becomes normal again, he does not remember what he did or said as he was completely in the other world with the uyus. He then conveys the desires of the spirits and makes arrangements for the appeasement of the spirit or spirits accordingly (Roy: 1960, p.245).

Most of the Ayit Miris can perform the duties of Ukki Miri, Rokyin Lime-Tagil Miri and Along Mutkyon Miri. He can also take out the bone fastened inside the throat through Tagong Lana Uyu.19

Orang Megu, one of the renowned Miris of the Padams was reported to have transfigured himself as snake, deer and tiger and

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18. The researcher saw Late Takom Pertin one of the reputed Ayit Miris of Damro at the house of Shri Tukpik Lego during schooling days.

19. Tagong Lana Uyu is a familiar spirit of Ayit Miri. With the help of this spirit a Miri can mysteriously take out the bones and Abuk Guli (cartridge bullets) from inside the throat and body through their magical power.
frightened the people in the jungle. It is said, one day when he was on the way to Mebo for performing Ayit, he waved his hand to stop a truck. The truck driver overlooked the signal given by the old man. So he said to himself, "Monbang nom ngo kangki ye" (I will teach you a lesson). Within the reach of the eye sight the truck stopped running all of a sudden in spite of giving full acceleration. After reaching the spot, he ridiculed the driver for his inability to drive the running engine truck. Then after boarding he politely directed the driver to press the accelerator and the truck started running as usual. The truck driver spread the strong magic power of the Miris in the area. Thereafter, all drivers of Mebo area who met him on the way started picking him up without waiting for his signal.20

_Ukki Miri_: Ukki Miri determines the type of illness and particular spirit responsible by touching the body of the patient. After identifying the spirit, he prescribes particular offerings to please the spirit. He can cure patient by performing small ritual sacrifice. Some Ukki Miris are expert in Etlik and Rokyn Lime-Tagil but they can hardly become Ayit miri.

_Rokyn Lime-Tagil Miri_: Rokyn Lime-Tagil Miri performs divination of eggs, chicken liver, pebbles, rice, etc. Through divination they could detect the spirit responsible for illness and also could trace the stolen

20. An extract of interview with Shri Rosok Borang, who accompanied the Miri and witnesses the incident at Mebo on 22. 12. 2002.
goods and the person involved. On request they also perform small ritual offerings.

**Along Ngutkyon Miri:** Along Ngutkyon Miris are experts in joining and curing fractured bones of the body by applying ngutkyon (honey wax). For treatment of the fractured leg or hand, some people prefer Along Ngutkyon Miri to orthopaedic doctor. “Even a fractured leg or hand is completely plastered and cured by a ‘Miri’, which is direct challenge to a modern orthopaedic specialist,” (Mibang: 1994, p.19). Here is an example. In the year 2001, right ankle of a young boy, named B. Pertin, was severely fractured in a motorcycle accident. He was hospitalised at General Hospital Pasighat. The X-ray report showed that the ankle is totally fractured. The patient and his relatives preferred the treatment of a local Miri and requested the doctor to discharge him. He was discharged at his own risk. He then called Muang Miri, a local Ayit Miri for treatment. To the utter surprise of all in two month’s time he was cured by applying bee wax.

**Etlik Miri:** Etlik Miri is also endowed with extra-ordinary powers. He is expert in correcting the dislocation of nerves and joints. In other words, he is almost akin to modern physiotherapist. When he is possessed by high-powered spirits, he simply touches the portion of
dislocation and treats the patient. Tukbeng Tayeng was one such renowned Miris of the Padams.\textsuperscript{21}

**Eso-Eyek Etlik Miri:** Eso-Eyek Etlik Miri is a person who is an expert in joining the dislocation of joints, nerves and fractured bones of domestic animals such as methun, pigs, cattles and dogs. Usually, they are very few in number. At present there is no Eso-Eyek Etlik Miri in entire Padam area.

**Yektum Miri:** These Miris are expert in the treatment of domestic animals. Yektum Miri is an expert in castration of pig. It is narrated that during childhood or adulthood they have visited the abode of the gods of domestic animals in their dream and had established liaison with the expert spirits of castration.\textsuperscript{22} With the guidance of Yektum Uyu (spirits of castration) Yektum Miri becomes perfect in castration. Therefore, after completion of castration, besides normal fees, the host presents kepel (a jug of local wine with one or two squirrels) to Yektum Miri in order to keep his spirits happy. Otherwise, it is believed that the castrated pigs will die afterwards.

In Padam, Miri does not enjoy any special privilege in the society, except during the performance of the rituals. The host family pays him in cash or kind for his service. The amount of the fee is

\textsuperscript{21} Etlik Miri Tukbeng Tayeng treated the researcher when he was suffering from knee pain problem during his field study at Damro in April 2000.

\textsuperscript{22} An extract of interview with Shri Loknik Saring, a Yektum Miri of Damro on 25. 5. 2003.
determined according to the nature of sacrifice. Ayit Miri is the highest paid Miri of the Padams. The status of the Miri is determined by his ability to identify the cause of illness and number of patients he had cured. However, the success and failure of curing the patient also depend upon the faithful observance of taboo prescribed by the Miri. After the completion of ritual, the Miri restricts the movement of the ailing person and also of his family members for a few days. It is called Nyonam (observance). The Miri also observes taboo on eating meat of the animals and fowls sacrificed by him. Some miris do not take any thing, even water from the house of the patient immediately after the completion of Ipak till the next morning. Even in normal period, he does not take meat of certain animals, birds and rats. It is believed that if he takes the prohibited meat, the Miri uyus, the spirits behind Miri would feel hurt and would desert him. In such case the Miri would lose his magical power to cure the patients. These benevolent spirits are believed to be generous to humanity. In the event of commercialisation of spiritual power by the Miri, they take back the power from him. So, the Miri always accepts reasonable fee from the patients.

Delong Pong Miri and Bari Miri (leader singer).

These Miris are experts in Abang and lead the Delong-Ponung and Bari parties during festivals. Keping Tabe was the first Miri of
these groups. These Miris can be considered as the repository of the Padam traditions.

**Yokmo Miri** (expert blacksmithy)

*Yokmo Miri* makes dao, sword, javelin, knife, axe, *beyop* (brass disc for girdle), *emul* (a traditional religious ornament), etc. This class of Miri is already extinct in Padam areas. But they are still found with *Yokyup* at Adi Pasi village. Adi Pasi is the parent village of Pasis, a sub-group of the Adis.24

**Rites and rituals**

Rites and rituals are other important features of the Padam religion. They have scores of rites and rituals, which are, associated with various social, religious, economic and domestic activities. Rites are the obligations, which they cannot afford to ignore and rituals are equally essential for the fulfilment of their religious sentiments and emotions.

**Rites:** Some important rites practised by the Padams are birth rites and burial or funeral rites. These rites are basically performed to mark two important occasions of human life. It is believed that birth and death are nothing but a new beginning in the journey of human soul.

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23 *Yokyup* is a small structure where *Yokmo Miri* makes eyok (dao) *yoksik* (knife) *beyop*, *emul*, etc.

24 The researcher has visited the village during fieldwork in 25th December 2001.
With a great hope they perform the birth rite to mark the coming of a new soul in the new body in this material world. The child is a tender. 

**Birth rite:** Just after delivery, the *mambung* (umbilical cord) is tied with a cotton thread and cut with splitted bamboo sharp like a knife called *gumpepepe*. Then *amam* (placenta) is removed and the baby is washed with tepid water. Then the members present give a name to the newborn in recognition of a human child. Otherwise, it is believed that the evil spirits will give their name and take the human soul, which may result in the death of the baby. Soon after washing, a white thread (preferably locally made cotton yarn) is tied on both the wrists and ankles called *Lejin lakjin* by an elderly woman present in the house to protect it from the evil spirits. The beads are also tied on the neck of the baby called *Kodang ginpak* by the grand parents or the near relatives. Some times *Aki-Amo* (paternal or maternal uncle or aunt) ties the *Kodang ginpak* and his or her good gesture is reciprocated by giving sumptuous feast called *Dogran* in appropriate occasion.

The next rite is to prepare a small quantity of rice in a small pot without cover. This is called *Ngilum*. The rice is taken by the mother of the newborn with a *Bungko* (a rat having religious importance). In the mean time the *Nebing* (boy or girl who would carry the child) carries the baby on the back with a *Tagi eppon*, a bark of a sacred creeper as carrying rope that signifies the longevity of life of the child and goes
around the court-yard practising shooting with Iyyi epuk (bow and arrows) if the child is a male or weeding with lik (hoe or weeder) if the child is a female.

If the child is born in the morning, the mother takes a Maksong sumpa (weaving sword believed to frighten the evil spirits) as stick and along with other women of the neighbourhood, goes to the water point called Byatbo ginam. If the child is born in the afternoon Byatbo is performed on the next day. They perform ablution in the water point and wash the dirty cloths there. They also perform taku tabat to mark a new beginning of the baby in this world and for his bright future. Here they erect one taku pumsu (pair of ritual bamboo) in the middle of three stones put in a triangle. The head of the Bungko taken in the Nyilum is fastened on one head of the taku and a ginger on the other taku. While chanting for the blessings for longevity, good health and successful life, apong and ennom-take are sprinkled over the taku. A piece of stone is brought from the water point and rubbed against the sole of the baby. It is believed that it prevents Lengong ledat (any kind of sole cracking). In the same evening Byatbo gyaran or Byatbo aran (feast) is arranged in the house.

Erang abo or Obo aran (birth ceremony) takes place on the third or fifth day. During this period some specific taboos are imposed on the diet of the mother. Chillies and all edibles, which require roasting in the fire, are restricted for her. It is believed that if the mother consumes these roasted edibles, her breast will dry up just as the
edibles dry up in the process of roasting and consequently there will be no milk left for her child. All the members of the house also eschew from taking engin enge or nginpi sari (sweet potato, arum or tubers); otherwise hydrocele may develop in the infant; Enno sipyak nyonam (taboo on spinning and weaving) lasts for ten days in case of a boy. In Erang abo, a food packet with meat inside and apong kaklak (bamboo jug of local wine) are distributed to the relatives. Traditionally the Padams are restricted from killing fowl, pig or any domestic animal on this occasion as per the age-old advice "Anggung Punyoe", which means plucking of heart of the killed animal is forbidden by custom. It is believed that plucking of heart serves obstruction in the next pregnancy or the child on attaining maturity may not get his/her issue after marriage in future.

Funeral rite: Disposing of dead body is closely connected with their religion. After the death of a person, except stillborn and prenatal cases, the death body is washed again as the person was washed at the time of birth, which is called Mibi irpak (desecration of all sins and the dark stains of the body of living life) (Rukbo: N/A, p.26). The ceremonial cutting of uuk, the woven cane strap around the waist worn by the deceased have to be done by the Simang gena (designated for disposal of dead body). As a mark of deep respect some rich family adorned the dead body with dumling (fasting of beads with sacred creeper on the hair of the dead body). The dead body is then dressed
up and wrapped with new clothes (gale, galuk, ugon), etc., given by
near relatives and is called Mayet. Besides mayet they also offer fowls
as farewell gifts to the deceased. It is known as Gatek. The man, who
is to carry the corpse, kills the fowls over the head of the deceased
taking care that the blood is not spilled over the face. The dead body
of an ordinary person is disposed off as soon as possible (if death
occurred in the morning), while the disposal of the dead body of a rich
or an influential person may be delayed by one or two days in order to
allow all his/her relatives to attend the burial. The old men and
women and near relatives of the deceased may start funeral hymns
known as penge (dirge) at any time. However, the Penge Miri (priest
expert in funeral hymns) starts Penge in the evening. “Though the
Penge is also an Abang consisting of the sacred hymns of the Adi
religion, not every Miri is in a position to chant it. So they had to wait
until the right man could arrive” (Raikar: 1972, p.21). Thus the Penge
Miri is chosen for and given beads for his service. It is a long process
and lasts for the full night and a half-day without interruption. It
narrates the account of the deceased, his family and his ancestors.
According to Penge Abang, it is believed that human soul is immortal.
So they do not pronounce death, but address as Bayyuk meaning
transformation (Ering: 1998, p.53). Finally the departed soul is guided
to the path of Donyi Gite Pobe, Polo Yaro Mobang, that is, Uyu Among
or Donyipolo Among to take rest in eternal peace25.

On the next day, while chanting of Penge is still in process, some villagers go to the ago golung or golung (burial ground) and dug out the pit after the simang gena performed the ritual digging called Dengal, and also he is the person to throw the earth first before covering the body (refilling). For digging the grave quickly, all the kinsmen render their help. After digging for two or three feet, a cavity is made within the ditch and the corpse is kept in this cavity with its knees touching the chin and its head towards the west. The cavity is then covered with splitted bamboo so that the corpse remains safe inside when the hole is filled up with earth.

According to Padam custom the responsibility and ritual precedence of burying the corpse devolves on the youngest son of the deceased. In his absence, any son chosen by the deceased can initiate the digging and bury the corpse. If the deceased has no son, one of the nearest relatives can do all the formalities. And if there are no relatives present due to some communication gap, the clan members take the responsibility of disposing of the corpse in common. This practice is called Yupyang binam.

To carry the dead body from house to the grave, a stretcher called Marap is made and dead body is placed on it, and is carried by minimum of four persons and, the person who would perform the funeral rites hold it on the side of the head. Sometimes the dead body is taken in a basket. The simang gena lifts the basket on his back while another holds the legs in support (Raikar: 1972, p.21). After
placing the dead body in the pit relatives are allowed to see the face for the last time before burial.

On the same day a special sacrifice known as Dodgang is offered to the departed soul. The daughter of the deceased and her husband are to sacrifice a pig as dodgang. On behalf of the son, a rich family slaughters a methun but a poor household satisfy with a pig (Mibang: 1994, p.21). In case of not getting the methun on the same day it can be slaughtered even after five to ten days. In Monggu area dodgang is sacrificed after one year.

A small hut-like structure called Ago/Goyu is erected above the grave as an abode of the departed body and soul (Rukbo: N/A, p.26). The replicas of all his costly ornaments such as dangki, tale, beads, and monpur i.e., replica of hunted animals during his lifetime including other articles of every day use of the deceased are hang outside the ago, showing that nothing is left at his deserted home. The grave of different persons- rich, poor, man, woman and minor can be identified from the things hung at the ago.

After burial, men folk go to a nearby stream or water point (sigo), wash up and go to the Musup before returning to their respective house. The members of the clan and other relatives return to the house of the deceased in the evening and spent the whole night. This is called Gimang igkul. In the early morning of the next day they perform gokang (visit of the ago) to give the last homage to the

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26. Information collected during the field study of Roing, Dambuk and Mebo (collectively called Monggu area) areas in the month of December 2002.
departed soul. Then the _ago_ is locked up with branches of thorny trees (tanyum), signifying farewell to the departed soul forever. However, some families who are not able to sever their love and affection immediately to the departed soul kindle fire and offer food and drink inside the _ago_ continuously for one month or one year. This practice is called _goram parnam_. This practice of _goram parnam_ is stopped after performing required formalities on a specific day and is known as _Ago patum_.

The above burial rites are performed only to those persons who die a natural death. Similar treatment is given to those who die during an epidemic. But the man who dies, as _Nyipong_ or _Ngipong_ and _Taleng_ are not treated well in Padam society. The dead body of a man who dies in accident outside is not brought inside the house and is kept in _gurang_ (veranda) for a short period. After putting new dress, the corpse is disposed in the _Taleng yupom_ (grave yard unnatural death). Instead of sacrificing a pig as _dodgang_, a pig is set free in the jungle for the departed soul. The corpse of _Ngipong_, that dies immediately or after prolonged illness in the house, is kept in _kodang_ (one side of the fire place that is straight to the door). The corpse is interred within a few hours of the death (even at midnight) in the _Ngipong yupom_ (burial place of _Ngipong_ generally in unfrequented area) in the jungle. All personal belongings are either burnt or thrown

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27. Those who died after possessed by female spirit is called _Ngipong_ and those who dies in accident is called _Taleng_.

away at the same time. The child that dies before or immediately after birth is believed to be taken by *Ngipong*. The corpse is kept in a scooped out gourd (*epum*), and is carried away by the father and hung on a tree in an unfrequented jungle.

Five to ten days are observed as taboo. During this period they also abstain from taking certain food items. The person who leads the burial rites takes ritually cooked food from a small pot called *Mibi kisi* and observes more taboos then other family members. The whole village observes one-day taboo for *Ngipong*, *Taleng* and *Orih* i.e., abstaining from going to paddy field, weaving and spinning.

On the last day of taboo, purification rites called *Gimang giyit* or *Mayu* is performed. On this day, members of the family take bath in the stream and wash all the clothes used during the taboo. Those who have observed it put a bundle of wood and *ekkam* leaves at the intersection of two paths out side their village and place a stone upon it to signify that they are now free. (Borang: 1999, p.120). Every body could start their respective works freely from the next day of purification.

**Rituals:** The Padam religion is based on a belief in spirits and deities and, in order to appease them, various ritual sacrifices are offered as and when necessity arises. Most spirits and deities are malevolent and harmful to human beings. Therefore, rituals in the names of different malicious spirits are performed to avert diseases and to ward off the
concerned spirit from the body of the patient by sacrificing animals like methun, pig, dog and fowl. According to them, spirits and deities love animal soul, blood and meat and, therefore, all rituals are marked by sacrifice of animals and fowl. *Ambin, ennok, take,* (rice, fermented grain, ginger) *lipo-ketke* (squirrels) are also used as negotiation agents. It is believed that every thing has a living spirit and the spirits of all these are active negotiating agents between mankind and the spirit of all statuses (Rukbo: 1997, p.29). The manner of sacrifice, kind and colour of animals and fowls to be sacrificed differs in different rituals and occasions. For example, black dog and black fowl are sacrificed for *Ngipong*. Red cock and grey hen are the favourites of *Epom*. They also believe that the soul of the sacrificed animal goes to the domain of the particular spirit for whom the ritual is offered to. For sickness and other misfortunes, generally *Miris* are called upon to decide who is responsible for the trouble or to ascertain what particular form of sacrifice is required. There are various methods *Ayit* (necromancy), *Ukki* (palpating to ascertain the cause of disease) *Rokyn Lime-Tagil*, (reading of chicken liver, pebbles) etc., in practice for obtaining the desired information.

Ritual offerings like *Agam kepel* or *Gampel, Binnyat pipak, Tatkin, Mopun*, etc., are meant for benevolent deities and are performed on yearly basis during the time of festivals. *Agam kepel* ritual is performed in the first night of *Lutor (Etor)* and *Lune (Solum)* festivals. In this ritual two squirrels, including rice and ginger are
packed in *ekkam* leave and kept in *Rising* (sacred place of the house in the northern part of the hearth where *Sotkya*, rope for catching methun are kept). In this way they worship *Agung Agam*, that is gods, goddesses and deities in the festival for the good health of mankind and domestic animals.

In *Binnyat* ritual, boys and girls (those who are not in monthly period) go to the paddy field and offer *Binnyat pipak* – erecting two *takus* and two branches of *tan* (a tree of ritual significance) surrounded by three stones in a triangle and at the top of one *taku* fastened a piece of meat and on the other a ginger; then *ennok-take* and *apong* are sprinkled over it. This *Binnyat pipak* is offered to *Kine Nane* including *Sisi Moyi* and *Tusin Rodong* (preserver of land) for up keeping of paddy field and good harvest.

Some rituals are preventive in nature. In such rituals *Gumin Soyin* and other deities of family and village are worshiped to keep vigil and prevent the evil spirits from entering the village. One such ritual is *Motum moyeng* or *Motor* or *Pator*. When *eki* is sacrificed in *Motum moyeng*, it is called *Eki pator*. Sometimes monkey is killed and the disembowelled carcass is erected above the gate to deter the spirit (Borang: 1999, p.119). This sacrifice is usually performed when the neighbouring villages are suffering from epidemic.

In *Eki pator*, a gate called *Motum moyeng* is constructed at the entrance of the village and a dog is sacrificed and the disembowelled carcass is suspended from it. The blood that oozes out from the
stomach drops on the head of the person who enter into the village. When strangers are to enter into the village for some specific programmes and the neighbouring areas suffering from epidemic like diseases, *Eki pator* or *Motum moyeng* is performed and then the guests are allowed to enter. The gate is decorated with bows and arrows, bamboo snakes, spears and bamboo shaving to make it to look fearsome. Sometimes *beru* (temporary road that bypass the village) are made for the travellers who want to cross the village by road. Travellers and villagers are not allowed to bring fish and meat from out side of the gate, for they belief that this practice would prevent the spread of epidemics. It is believed that *Tordum Babu*, the spirit of protection, takes care of the gate and prevents the entry of *Doli talam*, spirits of epidemic to the village. This shows their strong belief in supernatural powers.