CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS UNIVERSE OF THE MINYONG

3.1 Men - Supernatural Relationship

Goswami (1973:8) noted that, ‘At one time belief in the spirit world was universal. In Vedic literature we came across beings like yaru, bhuta, yaksha, rakshara, pisacha and all sorts of evils. The Grihya Sutra speaks of demons, which causes harm to cattle and children, the Atharva Veda not only speaks of harmful demons and spirits, but provides for exorcism as well. These old traditions have persisted among the common people. One can speak of demons, but none seem to be able to explain how these beings occur......’. In all the societies of the world, both primitive and modern, belief in supernatural powers like demons and deities are almost universal, who believe in existence in some form or the other. Not only in ancient literatures but also in those modern days writings about such beliefs can be found. The Minyongs also believe in the existence of a number of spirits, both benevolent and malevolent. According to Dunbar, ‘It is the spirit residing in every object that wills and acts and so really counts. It has no form of its own and so the Adis have not tried to form their image’ (cited in Roy, 1960:243). Mibang (1994:17) opines,‘The supernatural world of the Minyongs consists of supernatural beings and spirits - malevolent and benevolent........ The demons and deities of the Minyongs can be broadly divided into two categories, such as, benevolent and malevolent’. Among all the
demons and the deities of the Minyongs, Donyipolo occupies the acme position. Bayan (1998:102) describes the belief and practice of Donyipolo as, ‘The God is conceived as the only benevolent supreme authorized destiny. He never does anything wrong or provides any painful efforts upon human life; so He need not be worshipped, but have a faith and love Him whole heartily, He will send His blessings. However, such benevolent supreme destiny is generally covered by uncountable numbers of ‘Devil or Evil Spirits’ of various kind and of different nature, who are malevolent in and do not allow human beings to view the God and hence, they should be worshipped with sacrifices. While they get satisfaction of their desired level with the worshipping efforts, they gives a way to view the God and thereby, harnessing the blessings of God for the purposes of life. This is the way of deriving satisfaction of human life according to this form of religion.

Among the Minyongs there are numerous spiritual representatives or emissaries beneath the supreme ruler Donyipolo to govern various domains of this spiritual empire. Kakar (1997:18) writes, ‘Donyi - Polo is, infact, a kind of nature – man - spirit complex: while nature is supreme, man is central to the cosmos and spirit a link between the two’. Worshiping nature and belief in spirits are part among the Donyipoloists. The prolonged and intimate association with the objects of the nature has enabled the Minyongs to choose Donyipolo as the symbol of their faith and aspiration. Kakar (ibid) added that Donyipolo faith, therefore, derives its substances from nature, mainly from sun, moon, air and water. When rains continue for months together, the Minyongs offer sacrifices to
Bomang Mone (goddesses of light) to give sunshine and to god of rain, when there is no rain in the sowing season to shower rain.

The Minyong believe in a host of gods and spirits of lesser power and offer sacrifices to propitiate them. These gods and spirits are creations of Sedi. Nath (2014:148) writes, ‘All beings created by Sedi and their progenies except Diling became benevolent gods and goddesses and among them all 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’. In between the benevolent gods and malevolent gods the Tani from the beginning finds himself. Borang (2008: 68) opines, ‘The benevolent groups of gods are 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 guard and guide of human beings; Kongki Komang or Kongki Bote, the god who designs the physical form of man and boons the life span; Dadi Somi or Dadi Bote, the god of domestic animals; Gumin Soyin, the god of protection or saviour of man; Bomang Mone, the god of light and warm; Ute Poro, the god of luck et al.,’. They are very kind to human being, but when one deviates from the principles of Donyipolo, and abstain from performing periodical offerings to the deities in the festivals like Aran, Etor, Solung, etc., they stop blessing. Taking the advantage of this
unresponsive period, different evil spirits cause all types of suffering and misfortune to the human beings. When people violate the rule of conduct, some benevolent gods may also turn to be hostile spirits. Only by atonement in the form of offering acceptable sacrifices, man could get back their mercy and pardon from them (Choudhury, 1971).

Dupak (1982:14) writes, ‘We have neither the habit of folding hands and praying the Donyi - Polo nor of offering direct worship to Donyi – Polo. But Donyi – Polo is residing only in the every heart of individual. All the above mentioned systems prevail in our religion; so we do conclude that we are having indirect worship to our Donyi – polo’. Donyipolo manifests itself in different forms for different purposes. Donyipolo creates all other gods and goddess. Under Donyipolo, there are a number of benevolent and malevolent deities. The deities are referred to with different names. According to the Minyongs the same deity may act as the benevolent as well as the malevolent. When a malevolent spirit is properly propitiated and offer sacrifices in time, it turns into a benevolent. Since time immemorial, they are propitiating from time to time for peace and prosperity by the Minyongs.

The Minyongs believe that the malevolent group of gods and spirits, commonly known as uyus, are closer to the physical world of the Tani’s. Effects of their bad intentions are repeatedly met by man as a result of their closer relationship, in all forms of misfortunes, diseases and sufferings. Man has to struggle constantly between these two groups of gods and goddesses for
existence. By offering sacrifice in appropriate occasions and faithfully following the tenets of Donyipoloism, the Minyongs have to keep both the benevolent gods and malevolent gods in good relation. 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 offerings towards the evil spirits. A man of Donyipolo (truthfulness) could led a peaceful life of a perfect man when he/she acquires all nobles qualities, i.e., truthfulness, wisdom, enlightenment, blissfulness, compassion, charity, love, etc. The Minyong believe that a righteous person leads a peaceful life and never breaks the laws of nature.

3.2 Benevolent Spirits

The Minyongs believe in a good number of benevolent deities and spirits. According to the Minyong concept, the welfare of human beings is looked after by them. The Minyongs cannot give any clear cut idea about the physical features of their deities and spirits. When the spirits remain satisfied, these deities are not generally harmful, they save the people from various distresses. If the deities are enraged, then they may cause harm by spreading disease, causing distress, even death to the people. These deities are not prone to take offence easily if they are not displeased, dishonoured or disturbed. However, they take actions against responsible persons, if they are disturbed and neglected. With some of their relevant features, the benevolent deities and spirits are responsible for various diseases, ailments and hazards. Ering (1983: 5 - 12) writes, ‘In the
mythology of the Padam – Minyongs, the benevolent gods such as, Dadi Bote, Doying Bote, Yidum Bote, Kine Nane, Kongki Bote and others are nearer to Sedi, the creator’. A few deities and spirits reside inside the dwelling house. The Minyongs always propitiate them for peace and prosperity. There are some deities, who are worshiped in the households. The villagers worshiped some of the benevolent spirits annually and collectively. In the village during the community rituals these deities are propitiate. If the benevolent deities like Donyipolo, Gumin Soying, Dadi Bote, Doying Bote, Kane Nane, Konki Komang, et al. are not worshiped regularly, they may cause various distresses in a village or to the community. Generally through the local priest they propitiate the deities. For appeasing each deity, animal sacrifice is inevitable. The Minyongs worship the following deities whom they considered as benevolent.

Table 3.1: Aspects of the benevolent deities of the Minyongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of deities</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Resides in</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Nature of ritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Donyipolo</td>
<td>Both male and female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>Household and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dadi Somi/Bote</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Domestic animal</td>
<td>Household and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Doying Bote</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Knowledge, wisdom, spiritual guardian of people</td>
<td>Household and Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gumin Soying</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Prosperity of human beings</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kine Nane</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Goddess of grain, wealth</td>
<td>Household and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kongki Komang</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Designs human destiny, physical form, life span</td>
<td>Household and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pedong Nane</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>Creator of all living being</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sedi Melo</td>
<td>Both male and female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Builder, architect of earth</td>
<td>Household and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ute Poro</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Authority of luck and fortune</td>
<td>Household and community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are some of the important benevolent spirits of the Minyongs:

(1) **Donyipolo**

In the pristine Minyong pantheon, Donyipolo is called as the god of mercy and justice, who comes next to the Sedi Melo, the creator. After the creation of Donyipolo, Sedi Melo becomes silent and obscure; so no offering is made in their names. On the other hand Donyipolo is regarded as the symbol of creator and protector, as Sedi Melo give the popular divine dignity to Donyipolo, who is always with humans. He is the invisible, omnipotent, powerful and Almighty.
Nyori (2008:29) writes, ‘Although the Donyi and Polo can be literally interpreted as the sun and the moon, they conveys certain ideas having direct bearing on the spiritual and physical life of the people. As far as the physical aspect is concerned, the term Donyi – Polo convey the vision of the sun and moon which gives warmth, energy and benevolent light to the humanity’. The Minyong cannot give the clear cut image of Donyipolo. Elwin (1959: 211) writes,‘He is the eye of the world; he is as important to man as eye of the body. He watches everything; he is the witness of truth; he show the man the way to go; he protect them; he treat them with mercy. Above all, he is the lord of truth and an oath taken on his name is the most binding of all’. Donyipolo with their light illuminates the whole world; they also lift the cover of darkness and stay high above the sky to look all. With their extreme regularity in their duty the Adi look them to be the custodian of truth and law. They are invoked in the village council to find the truth. They do not offer directly to Donyipolo because they think that Donyipolo reside in the heart of individual. However, the name of Donyipolo is recalled to witnessed their offerings to other spirits.

(2) Dadi Somi/Dadi Bote

The god of animal kingdom is known as Dadi Somi or Dadi Bote. He is the god of domestic animals and is worshiped for the health and prosperity of the household pets. It is believed that Dadi Somi visited the Minyong villages during the Etor festival. In order to get the boon and blessings of the god, the people offer him special offerings to have more animals. According to Furer –
Haimendorf, ‘There is one greater Agam, described as an old man living in the forest’. ‘There are smaller Agams who act as guardians of the cattle of individuals households’ (cited in Roy, 1960: 237). He is considered as the great agam (a benevolent supernatural power). Agam is a general name for all the spirits and he is the assistant of Dadi Bote. Eso Agam is the in - charge of mithun and Eg Agam is the authority of swine. In the agam kepel rice, apong, ginger and meat of squirrels are offered to Dadi Somi.

(3) Doying Bote

Doying Bote (god of knowledge) is manifested for imparting knowledge and wisdom to all human beings. He is regarded by the Minyongs as the spiritual guardian of the people. He is known as ‘Tumi Lonmo Rutum’ which means ‘a person having influential power’. With his blessings a person can acquire higher states in the society.

(4) Gumin Soyin

Gumin Soyin is the god of household and he dwells in every house and resides above the upper most tray of fireplace. The Minyongs worship Gumin Soyin for prosperity and well being. According to Osik (1982:13), ‘The Adis believe that Gumin Soyin stays in residential units because Sedi after creating human in the earth employed him to hatch the human reproduction, that is why Gumin Soyin frames and constructs the body structure of the babies in women wombs. That why we call a physically handicapped person ‘Gumin Soyin rumen namko’ which means ‘a person misframed by Gumin Soyin’’. Gumin Soying
also caused eye disease and blindness (Srivastava, 1990). The Minyongs propitiate him in their houses by sacrificing fowls. For this sacrifice either red or white colour cocks are required. The materials required for offering to Gumin Soying is called *kepel*. The liver of the fowl is burn in the fire and mixed with ginger paste placed inside the small bamboo container (*popur*). Again a little amount of water and rice beer is poured in a bamboo tube so that Gumin Soying can use it for drinking. Then these two are tied together with four small bamboo splits and hang in the main post (*aneng giyang*) above the hearth in the roof of the house where they believe that their parents resides. Inside the packet one legs and a wings of the cock is tied for the prosperity of the house. When there is distress in the house then Gumin Soyin is appeased. It is not necessary to worship him every year; when a family is not disturbed by any hazard, the deity is not appeased. There is another Gumin Soyin who is the guardian spirit of the village and resides in the community hall (*dere*). If the Gumin Soying of the house decree a person to death then the Gumin Soying of the *dere* can forbid it.

(5) Kine Nane

Kine Nane (goddess of wealth), a female deity, who is also known as ‘*Ali ai rutum*’, i.e., ‘Goddess of grain’. Kine Nane is worshiped for good harvesting and productivity. During Solung and Mopun festivals, the Minyongs offer *binyat* to Kane Nane. The *binyat* is composed of rice powder, ginger, rice beer, etc. By offering *binyat* to Kane Nane, the farmers seek her blessings in the form of abundance of paddy. Kane Nane is worshiped in the jhum field.
(6) Kongki Komang/Kongki Bote

Kanki Babu and Komang Nane are believed by the Minyongs as the uncle and aunt of Abutani, their mythological ancestor. They decide the life span of a man on this earth. Together they are called as Konki Komang (god of fate), who determines human status. The Minyongs believe that Konki Komang designs the physical form and life span of a man in this world.

(7) Pedong Nane

Pedong Nane is the goddess who gave birth to all the living being in the world. She is the great grand daughter of Sedi Melo, the creator, and she was the last series of creation and the age of the creation is over here after. The creation of spirits and other creatures of this world are start and Donyi – Polo stand in the border land. They are not created by themselves but stand aloof in the ethical grandeur above the rest (Roy, 1960). The age of the spirits and the other creatures starts with the end of Pedong, the creator.

(8) Sedi Melo

According to Bhattacharjee (1982:14),‘In Adi mythology the concept of universe start with keyum (vaccum). Sedi Melo (Sedi is mother and Melo is father), the Creator of universe, is revered as the creator or the Rutum originated from vacuam, considered as the builder and architect of the earth. He is Almighty without shape and size and beyond the imagination of all human beings’. It deserves mention that Sedi (mother) is the earth and Melo (father) is the sky.
Previously they lived together but after begotting many children they were separated and thought to be living far away. The Minyongs offer sacrifices to Sedi Melo while burning the felling trees in the jhum field. In the ritual, the whole village offers a pig and some fowls collected from each household of the village. Donyipolo, the supreme being, is believe to be gave birth by Sedi Melo (Srivastava, 1990).

(9) Ute Poro

Ute Pero is a female deity and the Minyongs believe her as the authority of luck, fortune, wealth and prosperity. She is called the supreme power for controlling the spirit of the wild beasts. They worship her for increasement of domestic animals like fowls, pigs, etc. A person who has many cattle is known to be blessed by Ute Poro. She is occasionally worshipped to acquire good luck and fortunes through offerings and animal sacrifices.

The benevolent spirits of the Minyongs are lesser in number than the malevolent spirits. The benevolent spirits are worshipped in both household and community basis occasionally or annually. Most of the evil spirits are propitiated on the household basis by them. Among the benevolent spirits of the Minyongs there are a few who are generally generous and cooperative, but if they are enraged, they can cause disease, damage of crops, destructions of domestic animals, even death. Invocations and offerings are organized to draw favour from these personalities. The propitiation of various spirits and deities is still important among the Minyong as it provide them with a guarantee of all
necessary supernatural services. The invisible powers that influence human life are thought of as personal beings. The Minyongs also develop a strong belief on the effect of annual and occasional sacrifices to propitiate these spirits. To appease them, usually they do not follow any prefixed schedule, but mostly fixed the date of appeasement according to their desire and necessities.

3.3 Malevolent Spirits

The Minyong believe in a number of malevolent spirits some of which are male and some are female. Ering (1983:5) writes, 'The malevolent spirits are closer to the physical world, i.e., they are near to Pedong – Nane, the mother of the spiritual and the material world'. The Principal malevolent spirits of the Minyongs are the Urom (spirits of dead person), Epom (spirit of the jungle), Biri Bit (spirit of water), Nipa Porag (common evil spirits), Asi Among Uyu (spirit of jungle), Dimu Tadayang or Dimu Bote (the lord of snow-clad mountains), Kumsung Uyu (spirit of stomach pain), Diri Uyu (spirit of famine), Banji Batmang (wicked spirit), Niji Ngipong, believed to be female fairy spirits lives in marshy places, small streams and amidst wild plantains, Shikom Tanom, Yilu Yamso, Sili Sidong, Nyine Nyipak, Meju Meya, Medeng Sene or Medeng Mone, a female spirit reputed for foul play, et al. They always seek opportunities to do harm to the people by causing various diseases including accidents, unnatural deaths, various kinds of crime, injustice, destruction, etc. These malignant spirits are offered sacrifices of birds and animals to get their power and response. According to the Minyongs, there are some malevolent spirits, who are calm and
timid unless their anger is aroused; the other section of the spirits are sadistic and their pleasure is to give pain to the human beings.

The list of the malevolent spirits of the Minyongs are larger than their benevolent spirits. The malignant spirits are mainly responsible for causing different diseases and ailments, different hindrances in life. Sometimes a spirit is worshiped by the Minyongs as male or female because the sexes of a few spirits are obscure and they appease them in different rituals as male or female according to the context. A single spirit can cause more than one ailment and a single ailment may be caused by different spirits. These spirits are appeased according to the necessity in the relevant rituals as prescribed by the priest. Some of the mischievous spirits those influence the life of the Minyongs are given below:

**Table 3.2: Aspects of the malevolent spirits of the Minyongs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Names of deities</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Resides</th>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Nature of appeasement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asi among uyuu</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Small stream and river</td>
<td>Illness particularly paralysis</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Banji Batmang</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hill and everywhere</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dimu Tadayang / Bote</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>High snow clad mountain</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ditimopang uyu</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Scared person anytime anywhere</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Diri Uyu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Cause poverty</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Epom</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Jungle</td>
<td>Troubling human being by kidnapping, death</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kumsung Uyu</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Everywhere</td>
<td>Cause stomach pain</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Medeng Sene/Mone</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Everywhere</td>
<td>Notorious, foul play, dispute, suicide</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Meju Maya</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Clay and dirty place</td>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Niji Nipong</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jungle</td>
<td>Disease &amp; death</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nipa Porag</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Everywhere</td>
<td>Weakness</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Situm Molum Uyu</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Small stream, tributaries</td>
<td>Madness</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sitking Kedang</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Inside the earth/mud</td>
<td>Stomach pain</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sili Sidong</td>
<td>Unisex</td>
<td>Deep water</td>
<td>Drowning in stream or river</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following are some of the important malevolent spirits of the Minyongs:

(1) *Asi Among Uyi*

This is a generic name of a class of malignant spirits of jungles residing in both water and land are called Asi Among Uyu. They live near small stream and river. They harass man by causing illness, particularly paralysis. Offerings for these spirits is called *Koseng*. Eggs, ginger and food grains are required to offer them. This offering is placed in the middle in the raised platform erected on four bamboo posts near the jungle or a water source. It is not mandatory that a priest only can do this ritual to appease the spirit, and any Minyong known the appeasement can conduct this rituals.

(2) *Banji Batmang*

*Banji Batmang* is known as the wicked spirit, who sucks human blood. He lives in hills and everywhere he desires. This is the souls of the persons who dies in war. Not much information is available about this spirits.
(3) Dimu Tadayang/Dimu Bote

Dimu Taya (spirit of snow clad mountains) lives in the high snow mountain claded with snows. It causes the death to a person who crosses his territory. This spirit is also called as the blood sucker by the Minyongs. *Koseng* (offering) is offered to appease this spirit. In *koseng* the ingredients required are ginger paste, egg, black rice beer, black or white cock and paddy. The appeasing rituals of this spirit can be performed by any person as directed by the priest.

(4) Ditimopang

Ditimopang (spirit of hills) resides in the hills. When this spirit attacks a person then the person is scared at any time and anywhere. A small bamboo mate is made for his appeasement and above this mate all the items required for offering like ginger paste, rice beer and eggs are ritually placed to this spirits. This offering is called *koseng*. Any person can perform this ritual who is expert in conducting this rituals.

(5) Diri

Diri is a female spirit who causes poverty to the people. When this spirit possesses, the whole society suffers from megre production of paddy. Due to his wrath paddy is destroy by insects in jhum field and the people suffer from starvation. The place where this spirit resides is unknown, but the Minyongs believe that it can reside in any place. The offerings for this spirits is unknown to the Minyongs.
(6) Epom

Epoms (the spirit of the jungle) are another set of spirits who never lose an opportunity of troubling human beings. They usually reside in the trees in the dense forests. According to Mibang (1994:20), ‘The Hollock (T. Myriocarpa Heurck at Muell) trees are favourite place for them to reside. The epom may sometimes, appear in human form, but it may not always augur well for a man to see him’. It is believe that epom and man were brothers but when art and craft were deprived from them by man they took shelter in the big trees in the jungles. It is believe that epom lives in the big trees so when the trees and creepers are cut by someone they feel offended. The people called it as an unidentified spirit of the wilderness who can assumes any shape at its will and can causes death to man by various types of accidents. Sometime people think it be a name of one spirit, and sometime just like the wild wind which had the capability of taking any form or shape, while other think that it designates a class of spirit (Roy, 1960). The epom usually trouble a man by kidnapping. When a family finds any member missing for long time, then its members just assume that the epom has kidnapped him/her. In such situation the other members of the family go to the jungle and start striking the big trees with machetes. Occasionally this spirit kidnap man and women but kids are their easy prey. The people promise to the spirit to offer a mithun or a pig in exchange of the kidnapped man. If the epom is pleased by the promise, then he releases the missing man. When the man returns to the family, sacrifices are offered to the epom and if does not return to home
then it is concluded that he had been devoured by the epom. In other cases the epom’s attack may causes direct death to the person. Due to his attack a man may falls down from a tree, or branches of tree may unexpectedly falls on him, which can crush him or a rock may roll down and smashes him under his weight, etc.

(7) Kumsung

Kumsung is the spirits that cause stomach pain to a person. It is believed that when the spirit is hungry then he attacks a person. According to the advice of the priest the Minyongs offer this spirit nogne takeng (ginger paste mixed of ginger and rice beer), egg, rice beer and food grains. They perform the ritual to appease the spirit either in jungle or in front of a granary. For this ritual they make a effigy of this spirit with bamboo, and all the offerings are placed in front of the mouth of the effigy and bury it. After burying the effigy the people move out without looking back to the spot where the spirit is burried. It is performed, it is believed that if they looked back the spirit may come with them.

(8) Medeng Sene/Medeng Mone

Medeng Sene (a notorious spirit) is a female spirit known for her foul playing and notorious character. Ering (1983:10) opines,‘She is believed to be the inducer of misunderstanding. Her present in the society can causes disputes, conflicts and war. She misguide the man and allures them to commit crime’. Not much information is available about this spirit. Mother’s brother tied beads (tadok) and ridgin (a sacred creeper) in the wrist of the victim person to get protection from this spirit.
(9) Meju Maya

It is a generic name of a clan of spirits who are the spirits of mud or clay, and live generally in mud in the village. They usually reside in dirty place, and cause diarrhoea. To propitiate them paddy husk, charcoal and a bones of pig is burnt and placed inside a small bamboo basket (papur) over ekam (Phrynium pubinerve Bl.) leaves and thrown in the river, stream or in a dirty place.

(10) Niji Nipong

Niji Nipong is the abode of souls who die during pregnancy. The unquiet soul of women is the most harmful of all the uroms. This spirit mainly target the women, but they can be equally dangerous to men also. Niji Nipong is the female spirit believed to be reside in banana plants, jungles, marshy places, small streams and amidst wild plantains. Banana plants are favourite abode for them. So banana leaves are believed to have special virtues and therefore, prescribed for a number of religious rites. This spirit is also responsible for the disease and mortality of the females.

(11) Nipa Porag

Nipa Porag is a common malevolent spirit who generally comes in dream. It is a unisex spirit. When a person becomes conspicuously weak, then the Minyongs believe that the person is possessed by Nipa Porag. The priest finds out the spirit responsible for weakness of a person through divination. Any person can be the priest, victim’s maternal uncle, mother, etc., can perform the offering as prescribed by the priest. For propitiation of the spirit a fowl and rice
beer is indispensable. The worshiper keeps separately the liver, wings and legs of the chicken along with rice, little water and rice beer in bamboo pipe and is kept in the roof of his dwelling house.

(12) Situm Molum

This type of genere spirit lives in the small stream and tributaries. This spirit is regarded as one of the dangerous spirits. Situm Molum is thought to be a unisex. When this spirit attack a person, the person becomes mad. The offerings to this spirit is perform according to the direction of the priest. One mithun or pig or cock is sacrifices to propitiate the spirit.

(13) Sitking Kedang

Sitking Kedang (spirit of earth/mud) resides inside the earth. He is considered as a powerful spirit, due to the tricks of whom people suffer from stomach pain. This ritual to appease the spirit is perform in the jungle. When this spirit attacks the people, the people seek the help of the priest. Then as per the advice of the priest the victim performs the sacrifices and offerings to this spirit. Moreover the priest decides who will offer to the spirit. Ginger paste mixed with black rice beer and ginger is placed over the leaves in the mud at the place where the offering is performed. A chicken is sacrificed to appease the spirit. Then in a small bamboo basket a little earth is placed and this is hang higher then, the legs of the sacrificed chicken and ginger paste which are placed above the earth to satisfy the spirit.
(14) Sili Sidong

Sili Sidong (spirits of water) is the generic name of a notorious spirit, who reside deep inside the water. These spirits are believed to be the abode of souls who are died by drowning in the stream or river. The offerings to these spirits are very simple and only a fowl is required to appease them. When a man is drown in water and is not traceable, then a chicken is thrown in the water. It is believed that in spite of the strong current of river the chicken whirls where the man is drowned.

(15) Shikom Tanom

Shikom Tanom (spirit of jungle) resides in house or small stream/river. When this spirit attacks, a person suffers from pain in different parts of his/her body. Bow and arrow are required to appease, this spirit. The priest touches the effected area of the man with the arrow and shoot the arrow to the place where offerings are given to the spirit. The offerings are given near the jungle and a fowl is sacrificed for the spirit. It is believed that the spirit hank after the soul of the fowl.

(16) Urom

It is a generic name of a class of spirits and are believed to be the spirits of dead person. They are very powerful and wicked spirits. The Minyongs believe that they reside all over the universe and caused different type of troubles to human beings. When man dies in unnatural manner or a soul of a deceased who do not received proper funeral rites, those souls become urom. These souls move
around in their houses and village. Such souls also do all sorts of evils in its domicile area and whenever he gets chances exhibits his anger. The sacrifices to the Uroms vary from a pig to a mithun according to their statues and power. It is believed that such soul allies from human camp that go add to the strength of the evil spirits. The Uroms are feared but not revered.

(17) Yilu Yamso

Yilu Yamso (spirits of air) reside in air. According to Winsor, ‘The storm is there play’ (cited in Srivastava, 1990:97). These spirit directly do not harm the people but they cause injuries to people in various ways like fruit falling on head, batting of branches of trees, bamboo, etc. Fowls are sacrificed to please these spirits, and after the ritual the legs of the fowls are hanged from the top of the gate of village entrance.

Dunbar (1913:133) writes, ‘It is the spirit residing in every object that wills and acts and so really counts. It has no form of its own ans so the Adis have not tried to form their images’. The Minyongs have no clear cut concept about the physical features of these deities and spirits. About the abode of the spirits also they have distinct ideas, e.g., Epom lives in jungles, Asi Among Uyu lives in water, etc. They also know which spirits is responsible for what kind of disease, such as Shikom Tanom is responsible for pain in the body, and so on and so forth. The Minyongs believe in the immortality of soul and think that the souls of the dead persons, who are not propitiated through mortuary rites, become spirits of the cremation ground.
3.4 Religious Activities during Crises Rite

According to Mair (1972:233), a letter is Beattie’s ‘transition rituals’, but many people say ‘life-crisis rituals’, thereby limiting themselves to a narrower field than that covered by Van Gennep, ‘Some of us simply say ‘passage rituals’. Van Gennep, the French man, contributed to the language of social anthropology, the term of rites de passage and was ‘The first writer to consider social significance of ‘confirmatory’ ritual. Difficulties are there in choosing an apt English rendering of this term, since ‘rites' in speech may be confused with ‘rights’ and ‘rites of passage’ to be taken to refer to something legal (although this is the title of the English translation of Van Gennep’s book). ‘Rites de passages’ are connected with the critical but usually expectable events of the life cycle like birth, sexual maturity, marriage, death, etc., of an individual. The attainment of social adulthood is marked by rituals, as are marriage and death, and one of the effects of mortuary ritual is to establish the status of the dead person as an ancestor. According to Van Gennep human being does not become a member of his society merely by being born; he has to be formally accepted into it, and this is done by a public naming of the infant or a presentation of him to his parent’s kin. All such changes, said Van Gennep, can be interpreted as ‘going out’ and ‘coming in’- not just ‘passage’ but rather ‘passing through’ (cited in Mair, 1972: 234).

Birth, marriages, sexual development, death, etc., are treated as crisis rites among all the human groups, which play significant role in the individuals and
community life of the members of the society. In all the societies crisis events are associated with culture complexes adhered to a good number of taboos, manas, beliefs, practices, and obviously rituals. The Minyong also observe some of the crisis rite with elaborate rituals.

(a) Rituals Integral to Pregnancy and Child Birth

*Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (1954:104 – 105), has describe about pregnancy, generally ‘It is a matter for pride, the outcome expected to follow immediately on married life......’. The concept of conception and pregnancy are universal phenomena. *Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (1954:104), ‘Accepted theory regarding conception vary widely. Though it may be recognized that conception follows sexual intercourse, this does not imply that the two events are connected as caused and effect’. The attitudes towards pregnancy for women are different in different society, especially in case of the married and unmarried women. There are various set of prescriptions and prohibitions for a pregnant women in the society and household, sometimes even for her husband (as for example couvade) and family members. The Minyongs believe that only by the blessing of Donyipolo a women can conceive and able to give birth to a child. At the time of pregnancy a Minyong woman has to observe simple diet and taboos associate with the child birth. The birth creates less stir than a death in the society. Without not much disturbance and religious rites it goes in normal process (Roy, 1960). There is no taboo on work and no ritual and ceremony is performed during the pregnancy. Both the husband and the wife have to follow
some restrictions so as to keep the coming child healthy. According to Dunbar (1913:57), ‘She should not drink water from the leaves of wild potato, ‘otherwise the child will be born with defective eyes’. Both the father and mother should not killed snake or frog, ‘lets the child will be born with darting, snake – like tongue, or crooked limbs, Double fruits should be shunned by both the parents to avoid the unwelcome birth of twins’.

The child birth can be either at the expectant mother’s parents’ house or in the husband’s house. No male member is allowed, and only the elderly women serve in the labour room. Immediately after the child born, the umbilical cord (mambung) is tied with a cotton thread and cut with a sharp split bamboo (gumpepepe). The placenta (amam) is removed and buried in a pit and the baby is washed with a lukewarm water. The defilement period last for three to five days, during this period the mother neither go near the fire place nor touch and cook food. Moreover, she takes food separately and restricted to go out from the house. The members present there immediately give a name to the newborn child in recognition of an arrival of a new member. Otherwise it is a belief of the Minyongs that the evil spirit will give the name and takes away the human soul, which may result in death of the newborn baby. Soon after the wash, a white thread (lejin lakjin) preferably made of cotton yarn is tied around the wrists and legs by an elderly women to protect the child from evil spirits. There are some specific foods which are tabooed for the newly mother. For example; the mother is restricted from eating all edibles like chilli, meat, yum and fish which requires
roasting in the fire. The Minyongs believe that if the mother eats the roasted things then her breast will dry up just like the meat dry up while cooking. Consequently there will be no breast milk for the child (Srivastava, 1990).

Small quantity of rice and meat of fowl are cooked separately in a small pot. It is called ngilum. Here fowl is boiled only with salt and ginger and it is given to the mother of the newborn. Celebrating birth (erang abo) depends from place to place. Birth ceremony can take place either on the third or fifth day from a birth. During this period, the household observed a taboo on doing work. On the third day the child is carried out to the courtyard by any one of the family and brought back to the house. It is an indication that from that day onward the child is free to take out of the house. The traditional beads (kodang ginpak) in a thread are also tied around the neck of the baby by the grandparents or by the relatives. Sometimes paternal or maternal uncle (aki) can give the traditional beads. The parents arrange a feast for the relatives, old men and women of the village. In the birth ceremony, packets containing of rice and meat and local rice beer are offered to the relatives.

(b) Rituals Connected with Marriage

Marriage as a social institution affected the group as well as of the individual in very intimate way. It is one of the vital crises rite in the life cycle of a human being. Usually marriage is associated with religious and social functions in every society. Marriage is practised universally in some form or the other, and it is one of the most important universal institutions prevalent in all
human societies. It regulates the relations of the mated pair to each other, their kinsmen, offspring, and the society at large.

For the Minyongs, marriage means unbroken line through which the family descent is maintained. The Minyongs are partilineal and therefore, so every person is concerned to perpetuate his name after his death. Moreover when a man dies it is necessary that someone have to cut the waist band before burying the death body. Unless this band is cut the funeral rites do not begin. It is the duty of the son to cut the band because the man who cut the band inherits the property of the deceased. The Minyongs often say:

‘Lagbik ko lang lakke ko,

ebong ko lang kiro ko,

egging ko lang eyok ko’.

‘Right hand and left hand,

Umbrella and basket,

Axe and dao’. (Srivastava, 1990: 192)

The board meaning of the saying is:

Like the right hand is no use without the left hand, basket without a headgear, and axe without a machete, so a man is of no use without a woman. As all this things always go together, so the husband and wife too go together. This explain that the necessity of marriage in the Minyongs society (Srivastava, 1990: 192).
In the marriage system of the Minyongs there are various types of marriage is noticeable. They are marriage by love and elopement, marriage by negotiation, marriage by exchange and marriage by service, marriages within the clan is strictly prohibited. The traditional marriage system of the Minyongs is very simple. At present with development and education the boys and girls are allowed to choose their life partners. The girls inherit the property of the mother. In the early days marriage by negotiation was common and respectable form of marriage as the parents consult the boys and the girls before the marriage without ignoring their likes and dislikes. The son and daughter of the rich families are not allowed to marry an orphan and poor. In the love marriages the boy let his parents know either by himself or through friends and relatives, which afterward arrange through negotiation.

Among the Minyongs, when a boy take a decision to marry, choosing a girl, the parent consult the all the clan members as well as the elders in the family. If the girl is good, hard working, cool tempered, then the elderly members agreed for the marriage, then the parent of the boy proceed for marriage. The experienced old men and women of the boy’s family or clan, who are expert in family negotiation, were selected as go – between (ari bena) and send to the girl’s house. They carry smoked squirrels, rice beer, meat to the girl’s house which is known as apong – kadung. Traditionally the way of asking for a marriage proposal is indirect. Instead of the boy parent the elderly members placed the proposal to the girl’s parent in a traditional manner which means by
saying – I have come to you for asking vegetable (oying kadung). When a man from the boy’s side again give next visit to the girl’s house asking for same thing followed by the second and third then the girl’s parent get hint, and accordingly, they say either yes or no for the alliance.

After receiving favourable response, the groom’s parent starts the process for formal agreement for arrangement of daughter – in - law (nyameng tatnam). If the proposal is accepted the apong kadung continues for one month; during this period if unfavourable turns out from the girl’s parent, then a day is fixed for final decision (reying apong). Apong kudung is the system to offer rice beer by the groom family to the bride family which is generally continuous for one month. It deserve to mention that reying apong means the rice beer (apong) that cools hearts. On the final day the mother of the boy takes good amount of meat of mithun, pig, fish, fowl, squirrels and rice beer and went to the girl’s house. That day they organize a feast in the would be daughter – in – law house. The dignified and other clan and family members of the girl are invited. Each woman who attended the feast are the family and the clan members of the girl get one squirrel that they carry home. To show the gratitude to the girl’s parent and clan and family members for accepting the proposal the boy’s mother herself distributes the food with ginger paste and flavoured with salt. After completing this ceremony the marriage of the couple is legalized in the society and the boy get the right to exercising as a husband.
The entire share of fish that are caught in organized fishing by the husband is given to the wife’s house. But half are given from the fish that are catch by a trap and of rat and squirrel caught. From community hunting, whole share goes to the girl’s house and hind leg of the game is acquired by the husband. The parent of the girl get the share as a clans men one foreleg with the ribs of a wild boar and when a bear killed by the brother of the husband or his clan’s men. The father - in - law gets the entire chest including the neck, if the sacrifice is made by his clan’s men and the whole upper portion of the mithun if it is sacrificed by the husband. If a pig is sacrifice then wife’s father get the legs. If the pig sacrifices in the Solung festival the neck, chest including the ribs and the jaws are presented to the girl’s parent. These gifts are continually given to the girl’s house till the girl is brought to her husband’s house and finally reduced the quantity of gift till the death of the wife. Whenever there is a feast in home of the boy or the girl, then they exchange their share of meat.

The husband is known as magbo (son – in - law) during his residence at wife’s house. In order to add his status in the wife’s house yegling is performed by killing pig. It deserved mentioned that this rites is performed only by the rich Minyongs to execute their richness and availability to spent money. The poorer sections of the Minyongs do not performed such rituals. The large portion between the neck and lower rib with one foreleg of the killed animal for the ritual is offered to the parents - in – law. Likewise the other foreleg goes to the sister of the bridegroom and the heart, intestine and liver are distributed among the clan
and family members. *Yegling* is not compulsory; it is optional for the son-in-law. After this ceremony whenever the bridegroom makes sacrifices, the chest portion goes to the parents—son-in-law. After marriage, a family is deprived from a girl, which should be compensated by paying a bride price (*are*). There is no fixed price and objects to give as bride price; at the time of marriage either in beads (*tadok*), cash, property and domestic animals are given as bride price. But it takes in another form which means continuous supply of meat by husband to the parent of the wife (Roy, 1960).

After marriage, the girl can live in her parent’s house till the birth of the first child. Her staying in the house also depends upon the economic condition of the family of her husband. It is also taken care that the husband’s family should not be deprived from getting help from her for a longer period of time. She also can continue staying in her parent’s house if the boy has not able to built his own house and still lives with his parent. The maximum period for a girl to live in her family of orientation is up to giving birth of the third child. In the Minyong society it is believed that if the husband stay beyond it then the husband may die. So most of the Minyong couples move out of the parent’s house after the birth of their third child. It is not compulsory for the girl to leave her family of procreation and live in husband’s house. The husband’s family cannot force the girl for staying in their house. There is no legal compulsion so in this case the residence after marriage can be called biolocal residence. In some families it is seen that the girl comes to the husband’s house after marriage to help the in-law
if there is no one to look after or help them. The wife can join the husband’s house even after twenty years.

At the time of her shifting to her husband’s house, the mother of the bride gives her seeds of all crops grown in their jhum field for sowing in her husband’s field. A sow and a hen are also given by motivating the idea of fertility. These gifts are very important in the Minyong society, they believe that like the seeds grow into crops and the hen and the sow reproduce numerous offsprings, so will the girl bear the children. Female hen and seeds are motivated by the idea of fertility (Srivastava, 1990). All articles related to daily use like clothes, winnowing fans, baskets, metal utensils, etc., are given by the idea of well being of the couple and with the wish to have a good life.

In the rich family the boy and the girl’s opinions are not taken for marriage because a rich family always prefers to have a rich bride likewise the rich family’s daughter suppose to marry a rich youth. If the families are of not having bride or groom more or less of equal economic states, then the parent’s consent for a marriage is very difficult. When a man marries a girl from a rich family, two additional ceremonies are to be performed. A rich bride brings her personal belonging like beads (tadok) and when this beads are equivalent to the cost of fifteen mithuns, generally then two functions are performed. The first ceremony is called as maruk. It can be performed at any time and it has no fixed time but in the occasion of Unying festival it is preferred to be held. For this ceremony a huge amount of food, rice beer, cooked rice, pigs, dried meat,
smoked rat and squirrel are arranged by the groom. On this occasion a mithun is also sacrificed. The clan members of the groom dressed up in war attire and proceed towards the bride’s house carrying all the presents with pomp and gaiety. The bride’s clan and family members too come to groom’s house but they usually do not carry anything. When both the party meet in the half – way, the bride’s party blocked the way and the groom’s party tries for the passage; there start a mock fight between the two groups. Machetes are taken out and harmlessly flourished. The heads with hamlets are bobbing up and down. This continues for an hour till they feel tired and while passing the bride’s party yield at the groom’s party in a joyous mood (Roy, 1960).

The women of the bride’s clan receive the groom’s party at a few yard away from the house and they are offered with rice beer and food only after the present that are bought by them are handed over to them. The bride’s parent offers a grand feast where the entire members’ of the clan and other relatives of the bride are invited. On this feast the bride’s parent kill a pig or a mithun to serve the meat at the feast. The other ceremony is called minyam. In this ceremony a mithun is killed for the feast. The investigator has not found this type of marriage ceremony performed by them of the East Siang district but it is gathered that it was practiced by them who reside in the Upper Siang and in higher regions.

Other forms of marriage are also there, though such marriages are less practiced, but sanctioned by the Minyong society. Marriage by exchange (ape) is
possible in the Minyong society for same generations, though it is not very common. Usually in this type of marriage, the two men exchange their sisters, by supplying suitable marriageable girl in each family to fill up the gap. In marriage by exchange also the pristine marriage ceremonies are performed. Betrothal (kepel) is necessary and at initial stage kepel is given. In marriage by exchange both side’s payments are approximately equal. The things given in betrothal is very less, and any family can afford, so this marriage is preferred who faced difficulty in giving bride price (ome are). After betrothal depending upon the economic condition of the family of the groom, the bride –price is given to the parents. According to Srivastava (1990: 203), ‘Usually for such marriage the bride – wealth consists of a basket each of rice and bread known as magin and tingin respectively’. On the occasions of festival and paddy sowing season, rice and meat are exchanged by both the families. Kepel is paid because it is the only process to legalize the marriage of the couple in the society. In this type of marriage if one of the girl is infant and other is of marriageable age, then the infant is kept in the parent’s house while the other is sent to the husband’s house. In this case the kepel of both the girls are paid together.

In the present day love marriages are becoming popular among the Minyong youths. When the parents do not agree for a marriage, then the couple elope to some other village and live like husband and wife. Without the kepel the marriage is not approved. So after sometime when the parent’s wrath decreased they come back to youth’s home. Then to legalize the marriage the kepel is
agreed and the bride – price is sent to the girl’s father. The boy’s father sent some rice and a little meat to the girl’s parents. Elopements are also not uncommon among the Minyongs. Elopement can be happen with a non Minyong, tribal or non – tribal also, but customary compensation equal to the bride price is always claimed. This type of marriages is tolerated by the society and usually they lived in the distant land and live in a the place which is outside the Minyong jurisdiction.

Marriage by service (magboship) is also occurs in the Minyong society when a man due to various reasons unable to have his own house. After the acceptance of the bride’s family the groom come to the girl’s house at night. According to Banerjee (1975:113), ‘In this sense of marriage for the boys means rather a serfdom to the father – in – law’. The man continues to remain in the father – in – law’s house for a short period of time which is called ‘magboginam’. According to Prem Anand, ‘Magbo is compare with bonded labour’ (cited in Singh, 1991:68). During the stay, the son – in - law works in his house during day time and occasionally give full service to the family of his father – in – law whether it may in helping in jhum paddy or in other house works.

(c) Rituals Connected with Death

Among the Minyongs, a number of rituals are performed when a person dies. Just after the death, except stillborn and prenatal cases, body is washed in the same way at the time of birth, which is called consecration of all sins and
defilement (*mibi irpak*). A woven cane strip (*beying*) wore around the waist by the deceased, is cut off to signify that the life span has been completed according to the length of the knot tied by Konki Komang (god of fate). The cutting of the cane strip is done by the would be heir. If the would be heir is a small kid then an elderly person does everything on behalf of the child. In case of a normal death, the family members are informed about the matter. Relatives bring clothes (*mayet*) and fowls (*gatek*), respectively, as farewell gifts for the purpose of wrapping the dead body and to be sent as gift to the departed soul. The death body is wrapped with new clothes given by near relatives. The fowls are sacrificed with the belief that the soul of the fowls would also be carried by the soul of the dead to the land of deads. The men who are carrying the corpse, strangles the fowls. Generally the dead body is disposed off as soon as possible. But in certain cases, it is delayed in order to enable the close kins to attend the burial. The would be heir of the deceased take fire from the household hearth, place the fire above the soil to form the spot and throw the same, in a direction away from the house. Some of the villagers go in advance to grave yard (*golung*) just at the outskirt of the village and dig the pit after person designated to perform last rites. The corpse carriers (*simang gena*) performed the digging ritual (*dengal*).

To carry the dead body (*simang*) from the house to the grave yard a bamboo bier (*simang mapur*) is prepared and the dead body is carried by four persons. The bier is lifted by the person who will perform the funeral rites and
hold it in the front side. He first touches and then lifts the dead body. Clan members carry all the personal belonging of the deceased such as mat, clothes, utensils, machete, etc. After placing the dead body in the pit relatives are allowed to see its face for the last time. For digging the pit quickly, all kinsmen render their help. The pit is dig for about one and half metre deep, one metre broad and more than two metres in length. On mid way down the pit hallow, cave like bunk is dug out, where the dead body is to be placed (Borang, 2008). The corpse is kept in this cavity with its knees touching the chest and its head towards west. Inside the grave, the cavity is covered with the split bamboo, jungle banana leaves; bamboo slices and dry leaves are carefully placed so that the corpse remains safe inside when the pit is filled up with earth. Then the death body is buried by covering clothes.

The person (*Simang gena*) who carry the corpse is the man who is to throw the earth first. Soil dig out from the grave are refilled in the pit tightly by two or three persons. A shed is constructed to cover the grave by *toku* (*Livistona jenkinsiana* Griff) leaves and is fenced. A small hut like structure is made over the grave as an abode of the departed soul. The replicas of all his ornaments such as beads, *tale* (plate) and other articles of everyday use of the deceased are hung outside the grave (*ago*), showing that nothing is left in the house deserted by him. After burial the assembled people wash up their hands and feet in a nearby stream (*sigo*) before returning to their houses. In the evening the clan members and other relatives go to the house of the deceased and spend the night there. The
deceased’s family offers food and drink to them and burn fire in front of the grave for ten to twelve days. According to Minyong custom the responsibility and rituals precedence of burying the dead body devolves on the youngest son and the eldest son of the deceased. In case in the absence of the eldest and youngest son, any son chosen by the deceased may initiate the digging and bury the corpse. If the deceased has no son, one of the nearest male kins may perform all formalities. In the absence of near relatives, clan members may take the responsibility jointly. This practice called yupyang binam is followed to preserve the property of the deceased for his rightful heir. Funeral ritual (dodgang) is offered to the departed soul in the same day. In the present day it is performed within a year or after one year. Daughter of the deceased and her husband sacrifice a pig and fowl with the belief that it will be carried by the deceased in the next world (uyu among). The rich person sacrifices a mithun where as the poor household is satisfied with a pig and fowls.

The burial rites are performed for the natural death. When a person die because of epidemic get the similar treatment like that of the natural death. But for some other type of death, the burial system is different. Similar treatment are not given to other who die in accident, suicide, delivery and stillborn. The dead body of those who die in an accident, after possessing by female spirit (nyipong), are used to be buried right away without bring it to the house. They are usually buried near the road side.
Five to ten days are observed as polluted period after a death. During this period they abstain from taking certain food items. The person who carry corpse takes ritually cooked food from a small pot (mibi kisi) and observes more taboos than the other family members. The whole village observes taboo for one day for Ngipong, Taleng and Orih, i.e., abstaining from going to paddy field, jungle, weaving and spinning. On the last day of taboo, purificatory rites (gimang giyit/mayu) are performed. On this day the family members take bath in a stream and wash all the clothes used during the period of taboo. They keep a bundle of wood and (phrynium pubinerve B1.) leaves (ekkam) at the intersection of two paths outside the village and place a stone upon it to signify that they are now free from the taboos and restrictions. They are free to resume their work from the next day of the purification.

*Penge* is the funeral hymns of the Minyongs which is sung in the death of a person. Every person can sing funeral hymn including the priest. There are *penge* priests who are professional *penge* singers and they are specially invited for this purpose. The house of the deceased offers gifts for his service. It is sung by relatives and elder persons either man or woman. Funeral hymns are sung before burying the corpse. Through the funeral hymns the singer describes about the biography of the deceased person, his ancestors, children and family members. The funeral singer describes the deceased’s life, his contribution to the family, children and society. He also tells how the deceased person’s soul will face difficulties in the land of deads. Moreover, the singer tell soul to take care of
himself while crossing the rivers and climbing the mountains. According to Perme, ‘In penge abang human soul is immortal. They do not pronounced death but address as change of skin for the continuation of life (bayyuk). Finally the departed soul is guided to the path of Donyi Gite Pobe, Polo Yaro Mobang, i.e. Uyu Among or Donyipolo Among to take rest in eternal peace’ (cited in Borang, 2008:43).

3.5 Ritual Experts

Mibang (1994:18) opines, ‘In the socio - religious frame work of the Adis, the presence of the priest is inevitable. They possess certain spiritual qualities and were conversant with the language of the spirits with all technicalities of religious rites and ritual. Every material used in the rituals is treated as living being’. Therefore, the Minyongs assumed every material is personified as an active person. In the Minyong language, a priest is called as miri. The priest’s role is very important in the society. The priest is their ritual expert. Priesthood among them is not hereditary and elective. It has been observed that most of the priests are males, although there are some female priests also in the Minyong society. There are different priest for different deities. Some of the rituals can be perform without the help of the priest. On various occasions a priest performs divination from chicken liver, rice, offer sacrifice by giving squirrels, fowl, pig, etc., and invokes blessing of the gods and spirits on behalf of the people.

According to Choudhury (1996:142),‘They are the shaman’s par excellence with the knowledge and power of negotiating with the spirit world.
Their services are sought after and during sickness or other misfortunes, when they prescribe the necessary rites or sacrifices for propitiating the inimical or orams’. He performed all sorts of functions, rites and rituals, etc. The priest can be called as the mouth piece of the people to communicate the spirits, and he describes their grievances and sufferings. So, he is the intermediary person between the spiritual world and the human world. The Minyongs believe that the priest is guided by his spiritual attendants and through these attendants, the priest gets access into the supernatural world and finds the causes of sickness, disease and brings back the soul (ayit) to the human world. The priest performs divination, offer sacrifices, chants spells on behalf of the people, to get blessing from the spirits. The priest also requests the spirits for redress and early recovery of the household. Riddi says, ‘In normal times, he invokes the blessing of benevolent deities on the behalf of the family and the people (cited in Paul and Duarah, 2008:105)’.

The priests are the custodians of traditions and customs and they are regarded as the guides and the preservers. The priest possesses spiritual power, with the help of which he can communicate with spirits, whom a common human being cannot see and do. The priest is usually a fulltime religious practitioner in the Minyong society and occupies an higher position in the society. He plays a vital role in life of the people. A person who is likely to be a priest show some signs such as, capacity to memorizing the abang which he chants in the form of hymns. This power is not hereditary. It is believed that when he/she (priest) is in
her mother womb, the power of priesthood is endow by Donyipolo. The Minyongs believe that the priest is not made, but such power is inborn to him/her. In the early stages, some unusual and miraculous behaviour are noticed in him/her. It is said that the priest see a number of typical dreams. According to the dreams he followed the power of curing the sick and performs ritualistic activities by the appropriate sacrifices to the spirits endow on him/her. Being associated with senior priest, he/she automatically develop the capacity to act as a priest. The young one feels the inspiration in him/her and picks up sacrificial songs and incantations.

The functions of both the male and female priests are same and both are equally honoured in the society. The female priests also have the same capacity and power as those of the males. In some cases, it may be different because it is seen that one may found the power to attain the priesthood in his/her later age. They learned many things from dreams automatically. In such cases some unusual behavioural activities are seen in the person. He/she may utter hymns, which are not understood by the people. After this he/she starts to perform relevant activities of the priest.

A priest has to perform multidimensional hard tasks. The priest can foretell through divination. In every sphere of the life a priest is indispensable for the Minyongs, because the priest is the only person that can prescribe the right way through divination. He not only performs ritualistic activities to get blessings of the deities and the spirits, but also help the society to get rid of ill
beings. He can identify the person responsible for a crime, theft and so on and so forth. In this regard, before performing a major deed the Minyongs prefer to take the decision of the priest. For the construction of a house, hunting, fishing, purchasing of land, rearing of mithun, agricultural operation, going for an expedition, choosing jhum field, sowing field, etc., and they lean on the priest so on. The priest performs divination with the help of egg and chicken liver. A priest can identify the distress or fortune of a person with his magical power in the chicken liver. He identifies and prescribes the mean for the appeasement to the spirits that are responsible for the hazards of a person. For this purpose, the priest at first takes an egg in his hand and chants relevant spells. Then the egg is boiled in water and its yolk is thoroughly examined to tackle the matter. If the priest fails to identify the right cases in his first attempt, the process is repeated. For further confirmation, divination is performed through chicken liver. For this process a chicken is taken in his hand and for the success of his venture the priest chants some spells. After the completion of chanting, the liver of the chicken is extracted and examined to prescribe the ritual to be performed. The priest also tells to get rid of the distress and the required animals to be sacrificed to propitiate the responsible spirits.

A priest does not enjoy any special privilege in the Minyong society except in invocations and sacrifices. The priest during the performances of the ritualistic activities put on special dress and ornaments. He leads a common life like the fellow villagers. Except a few words, in all ritual offerings, the language
used by the priest is not understood by the common people and is different from
the common dialect. The Minyongs believe that the dialect used by the priest is
scared and the priest can utter this with the help of his divine power. Therefore,
there is diminishing tendency in the society, particularly the educated people to
take the priesthood.

3.6 Festivals

The Minyongs perform a good number of rituals and socio-religious
festivals. These are performed in both household and community basis. Solung,
Aran/Uyning, Etor and the Mopun are the principal community festivals of the
Minyongs, while Agu Agam and Binyat can be performed both as community
and household festivals. Perivously there was no fixed date for performing the
festivals, but the Adi Bane Kebang (Adi Society traditional customary
association) has fixed dates for all the festivals so that all the Adis could
celebrate those together.

The following table will give the first hand idea about the festivals of the
Minyongs:

Table 3.3: Aspects of the festivals of the Minyongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the festival</th>
<th>Observing month</th>
<th>Deity appeased</th>
<th>No of days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aran/Unying</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Doying Bote, Gumin Soying and Kine Nane</td>
<td>5 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is a community festival and gods and goddesses like Doying Bote, Gumin Soying and Kine Nane are worshiped in the festival by the people for 5 days. It start from 7 March. The Minyongs celebrate the Aran festival with the advent of spring in the month of March. It is celebrated to welcome Nyani Mete. Ering (1972:2 - 9) says,‘It is to commemorate the arrival of Nyani Mete, the beautiful girl from Kojum Koja, who floated in the deluge which completely destroyed Kojum Koja, into Doni – Dongor the land of Tani’. This festival is integral to some household rituals like petum patlung, Eting Rikti and tapu.

The main purpose of celebrating the Petum Patlung ceremony is to increase the number of domestic animals like pig, fowls, cow, etc. It is celebrated in Aran in 17\textsuperscript{th} of the month of March. The Minyongs offer rice beer, ginger, squirrels and rice packets, etc. in this ceremony to the deities Gumin Soying, Kine Nane and Dadi Somi/Dadi Bote, the authority of domestic animals for the welfare of the animals. This festival is observed in the month of March. Rikti Eting is another ceremony integral to Aran which is celebrated after the Aran in 16\textsuperscript{th} of the month of March. This household ceremony is observed before getting
back to work after Aran festival. Pigs and fowls are sacrificed in the ceremony and the villages dance in group in different households after eating rice cake (*etting*) in a grand feast. Tapu is another ceremony of the Minyongs performed in the 12th March in Aran for 2 days through pamp and gaiety. In this festival tapu, a kind of group dance is performed by the boys. All the villagers gather in the dormitory at night for this festival. Pangkam (2011:56) writes, ‘In Adi sayings and mythology, this festival is called as ‘Siking Kitang Tapu’, as it was a blessing to Tani by Kene – Nane’. While celebrating and performing the dance for this festival, the performer they wear costumes like worrier. Then they perform mock war dance using sword and war helmet showing as if they are fighting with the spirits who caused disease. While dancing the performers invoke Doying Bote, Gumin Soving and Kine Nane’s name and ask them to shower blessings for the well being of men and animals.

(2) Mopun

When the Minyongs cut jungles to initiate jhum cultivation then they celebrate the Mopun festival. The Mopun festival is celebrated in the month of April or May for 2 days to represent that soil of the jhum field is prepared for sowing. For celebration of the Mopun month and date is not fixed, and it is celebrated in different times at different villages. This can also be celebrated in out skirt or near by the village or even in community hall. Doying Bote and Kine Nane are worshiped in this festival in expectation of good harvest in jhum. The whole village gather in the outside of the village and celebrate the Mopun. The
Mopun priest is selected by the villagers. After this festival the villages observe one day taboo and abstain from work, while the priest observed the taboo for five days. The articles required for offering in the festival are rice powder, rice cake, rice beer, ginger, pig and fowl. The branches of *tan* (*Solanum khasiana clarke*) tree and *sinkang* (*Xanthoxylum armatum Dc.*) leaves are planted by village elder people, at the place where the ritual is performed.

(3) **Etor**

In the month of May after fencing the whole village the inhabitants of the village celebrate the Etor festival for 5 days. This festival starts from 15th May. In this festival they sacrifice mithun, pig, fowl, etc., for the protection and well being of mithun and other domestic animals Dadi Bote is the guardian of domestic animals, Doying Bote and Kine Nane are the authority of knowledge and wealth, and therefore, they appease the deity in this festival.

(4) **Solung**

Solung is the festival celebrated to express gratitude for the creation of mithun by the deity Dadi Somi. The benevolent deities like Kane Nane, Dadi Somi, Doying Bote and Gumin Soying are appeased in this festival and offered egg, ginger paste, chicken liver, etc., to them. In Solung, ponung, a special kind of dance, is performed by the woman folks for four nights. For peace and prosperity of the community they offer mithun, pig, fowl, etc., to some of the deities. The leading singer of the ponung dance is known as *ponung miri*, who sings continuously for four nights in this festival where he describes about the
creation of the world and its existence till to the present day. Along with the solung, some other ceremonies also performed by the Minyongs. Such a ceremony is Agu Agam or Agam Kepel, in which the Minyongs worshiped Dadi Bote in the first night of Solung. They offer rice beer, egg, ginger paste and squirrel at home to Dadi Bote. The kepel offer to Dadi Bote is later on kept on the raised front platform of the residential unit of each house in order to get blessings from the deity to increase in domesticated animals like mithun, pig, fowls, etc. The sacred offering to any god or goddess together is known as Kepel. They pray to Dadi Bote for the welfare of the animals. The Binyat is another ceremony celebrated along with the Solung festival in its second night. In Binyat, Kine Nane is especially worshiped in their respective paddy field for getting good harvest. The women of the family go to the paddy field to offer Kine Nane egg, ginger paste, rice beer, etc., to please the deity and to offer them good harvest. Another ceremony integral to Solung is Taktor Takdung, which is celebrated at the 3rd night of Solung festival. For this ceremony people make bows and arrows which are fixed near the front door of the living house. It is believed that the bows and arrows will refrain the evil spirits who are trying to enter the dwelling house and cause disease and ailments of the people.

3.7 New Trend of Religion

Since time immemorial the Minyongs practise a system of beliefs and practices by performing the rituals as situational demand occasionally or annually. With the passage of time many of their faiths, beliefs, customs,
practices and norms are becoming inconsistent. Now – a – days the Adis religion is popularly known as Donyipolo religion. A voluntary organization called Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang (DYK) had developed for the systematic functioning of the religious system of the Adis and it becomes necessary for the Adis to redefine and reinterpret the traditional practices with the changing reality of life. The DYK is mainly form to propagate the pristine religion of the Adis centring their high god Donyipolo. In order to protect the existing beliefs, customs and faith it has become necessary for the Adi to revive old beliefs, practices and norms. Rukbo (2005:35) while addressing to the activism of DYK says, ‘First the religious literature of the old practices was collected and compiled and books were published. Second, prayer songs were composed and books were published. Third, for gathering people a Donyi – Polo temple was constructed at Pasighat. Fourth, images of Donyi – Polo and other gods and goddesses were prepared and others were placed on the altar of the temple. Fifth, valuable ornaments were collected and then other healing materials were collected and kept in the temple for use’. Thus with modification, rectification and reorganization of the traditional practice a new religious belief system have developed among the Adis in an organized form. Other organizations like the Tani Jagriti, Arunachal Pradesh Nyibo Association, etc., are also involved in establishing and revive the flaceid, traditional practices and customs of the Adis. According to Rukbo, ‘A society cannot progress if it merely imitates the ancestors. Inventive, creative and vital activities are needed for the progress for the society. So instead of
discarding totally the old customs, we should replace them by modifying and rectifying the existing ones with the reformatory spirit.....we have to abolished some evil practices out of these customs and good one should be reformed properly and preserved as identity of the society (cited in Pegu, 2012:147)’.

Moreover, after forming the religion a scripture become necessary which must be prepared and knitted to the practices. So, the Adis prepared a scripture of hymns in printed form to adore Donyipolo. They adopt the roman script for writing and all the prayer songs were documented in that book, viz., Angun Bedang. The Adis established a religious organization called Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang in 31st December of 1986 in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The DYK set a doctrine for their religion centring Donyipolo and such doctrines are called the ‘code of conduct’. The code of conduct contains the spiritual and philosophical doctrines of their revived religion. This code of conduct has laid some directive principles for smooth working the integral organization, functions, rules, responsibilities, rituals, occasions, worships, celebration of Donyipolo day, etc.

With the new trend of their religious practices, a few discussions have been made about the features and functions of Donyipolo religion in details. The organizing body for this new religion is called Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang. The central office of DYK is established in Pasighat, and its branches are located in every town and villages of Adi dominated areas of Arunachal Pradesh. Construction of gangging, i.e., the community prayer house, in every Adi village
comes with the objectives to form a systematic and organized religion. Through this medium the devotees can pray to Donyipolo and other deities and get blessings for their peace and prosperity. The central gangging is built in Pasighat, the head quarters of East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh. Every village must have a gangging in order to offer a weekly prayer by the devotees. Strict discipline must be maintain inside the gangging. It can be called as re – vitisizing centre because of giving awareness to the new generations about the indigenous faith. Every year the gangging in blockwise organize cultural activities and the members of it do various social services in different villages including providing financial help to the poor people. The DYK had unanimously accepted the image of Donyipolo and the other deities.

According to Rukbo (1998:12 - 13),‘There is a great sublime purpose behind it; though various images are insentient it is the conscious and sentient gods or goddess that are bought to the minds of the people by the images as we remember the living and conscious person when we see his/her photograph. We find that all religions have images of their gods/goddesses and prophets. Leaving aside the question of the Hindus and the Bhuddhist, the Christian worship the crucifix, the Muslim adore the Kaaba stone, the patriots worship the national flag’. The image is of Donyipolo is drawn in circular surrounding by many more circles with different colours and the rays are diverting towards the earth. Other deities have been given the proper images like that of the human being. Displaying the images of Donyipolo and other deities in the gangging in order to
get blessing, prosperity and also to come closer to the supreme being. The picture of the principal religious reformer must be hanged in the wall inside the gangging. The researcher has found in her field work that in some prayer centres the photo of late Talom Rukbo, whom they recognized as guru, is placed in the raised platform along with the other deities.

The DYK also set some norms and rules for the prayer centres. The devotees should come to the centre clean, wear traditional attire and should maintain silence in the centre. The symbol of Donyipolo faith is also developed by this organization. Its emblem will be sun and moon, keyum (vaccum) in the middle will be surrounded by the sun. Wearing locket of Donyipolo in neck and ridgin (sacred creeper) in wrist indicates the person is the follower of Donyipolo religion. When a person die in the grave the family placed the flag of Donyipolo as a symbol of the religion. The house hostes the Donyipolo flag infront of the homestead indicates that it’s inhabitants follow this religion. Regarding the worship, the organization had made a process to perform all the functions and rituals in a systematic way. As soon as the people gather in the gangging the prayer starts. The priest with other devotees sing prescribed songs in appeasement of Donyipolo followed by chanting of hymns by the priest. After every prayer all the devotees utter: ‘Bomyerung Donyipolo’ means ‘Taking the blessing of Donyipolo’. No lunchion or other food are served in the centre after the prayer. However, sometimes some families offer snacks to the devotees gathered in a gangging to celebrate some events like birth of a child, birthday of
a sibling, recovery from ailment, good result in exam, and so on. Such luncheon is purchase from the nearing market, which is served without tea or coffee to the assembled devotees after the prayer. After the funeral rituals no family is tabooed to come to the gangging.

The DYK constituted a set of office bearers to look after the administrative affairs of the organization and maintenance of prayer centres. All the prayer centres are having equal number of office bearers. The office unit in the villages must maintain regular contact with the central body. The president, the secretary and the other office members are policy makers and their decisions are accepted by the organizing body. The main purpose of the office bearers is to develop the Donyipolo faith. The followers of this revived religion must have membership, through registration. Every devotee must register his/her name through which they get the registration card, which consists of gangging’s serial number. Every person must pay an entry fee of rupees ten, and this testimony must be obtained from the respective gangging. The entry fees revived in every year on 31st December. The registered members must follow all the rules, norms and order of DYK. When a registered member of this faith die, then he/she is buried with all the norms and rules that are written in the directive principles of the DYK. The devotees whose names are not registered, their funeral rites are not performed with honour and as per the rules of the organization; however all the Yelam Kebang members will attend and pay homage to the departed soul of the
deceased. The DYK members will perform prayer in the dead person’s house in the fifth night after his/her death.

A notice is issued to all the ganggings by the organization not to encourage the members to do business in the name of DYK. A person who breaks the rules of DYK, he/she may reregistered again by begging apology. If a member violates the rules, of DYK, making destructive remark against the harmony of the DYK, he/she will be terminated from the membership and will not be allowed to attend any prayer in the centre. For any misconduct of a member he/she gets warning. The DYK has a fund to help the poor and downtrodden, and a member can take a loan from that fund with the promise to return it in time. If anyone fails to return it in the stipulated period, then he/she have to pay interest for every additional month. The organizing body cannot misuse the money of the organization for the personal purposes. Destroying the image of Donyipolo and scripture are considered as sin, copying of Donyipolo hymns anyone may have to face judicial action. Without consulting DYK not a single word of hymns can be changed by any person. The Donyipolo prayer book Augun Bedang cannot be reprint and sell above the fixed rate.

The believers of Donyipolo celebrate the foundation day of the Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang on 31st December every year with a long scheduled programme. On that day from morning till night all the devotees assembled in the prayer centres. All the ganggings in the villages and towns celebrate the day with pamp and gaiety. But the central committee held a splendid programme in any
place of their choice. The session starts with flag hosting, delivering speeches by the senior members, priest of the gangging, intellectuals associated with the Donyipolo faith, etc. The people also go for a procession to the nearby places from the place of the meeting. In this meeting they organize traditional dances and a grand feast in the evening.

The DYK also do various welfare activities for the benefits of the society. Miri (priest) Orientation Courses are organized for the priests of different places, and taught them how to perform the prayer in an attractive manner. There are various abang i.e., the appeasing songs of Donyipolo, courses, seminars are conducted for the improvement of abangs. The Adi tribe is composed of a good number of sub - tribes and to make conflict free and to synchronize the abang into prayer and hymns the DYK conduct this once in a year in different places. The DYK discusses about the maintenances of gangging, fund, etc., various awareness programmes also constitutes by the Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang. All Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang means all the members of Tani group of Arunachal Pradesh, who believed in Donyipoloism.

The priest plays a vital role in the Donyipolo faith. Prayer, rituals and rites are incomplete without a priest. He will pray for the sick people who are coming to gangging. There is no restriction to become priest by the female. If the patient is male the priest can touch him, if the ailing person is a woman, then he should not touch the ailing woman while praying for her; a woman will help him to conduct his function. The DYK had introduced a dress code for all the priests.
While performing the prayer, the priest must wear this dress till the end of the prayer. The dress (*taabe galuk*) of the priest is a white colour long coat and in the hands and lower part of the garment motifs are there in different colours, which is very much similar with the dress of Donyipolo depicted in the picture. It can be worn by both male and female priests in the prayer centre. The devotees should wear their traditional dresses according to his/her sex. In case if the priest performs prayer in a devotees’ house, he can wear his dress there as the priest, but cannot wear it in other time in his day to day life. Previously the Minyong women as per their custom do not observed taboo for the menstruation periods. In the new doctrines of DYK they do restrict the females from entering into the prayer halls during menstruation period for 5 days.

In the rectified religion of the Minyongs also offerings are there to appease the benevolent deities. However, they do not encourage the sacrifices for the malevolent spirits, especially when a person is sick. The DYK propagates that worshiping for the prosperity and well being of a family and those for a sick person should be done in *gangging*. They are rigidly against the animal sacrifices in the name of Donyipolo. Marriage ceremony can be organized in the Donyipolo *gangging* with the consent of both the parties. Offerings in annual rites for the ancestors will remain same as a token of respect.