CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem under Study

Religion is the medium through which human being cope with the supernatural environment. It is one of the oldest institutions of human society. In different types of societies, whether it is primitive tribal society, urban industrial society, modern cosmopolitan society, peasant or agricultural society, it is the indispensable part of social structure. Imespative of the levels of development, the institution of religion exists in human society with varying patterns and functions. No human society can exist without one or another form of religious beliefs and practices. However, the beliefs and practices are not same in every society. It also differs from society to society depending on their tradition and stages of social development. Religion was found in the form of what is called animism, naturalism or totemism in the early tribal stage, and it was found in some particular cults or doctrines like Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, etc., in the post - tribal stage.

Origin of religion is based on rites and rituals, which signify the system of faith and worship. The most important institution of human culture is rites and rituals, with rites and rituals people relate to each other on various occasions. A ritual performing can be defined as a way of religious act like praying, sacrifices and offering to god (Beals and Hoijer, 2007). Religion is an expression of the manner and types of adjustment by the people with the concept of the
supernatural. The term religion can group to all the societies which have same beliefs. Religion can be defined as a philosophy, pragmatic attitude and a special mode of behaviour, and all it concerns is about the supernaturals. So, religion can be termed as beliefs and practices related to supernatural power, whether it may be the power of God, spirits, ghost, demon, etc.

The religion of the primitive people consists of magical rites which are found to be direct control by demons by causing disease, death and other evils. While in nature worship, the magical elements of spirits of deceased ancestors are more or less strongly represented. Supernatural concepts differ from people to people and society to society. For some people the supernaturals are constituted of ghosts, spirits, impersonal powers, which may be present and apparent throughout this world, while for others it is manifested through the pantheon of gods, goddesses, high gods and so on. From the psychological point of view, in history the man while dealing with evil power, did not exclusively relay on magic and ritual activities like prayers and offerings.

Frazer in his book *Golden Bough* (1870) defined religion consists of two elements, practical and theoretical, where man believe in higher, superior and powerful and an attempt to please them. By religion it is also mean to propitiation and conciliation of superior and more powerful than man, who are believed to control the universe and bind all human beings. Divine being come first since there is an attempt to please him for his existence. Religion is not a religion if it is only based on theology without its corresponding practices. So it
is clear that no man is religious unless he is govern by some conduct like fear or love for God. The practices that are divested to all the belief is also not a religion. According to Encyclopedia Brittanica,’ Religion is not merely a claim for a broader and more comprehensive view of the reality. Fundamental to religion is the conviction that through a right relation with a cosmic power or powers man will find his salvation. Various views of such salvation have been held. Salvation has been regarded as something attainable only after this life. Other views, however, tend to posit a salvation for man through escape rather than fulfillment. Alternatively salvation may be viewed as something anticipated in the present and fulfilled perfectly after this life’ (cited in Nath, 2014:171).

One of the earliest and eminent anthropologist, Taylor has proposed a theory of the origin animism and it is found in his book Primitive Culture, 1971. Mitchell (1970:6) states,‘The notion was a part of theory of primitive religion which endeavoured to account for the attribution by some people of a spiritual existence to animals, plants, and even on occasion to inanimate objects’. Karsten (1935) opines that primitive rituals are of man’s desire to make existence as tolerable and possible. It is also an instinct essential expression of man for self preservation. The man tries to influence the supernatural powers by his prayers and offerings which are not originally an ethical relation. Lasbax (1937:176) in his article entitled ‘Rhythm of Sacrifice and Prayer’ has observed, ‘Primitive sacrifices is always an offering under one aspect or another; it is a sacrifice of the firstlings. The sentiment which expires it is that the materials should never be
used without some reserve; for it becomes an absolute master who has himself produced them to sacrifice them without some reserve. It should not be forgotten that their true creator is God, and therefore, it is equitable to offer Him the first fruit, which it has permitted to us to gather, in gratitude for this first gift. The sacrifice of man thus appears to be the exact counter part of the creative work of God’. Durant (1961:783) has located the characteristics of primitive religion as an ‘Animistic fear and worship of spirits lurking anywhere, a poetic reverence for the impressive forms and reproductive powers of earth, and an awed adoration of a heaven whose energizing sunlight and fertilizing rains are parts of the sky’.

Risely (1908:18) states on animism in his book *History of Ancient Religions* as a ‘Belief in the existence of souls or spirits of which only the powerful - those on which man feels himself dependent, and before which he stands in awe - acquire the rank of divine beings and become objects of worship’. The definition of animism is corroborated by James (1948:15) who writes ‘The doctrines of animism represent a complex attempt to interpret the material and a spiritual aspects of the phenomenal world by revolving the universe into a fundamental dualism of body and soul’.

Taylor has defined animism as a belief in ‘spiritual being’. He writes that, although the origin appears to be multiple, yet there is only one idea underlying it, viz., belief in the soul (*atma*); hence, the name animism for this theory (cited in Majumdar and Madan, 1986:153). In brief, the medium through which human beings cope with the supernatural elements is the religion. All societies have
some beliefs, which can be grouped under the term religion. The system of faith and worship, which means is the origin of rites and rituals, is the religion. One of the most important institutions of human culture is religion, which is based upon rites and rituals, which relate people to each other on special occasions. With their concept of super naturals, it is the expression of manner and type of adjustment effected by the people. A set of earnest policies, a philosophy, a special mode of behaviour, a pragmatic attitude, but in all cases it concerns with the supernatural has been defined as religion. Therefore, any set of attitudes, beliefs and practices pertaining to supernatural power, whether that power be force, god, spirit, ghost, demon, etc., may be termed as religion.

Majumdar and Madan in their book *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* (1986:151) opine that, ‘Religion with the concept of supernaturals is the way of expression of the peoples’ manner and type of adjustment by the effected people. It is the human response to supernatural and supersensory that apprehend of the power and something’.

In the Northeast region of India, the ethnic growth and culture is very rich and colourful. In this region the people are broadly divided into tribal and non tribal. North East India is a region of wide ethnic diversity, comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The migration of the people from the ancient to the present time have significantly contributed in this field and makes this region almost bewildering cultural variations and diversity. Datta (1985:15) writes, ‘In this
region different tribals and non tribals, sanskritized and non - sanskritized, highly refined and the patently ‘primitive’ peoples have been living in a remarkable state of juxtaposition’. In comparison to some other parts of India the predominance of tribal elements in the term of numbers of such communities and their overall ratio to the total indigenous population of the region and the visibly dominant racial and cultural tribal strains even in the sanskritized non - tribal societies are the most special and distinguishing features of this region. The different parts of North Eastern region including Arunachal Pradesh is the ethnographer’s laboratory. Datta (1983:20) said,‘This region is like the living museum or storehouse of the most varied and interesting folk materials. Thus there is need for the preservation, collection, and scientific study of this wealth of heritage. The study of folk materials of this region can prove to be the most rewarding and satisfying experience for both the enthusiastic laymen and the discerning scholars’.

The whole population of North East India from the socio - religious and cultural point of views could be divided into three categories: (i) those tribal communities living in the hills, who are more or less free from the impact of ‘sanskritic’ or other ‘organized’ cultures (except in the case of tribes with Buddhistic connections); (ii) tribal groups that are living in the hills and plains, that have retained their tribal identity but acculturated in various degrees as a result of their living in close proximity and contact with those non - tribal sanskritized majority or with the impact of Buddhism, Christainity, or Islam, and
(iii) which are more or less sanskritized societies, where the population is almost wholly (like the Meities of Manipur), or partly, as in the case of the Minyong society, made up of earlier Mongoloid stocks.

The tribals in contemporary times are no longer in their early primitive stage. They are in transition from primitive to changing way of life. In various fields of activities, such as economic, cultural, political, religious and social, such transition has been identified. In the course of their transition in religious sphere, some of the tribes have converted to religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, etc.; however, some others are trying to develop their own animistic or totemic type of religious beliefs and practices into a systematic monotheistic religion. The Donyipolo emerge as a new reformistic concept of religion among the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh, is an example of such efforts. In Arunachal Pradesh, the Adis are the group of combination of several tribes who believe that they are the progenies of Donyipolo - Donyi (sun) and Polo (moon). The Adis believe that, out of the union of the Donyi and Polo, their first forefather Abutani (abu - father, tani - man) was born. The Adi have been trying to develop their pristine religion on the basis of their beliefs, in the name and style of Donyipoloism. In course of time, and in the tune of popularity and expansion in its organization, the Donyipoloism in its pattern of belief and faith has become a movement. Formally in the year 1960, this idea was started in Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh by some educated and intellectual Adi leaders. The group in the initial stage was consists of a very few persons.
Roy (1960:244) writes, ‘The remarkable feature of the tribal religion as practiced in the North-East Frontier is the absence of shrine or temple, as also of image worship. Nor is any organized clergy or priesthood dependent or religious performances as distinct from rest of the community to be found among the tribes except some religious functionaries like the Ipak miris and the Nybos of the Adi society’. The Adis believe in polytheism and they put their innumerable gods and goddesses in hierarchal order. They afraid and respect their deities, although they do not have transparent idea about the form, abode and gender of these supernaturals. In North East India all the tribes traditionally profess animistic religion. In Arunachal Pradesh, there are 126 number of tribes among them some are practicing Buddhism, while some other are following pristine religion of the race is animism.

According to Rukbo (1985:3), ‘Donyipoloism is the religion of the Adi, Apatani, Mishimi, Nishi and the Tagin. It has a vast mythological background with all its mundance and supernatural elements. Donyipolo is the combination of two terms, ‘Donyi’, means ‘sun’, and ‘Polo’, means ‘moon’. These two physical and material objects are the source of power and energy for living beings which cannot be denied scientifically and philosophically’. Thus Donyipolo, the spiritual source and symbol, is believed to be the supreme power governing the universe. In the other word Donyipolo is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient’. According to Ering, ‘The creator radiates through the Donyi and the polo in the forms of rays and the light. His qualities, truth, peace, purity, love,
impartiality, wisdom, etc. are focused through the sun and the moon to enable man to realize Him abstract from (the Donyi - Polo Cult) (cited in Osik, 1981:12)’.

Pankam (2011:53) writes, ‘All forms of indigenous faiths, beliefs, customary practices, rites and rituals, which are found among the Adis constitute our religion Donyipolo’. According to Dai, ‘It is not the physical Donyi - Polo that we regards as our God. The physical Donyi - Polo is only symbolic power……there is a power, a creative power, similar to that of Donyi - Polo which we human beings, do not see but feel deep in the heart its presence’ (cited in Osik, 1982:14).

The Minyongs, a major branch of the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, are traditionally animists. They principally reside in east and west of a Siang, Upper Siang and Siang area of Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Adi tribe has 15 branches among which the Minyong also indispensable one. The Minyongs are partiriarchal, and descent, inheritance, succession, authority and residence after marriage are traced among them through male line. Their mainstay is shifting cultivation. They live in compact villages on the hill tops in pile dwellings arranged in linear fashion by both the sides of the village path. They have pristine three tiered village organization through which all the disputes are controlled. Division of labour among them is distinct which is based on gender and age. The Minyong females are very expert in handloom weaving and they produce the clothes necessary in household in their back strip looms. Traditionally the
Minyongs are animistic and they appease a good number of spirits (uyu), who are areal, aquatic or terestreal. Idolatry is not there among the Minyongs and they do not have a clear cut idea about the gender and physical features of the deities. They also do not have any pristine community worshipping place to propiciate deity. It has been already stated that the Minyongs believe in many gods and goddesses, both the benevolent and malevolent, which are occasionally appeased to get rid of death and distress and also to achieve the desired goal. Donyipolo is the high god of the Minyongs, although he is not worshipped alone but appeased in almost all the rituals along with the other subordinate deities.

Religion, beliefs, supernaturals, superstitions, etc., still play dominant roles in the Minyong society. Their religious outlook has been to a great extent coloured by their geographical environment. The Minyongs believe in the existence of invisible spirits, who are not cordial to man. Besides spiritism and animism, they also believe in the hierarchy of the deities. Donyipolo is their high god, who is the nearest approximation of the supreme deity. These supernaturals reign unchallenged in the heaven and are the ‘eyes of the world’. They watch everything and are the witness. They are endowed with light that illuminates the world and lifts the cover of darkness and are favoured with a position high above in the sky to overlook all (Choudhary, 1971).

The religious aspects of the Minyongs characterize into two important factors, a complex system of faith in the spiritual world and side by side, the concept of supreme being. It has been already stated that they believe in both
benevolent and malevolent spirits. The evil spirits are believed to be capable of causing disease, miseries and misfortunes to human beings who have the power to exert influence on man in both of his earthly life and after life. Propitiation of the evil spirits is an important religious aspect of the Minyongs. According to them Donyipolo is the supreme power, who is assisted by many gods and goddesses in his task of managing the universe. The Minyongs do not create image of Donyipolo and called Him as male or female according to the suitability of contexts. Besides their literal meaning, the combined word Donyipolo refers to the divine force operating from heaven (*Donyipolo among*).

In the last few decades some revivalistic and reformative spirits among the tribals of North East India have been witnessed. Such trends were prominently visible among some tribals living in Manipur, some Naga groups, and some tribes of Arunachal Pradesh with very deterministic goals. In such critical situation, Donyipoloism, a revivalistic tribal religious thinking, has been growing among some tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Accordingly, the present work has been undertaken to study religious change and reformation and to know the genesis and development of Donyipolo movement among the Minyongs, a group of the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

This study is an enquiry about the emergence of new religious movement in a tribal society. In religious beliefs and practices, the tribals are in general animists, during their life cycles, varieties of sacrificial rituals are performed. The emerging religion is monotheistic type worshipping only the primeval pair
Donyipolo. In the new system of worship sacrifice is greatly abandoned. Thus, offering any sacrifice, worshipping the spirits and deities and use of rice beer (apong) which they have been practicing since early times, are no longer practice in Donyipoloism. The traditional priests who enjoy high status in the society for their skill and believed by fellow members that their power is given by God are not engaged in the new system of worship. In the new religion, well - versed persons in rhymes and rituals are engaged as priests. By reciting hymns prayers are offered to Donyipolo and the hymns are composed by their own men of knowledge. Thus, on the basic belief system and concepts the whole new system appears to be a revivalistic process. In Arunachal Pradesh, based on traditional concept of the sun and the moon as their progenitors, the Adis have been developing its own religion. The Adis cannot be called as Hindus for worshiping Donyipolo though sun and moon worships are the parts of Hinduism, because they do not believe that they are a part of the Hindu society. The Adis have felt the necessity of developing a new religious system of their own by giving up many of their traditional animistic beliefs and practices.

1.2 Literature Review

Literature review is an integral part of the report and thesis from which an investigator can acquire knowledge on the topic under study as well as schedules for investigating and delineating some more elements integral to the study. The present review has been divided into two major parts – ethnographic works on the Adis including the Minyongs and the study on religion.
A few ethnographic studies have been done on the Adi by different scholars although studies on Minyong are scanty. Comprising one-third of the total population of Arunachal Pradesh the Adi is a major tribe of the state. Among various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Adis are the most advanced group. The Adis has been known as Abor for a long time. According to Saikia the meaning of the Abor is ‘One who does not owe allegiance to others’ (cited in Nyori, 1993:2). The Adis do not like to be called themselves as Abor but prefer to be called as the Adi, which in their own language means ‘hill’, thus briefly the ‘Hillman’. Hesselmeyer (1868:192) writes, ‘The Subansiri river divides the Abors from the Daflas, that the Abors occupy the country lying between the territories of the Daflas on the west and the Mishmis on the east, and that the Dibang river formed the line of demarcation between the villages of the Abors and the Mishimi’. According to Beresford (1881:15), ‘The Abors living in the territory between the east bank of the Dihong river and the west bank of the Dibang river as Bor Abors or great Abors (‘bor’ means ‘great’), those Abors living in the right or west bank of the Dihong as Pasi - Minyong’. According to Cosh (1837:142), ‘The Abors and Bor Abors, as the two groups of the Abors’. Elwin (1959: 224) says, ‘The Padams, one of the sub – tribes of the Easter Adis or the Padam – Minyong group, formerly called Bor Abors’. Butler (1847:110) says, ‘The Bor Abors reside on the loftiest and most remote mountains north of the valley of Assam, the Abors on the lower range, and the Miris at the foot of the hills or on the plains immediately leading up to the hills’. Neufville (1828:5)
writes, ‘The Abors inhabited the portion of the hills of the lower ranges between
the heads of the Dihong’. Waddell (1901:12) divided the Adi tribe into following
sub – divisions, ‘The Padam (who live to the east of the Dihong), Minyong and
Pasi (who live to the west of the Dihong), and the Doba (Tagin) (whose habitat is
uncertain)’.

The Siang river is also known as Dihong and Dihang. Wilcox (1832: 331),
the first English man who had visited the Adis, says, ‘The hills on the right bank
of the Siang river belong to the Pasial and Mayong Abors, and those of the left
bank to the Padoo, Siboo and Meboo and Galiwar Abors’. Here Pasial and
Mayong are the present day Pasi and Minyong. While Meboo and Padoo are
village name in the present day but the other names are difficult to make out
(Nyori, 1993). The Adis are divided into two groups, the Abors and the Gallongs
(Dunbar, 1913). Elwin gives about the information about the division of the Adis
(1959:18), ‘The word Adi today covers a large number of tribal groups, united by
a language that inspite of dialectrical variations is fundamental everywhere the
same and a similar culture and temperament. The Adis fall into two main
divisions – one division includes the Minyongs, Padams, Pasis, Panggis,
Shimongs, Boris and the Ashings and Tangams. The other division includes the
Gallong group, with which may be associated the Ramos, Bokars, and Pailibor of
the far north’. Krick (1853:108), a French missionary, writes about Adi as a,
‘Lover of freedom and independent, generous, noble hearted, plain spoken, more
honest than the average oriental’. While Hore observed that Adis are
agriculturists, and quite ready to fight for their independent, they are not war mongars. He further added that (1853:21), ‘The Abors are a kind hearted people and children and animals are invariably treated well’. Hamiliton (1912:18) described about the Adis as, ‘They are fearless, their hair and eyes are black; the skin is brown, the eyes stand at right angles with the nose. The forehead is flat, the face is board, the nose is short, the check bones somewhat prominent and stature moderate’. Medhi (1980: 64 - 68) in his paper, ‘Dress Habit of the Adis of Arunachal’ delineates on the attires of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh.

As a result of material and all forms of non - material change and development, religious rites, rituals and practices are also experiencing noticeable changes. Religion has been considered as all pervading phenomenon of human society, and it has been conteminoius with human history. Religion has been a source of knowledge about human beings, it has given rise to transcendental notions, which go beyond the temporal and spatial. Therefore, anthropological, folkloristic and sociological study of religion very often considers different aspects of religion and religious organization and its accompanied change and dynamism. In nearly all societies - primitive, agrarian or industrial, it has been present in one form or the other. The theories of religion are, therefore, highly concerned with describing, developing, analyzing and exploring the continuous role and functions of religion at various stages of human evolution and development. Indeed, the interest in religion and its study would seems to be as old as man himself, since the relationship between religion
and its associated social dimensions are equally considered old. The dynamic aspects and its organized move are very often termed as revolution in religious thinking and ideology, synthesis and ideas, reformation of ideas or religious movement for this reasons, many a times, scholars are of the opinion that the sociological study of the religion is a relatively new area of interest. However, the new aspects which the social scientists take interest on studying religion in organized, systematic and scientific attempt and to disseminate the knowledge in consonance with the changing environment and with scientific worldview.

These and many other such aspects of religion have attracted attention to many anthropologists, folklorists and sociologists over the last few decades. In 1906 the great anthropologist Rivers systematically studied about the Todas, a remarkable polyandrous tribe of Nilgiri hills, India, where he also explored their religious life. Roy (1912), the stawart anthropologist, has explored sociological and geographical environments of the Mundas in the book entitled The Mundas and their Country, where he meticulously described about their religious universe. Gradually ethnographic study of a particular community or study on religion was made on different communities (Roy: 1912, 1928; Elwin: 1955), and after attempts were made to correlate the religious beliefs and practices and social life (Bodding: 1925, 1927, 1940). In 1915 he also studied the Oraon tribe of Chotanagpur, and again in 1928 he had highlighted the religious universe of the Oraons. Impact of religion and its indispensable relation with the society from different perspectives are studied by the scholars from different disciplines.
Bose (1927), Das (1927), Roy (1928), Chattopadhyay (1935), and Hutton (1961) have examined diffusion and changing Oroan religion deleneating acculturation as a pivotal factors of their social changes.

However, before anthropology was formally taught in the universities of India, study on religion in the country had insignificant acceleration. At that period, the initial study on religion was mainly made by the travelers, missionaries, and self - made scholars who either made textual analysis, or discussed the diverse religious beliefs and practices, and peculiar customs on the basis of their empirical data’ (Dubois, 1928). Different communities of India with their spectrum of cultural patterns offer an interesting field of research in religion. In this context mention may be made of Murdock’s (1934) *The Todas of Southern India. History of Indian Philosophy* by Das Gupta in two volumes, Vol. IV (1949), contains a lot for our understanding on Hinduism.

It is pertinent to note here that there are some studies where the scholars from different disciplines have examined various aspects of religion, but in some others their thrust area exclude religion. However, in course of their treatment of other subjects of a particular community they have elaborately discussed about religion. Sometimes in evaluating some aspects of society, more particularly in the monographs, religion is meticulously dealt with. In *The Nuer*, (1940), the praiseworthy monograph of Pritchared, the author examined religion as one of the integral components of the Nuer life. In this context Bose’s (1941) study on Hindu system of tribal absorption deserves mention. The article entitled *Culture*
Change among the Nilgiri Tribe of Mandelbaum’s (1941) unveiled many elements integral to the religion of the tribe of the Nilgiri hills; Furer-Haimendorf’s (1943) book The Chenchus: Jungle Folk of the Deccan, is another important addition in this line.

Davis and Wilbert (1945) were of the opinion that ‘religion is necessary and it is apparently to be found in the fact that human society achieves it’s until primarily through the possession by its members of certain ultimate values and end in common. Although these values and ends are subjective, they influence behaviour, and their integration enables the society to operate as a system. These values and ends they said - ‘must appear to the members of the society to have same reality, and it is the role of religious beliefs and rituals to supply and reinforce the appearance of reality. Through rituals and beliefs, the common ends and values are connected with an imaginary world symbolized by concrete scared objects, which would in turn related to a meaningful way to the facts and trials of individuals life. Through the worship of the sacred objects and the beings they symbolize and the acceptance of some codes of behaviour, a powerful control over human conduct is exercised, guiding a long lines sustaining the institutional structure and conforming to the ultimates ends and values’. For example in the painstaking study of Radcliffe Brown (1948) The Andaman Islanders, the famous British Anthropoloist has highlighted the religious universe of the Andamanese also.
The study of Majumdar (1950) on the Ho tribe is a meticulous endeavour in which he developed the concept of Bongaism. In India the anthropologists initiated the study of religion by evaluating different religious concepts among various communities of the country. Mention may be made of Ehrenfels (1951), who systematically studied socio-cultural dimensions of the Kadars. Important example of such studies is Srinivas’ (1952) book entitled Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India, where he developed the concept of sankritization. Srinivas correlates the rituals with the social structure of the Coorg society. Following Srinivas, exploration were made by Harper (1957, 1959), Gough (1959), Mathur (1964), Beteille (1964), and Nicholas (1969) on various rituals and practices among the different communities of India treating those as integral components of respective social fabrics. Mukherjee’s (1965) work on the Santals has contributed towards our knowledge of the tribe including their religion. Beals (1962) evaluated the life structure of the inhabitants of Gopalpur, a heterogeneous village of South India, where the inhabitants of different castes and creed including the Muslims propitiated Hindu gods and goddesses and Muslim pirs and faquirs.

The edited book of Singer (1959) entitled Traditional India: Structure and Change, includes five articles having relevance to the study of religion. Marriott (1955) studies, Redfield’s (1941) ideas on ‘social organization of tradition’ and ‘little and great tradition’ had helped immensely in the study of religion in the villages in Uttar Pradesh. In the same study Marriott also developed the concept
of universalization and parochialization. Religion and Society of the great philosopher Radhakrishnan (1959) the great philosopher of our country, compiled a few of his thought provoking lectures on Hinduism which have analyzed different components of the Hindu religion like need of religion, women in Hindu society, etc. Like The Nuers of Evance Pritchard, in the Indian context also endeavours of many scholars have examined the life ways of the different communities producing many notable monographs where discussions on religion are conspicuous.

Indologists, travelers, and missionaries also made some elaborate reports on Indian temples. In comparison to a good number of studies of temple on historrical and structural dimensions, anthropological exploration on temples of our country are scanty. Some of the archeologists have examined the structural and architectural aspects of a few temples of India. However, those studies have very little anthropological significance. In different District Gazetteers there are some elaborate reports on sacred complexes of India highlighting the mythological and historical dimensions. Mentionable anthropological studies on temples were made by Bose, Patnaik and Roy (1958), Bhowmick (1960), Saraswati (1963), Roy (1969), Goswami and Morab (1970, 1974), Freeman (1971). Chaudhuri’s detailed and informative study of the Bakreswar temple complex in Birbhum district in West Bengal, based on field work in 1970 -71 and 1973 - 74, is an important addition to the growing field on the study of sacred centres of Indian civilization’ (Sinha, 1981: vii). Most of such publications
appeared during the period from 1960 - 1980 except two studies, which were published by Bodding (1921). Bodding studied the Santals in India and it appeared with the title ‘Kharwar Movement among the Santhals’. Notable contribution to the study of religion was made by Vidyarthi (1961), who meticulously explored the Hindu temple of Gaya as a sacred complex following the framework of Redfield and Singer’s concept. In the study of Gaya Vidyarthi evaluates its changes through history as one of vital dimensions of Indian civilization.

Vidyarthi (1962) and Harper (1964) edited two books on religion, which have great anthropological value. In Harper’s book entitled Religion in South Asia, various approaches to the study on religion from anthropological point of view have been elaborated. Aspects of Religion in Indian Society (1962), which is edited by Vidyarthi, includes articles on various dimensions of tribal and peasant religion of different communities of India. Bharati (1965) explored painstakingly the tantric tradition of India. Bouguet’s (1966) book Oroan Religion and Customs had contributed considerably towards the study of religion in India. Over the years, sociologists were concerned with the issue of tribal movements in India, a special theme of interest came with publication of two edited volumes by Singh. The theme of the tribal movement has become a part of general social movement (Singh, 1982; 1983). Inspired by Vidyarthi’s study, Jha (1971, 1973, 1974), Sinha (1972), Chakraborty (1974), Mahapatra (1974), Narayan (1974), Sahay (1974), Sahay (1974), et al., made studies on sacred complexes in different
prominent religious centres of India. Sinha and Saraswati (1970) had examined the roles of *sadhus*, different sects, etc, in Kashi. Sinha (1974) explored different dimensions of Kalighat temple of West Bengal. Dube’s (1977) *Tribal Heritage of India* is one of the prominent works where he meticulously described the life ways of a few tribes including their religions. Man (1983) had examined *The Andaman Islanders* evaluating their socio - religious life in a very interesting manner.

Medhi (1980) is an eminent anthropologist who had studied the beliefs, rituals, etc., integral to the Pati Rabhas, a sub tribe of the Rabhas. In 1981, he had examined the concept of malevolent spirits among the Pati Rabha population of Assam. In 1982 he had evaluated beliefs, in 1983 he had examined the tuterary god Langa, and in 1984 he had delineated about the snake goddess Marai of the Pati Rabha. He also examined about the supernaturals (1985) among the Pati Rabhas of Assam in the year 1986. In his article ‘Rituals Connected with Birth among the Karbis’ Medhi (1988) had examined the beliefs integral to birth among the Karbis of Assam. Medhi is the initiator of the systematic study of the Assamese Sikhs, a minuscule community of Assam. In his unpublished thesis entitled *The Assamese Sikhs: Their Social Relation in a Rural Context of Assam*, (1990), he had elaborately described about the synthesis of religion of the Assamese Sikhs. In the year 1992 and 1993, Ali and Medhi examined the Assamese Sikh society and their religion in the rural context of Assam. Medhi
and Marak (2005) have examined the belief system integral to child rearing practices among the matrilineal Garo tribe of Assam.

Medhi and Sharma (2008) had examined the ethno–medicinal practices of Assam in relation to the belief system of these people. ‘Concept of Jagannatha among the Assamese Hindus’ (2009) is a thought provoking narration of Medhi where he delineated the concept of Lord Vishnu as Jagannatha in Assam. This stalwart anthropologist along with Choudhury (2009) studied megalithic tradition of the Karbis of Assam with its religious significance. In the year 2012 Medhi wrote on the religious life of the Assamese Sikhs. Medhi with Talukdar (2012) had examined the different dimensions of Umananda temple of Guwahati, Assam. Medhi and Goswami (2014) and Medhi and Thaosen (2014) wrote about festival among the Hmar and the Dimasha tribes, respectively, where the religious flavour of both the tribes are conspicuous. Medhi and Medhi’s (2014) article ‘Preservation of Plants among the Assamese Hindus through Pristine Religious System’ depicts the process of Hindu religion among the Assamese caste population through which some of the sacred plants are preserved in this remote part of India. ‘Advent of Vaishnavism in an Animistic Environ: The Case of the Deoris of Assam’ is a meticulously written paper of Medhi and Bhuyan (2015), where the process of acceleration of Vaishnavism without systematic effort towards a tribal society is well depicted.

Mittal discusses the religion and festivals of the Santals and also how and by what means they are preserving their identity in the midst of industrialization,
urban impact and environmental changes. Mittal’s (1988) study on ‘Awareness of Tribal Identity and Religions in the Industrial Environment’ is an attempt to focus on the identity issues of the tribal in the wake of industrialization. He shows how religion keeps the Santal social solidarity despite physical disperses in the changing social - economic situation. Mittal visualizes how the worship of the deceased ancestors helped immensely the Santals to keep the cohesiveness among the fellow members of the tribe in every aspect of the life.

Samanta and Nandy (1988) in their study entitled ‘The Pluralistic Nature of Religions among the Tribes of India’ reveals that the tribal in India stand at various stages of belief system ranging from animistic faith to the followers of complex religious faith. Hence, their attachment to the tradition and pristine cultures seem to be reflected on their notion of preserving social systems in spite of various levels of modern exposure and development. Fuchs (1992) provides some description of the religious beliefs of the tribes of different regions of the country including the hill tribes of North East India. He has mentioned about the religious aurora of some tribes of the southern part of the country also. In his last analysis, Fuchs stated that the ‘tribal are still reluctant to give up their tribal identity completely and to completely emerge in the majority communities. But there is a third group, which looks for another alternative in the hope of saving their tribal identities and independence’.

Deogankar (1992) gives a description of tribals of Himalayan ranges and concludes that ‘in a way of tribal religions is secular in content as it is universal
so far as the objects of worship like nature and forefathers are concerned. Their festivals are an expression of the vigorous and enthusiasm overflowing from their community life’. In the year 1998, a volume on tribal movement was published under the title *Tribal Situation of India Series (Series 1)*. Mahapatra (2000) studied the changing religion and world view of some Indian tribes. In Rao’s publication entitled ‘Social Movement in India’ four studies on religious movements have been included, but those are not on tribal religion. However, in the *Tribal Studies of India Series* (T - 151) there appeared four papers on tribal religions. These are ‘The Religion of Indian Tribes’ by Fuchs, ‘The Pluralistic Nature of Religions among the Tribes of India’ by Samanta and Nandy, ‘Awareness of Tribal Identity and Religion in the Industrial Environment’ by Mittal and ‘Tribal Religion and Festivals’ by Deongankar. Rao (2002) Indeed, tribal movement in India is not a new phenomenon, it is as old as other types of movement. The tribal were in a position to confront with the country native Hindu lords as well as the British colonists.

The Britishers were aware of the pivotal role of anthropology in administration. So they started a curriculum in the London University. In undivided Assam, initiatives are taken by British administrators and the Christian missionaries to explore the different dimensions of the society and culture. Therefore, they made it mandatory for those persons who had to work among the various communities of isolated areas to go through a condensed course of anthropology in the Cambridge and Oxford universities. Rajkhowa (1976:11) in
‘Assamese Popular Superstitions and Assamese Demonology’, writes:
‘…………….I must also refer to the British policy of tribal administration and about the administrator scholars who were the pioneers in writing about tribal life and anthropological knowledge opened the gate for our entry into World Anthropology. It is through their publications that some of our tribal groups were known to anthropologists outside our country’. Inspired by them some of the local scholars also started writing about the society and culture of different tribal groups of North East India. Stack and Lyall (1908) have explored different aspects of Mikir (Karbi) society. Playfair (1909, reprinted in 1975), was the first to examine the Garos a matrilineal tribe of Meghalaya. Endle (1911) in The Kacharies highlighted the life of the Kacharis including their religion. Hodson’s (1911) Nagas of Manipur is one of the worth mentioning anthropological documentations. Shakespear (1912), Gordon (1914), and Dunbar (1913) have examined the Lushai Kuki clan of Lusai Hills (now Mizoram), the Khasis of Khasi hills and Jaintia Hills (now Meghalaya), and the Abors (Adis) of NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh), respectively, which are mentionable ethnographic works.

Hutton systematically evaluated the turbulent Angami Nagas (1921) and Sema Nagas (1921) and Mill (1926) examined the Ao Naga society. Mill’s (1926) The Ao Nagas is a milestone in initial examination of the tribal communities of North East India. The Purums of Manipur of Das (1945) is a pioneering work, which has contributed to our existing knowledge of the tribal
populations of North East India. Furer - Haimendorf’s (1974) *Ethnographic Notes on the Tribes of Subansiri Region* is one of this extreme thought provoking works which brought to light the dimensions of the tribal life of this part of India. His other mentionable explorations are *The Apatanies and their Neighbours* (1962), *Return of the Nacked Nagas* (1976) and *A Highlanders of Arunachal Pradesh* (1982). Barua (1960), Sharma (1961), Singh (1962) and Srivastava (1962) examined the Idu Mishmi, Sherdukpen, Aka and the Gallong society of Arunachal Pradesh, respectively.

Bhattacharyya (1962) compiled 39 articles written in Assamese by different scholars on various aspects including religion of some tribal groups of undivided Assam. The devoted anthropologist Elwin presents a chapter (1964: 209 - 222) in his book *A Philosophy for NEFA* entitled ‘Religious Aims in NEFA’, where he meticulously delenated intricate structure of religion of the various tribal groups of the region. Saikia (1964), Barkataki (1967), and Chaudhury (1969) have examined different tribal societies of North East India exploring their religious universes, Elwin’s *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (1969) is a hallmark in the methodical study of tribal universe of North East India. Syamchaudhury (1973) *et al.*, examined various components of the cultures of a couple of tribes of this remote part of India, Hagzer (1974), Pandey (1974), Saikia (1964), Teron (1974), and All Assam Yuva Chatra Parishad (1975) have evaluated the social and religious life of the Dimasas, Hill Miris, Deuri - Chutias, Karbis, and the Tiwas, respectively, of this sentinel region India.
Goswami and Kamkhenthing (1976) have evaluated the role of ritual experts in the traditional society of the Paite tribe. Dutta (1978), Kumar (1978, 1979), Saigal (1978), Bhattacharyya (1982), Bordoloi (1984, 1987), Sharma Thakur (1985), et al., have examined different communities of North East India and their various socio-religious traits.

A number of studies have been made on the socio-religious life of the Adis. The British officials and the anthropologists in the pre-independence era wrote monographs on many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA). These monographs provide basic information about their social and cultural life including religion. However, after the post-independence period, further extensive works on the tribes of North East India have been done related to historical and socio-cultural systems. Government officials of Arunachal Pradesh, those who engaged in Arunachal Pradesh administration, officials of Anthropological Survey of India, anthropologists, academicians, social activists and cultural leaders took initiative in that area to prepare books and monographs in this sphere of interest. Some of the prominent publications are Furer–Haimendrof’s Religious Beliefs and Ritual Practices of the Minyong Abors (1954), Elwin’s Philosophy for NEFA (1959), Roy’s Aspects of Padam Minyong Culture (1960), Srivastava’s The Gallongs (1962) and Social Organizations of the Minyong (1990), Bhatthacharjee’s The Myths of the Shimmong of Upper Siang (1965), Chaudhury’s A Comparative History of Adi Religion (1971), Arunachal Panorama and Arunachal Through the Ages (1982), and Mibang’s

Elwin (1964:209) observed that, ‘religious systems in NEFA have fundamental values and qualities. There is a general belief in a supreme God who is just benevolent and good. Donyipolo the principal God of all the Adis, is regarded as the great witness in the sky and the upholder of the truth. The tribal religion is built up on the pedestal of elaborate mythology. The tribes of NEFA have their own philosophy of religion, even though it is expressed in poetic or metaphysical form; the tribal religion is a genuine emphasis on the spiritual realities behind the everyday life, the belief in circumambient unseen world; tribal religions are associated with social ethics that unites the tribes in its discipline and make for a certain nobility of conduct. The great tribal values are discipline, devotion to work, hospitality, truth, kindness, etc.; tribal religion gives the people the power to reconcile themselves to the external energies of life’.

Working on the religion of Arunachal Pradesh, Roy (1960:235) observed, ‘In the sphere of religion, fundamental beliefs go back to the dawn of civilization. All objects around them were to them as animate as themselves, they lived in a world where everything was living with invisible spirits presiding on them. Animatism, animism and supernaturalism come to be ingredients of Adi religion’. In A Comparative Study of Adi Religion, Chaudhury (1971) attempts to evaluate the relationship of Adi concept of universe, its origin and the concepts of the sun and the moon and sacrificial rituals with those of Vedic concepts and
meanings. He does not find much difference between the Adi concepts and the Vedic concepts of these phenomena. Chaudhury (1971:32) states, ‘In the naturally constructed horizon of the Adi theology, we should not possibly hope to encounter any concept approaching the Vedic idea of the dual duties always in conjunction - Sedi, the earth, and Melo, the sky, is found among the Adis. That is the theology concept of the Adi tribe emerged out of the natural environment in which they have been living’.

Rukbo (1985:2), a leading leader of the Donyipolo movement, asserted that, ‘Donyipolo can stand as a religion as any other religion of the world. It is the tradition of vast mythology with all its mundane and supernatural elements, the tradition based on this mythology has given a moral purpose over life on this earth with the ultimate salvation after this life. This mythology can be interpreted at two levels - materials and spirituals’. At the material level, Donyipolo is a combination of two terms – Donyi and Polo, and these two physical and material objects, particularly the Donyi is the source of power and energy of living being which cannot be disputed scientifically or philosophically. This mysterious aspect of physical supremacy of Donyipolo over this universe transforms into spiritual aspect and the entity of physical Donyipolo is totally lost. In other words, Donyipolo is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Under the manifold power of Donyipolo, all living being exist and survive, all religions of the world prosper. It becomes a synthesis symbolizing a spiritual source of truth,
justice, beauty, morality, love and goodness. Thus Donyipolo, the spiritual source and symbol, is believed to be the supreme power.

Mibang (1994:17) opines that, ‘The religion of the Minyong, a sub tribe of the Adis, believe in the existence of a supernatural being, who is all powerful, omnipotent and whose existence is even beyond the reach of modern science and technology. Everything that exists in the universe is existing through Him (supernatural being). He is called Donyipolo, the Hindu called Him Bhagawan, the Muslim called Him Allah, while the European called Him God. The physical celestial body, the sun and the moon, are also called Donyipolo by the Minyongs. In wider connotation, Donyipolo is the common spiritual authority of the Adis’.

Nyori (2002:5) writes,‘All forms of indigenous faiths, beliefs and practices, which are found among the Adis, constitute their religion and now the religion is designated as Donyipoloism - a name which has been derived from the recognition of Donyi – polo, the confirmed divine figure of Donyi (the sun) and polo( the moon) as their popular gods’. Taipodia’s (2002) Donyipoloism – A Way of Life, reveals important illustrations on the religious faith and philosophy of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. The origin of the concept of Donyipolo and the evolution of the Donyipoloism as a religious system, emergence as a movement and the present state of the movement are among the Tani groups. Rikam (2005) states about the philosophy of Donyipolo and justify that like any other religious system in the world, Donyipoloism has also its own philosophy which emphasize on truth, justice, love, compassion and solace for all human race. He concluded
that Donyipoloism is an indigenous belief system symbolizing the indigenous faith and culture of the Tani group. Intellectuals and prominent writers of tribal origin of Arunachal Pradesh discussed the spiritual, philosophical and functional aspects of Donyipolo religion and contributed significant materials in form of books, articles, newspaper reports, public discourses, leaflets and in seminar discussions. Although this review is not an exhaustive and can provide all the studies on Adi and Minyong religion, yet it can give a clear cut idea about the religious universe of the Adis including the Minyongs.

1.3 The Land and the People

North East India, which is officially called North Eastern Region, (NER), is located in the eastern most region of India. North East India is the home land of a large number of tribes. It comprises of eight states Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. This region shares international border with Bangladesh in the southwest, Bhutan to the northwest, China (Tibet Region) in the north and Myanmar in the east. The region comprises an area of 262,230 sq km, and 8.0 per cent of India. The total population of North East India constitute 25.81 per cent of the tribes. There are 145 tribal communities of which, 78 are larger, each with a population of more than 5,000. 12 per cent of the total populations of India are constituted around by the tribal.

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in the northeastern extremity of the Indian continent, the boundary of which is demarcated by the McMohan line and the
The mountains of Arunachal Pradesh receive the first sunrays in the morning and announce the day break for the whole country. The territory of the state covers an area of 83,743 sq km. of lofty mountain terrains. It is the largest state in North East India lying roughly between the latitudes 26°28' N and 29°30' N and the longitudes 91°30' E and 97°30' E, and its capital is at Itanagar. The entire area lowers over the plains of Assam in the shape of a horse shoe.

Shanker (1988:2) writes, ‘The well known term NEFA, short form of North East Frontier Agency of 1954, yield to Arunachal Pradesh in 1972 when it was renamed by its own people’. The history of the administration of the area may be traced back to the government of India’s Notification of 1914. Prior to 1972, the area was popularly known as North - East Frontier Agency (NEFA) comprising five districts; Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap, named after the major rivers flowing through each of the district. Arunachal Pradesh has attained the status of state through different stages of political and administrative developments. The whole territory has been now divided into twenty one districts for effective administration and meaningful development. Here live some twenty six major tribal groups, broadly Indo - Mongoloid racially with distinct and varied culture, language, custom, religion and so on.

Arunachal Pradesh is the homeland of about twenty six major tribes divided into a number of sub tribes. As per 2011 census the total population of Arunachal Pradesh is 1,383,727 of which male and female are 713,912 and 669,815, respectively, and scheduled tribe population forms 64.2 per cent of the
total population. The density of the population has been recorded as 17 persons per sq km in 2011 as the area of the state is mostly uneven and covered with hills, forests, springs, rivers, etc. In the North East India as well as in the country it is the lowest population density. The Minyongs, which is one of the major tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, forms about 8.6 per cent of the total scheduled tribe population of the state. According to Singh (1995), the major contributors to the great association of tribes of the territory are:

(a) The Adi inhabit in the Siang valley districts comprises of 15 sub - groups, viz., Ashing, Bori, Bokar, Galo, Karko, Komkar, Milang, Minyong, Ramo, Padam, Pasi, Panggi, Pailibor, Shimong, Tangom, along with the Membas and the Khambas.

(b) The Mishimi having three sub - groups, viz., Idu Mishimi, Digaru or Taraon Mishimi, and Miju or Khamau Mishimi. The Idu and Digaru Mishimi along with the Adis lives in the Dibang valley. While the Khampti, Khamiyang, Singpho, Zakhering or Meyor and the Chakmas are at Lohit district.

(c) The Monpa having six sub groups namely – But Monpa, Chug Monpa, Dirang Monpa, Kalaktang Monpa, Lish Monpa and the Tawang Monpa, live in the western most part of Arunachal Pradesh. The Tawang district is inhabited by Tawang Monpa and while the rest of the Monpa, Sherdukpen, Aka, Khowa, Miji, Bangin and the Sulung are in the East and West Kameng districts.
(d) The Apatani, Nyishi, Hill Miri, Tagin, Sulung and the Nah are resided in the Upper and Lower Subansiri districts.

(e) The inhabitants of Trap district are the Nocte, Wancho, Tangse and the Lisu.

(f) The whole Changlang district is inhabited by the Tangsas. The Tangsas have 18 sub-groups, namely – Hacheng, Havi, Jugli, Kimsing, Lungchang, Langching, Lungphi, Logri, Muklom, Mungrey, Mossang, Pongthai, Ronrang, Sangwal, Sangkeng, Tikhak, Thamphang and Yongkuk. Other tribes like Singphos, Deoris, Lisus, Chakmas are also found.

Out of the total population of India as per the Census Report of 2011, 1,210,193,422; 1,382,611 souls are found in Arunachal Pradesh, out of which 9,51,821 are scheduled tribes. There are some features common to all of them even though each of the tribe has its own socio-cultural and socio-economic pattern, religious beliefs and practices, and distinctive languages.

Arunachal Pradesh has different geo-morphological and geo-climatic setup compare to that of the other states of India. The climate is extremely cold in higher altitudes while it is very humid in the lower altitudes and the valleys. The altitude varies from 100 to 7,000 meter. The greatest gift nature has endowed on Arunachal Pradesh is the forest. Gansser (1964:227) writes, ‘Geographically, the Eastern Himalayan range of Arunachal from the eastern border of Bhutan through the gorge of Tsangpo (Dihang) up to the syntaxial bend in the Mishimi
hills lies entirely with in Tibet and Assam’. The rugged terrain has snowbound peaks, deep river gorges, swift flowing streams, and river valley flats. Dutta (1988:55) opines, ‘Forest is the highest revenue yielding income source of Arunachal government’. The entire state is covered with a dense evergreen forest; gradually these yield to broad leafed evergreen forests and in the foot hills deciduous to semi - evergreen forests are grown forest. Total area under the forest is 51,549 sq. km of which 11,934.75 are reserved forest. The forests consist of numerous species of trees, flowering plants as well as ferns, every tree is a host to several kinds of epiphytes and climbers. The various species of orchids have so far been discovered. Numerous species of Rhododendrous with riot colour of hues of red, yellow and white are found gregariously on the slopes of the mountains. In the state mainly due to the mountains and variation of altitudes there is no plant except perpetual covering of snow.

The 61,000 sq km of the territory of Arunachal Pradesh is covered with forest, which is an important source of revenue for the state. In forest product such as bamboo, cane and timber the state is rich. Three types of forest are found in Arunachal Pradesh, namely tropical, temperate and alpine. Singh (1971) in India - A Regional Geography, writes that the flora and fauna of the province vary with the climate and soil. The forest types range tropical evergreen in the foothills, in the middle range temperate evergreen, coniferous in the higher elevation and the high Himalayas in the extreme north. The forests are rich for its abundant medicinal plants. These forests consist of numerous species of trees
chiefly belonging to the families - *Anacardiaceae, Clusiaceae, Euphorbiaceae, Lauraceae, Magnoliaceae, Moraceae, and Transtroemiaceae*. Various kinds of amphibians, birds, common fishes, mammals and reptiles are found. The most abundant mammals bound here are large Indian civet (*Viverra zibetha linnaeus*) and the spotted lingsang (*Priandon pardincolour hadgron*) are found. The jungle cat (*Felis chauss guldentaedt*) and leopard (*Panthera pardus*) are very common. In the foot hills area, elephant (*Elephas maximus linnaeus*) and jackal (*Canisaureous linnaeus*). The wild bear (*Susscrofa linnaeus*), barking deer (*Muniaicus mantjak*), sumbar (*Cervus unicolour kerr*) and wild boar, wild goat, wild buffalo, leopard, tiger, etc. are also found in and around the cultivable land covered by the grassy and bushy jungles. In mineral resources the state is very rich. Among such mineral found are like dolomite, quartzite, graphite, limestone, coal, marble, oil, natural gas etc.

The yak is common domestic animal in higher regions of Arunachal Pradesh. In the Tirap and Changlang districts one of the great apes, the gibbons, are found. The most important among the animals which plays an important role in the socio - cultural life of the people is, a semi - domesticated animal, the mithun (*Bos frontalis*). Different types of birds, species of babblers, warblers, and chats are found in the lowland alluvial grassy and marshy areas. Some commonly found birds in fruiting groves are game birds such as jungle fowl, hornbills, cuckoo, fly catcher, bee - eater, jungle fowl, eagle, dove, hawk, wood peeker, sand pipers, ducks and imperial pegions. The famous hornbill deserves a
special mention. The wild buffalo (*Bubalus*) occurs mostly in the plain areas along river banks. Both aquatic and semi aquatic, arboreal and terrestrial, reptiles and amphibians, are available. In the rivers and rivulets all most all types of common species of fishes, viz., craps, snow trout, loaches, climbing porch and snake headed types are found. Among the three varieties of game fishes which are of commonly found are red, brown and the golden. Among the reptiles a large number of poisonous varieties of snake are found in the region and they are the viper, kraits, cobra, etc., and various amphibious, species of frog and toad. Common insects like moths butterflies, bees, ants, flies, sand flies, dragonflies, beetle, etc.

Most of the areas in the Arunachal Pradesh roaming within the range of 1,524 meter altitude experience some snowfall and alternate rainfall showers. Important rivers passing through the state are Dibang, Dihing, Kameng, Lohit, Siang, Subansiri, Tawang and Tirap. The foothills and plains of Lohit, Dihing, and Tirap districts are comparatively thickly populated where as, in the mountainous terrain small scattered settlements are found. In the foothills the temperature plummets from $40^0$ and plains to $30^0$ in the higher altitudes. Arunachal Pradesh has only two seasons, namely, rainy and winter. With the annual average rain fall ranging from 300 to 400 cm the state falls in the heavy rain fall zone of the country. The rain starts as early as April and continues almost till October. According to Elwin, ‘the rain comes down all through the year, breaking the Indian rule of hot, cold and rainy seasons’ (cited in
Choudhury, 1973:13). Communication between some areas of the state is completely disrupted during the monsoon, because of often landslide. The communication by air also depends on the weather.

Twenty six per cent of the total cultivated area forms of irrigated area of about 1,33,430 hectare. In Arunachal Pradesh, nearly 96 per cent of the total population is engaged in agriculture. *Jhum* or shifting, and terrace cultivation, are practiced by the majority of the people but settled farming are becoming increasingly popular. Under *jhum* cultivation total of 56,270 hectre have been brought. Jha (1988) in his book entitled *Socio Economic and Demographic Dimension of Arunachal Pradesh* has stated that the people of Arunachal Pradesh are today politically more conscious. Gradually money economy being replaced their age old barter system. Here material culture has met with tremendous changes, and the tribals are joining the national main stream enmasse. Permanent cultivation is being replaced the traditional method of shifting cultivation. The village priests are invariably playing the role of ritual performers as well as healers. Now also the priest play role in the religious universe of the Adis, although the revivalistic movement among them created limitations in their activities. As the healers also their role became limited because the changing environment of the Adis including the Minyongs encouraged them to take the help of the modern physician to cope with their disease and ailments and only in the cases of some of the disease, particularly to the supernatural possessions, etc., they seek help from the local priests. In a nut shell, winds of change are blowing
softly in the economy of Arunachal Pradesh in all the sectors are growing in an integrated manner.

The McMohan line and Lakhimpur district of Assam lie on the north. Lying between the Nishi hills on the west and the Dibang river which borders on Mishimi hills on the east, the extensive Adi hills of East, Upper, Siang and West Siang districts covers 18,518 sq km. The names of the districts of East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh have been commonly derived from the river name Siang. The history of formation of these districts as administrative units may be traced back to the year 1914, when the areas occupied by the present East Siang and West Siang districts were a part of the administrative division called Central and Eastern Sections, North - East Frontier Tract. In 1919, this division was redesignated as the Sadiya Frontier Tract, which was, in 1948, bifurcated into two separate administrative charges called the Abor Hills District and the Mishmi Hills District. In 1954, the Abor Hill District came to be known as the Siang Frontier Division, which in turn was renamed as the Siang District in 1965. Under the provisions of the Arunachal Pradesh (Re-organisation of Districts) Act, 1980 (Act No. 3 of 1980) coming into force from June 1, 1980, the Siang District has been divided into two administrative units, namely the East Siang District and the West Siang District, each under the charge of a Deputy Commissioner (Dutta Choudhury, 1994).

In 1999, the Upper Siang district was formed when it was split from East Siang district. Siang district is the 20th newly created district of Arunachal
Pradesh. By bifurcating West Siang and East Siang districts these new districts was created of Arunachal Pradesh consisting of 32 – Rumgong - Kaying and 35 – Boleng - Pangin Constituencies. It comes into existence on 27th November 2015. Siang is the homeland of the Adis and some other small tribal groups. The indigenous population of the area is almost wholly constituted by different Adi groups. Besides the Adis, there in Siang valley: East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Siang district, live various other groups of people, who have come from different parts of India in connection with government services, trade and business, etc. Siang also forms a natural abode like other areas of Arunachal Pradesh for very many species of orchids of surpassing horticulture value. The Botanical Survey of India has collected about 74 species of fern from this district. From this region several species of algae, liverworts and mosses have been collected.

It has been already stated the name of the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh have been derived from the river name Siang, known in Tibet as Tsangpo, the Siang also called as Dihang in Assam. Good number of rivers and streams are there in Siang. The major rivers are Siang and Siyom. Generally the rivers flow in a north - south direction and being the river artery Siang constitutes the main drainage system. The principal river of this region, enters the Indian territory in West Siang through the main Himalayan watershed east of Gelling. The river flows through the entire length of East Siang in its southward course until it descends into the plains of Assam, south of Pasighat, where it meets the
Dibang and Lohit, and then in a great confluence goes by the name of Brahmaputra. The Siang is revered as ‘father’ (abu) by the people. The East Siang district with its headquarters at Pasighat is bounded by the West Siang district on the north and west, by the Dibang valley district on the east, and by Dhemaji district of Assam on the south. The East Siang district with its headquarters at Pasighat, is situated at 261 kms away from Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, which is located in between 27°30' to 29°42' North latitude and 94°42' to 95°35' East longitude. Pasighat is well connected by road, rail and air routes from places like Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Itanagar, Jonai and Lakhimpur. The climate varies significantly from place to place, owing to the mountainous terrain of Siang, depending upon the elevation and exposure to the sun. Temperature raises to maximum in July and August are warmest and falls to a minimum in December and January are coldest, which ranges from 30.8°C to 12.2°C, respectively. The nature of terrain mainly influenced the wind circulation, which gives rise to various type of local wind. Winds blowing through mountain gaps emerge out as strong current. Annual rain fall here varies from 400 cm to 1000 cm.

An area of 3603.00 sq km has been covered by the East Siang district. Inhabited by 99,214 persons, according to the 2011 census, of whom 50,116, 10.72 per cent are male and 49,098, 16.53 per cent are female. The density of population per sq km is nearly 28 persons. There are 18,858 houses in the district. Among them the major tribes are the Minyong, Padam, Pasi, etc. For
administrative purpose, the East Siang is district divided into three sub divisions, namely, Mebo, Nari and Ruksin, which are further divided into 8 administrative circles. The circles are Bilat, Koyu, Kora, New Seren, Nari, Namsing, Sile-Oyan, and Yakrung. According to 2011 census, as regards literacy, 62,576 persons are literate in the district, out of which 34,210 are male and 28,366 are female. The literacy rate of the district in 2011 has gone up to 72.54 per cent from 60.73 in 2001. The literacy rates of the male and female in the district are 78.47 per cent and 66.49 per cent, respectively. This shows that literacy rate increased significantly during the decade.

As a water source, small streams are also available. For irrigation purpose also the water of the river and its tributaries are also being utilized. Natural resources like river, spring, small stream, etc., are providing available water in most of the villages in the state. Other than these, the entire length of the river Siang is flowing throughout district along with its tributaries, also providing drinking water. The major problem in the district is intra-district communication. Pasighat, as regard to inter-districts communication, the district head quarter, is well connected by in all weather. Some of the areas are yet to be connected by road. Regular bus service of the state transport, private buses and Sumo services are flying to and fro from Itanagar, the state capital. Only two markets is available in the district and that is located in the district head quarter and Ruksin Sub Division.
The Adi, who form the subject matter of the present study, are hill people, constitute a major tribe in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. According to Dutta Choudhury (1994: 70), ‘The Adi is a blanket term which includes many sub tribes, ‘united by a language that in spite of dialect variation, is fundamentally everywhere the same, and by a similar culture and temperament’. The Adi principally inhabiting in the Siang valley of Arunachal Pradesh. Earlier, however, they were known to their neighbours in Assam as ‘Abors’. Siang district is inhabited by a number of tribes of which the Adi forms the most dominant group. The Adi tribe is composed of sub tribes - Ashings, Bori, Bokars, Gallongs, Karko, Komkar, Milang, Padams, Pasi, Panggi, Pailibar, Ramos, Shimongs, Tangom and Minyongs. The Minyong is a sub tribe of the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. They are concentrated over the Siang district and a part of the land between the Siang and the Yamne river of Arunachal Pradesh. Elwin (1966:66) described Siang as ‘One of the fascinating and exciting parts of NEFA’ and said, ‘the People are charming, hospitable, and filled with a zest for life: tribal institution still retain their vitality. It is a country of song and dance, of hard eager work, of fine spinning and weaving, where the rich and varied tapestry of NEFA is displayed’. The Minyong belong to the Mongoloid stock. The Minyong language comes under the Tibeto - Burman branch of the Sino - Tibetan family. The Minyong is a patrilineal tribe and live in pile houses constructed with bamboo, wood and palm leaves. They are agriculturalists and their day to day life is principally depend on jhum cultivation. Beside jhuming,
they also practice gathering, fishing, hunting and domestication of animal. Each Minyong girl is expert in weaving. Local disputes among them are generally solved through a social council (kebang) as per their pristine customary law. Traditionally they worship their forefathers and different deities reside in hills, fields, jungles, rivers, homesteads, etc. It is pertinent to note here that, religion is expressed through different components of a culture like beliefs, rituals, magic, mana, omen, taboo, fetish, sacrifice, divination, and so on and all these components are present in Minyong religion. (For details see chapter II)

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this endeavour are to:

(a) examine the pristine religion and the concept of Donyipolo among the Minyongs of study area;

(b) evaluate the presence of Donyipolo in their cyclic and crisis rites, and also in their beliefs, rituals, manas, taboos, etc.;

(c) highlight the household and community rituals integral to Donyipolo and temples and shrines for the deity;

(d) explore the steps taken by the Adis including the Minyongs for the continuity of the appeasement of their high god Donyipolo, through revivalistic movement.

1.5 Methodology

The researcher is a Mishing girl of Assam inhabiting in the border area of the state adjacent to Arunachal Pradesh. That area of Arunachal Pradesh is the
principal abode of the Adis and the major concentration of the Minyongs also found there. The weekly markets of the border areas are the meeting places of the different communities and in each week good number of the Adis come to sell and buy different goods there. From her childhood the researcher has seen the Adi people and nourished an attraction towards their life ways. It should be noted here that in the remote past the Mishings were also hill dwellers of Arunachal Pradesh and they were the integral part of the Adi tribe. For different reasons they have migrated to the plains of Assam and had adopted wet cultivation abandoning their pristine jhum cultivation. It is due to the geographical and cultural environments jhum cultivation is not possible in the plains areas and they also surrounded by the people who practiced permanent cultivation. The legends of the Mishings tell that once they were hill dwellers living in Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of the Adi tribe.

From her childhood the researcher also knows that the Adis worship Donyipolo as their high god; however, she had no idea about the features and characteristics of Donyipolo. Idolatry is not there in the Adi society and they do not perform any rituals or festivals integral to the appeasement of only Donyipolo. Basically to know about this god, who is the combination of two celestial bodies, the sun and the moon, this study has been undertaken.

The study was conducted in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Five Minyong villages were taken for study from different circles. The names of the villages are Boeing, Rani, Oyan, Sile and Todeng. The study is principally an
exploratory one, for which both qualitative and quantitative data are required. Moreover, both primary and secondary data have been collected for justification of the endeavour. For collection of secondary data meticulous library works have been conducted in and outside the state. Books, journals, newspapers, office records, internet sources, etc., are consulted to acquire the required secondary data.

Empirical data for this endeavour have been collected from the five study villages. The villages are situated within the range of 10 km and marital ties have bound the villages into a close socio-cultural unit. Beside marital tie the inhabitants are bounded by the village social council (kebang), the pristine institution of customary law, of the Adis. Common educational and health institutions also act as pivotal factors for binding the inhabitants of the study villages. The empirical data have been collected through observation method – both participant and non-participant, interview method - both open end and close end, interview method and case study method. Informal chattings also help the investigator to collect lots of data. The audio-visual equipments like camera, tape recorder, etc., also used in the collection of empirical data. The field work was conducted in different phases and the researcher stayed in the study villages during her field work. Due to staying in the field she could observe closely the day to day live of the Minyongs neatly, which also helped her to established a good rapport with the study people. The acquired data have been analyzed,
interpreted and distributed over five chapters knitted meticulously with secondary data and finally the conclusion was drawn.

It has been already stated that the study was conducted in the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, where overwhelming majority of the Adis are inhabited including the Minyongs. Among the sub-tribes of the Adis here are conspicuous socio-cultural and linguistic differences, therefore, only the Minyongs have been taken for the study, who are actively participating in the revivalism of the Donyipolo religion. From administrative point of view, the study villages are under different Development Blocks and under the jurisdiction of Oyan, Pasighat and Ruksin police stations of Pasighat. National Highway No. 52 bisects the district into two parts. The area where the field study was conducted falls in both the sides of the highway. Boeing village is situated about 2 km away from Pasighat and the villages Oyan 23 km, Rani 12 km, Sile 20 km and Todang 15 km away from Pasighat. The communication from Pasighat to these villages is quite good. Different varieties of Public vehicles are frequently plied from Pasighat to the villages.

It has been already stated that the data for the present study have been collected from five villages of East Siang district from different Blocks. All these villages are located in and around Pasighat, the head quarters of Siang district. These villages are more or less homogeneously inhabited by the Minyongs, and easily accessible by road and have good telecommunication network. The villages under study are inhabited by some converted Minyongs to Christianity,
which is the another important reason for selecting these villages. Some other important characteristics of the study villages are:

(a) Rani is, the largest Minyong inhabited village in the state,

(b) Boeing village is inhabited by the Minyongs migrated in various times,

(c) Sile is a heterogeneous village inhabited by the Minyongs and other sub -
groups of Adi tribe,

(d) Oyan is a heterogeneous village inhabited by the Minyongs and the other
    sub – groups of Adi tribe including the Mishing,

(e) Todang is a homogenous village, inhabited by the Minyongs only.

Villages situated in the Pasighat and Oyan Block areas have acquired many suburban characteristics. The area is more or less in a shouting distance from Pasighat headquarters, for which the area has imbibed many urban features. In the study area pattern of occupation is gradually changing and a sizable people have been engaged themselves in different non - traditional occupations which are not rooted in their home land; keeping these points in view informants for the present study have been selected carefully. Each head of the household following Donyipoloism became the respondents for the present study. It may be mentioned that there are a few families belonging to other sub - tribes of the Adi live in the study villages; they were also included in the purview of the present investigation. The Minyong villages maintain a close relationship with those households in their day to day life; even in their religious activities these households are included, and, therefore, these households are included in this
universe of study. The priest, the presidents and secretaries of Donyipolo Committees functioning at village level, Anchal (area) and district levels, resource persons, social activists, etc., are taken as key informants. Thus besides the selected respondents, this study incorporates the responses and views of many more persons of experience. Moreover, those persons who have suffered from some ailments, like possession by spirits and treated by the village medicine men, a good narrator who have recently observed some rites in his household, a parturient or newly mother, school student, village elder, housewife, teacher, youth, etc., are also taken as informants for the present endeavour.