

“A Historical Study on hunting festivals of the Adis Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh”

¹ Prof. Ashan Riddi, ² Mr. Nuyu Mize

¹ Professor, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

² Ph. D. Research Scholar, Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar - 79111
Arunachal Pradesh, India. Email - ² nuyumiding@gmail.com

Abstract: *The Adis is one of the major tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh inhabiting in the Upper Siang, Siang, East Siang, Si-Yomi, Lower Dibang Valley and some pocket of Namsai districts of the Arunachal Pradesh. The Adis had rich old age traditional practices of hunting festival from generations to generations, hunting is one of the earliest occupations of the Adis community of Arunachal Pradesh and it remains as favourite pastime of the people and also important source of wealth but a means of livelihood. The Adis resort to hunting not only sport, game and fun but as a solid substitute for food. This has been practices from time immemorial. Even today hunting is practices most of the villages of Adis areas, though it's had socio-religious significant for the society. The Adis generally start practicing it from childhood. The elders teach the younger's to use of various weapons and traps, and the young are always eager to participate hunting parties whenever they get chance. The Adis hunt both individual and groups hunting. In individual hunting Apta-Geta, Edku-Eda, etc. and groups hunting are Dorung Kiruk and Pinne kiruk.*

Many authors and scholars attempted to trace the different types and impact of the hunting festival of Adis and discussed with different interpretations. But could not attempt to historical study on hunting festival of Adis, though it has socio-religious and economic significance. Thus, the present paper is a humble attempt to authenticate the origin and concept of hunting festival and its significance to impact on the society.

Key Words: *Festival, Hunting, Practices, Taboo, Traditional.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Adis are one of the major tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh inhabited in the 6 districts of Arunachal Pradesh viz. East Siang, Siang, Upper Siang, Si-Yomi, Lower Dibang Valley and some part of the Namsai Districts which occupied central part of the state. They had practices traditional old age hunting festival from generations to generations. Hunting was one of the earliest occupations of the Adis community and is remains as favourite pastime of the people and also important source of wealth but a means of livelihood. The Adis resort to hunting not only sport, game and fun but as a solid substitute for their food. This has been practice from time immemorial. Even today hunting is practices most of the villages of Adis depending on the agricultural cycles of the areas, though it's had socio-religious significant for the society. The Adis generally start practicing it from childhood. The elders teach the Younger's to use of various weapons and traps, and the young are always eager to accompany hunting parties whenever they get opportunities. The Adis hunt both individually and in groups. Young children are generally allowed to join group hunting parties for beating the forest. And they always carry bows and arrows.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To know the hunting practices associated with social and ritual ceremonies.
- To provide different types and preparation of hunting festivals of Adis in Arunachal Pradesh.
- To study the impact of hunting festival on socio-cultural and economic life of the people.

3. STUDY AREA:

The present paper study area is located in Arunachal Pradesh, It is situated in the extreme north-eastern tip of India, and so it is called 'the land of the rising sun.' It has long international boundaries is bounded by Bhutan on the west (160 km), china on the north and north-east (1,080 km), Myanmar on the east (440 km) and the state of Assam and Nagaland on its south. It is located between latitudes 26°-30' north and 29°-31' north and longitudes 91°-31' east and 97°-30' east. It covers an area of 83,743 Sq.km. It stretches from snow fall hills and numerous river stream that flow in the north to the plains of Brahmaputra valley in the south. In area-wise the state of Arunachal Pradesh is largest among the north east states. Itanagar is the capital of state and is located at an altitude of 530 meters above the sea level (MSL). At present state had 25 districts and out of these 25 districts, 6 districts are come under study areas and had dominated by Adis tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is basically empirical in nature, the historical data for present study attempted to introduce the readers to the subject matter and tried to explain the broad contexts of the research and outlined briefly the essentials of the research design. Under the research methodology the general sense a reference of both theoretical and empirical aspects of the field research is being highlighted. During field survey the historical data have been collected from both the primary and secondary sources have been utilized for the preparation of present research work. The secondary sources in the form of published materials like books, monographs, ethnographic report, articles, essays, survey report, research reports, field diaries, etc., had been consulted extensively. To collect primary sources, different archives have been surveyed. To corroborate the archival sources, extensive field work were conducted at different Adis inhabited villages. Research tools like interview and participant observation methods were employed to collect relevant data particularly on myths, legends, oral history, etc. knowledgeable person's viz. Miris (priest), orators, singers, kebang Abu (Goan Buras), panchayat leaders, and educated people of the Adis community have been selected as informants. Besides that modern research tools and gadgets like mobile phone, video camera has been used in field survey in documentation of field data.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

The term '*Kiruk*' is literally meaning 'hunting' in Adis language. Hunting was one of the earliest occupations of the Adi community and it remains as one of the favourite pastime of the people even today though in limited scale. Hunting, gathering and fishing seems to have continued in the area due to uncertainty of sufficient grains from the shifting cultivation and also as means dietary supplement. With the change of the society and progress of the domestication of animals, hunting has gradually changed from a means of livelihood into a form of entertainment and pastime. During the recent times, hunting although lost much of its economic importance but had a greater social significance. For Verrier Elwin remarks that, "hunting and fishing is something more than a search for food, it is a religious activity involving strict taboos, on the success or failure of a ceremonial hunt will depend the success or failure of the harvest, the horns of an animal, the bones of a big fish, are hung up in the hunter's house, and it is a taboo to desecrate them, before and after a hunt, offerings are made to the forest Gods."

5.1. THE MYTH OF ORIGIN:

The Adis have different myths and legend regarding hunting festivals. According to their myths, in ancient times there were two brothers, *Kari* and *Toro*, the son of *Sedi-Melo* (The sky and the earth). Who were very good hunters and lived on hunting. They died suddenly, and after their death, *Dongor* (first human being) came out, but he had no knowledge of hunting and so did not hunt. *Doying Angong Abu* (God of space) and *Siking Ane* (goddess of earth) asked *Dongor* why he did not hunt. They thereafter started hunting together and from that time onwards hunting has been practiced by the Adis.

Other version of the myths says that there had been a long struggle between *Nibo* (the man) and *Robo* (the spirit) who were brothers, for the possession of fertile land and other good lands suitable for human habitation. Ultimately *Nibo* emerged victorious and had occupied these lands and hunting grounds. From their ballads (abang), we learn that *Kari* and *Toro*, two sons of *Sedi-Melo* (the sky and the earth) were the first good hunters. Also, there were two other, great hunters i.e. *Nui* and *Gamroh* who lived in the underworld and came to help *Karduk* (young man) in hunting and killing a *Gumgo* (boar). Their ballads also narrate as how the first bow and arrow were made by the Adis.

Sachin Roy, stated that in his book, *Aspect of Padam-Minyong Culture*, "In ancient times, there were two brothers *Nui* and *Gamroh* who were great hunters. In order to kill wild boar, that destroyed the cultivation field, they started making different types of weapons. They found out a special type of bamboo which bends with weight. On cutting the bamboo into parts, they found two insects inside. With the help of a great craftsman, *Yokmo*, the insects were turned into a dog and a wild cat. The bow being properly fashioned, they started preparing arrows from split bamboos. They somehow got the information that poison trees grew in the north and were in the possession off the daughter of *Pedong-Nane*." With the help of a bird, they managed to collect some poison. The great smith prepared arrow heads of iron, which they made out of the nails of *Lingen Sobo*. With the help of a plant called *Talo*, they smeared the arrowhead with the poison. Thus, the human had gradually started after ready the entire hunting instrument and poison properly.

6. PREPARATION OF HUNTING FESTIVAL:

The Adis have done various types of preparation before hunting expedition, they are given below.

6.1. *Eyi* (Bows)

The term '*Eyi*' means bows in Adis language, Adis bows are simple, and made of a single piece of split bamboo. A straight bamboo piece is allowed to dry a little over a fire, when the stave is shaved down to the required thickness and shaped with the help of locally made knives. This stave is occasionally left to season above the hearth of the house

on the *Rapmeng* (A fire place for drying meat) a process which changes the green color to deep brown and maroon. The stave is not reinforced by any other material. The central portion of the stave is broad and almost flat. In section, the bow is markedly convex on the outer side and concave on the inner side. From the middle, it tapers slightly towards each end. At each end there is a shoulder or horn. There is ornamentation on the stave. At one end of the string, a loop is made which is semi circle permanently fixed in one of the horns of the stave, which is generally in the lower end; the other end of the string has a loop which is of sufficient length to slip down the other end but not beyond the limit of the horn of the stave.

The string is mounted on the stave only during use, so that the strength and elasticity is maintained. To string a bow, the lower end of the stave is rested on the ground, the top end being held in hand. The knee is pressed almost at the middle of the stave and the top of the stave is pressed down to receive the loop of the string. The knots at both ends of the string face inwards. Thus, bow is ready for use in hunting festival.

6.2. *Eyuk* (Arrows) The Adis arrows are prepared in two kinds:

Bamboo shaft with a bamboo head: A thin piece of bamboo is clean shaved; one end of this is pointed and hardened over the fire. The other end of the arrow is feathered by means of two strips of thin leaves. In the lower end of the shaft, a slit is made and two thin strips of cane leaf are inserted diagonally opposite one another. In order to keep the feather in position, this portion of the shaft is again tied by means of thread. There is a concave notch at the butt end of the arrow for fitting it on the bow string properly. These arrows are meant to kill birds during hunting.

Reed shaft with iron head and poison: the shaft is made of reed and feather is fixed as before but the head is made of iron. The iron head of the arrow is pointed and small. It is, however, barbed on two sides at the shank ending in a sharp point. The pointed tang of the head is inserted inside the shaft and is secured with thin cane strips. Poison is plastered on the shank of the arrow and for about 2cm. on the haft, over the cane strips tied round the place of insertion of the arrow-head in the shaft. The whole portion plastered with poison, is expected to go into the animal body, and even if it does not, a simple cut is enough to cause death to the animals. Hence, in these ways the Adis prepared their arrow and bows for hunting expedition during community and individual hunting.

6.3. *Gatbung* (Carrying case for arrows)

This is made out of a bamboo section, closed at one end, by the node, the open end being provided with a cover. On the outer side, a pocket made of cane strips plaited in hexagonal open work is provided for reserve store of the strings. The carrying case generally contains assorted arrows and its capacity varies from twelve to fifteen arrows. The carrying case is suspended by means of a string attached to it. The Adis hold their bow almost perpendicularly, gripping the stave at the middle with the left hand, the string towards the body. The arrow is held with the fingers of the right hand and is placed on left side of the stave, and rests on the index finger of the left hand. The string of the bow fits the notch of the arrow and the arrow butt is held in position by the thumb and the index finger. The string along with the arrow is fully drawn towards the body and released suddenly after taking proper aim. Only a slight pull is required to send the arrow with a great velocity. A good shot from an Adi bow will strike accurately at a distance of a hundred yards or more.

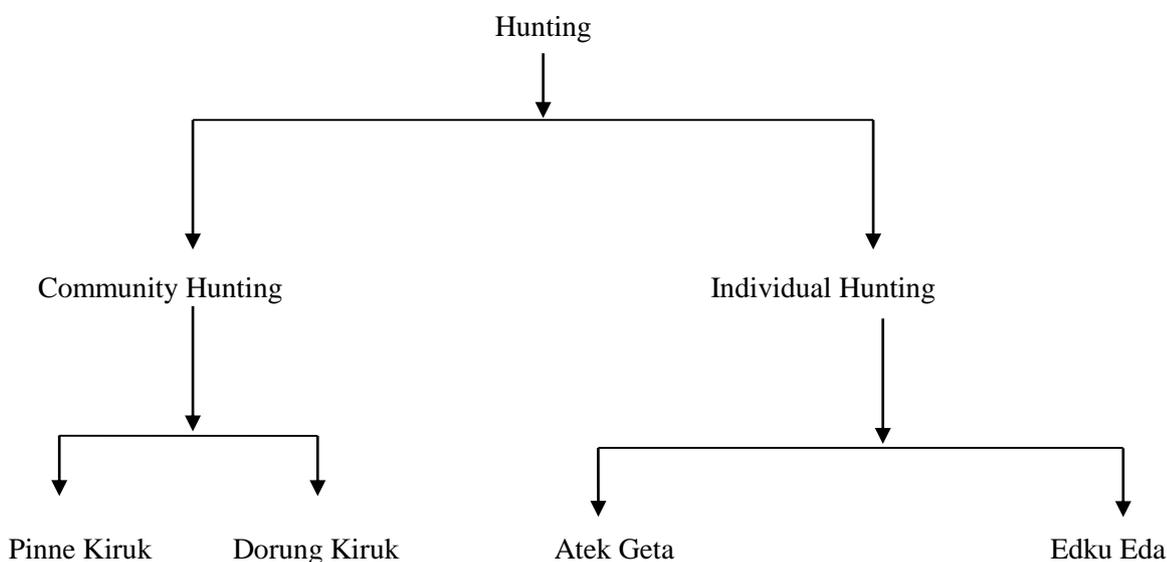
Before hunting expedition the Adis had also prepared an arrow heads to smear with *Emo* (aconite). They collect from *Millang* areas the snow-hills of the north part in the state, powder and mix it with *talo* and *mane* (a variety of creeper and wild potato) to make a paste. This paste is allowed to dry slowly from some time after application. The action of the poison starts after it mixes with the blood of animal. Thus, Angus Hamilton remarks, "the action of the poison is very rapid, sometimes less than one hour, and rarely more than six hours. Violent convulsions are set up, and tetanus supervenes." But the poison is ineffective if the arrow is drawn out timely and the wound is immediately washed. The local antidote for a poisoned arrow is to wash the wound and apply a mixture of fowl's droppings and opium, if obtainable. The Adis go in batches to the high north-eastern hills to collect this poison. They believe that evil spirits guard the place, which assume the forms of their wives and try to deceive them and thus deprive them of the precious poison. So when they start to collect the poison, they shout five times "*Hoh ! Hoh!*" to drive away the evil spirit. While on the way to the village, they are received by the women of their village well ahead of the *Dere* with rice beer. Having seen believed to have run away. The women of the village brush the legs and hand of the men with broom sticks in order to drive away the evil spirits. After this ceremony, they come straight to the *Dere* and sing songs clan by clan. On the night of the return, they sacrifice a fowl and ginger. The poison is kept at the spot of the sacrifice, and the blood of the sacrificed animal is sprinkled over it to increase its potency. After the sacrifice of the fowl, the poison is divided amongst the adult male members of the village. They dry their own shares in the sun or grind it to powder. This mixture of poison and mane should not be plastered with the fingers as the slightest inadvertence may lead to tragic consequences. The young men who plaster the poison are not allowed to sleep with their wives for three nights. Poison being thus plastered; the arrow with the blade is kept on the *Rapmeng* over the fire place to dry. During this period, they did not drink *apong* (local wine made of rice) except from a leaf pot and do not eat hot rice. They believe that heat has a bad

effect on poison. Salt and vegetables are also tabooed during this period. Women are forbidden to husk paddy and prepare fresh *apong*. When effect. After they have left the village for hunting, the women of the village are allowed to husk paddy. In this way, the ceremony of the pasting of poison on the arrows and this collection of poison from the far away hills is carried out once in a year.

6.4. Dao

Dao is another important instrument of the Adis to ready before the hunting festival; The Adis do not possess any special *dao* for military, hunting, domestic as well as martial purposes. During hunting *dao* is alternate instrument to kill animals if bow and arrows is not in the position to target. And also save the life of hunter in emergency case. Hence, therefore, Adis always maintained *dao* blade and kept his body always during hunting. The blade of the *dao* is arrow towards the haft and broad towards the tip. The *dao* are without point and have a simple edged top heavy blade. The blade has a tang is inserted into a wooden handle which is occasionally plaited with cane. They are always carried in wooden cases, one side of which is open. Several transverse cane bands keep the *dao* in position. The sling of the *dao* is generally made of mithun hide to used and carrying their *dao* on shoulder.

Adis Society is organized hunting in two forms, they are.



7. COMMUNITY HUNTING:

7.1. Pine Kiruk festival ceremony is celebrated to mark the harvesting of paddy. It is observed during the months of November. The term '*Pine Kiruk*' has no particular meaning but it is a community hunting festival of Adis after harvesting of crops. The village young boys with the advice of elders announce the date of celebration at least one week ahead of the festival and it is called *Gokying* (advance announcement festival). During these period men folk go out for hunting, trapping and fishing for used pine festival. On a fixed day, they return home in the evening with their catches animal, birds and fish, their return marks the beginning of the festivities. On next day all male members right from children up to 10 years and old man up to 60 years go out to community hunting for two days with poisonous arrows called '*Emo*' (aconites) and non poisoned arrows were also ready to shoot the animals during hunting. This '*Emo*' were made from medicinal and poisonous plants called '*Emo Rinko*' In hunting they normally use bows and arrows (both poisoned and non-poisoned), *Gatbung* (made of bamboo with design for kept arrows) and daos, but for the hunting of tiger, bear or such other ferocious animals they use also spear and swords. Now guns have become important weapons for hunting. Dogs are also engaged in community hunting, on the fixed day the hunters in batches wise divided in group. one batch mostly of youngsters with their dogs go in one direction and shout and beat the forest forming a semicircle which may extended to as much as a quarter of a mile in jungle where the wild animal is in hiding. Another group means actual hunters take up their position and they hide themselves behind the trees or rocks to wait opposite direction where the wild animals running out from *Hipu* (wild animals resting place) and ready with their bows and arrows to shoot any wild animal that may come within their range. The beaters beat the forest and dogs chase and barking the animals with smile towards the place where the hunters wait.

In *Pinne Kiruk*, the meat of hunted animals is distributed on spot and divide the meat into pieces according to the age variation of the person, those person who had age above fifties are got *Pabu* (important portion of meat) and other below fifties age can divided the pieces meat. In the evening they are enjoying marry making with their family and

relatives in the name of hunting festival ceremony. After this festival one day taboo is observed by the village to restrict the washing of clothes, agricultural field, weaving cloths, etc.

7.2. Dorung Kiruk is also community hunting festival ceremony of the Adis which observed during the month of December. It marks after the harvesting of *Anget* (millet) and the word '*Dorung*' means 'feast' and '*Kiruk*' means hunting. In this Community Hunting festival *Merom* (hearth) wise group ready to hunting animals for four days and each *Merom* of the village had geographical reserved areas to hunt the wild animals. These hunted animals had brought to *Dere merom* of the community building on forth days of the celebration. In evening all men folk bring their local wine, Food and smoke dry meat to community building for distribute the person who participate the hunting festival. Those people who killed big animals like tiger, bear, wild pigs etc. were given reward by *Dere Mijing* called *Gumin-Hoyin Abu* (the old man of the Merom). After that the hunted meat is cut into pieces and distributed each members of the *Dere Merom* those who present during evening hours and exchange of merry making dancing, Singing and *Delong* were performed during the night hours at *Dere* (community hall). Especially the word '*Gamyng peyi*' is repeatedly called by every member to welcome the good fortune of the wild animals for hunting festival. In the same evening that is *Dorung Yuma* every house of the village had done *Rogum* (Ritual ceremony), a fowl is sacrifices with ginger and *Toti* (sacred plant) is planted in house in front. A *pobang* (sacred ritual bamboo design craft) is attached with *Toti* (rituals plant) and head of the fowl is fixed on the pointed stick along with ritual material. The *Rogum* is done by father or mother according to convenient of the family. The person who had done *Rogum* ceremony had to pray long lived for the family.

Pirding Doding Molape,

Pirgo Pete Molape,

Ngo amit mibar sima,

ngo alap mibar sima.

Meaning: pray for long life and does not want to lose any body from the family. After, that village had observed one day taboo.

8. INDIVIDUAL HUNTING:

Individual hunting is done at any time according to the wish of the individual hunter. This form of Hunting is called *Apta/Geta* or individual hunting, in these hunting; the hunter's roaming around the jungles for individually to search the wild animal as well as the birds. In such hunting, the hunter brings the hunted animals and provides their relatives and clan members for every house. in the evening all the old man of the clan members bring their ginger and rice to called '*Gamyng Peyi*' which means called the other wild animals and their family for next hunting day. It is important to note that some taboos were to be observed by the village as a whole, but in individual hunting only family member had observed the taboos.

Trapping is one of the important economic activities. Adis used different types of trapping depending upon the big and small animals as well as the birds. Like *Etku* (bamboo trap for birds), *Eda* (stone trap for rat), *Hongkit* (Rope trap for big bird and animals) and *Edpeng* (Stone and bamboo trap for kill big animals). A number of these traps were in common use and worked on the principle of lever release. Amongst the all Adis sub-tribes, are widely used trap was called *Edpeng* (trap kill big animal). This was an indigenous device by which an animal while passing by dislodged a lever held by a cane string resulting in the release of a poisonous bamboo spear which killed it. Birds, rat and squirrels were caught and killed in smaller traps. No individual was allowed to disturb the traps laid down areas in the forests by others. This prerogative was so strictly adhered to that the offender had to pay the traditional fine of a pig and he had been given bad name reputation in the society. The Adis had used traps of various kinds, one type of trap for big game was fixing of big log of wood above the path of wild animals. When an animal passed under it, the mechanism by which the log was fixed gave away and the log fell on the animal. Small traps, like a bow shaped nose trap or a falling stone trap were employed for catching porcupines, hares, squirrels, rat, etc. All those trapping system is came under individual hunting but the hunter can make another hunter friends which hunting operation to reserve areas i.e. *Eda* is near by the way or attached to his areas. Therefore, people usually hunt small animals like rat, squirrel, birds, etc. for individual used only to preparation of festival ceremony. During festival ceremony lots of hunted rat and squirrel animals were used for marriage and exchange marry making for the people of Adis which are impact on the fauna and flora life. But nowadays, these types of ceremony are nowhere in Adis areas because of Government had band on hunted animals.

9. IMPACT ON SOCIETY:

Community hunting is main impact on economy of the Adi society in particular and as a whole in Arunachal. In this hunting all the male members take part in hunting expedition irrespective of age group can participate during

Dorung/Pinne Kiruk (Community hunting). This system of hunting is carried out by different clans of the village and gathers in *Dumbang* (resting place of hunters) to plan for searching and chasing the wild animals from *Sipu* (wild animals stay place). Then all the children are advice to chasing with their domesticated dogs from *Sipu*, and opposite direction the young and mature men are waiting for running out of the wild animals from *Sipu* and shoot the animals. These hunted animals are brought to *Dere* (community hall) for distribute the meat to all members of the *Merom* (hearth). The hunted animal's skulls are hanging inside the *Merom* for memories of hunter expedition and also count the numbers of trophies of their particular life carrier. So, in this way the hunter received a great regard from the *Merom* in particular and as a whole in villages. After that two days taboo is observed by village.

Group hunting system is also one of the important rich tradition and customs of the Adis. In this hunting all the male members around 7-8 members make party to planning hunting during festival ceremonies. Before starting of the actual festival this group hunted wild animals for the purposed of festival ceremony. These types of hunting is also very effective and success for hunter, a lots of wild animals like bear, deer, wild pig, birds etc., are killed in this hunting expedition. But differences of community hunting are that all those meat are divided among the participant of the hunter. There is no distribution system of all the members of the *Merom* (hearth). And in this case no taboo is observed in the village except hunter itself. With the coming of modern era and passage of time this types of hunting expedition are restricted by forest department. Hence, despite of above fact our sources of meat and marry making system of Adis are nowadays slow and gradually declined.

In Group and Individual hunting, normally bows and arrows, both poisoned and non-poisoned, dao, spears and swords were traditionally used as weapons during hunting; dogs were also domesticated and used during hunting. But all those traditional kinds of weapon are nowadays no more everywhere and younger generations are also not interested to participant the hunting festival.

With the settlement of the tribe as an agricultural community, hunting remained as a necessity in their society. But with the change of the society and the progress of the domestication of animals, hunting gradually changed from a means of livelihood into a form of entertainment and pastime. Hunting, although, has lost much of its economic importance, yet it has a greater social significance among the Adis for several reasons.

- It has social significance, because a good hunter enjoys special social status in the society.
- The hunters hang their trophies to decorate at home to show stranger and society.
- The hunter's displays their trophies in *Dere* (community hall) are recognized by the society to show their expertness and get respect from the village community during festival occasion.
- Adis of Arunachal Pradesh beliefs that good hunter is afraid by evil spirits i.e. he had magic to cure the sick person and
- Hunters after death, their grave were also decorated with hunted animal's trophies. It is believed that the hunters had added their high status in the next world.

10. CONCLUSION:

Thus from the above discussion, it observed that the Adis possess a rich hunting traditional festival which had socio-religious significance on the society. Noday, these types of age old rich traditional system of hunting is declined due to coming of outside influence and Government had also banned the animals hunting system in Arunachal for maintaining the check and ecological balance. In olden days hunting and fishing were pursued only after the close of long rainy season in this high rainfall zone and before the advent of the rainy season. The spoils were stocks for immediate and future use. In present time young generations are always eager to hunting practices for their individual interest and are neglected to community hunting. They hunted unlimited and use modern weapon to kill abundant of animals and birds are impact on the environment. But communities hunting which had socio-religious importance are neglected day by day. Hence, now possibly due to the survival of this old age traditional practices Adis communities of Arunachal Pradesh observed the slightly modified form and continued maintained the hunting festivals of the state.

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Oral Narration

- A. An extract interviews with Tamor Mize (public) of Riga village on 20th January 2020.
- B. An extract interviews with Takot Tasing (Goan Bura) of Riga Village on 20th January 2020.
- C. An extract interviews with Tamyo Mingki (Ex-ASM) of Pangkang Village on 24th March 2019.
- D. An extract interviews with Takot Tatin (Gaon Bura) of Riga village on 20th January 2020.
- E. An extract interviews with Tahan Tali (Ex-ASM) of Pangkang village on 24th March 2019.
- F. An extract interviews with Taping Tali (Ex-ASM) of Riga Village on 21st January 2020
- G. An extract interviews with Galling Tamut (public) of Parong Kine village on 25th March 2019.
- H. An extract interviews with Kaling Borang (public) of Pasighat on 28th February 2018.

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