CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Religion is a vital element present in every society which, generally goes through the process of evolution and acquires a complicated structure from its simple pristine stage. The Adi, a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, also have moved towards modernity, abandoning many elements of their traditional culture, and embracing many new traits from alien cultures. The Minyong, an indispensible sub – tribe of the Adi, has also changing conspicuously due to the different factors and forces. In the present endeavour entitled, ‘Aspects of Donyipolo among the Minyongs of Arunachal Pradesh’, an attempt has been made to highlight the pristine animistic religion of the Minyongs which was developed centering their high god Donyipolo, and gradually arranged into a Donyipolo religion, shaping their faith from polytheistic to more or less a monotheistic one.

In the foregoing chapters we have addressed to many questions integral to the religion of the Minyongs. In chapter 1, i.e., Introduction, the problem under study is delineated to have an idea about the study along with the review of literature, the land and the people, objectives of the study and methodology.

The second chapter entitled ‘The Minyong’, provides a detailed ethnography of this sub – tribe, where their history and migration, population, physical features, material culture, economy, social structure, religion and fairs
and festivals have been discussed. This chapter is principally based on secondary
data. Chapter III, i.e., ‘Religious Universe of the Minyong’, highlights the pristine
religious environ of this group of people and examines the man – spirits
relationship, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, religious activities integral to
crises rite, ritual experts, festivals and new trend of their religion. It has been
observed from the study that the Minyongs believe in a good number of
supernaturals and the malevolent deities. Generally they appease those
supernaturals to overcome a crisis, although some of the deities are annually
worshiped. The priest, both male and female, are the experts to propitiate deities.
The Minyongs do not have crystal clear idea about the gender, abode, attire, etc.,
of many of their supernaturals.

Chapter IV, i.e., ‘Aurora of Donyipoloism’, delineates some of the salient
features of their high god Donyipolo. Donyipolo is the combination of two
celestial bodies – the sun (Donyi), and the moon (Polo). The sun is believed by
the Minyongs as female and addressed by them as mother, while moon is a
masculine entity for them, and they address it as father. God Donyipolo is the
inseparable combination of sun and moon, and therefore, it is difficult to identify
this god as male or female. So the Minyongs address Donyipolo as father or
mother according to the context. However, the Minyongs, who profess their
pristine religion, believe that Donyipolo is omnipotent, omniscient and
omnipresent, and He is the Almighty. This chapter also examines how their
traditional religion is shaped abandoning some age old traits and including some
alien elements to make the religion acceptable to the present environment and also to provide obstacles to the present flow of conversion of their people in alarming rate to Christianity.

The Chapter V, i.e., ‘Donyipolo in the Folklore of Minyong’, tries to assess the presence of Donyipolo in folk songs, taboo, omen, divination, dream, etc. It has been revealed from the study that in the tales and proverbs the presence of Donyipolo is obscure. As traditionally the Minyongs are devoid of the idols and images of their gods and spirits, and in the folk literature also they are not vividly described, Donyipolo comes to their dream sometimes as young or old male or female of various ages in traditional garb of the Minyongs. This god is remembered more in crises than in the moments of happiness. In oath, ordeal, blessing or curse name of Donyipolo is respectfully uttered. In all their rituals and festivals Donyipolo is propitiated, but He is never appeased alone.

‘The Religion and Society of the Coorgs of South India’, written by stalwart Indian anthropologist M. N. Srinivas, first published in the year 1952, is taken as one of milestones in the study of religion. In that book his research guide Radcliffe Brown, an eminent anthropologist, wrote in Foreword: ‘The study of religion can be approached in many different kind of problem. For social anthropologist or for some of them, one major problem is that of the social function of the religion - how does religion contributed to the existence of the society as an ordered and continuing system of relationship among the human beings? It is recognized that religion is a binding force amongst the individual,
and it would seem that the etymology of the word indicates this. The scientific problem is how religion does this, how in other words it functions. The problem is one of very considerable complexity, and it cannot be said that at present we know very much about the subject. The only method by which we can hope ultimately to arrive at an understanding of it is by a number of analytic descriptive studies of religions of diverse type, so that by systematic comparison it may be possible to arrive at some general theory’ (1955: vii).

The religion of the Minyong has acquired a complicated structure adhering indispensable traits like Donyipolo as high god, belief in innumerable gods and goddesses, both male and female, some of which are appeased together as husband and wife, generally who do not have conspicuous separate entity, and therefore, making it difficult to address such a ‘combined god’ as a male or a female. They believe in a large number of supernaturals living in house, burial ground, forest, water source, hill, jhum filed, earth, etc., and the overwhelming number of these supernaturals are malevolent. The Minyongs have a traditional hierarchal status of these gods and spirits, and the acme position of this ladder is occupied by Donyipolo, who is believed by them as the supreme deity. Donyipolo is the authority of all the living and non – living things of the world, who is assisted by different deities according to their status and capacity. Donyipolo is the overall authority of the universe, and the other deities look after the household, jhum field, domestic animals, prosperity, etc., of human beings. The malevolent spirits stealthealy seek opportunities to do harm to the people;
however, the benevolent spirits also become violent and do harm if they are not satisfied. Therefore, periodical propitiations are conducted by the Minyongs to keep the friendly relation to all these supernaturals.

Not to speak about the physical features, dress and ornaments, etc., of the supernaturals, the Minyongs even do not have transparent idea about the gender of many spirits. The Minyongs believe that disease and misfortunes are caused by the spirits. When a person is suffered from any kind of disease, they approach a priest, the connoisseur of the supernatural world, who detect the responsible spirit through divination, generally by examining the liver of a chicken. Then the priest advises the victim to propitiate the spirit. Sacrifice of chicken, pig, etc., and offering of ginger paste, egg and rice beer are essential in such appeasements.

Priesthood is not hereditary or attains through election or selection among the Minyongs. It is believed by them that with the transparent knowledge of their spiritual world and integral rituals a man or woman can acquire priesthood. Till to the recent past the Minyongs do not have script or written records. At present they have adopted Roman script to record their folk and modern literature. They have a folk verse (abang) to appease the supernatural, which have been collected and published in the year 1991 as Angun Bedang, although till today all the verses known as abang are not included in the book. It deserves mention that the language to appease the supernaturals are conspicuously different from the day to day language of the Adis including the Minyongs. Therefore, any member of the
society can not utter those verses and for the appeasement of gods and goddesses anyone has to depend on the priest. The Minyongs believe that the priest generally receives the power to please and control the gods and spirits through dreams.

In almost all the religions, god is a male entity, who is originated by himself; in those religions god has no beginning and end. However, in the religion of the Minyongs, Donyipolo is a dual entity, composed of a goddess and a god, and surprisingly created by Sedi Melo, who is also a combination of a god and a goddess. In all the steps of life Donyipolo is remembered, but He is not appeased in household rituals, and even there is no community rituals to propitiate this high god alone. However, He is appeased in crises and community rituals along with other gods and goddesses. There are 6 tribes in Arunachal Pradesh, viz., Adi, Apatani, Galo, Mishing, Nyishi and Tagin, who believe that they have originated from the mythological father Abutani, therefore, these tribes together referred to as Tani group. All these tribes appease Donyipolo as their high god. It has been already stated that the tribe Adi has been composed of fifteen sub – tribes including the Minyongs. There are language and cultural variations among these sub – tribes of the Adis, but all these groups worship Donyipolo as high god, although there are some variations in appeasement of the deity of one sub – tribe with that of the other sub – tribes.

Through a relentless system of conversion of the tribal people from their pristine religion to Christianity in North East India including Arunachal Pradesh,
created a turmoil in their societies making their social structure flaccid and dividing a society into two prominent sections – the animists and the Christians. To prevent the society from losing its traditional pedestal, Late Talom Rukbo tried to adorn their religion abandoning some pristine traits and including some alien elements to give it an acceptable shape. Due to the untiring effort of Late Talom Rukbo with some of the Adi intellectuals, in the year 1986, their traditional religion was moulded to the Donyipolo religion centering their high god Donyipolo. Traditionally the Adis do not have any shrine or temple to appease their supernaturals. In Donyipolo religion they have adopted community prayer house (gangging), where they appease this god on Saturday or Sunday through community prayer lighting candles and incense sticks and through the chorus of selected verses. In such prayer houses some other gods and goddesses are also propitiated. Traditionally no rituals and festivals of the Adis could be performed without sacrifices of animals and offering and consumptions of rice beer. However, in the community prayer houses it is strictly prohibited to perform sacrifice and to consume country liquor. In the vestry of the prayer house the image of Donyipolo and the deities, viz., Dadi Bote, Doying Bote, Gumin Soying, Kine Nane and Konki Komang are kept in a high pedestal. The priest of the community prayer house leads the prayer and after it sacred creeper (ridgin) is tied in the wrists of the devotees according to their gender and marital status. A Donyipolo flag is created, which keeps flying infront of the houses of each devotee who profess Donyipolo religion.
For the continuity of this new form of religion in the year 1986 an organization, viz., Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang (DYK) was created. DYK has been working with its youth and woman wings for enriching and continuing this new form of religion. Today, not only the Minyongs, the entire Adi tribe is united under the canopy of Donyipolo religion and have marched towards the desired goal acquiring strength and vigour from their new faith.