Intangible Cultural Heritages of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract:

Intangible cultural heritage includes traditions or living expressions, inherited from our predecessors and transmitted to our successors orally or by gesture, discussed mainly within five broad domains: oral traditions and expressions including language; performing arts; social practices, rituals, festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and traditional craftsmanship. Intangible cultural heritage, which only can be experienced, virtually could be anything; objects, songs, stories or skills; are considered important to preserve for future generations, because these create a community's identity and forming the belongingness to a country, a tradition or a way of life. With 31 indigenous communities with different oral traditions and languages, Arunachal Pradesh, a hill state of India is known to be one of the magnificent multilingual and multicultural indigenous peoples areas of the world. By songs, dances, dress, rituals or simply the gestures, the people express and maintain their different living styles which make Arunachal Pradesh vivaciously vibrant in the realms of intangible cultural heritages. This paper discusses intangible cultural heritage of Arunachal Pradesh within the arena of its five main domains.

Key words: Intangible cultural heritage, Arunachal Pradesh

Intangible Cultural Heritage: An Idea

Heritage is often defined as a legacy from our past that we pass on to future generations to learn from, marvel at and enjoy

UNESCO 2004:22

Intangible cultural heritage includes traditions or living expressions, which only can be experienced, inherited from our predecessors and passed on to our successors, and transmitted orally or by gesture. Intangible cultural heritage, which virtually could be anything- objects, songs, stories or skills; are considered important to preserve for future generations, because these create a community's identity and form the belongingness to a country, a tradition or a way of life (UNESCO 2004, 2010).

UNESCO distinguishes five broad domain of intangible cultural heritage to safeguard and develop new policies

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for it in the ‘Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003’ (UNESCO ICH Kit 2010). These are;

- Oral traditions and expressions including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Performing arts (such as traditional music, dance and theatre);
- Social Practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- Traditional craftsmanship

However, the boundaries between domains are extremely flexible and multiple domains may have same element(s) of intangible cultural heritage, i.e. a theatre performance include in performing arts domain as well as oral tradition domain and the craft objects used in that performance are included in traditional craftsmanship domain.

According to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO, the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) or Living heritage is the key word of cultural diversity. Considerate intangible cultural heritages of different community means helping in intercultural dialogue, creating social cohesion, encouraging individuals to feel part of a community rooted in the mutual respect for other ways of life. By playing a major role in giving a community the space of creativity and respect to human dignity, its create cultural diversity that help to sustain humanity, without which development is impossible (UNESCO 2004, 2009, 2010).

**Arunachal Pradesh and intangible cultural heritage**

Home to 52 million indigenous peoples (Miller and Wood 2007: 624), India is the most populated country of indigenous peoples. Within India, Arunachal Pradesh is the state where almost 31 indigenous communities inhabit (People of India survey, ASI, 1997). Arunachal Pradesh is a hill state in the lap of the Great Himalayan mountain range. This region was declared as Union Territory in January 20, 1972 and emerged as a full-fledged state from 1987.

The 96% per cent landscape of the state is covered by hills that create the natural boundaries for the different communities of Arunachal Pradesh. Being the home of many different indigenous communities, Arunachal Pradesh is known to be one of the magnificent multilingual tribal areas of the world. By songs, dances, dresses, rituals or simply the gestures, the people express and maintain their different living styles which make Arunachal Pradesh vivaciously vibrant in the realms of intangible cultural heritages. Though Anthropological Survey of India separate all tribes in five cultural zones in their survey, the tribes can broadly divide into three group. The first group is Buddhist tribes. It can again be divided into Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhist groups of tribe. The Monpas, Sherdukpons, Mamba and Khambas of the western part of Arunachal Pradesh practice Mahayana sect of Buddhism and the Khamptis and Singphos of the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh practice Hinayana sect of Buddhism.

The second group consists of Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Bungnis, Nyishis, Mishmis, Mijis etc., who have different beliefs on divinity, which again can be divided into two. Whereas Adi, Apatani or Nyishis believes in the the Donyi-Polo and Abo-Tani (the Sun and Moon God) as their original ancestor, the Mishmi groups believes in Nani Intaya as their goddess of origin. The third group comprises of Noctes and Wanchos in the Tirap district. They are little different on religious beliefs and social conducts against the other Arunachalee tribes.
All communities, whether it is Buddhists, or followers of Donyi-Polo or other faith, have a highly developed sense of music and rhythm. The dances vary from highly solemn and thoughtful religious dramas of the Monpas to the joyous and cheerful Adi dances to intense and powerful martial dance of the Noctes and Wanchos. While some Buddhist tribes maintain written records, mainly in the form of religious books, most Arunachalis have preserved their traditions in the oral form. The colours of the magnificent landscape and the rich & earthy life of the people of Arunachal Pradesh have been captured in their handicrafts. Buddhist tribes specialize in painting religious and semi-religious motifs and wood carving while Nyshis are specialized in bamboo and cane goods making. Intricate patterns are also woven out of cane by the eastern tribes of Tirap district. Monpa carpets, Adi skirts and highly decorative Mishmi bags, shawls and jackets prove their traditional skill and estheticness. The people of Arunachal Pradesh are also well known for their traditional knowledge on flora and fauna from *Mishmi teeta* (*Coptis teeta*, a type of poison) to sheep breeding to produce local salt.

**Oral traditions and expressions including language**

Languages live in oral traditions and expressions and these traditions helps to safeguard more a language rather than dictionaries, grammars and databases. Playing a crucial part in keeping cultures alive, oral traditions and expressions are used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values and collective memory (UNESCO *ICH kit*, 2010). This domain of intangible cultural heritage encompasses a vast variety of spoken forms of languages.
including proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dramatic performances and more. These expressions often vary significantly in their telling as they are passed on by word of mouth.

Oral tradition is the witness and evidence of the emergence of many societies and reflects society’s identity. The visual of oral tradition is very diverse in Arunachal Pradesh as almost 66 dialects are spoken in Arunachal Pradesh including Chakma and Nepali language. However, the whole structure of the linguistic diversity of the state is based on verbal form as only the Khamptis, Monpas, Sherdukpons, Khambas and Membas have their own script (Singh, 1995). The evidence of richness in oral tradition and expression is visible in the mythical stories of the origin of the tribes, on their prayers & rituals, on their knowledge and skills, and on their performing arts.

Singphos or Jingphos have a strong relationship with Myanmar which is notified in their oral traditions. The Hrusso’s oral tradition indicates their origin in Assam. The stories of Abo-Tani, the mythological ancestor of many tribes witness the richness tales and legends of those tribes. All communities have a rich collection of folk songs, tales and lore. The chants of the Idu Mishmis, Tagins etc. tribes are always orally transmitted by the priests from generation to generation. The Tagins have numbers of lullabies on animals, stars and the moon. Sherdukpen’s rich heritage of folktales is influenced by Tibetan folk tales whereas the Khamiyang tales have inspired by the Jataka, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

The ideas or themes of myths are diverse; an original primeval ocean out of which the world was formed, earthquake as caused by the great animal on whose back the world rests, opium as the reincarnation of a girl when nobody loved in her lifetime, the taboo on opening something during a journey, rainbow, colour and flower, ugly and evil people, thunder and storm etc. The myths are also told on different occasions: some are chanted during the dance, as for example the Adi abhangs and the Sherdukpen tales; some are recited at ceremonies, at a funeral or harvest thanksgiving or to save the life of a child; some others are told round the fire in the Naga morung (dormitory) or the Adi moshup(dormitory); and a number of tales are prohibited to tell publicly, and only passed down from shaman to shaman as a kind of traditional wisdom or history (Elwin, 1958).

Unfortunately, there are very few studies on the oral traditions of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. Directorate of Research, Arunachal Pradesh is a pioneer organization which works on the languages of the majority of tribes and publishes many books on phrase, tales, dictionaries etc. The district gazetteers and published and unpublished research works on Arunachalee tribes also give some lights on the tribe’s oral traditions. However, despite the richness, all these works do not illustrate the overall picture of oral tradition of Arunachal Pradesh. Beside few dictionaries and grammars, very few works are available on proverbs, myths and tales, songs etc., and no works are noticeable on riddles, nursery rhymes, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants and dramatic performances. These few works on myths, tales or proverbs are also limited to only two or three tribes and there is a total silence on the oral tradition of other groups.

Even with the fact that the material life including oral traditions of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh highlighted
from the Pre-Independence era through some then British residents and other foreign researchers works, perhaps, the first significant work on the oral tradition of Arunachal Pradesh is Verrier Elwin's *Myths of NEFI* (1958) and *A new book on tribal fiction* (1970). In *Myths of NEFI*, the author includes nearly four hundred myths collected from all over the Arunachal Pradesh from 1954-1957. In *A new book on tribal fiction*, Elwin includes the fairy tales of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh which gives brief glimpses of institution of slavery, village councils, dormitory of boys and girls, barter trade, attitude towards women, rare and popular motifs etc.

The Adi tribes (*Adi* is a generic category which includes 15 sub groups) is one of the most studied and written groups in the oral traditions and expressions domain. The oral tradition of the Adis are preserved in the form of *Abang* (rhapsodies relating to myth of creation, origin of several institutions), *Bari* (myth of origin and evolution of various institutions), *Abe* (introductory speech of *Kebang* i.e. village council), *Kongki bote* (narration of historical facts and exploits of great ancestors in verse in Abe tune), *Penge* (the funeral hymn relating birth, material life of deceased, death and journey of the soul to the next world), *Odong* (genealogy) etc. (Borang, 2006:48-49).

There are different kinds of oral narrative forms. Hoktum Eshi and Gomar Angu describe Adi oral literature in two sections: ritual and social. The *Nyibu* or the priest recites the oral ritualistic chants. These chants are different types like *Uyu Benam* (here the priest alone performs the chanting with the parallel tunes); *Uyu Dinam* (the *Nyibu* with one *Boo* or supporter perform the puja part and sings word by word and the *Boo* follows each and every word starting from the 2nd syllable of the Nyibu in a high pitched tone); *Yebo henam* (related with the hunting or putting the fire for *jhum* cultivation) etc. The social section of Adi oral literature includes *Anne-Yo-Anna* (the love song), *Ajen-Aa-Ito-Laka* (entertainment song) etc (Eshi & Angu 2005).

The Nyishi group also has treasures of myths and tales that throw lights on their faith and beliefs and customs. The most significant feature of Nyishi myths and tales is the perception of *Abo-Tani*, the heir mythical ancestor and cultural hero. Their priest chants different myths on different occasions, such as myth concerning the origin of *mithun* (*Bos frontlis*) is chanted before the animal is sacrificed on any ritual (Bora, 1995).

There is very little information about proverbs from previous works. The Idu Mishmis have a rich oral tradition including songs, tales, proverbs and sayings and most of the elderly members of their society are well versed with the oral literature. Some popular proverbs of Idu Mishmis are (Pulu, 2002):

- **Imu labindo mey yeha laha yi**  
  It is human nature to commit mistakes.

- **Imu khege mey tapumme chika-ga yimi**  
  A man cannot enjoy all comforts and pleasures in his life so also one cannot attain everything in life.

- **Yak u mey jji sa aruya layi**  
  Women often spread unpleasant rumours.

Proverbs and saying are also very popular among the Adis which are generally used in narrating abangs
mythology and in Abe speech. Some popular proverbs and saying of Adis are (Tayeng and Megu, 1990):

- **Doying kar-pitem pugi jin-pimang, biri gilobem danik topimang (ami takam layinnam agom dem ati ilamang)**
  
  A matter which is decided by absolute majority of people cannot be altered easily.

- **Dodum tumiem giijinako toro rukpoko doomalo donaqko lotmuem paajibo-nako kibo aroko doomalo (Kebang labona abako kamamilo dolunge dulamang)**
  
  If there is no perfect man who can lead or guide the people, a society cannot be existed.

- **Susenge paaseng-ko, pit-yange jajang-ko (a menalok pit-yang bottene lendo)**
  
  ‘A spark neglected burns the house’; a small mistake which we neglect grows in to a great problem.

**Performing arts**

The performing arts domain of intangible cultural heritage includes vocal and instrumental music, dance, theatre, pantomime, sung verse and beyond. This domain is inseparably related with other intangible cultural heritage domains; like music is an integral part of many other domains of intangible cultural heritage including rituals, festive events or oral traditions. Music can be performed in any situations: marriages, funerals, rituals, festivities etc. Diverse contexts, many dimensions or varied performing occasions make music universal. Dance illustrates specific events or daily acts, such as religious dances, hunting or warfare dance etc. The rhythmic movements, steps and gestures of dance express sentiments and moods. Traditional theatre performances generally combine acting, singing, dancing, dialogue, narration or recitation but may also include puppetry or pantomime. Traditional theatres play crucial roles in culture and society and they are more than simply ‘performances’ for the audiences.

The performing arts of Arunachal Pradesh are vivaciously colorful. They dance for merriment, festive & rituals, and wars or even for funeral. The dances, performed by the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, have been broadly divided into four groups. The first group is the ritual dances which are a part of a ritual. This group may again be divided into five subgroups. The first subgroup of the ritual dances includes those dances which are performing to secure prosperity, good health and happiness of the dancer, his family, village or the whole community in various rituals. The second subgroup comprises those dances performed in ceremonies related to agriculture and domestication of animals to secure a good harvest and increase of domestic animals respectively. The third subgroup is associated with the funeral ceremony when the soul is prevented from hunting its old house and guided by the priest to its abode in the land of the dead. It is generally believed that if the soul returns to its old home, the family suffers diseases and deaths. The fourth subgroup consists of the fertility dances where the imitation of the movements of coition is believed to promote fertility. War dances make the fifth subgroup, which are on the decline with the stoppage of the internecine feuds and raids. The war dance used to be prevalent among almost all the non-Buddhist tribes (Sarkar, 1974).

The second group is the festive dances which form the recreational part of a particular festival. The third group
is the recreational dances which are not the part of any particular festival or ritual. These are occasional dances which inspire its participants to express their mirth. The fourth group is pantomimes and dance dramas which narrate a mythical story or illustrate a moral and are educative in purpose. The Buddhist tribes have a large repertory of these. The Buddhist tribes have organized parties of dancers for their pantomimes and dance dramas. The other tribes do not have such arrangement. The boys and the girls learn the dance movements by imitating the movements of the elders (Sarkar, 1974).

Songs are the integral part of these dances. As a part of oral traditions, songs reveal the myths and legends of the communities as well as illustrate their love for nature and beauty. The mythical song or *abang* of the Adi tribe about the origin of paddy and other crops, mithun, fowl etc., is sung during their Solung Punung festival in August-September after the last weeding or before harvesting. The solung ponung dance is performed by girls with a male leader, known as Ponung Miri who must know and able to sing the *abang*. The *ponung* song of the Padam group of the Adi tribe is given below: ‘Lekole abule’ is the catching line.

‘Lekole abule / Darle abule / Lekole abule / Meium doying bote / Meium sedi
Dir irmi miki kine kaje name / Maium daing kaje bate kela tumi / Girik suta
Kine mite name ginning / Mela ginning girik sula / Keyum sedi dilling litung
Kine mite nane besing / Nane peba jate peba ruddung bito / Meyem sedi sobo
Doying iden dende sobo / Dend sobo mena mela buijjer jerdak delo /
Delde mena buijjer jeruk dinring anging / Kanem / Gane penga rasing pena
Dinding lilong pyabang taku / Gane amku sebiang kape / Tei matpe kape
Manne amku sabiang kape / Dinbing belung bepung kaaku /
Gane sebiang redsang tamping bomkai / Dinding pele abang kanem Bomi a kepee
Dende dinbing anging kene / Kine name bega irang bela / Dande taral tumti
Tarang tegar name / Dande tumti anging dena / Nei belung mepunh kane
Pine mite name besi / Name redeng tampang bomlang / Angi nei neang nako
Angi belung nepung kaane / Doing bote doui ane / Aji mena angi terang
Tegar bilang / Dende peba jate peba / Randung taku / Kine tarang tegar bito
Doni gaga sekap palang / Anga peba jate peba rudung naming / Kine mite name besi
Depang segeng saman segeng / Genbang bito / Douing lupa gegul bito
Doui ane aji / Angie erung e shantung kai / Angie mimung e erung shantung kai
Doying bote doni ane ajime / Meyum pedong dapung pummu / Piku lulung lage
Mii ketin ketan nako / Mii belung dubuk nadem / Meyum pedong pumu ane aji mena
Meum pedong dabi bisa bate / Dena api beli pito / Mii ketin ketan nako
Memang belo yatto / Meyum ata tabi pape / Mii ketin ketan lenkai /
Doying bote meyum ato / Tabi mena kine tumi gina lanka / Dadum tumi gibu taku
Meyum ata tabi mena / Kene tumi gina / Ani dayari mimung mena
Dari shantung erung nadem / Dori mimum mumma naku pe

Summary: Sons of Sedi had a talk with Daying Kaje Batte. Their first issue was a son named Indum. Indum’s son was Saba. In due course small plants grew at the following places, Panga, Rasing and Pena. People of those villages claimed those plants to be their own property and from these plants grew seeds which are now called paddy. The villagers gave some of these to Mite, Name and Basi and in exchange they received some animals. But the entire stock of the paddy was once destroyed by flood floods. Then the son of Yongmo prepared something like an egg from which came out of cock. Daying asked all villagers to sacrifice the animal to Kine in exchange of paddy. From that time onwards there is a custom to sacrifice a cock during Solung festival for better and richer harvests (Pandey 1996:79-81).

Though there are no significant theatre performances among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Khampti’s dance dramas are noteworthy. They have many dance dramas like Ka-Mukchu dance drama or choolinchiyen dance drama that depict mythical events or stories with moral lessons. The dance drama is called kapung (ka=dance; pung=story) means the story depicted through dance. Women cannot perform kapung and female role played by the men in female costume. These dramas are generally staged during the religious festivals of Sangken or Khamsang. The dance parties are invited by the affluent villagers to perform kapung on their houses and given remuneration for the performance (Sarkar, 1974:50-51).

Pantomime is a part of the performing arts of the eastern tribes inhabited in the Mon cultural zone of Arunachal Pradesh, who are basically the Mahayana Buddhists. The Monpas and Sherdukpens have several pantomimes depicting some legendary stories or events. These pantomimes are performed by the performers wearing magnificent and colourful masks. The Sherdukpen pantomimes are perfumed during the festivals of Chokor, Chosiwang and Tonuwang and the Monpa pantomimes are staged during the Losar or New Year festival, though these can also be performed at any other time of the year. The dance parties are formed for performing the pantomimes and the trainer or the instructor is called the Lopon. The pantomimes are staged in front of the temple or at some central, open and convenient place. Drums and cymbals are the musical instruments that played in the pantomimes. The Sherdukpen pantomimes are Jiij-Jukham or yak pantomime, ajimalu pantomime, Jikcham or deer pantomime, Jachung cham or bird pantomime etc. The Monpas also have ajilamu, yak, and deer etc. pantomimes. The Kamba pantomimes, it is believed originated from Uzor Rimboche or the great Indian Buddhist monk Padmasambhava for suppressing the malicious activities of evil spirits. Only the adult khambu men are allowed to perform these pantomimes (Sarkar, 1974).

Social Practices, rituals and festive events
These vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and commemorations, social practices, rituals and festive events closely linked to a community’s worldview and perception of its own history and memory. Social practices, rituals and festive events involve a incredible variety of forms: Worship rites; rites of passage; birth, wedding and funeral rituals; oaths of allegiance; traditional legal systems; traditional games and sports; kinship and ritual kinship ceremonies; settlement patterns; culinary traditions; seasonal ceremonies; practices
specific to men or women only; hunting, fishing and gathering practices; special gestures and words, recitations, songs or dances; special clothing; processions; animal sacrifice and special food.

In India, there are many festive events round the year. The Indian calendar of festive start with Bihu, Pongal or Baisakh, passages through numerous events and rituals in every month and end with the colours of Holi. Even the day to day life of an Indian is the synthesis of many social practices and rituals. With the 31 groups of tribes inhabiting, Arunachal Pradesh is also include in this colourful journey of round the year festivity. In fact, this state is blessed with uncountable social practices, rituals and festive events including birth, wedding and funeral rituals, worship rites, traditional legal systems, traditional games and sports, seasonal ceremonies, culinary traditions, special clothing etc.

Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by tribal communities professing different religions. Monpas, Sherdukpen, Membas and Khambas are the Mahayana Buddhists, the Khamptis, Khamiyangs and Singphos are the Hinayana Buddhists, many groups of Central Arunachal Pradesh are the followers of sun and moon or the Donyi-Poloism, while some others follow the Vaishnavism or their very own traditional religious believes. Each of the groups has their own festivals.

Losar, the Tibetan New year festival, is one of the most important festivals of the Mahayana Buddhists. It is held for 15 days sometime in January-February according to the Tibetan calendar. Sangken is the biggest festival of the Khamptis, Khamiyangs and Singphos. It is celebrated for three days according to their calendar (The Tai-Burmese calendar) in the middle of April as a spring as well as New Year festival. During this festival, the monks and the villagers pour water on the images of Lord Buddha and they also sprinkle water on each other for merriment.

Nyokum, the major festival of the Nyishis is held in the month of August and is observed to propitiate the gods for a rich harvest. During this festival people dance, sing and offer payers to deities for a better harvest, good health and life of the domesticated animals. Solung is the most popular and colourful festival of the Adis, which is related to agricultural activities and celebrated during the month of July-August. The Kehang (village council of the Adis) fixes a date convenient to all the people. The festival lasts for seven days. Mopin is the most popular festival of the Adi Gallongs, held sometime in the month of March-April. It is observed to propitiate the deity of wealth to seek a rich harvest, good health and happiness. The Mijis observe Khan, an important festival and great occasion for merriment with songs and dances for them, which is held sometime in the month of February-March. The Aka’s most important festival is Nechido. It is held in winter and has socio-religious significance. The Apatanis of the Subansiri district observe the Dree festival which is held in July and continues for three days, to propitiate deities for a bumper crop and prosperity. Dances and songs form a major part of the festival. The other important festivals celebrated by the various communities of Arunachal Pradesh are Tamlu du, Reh and Thung of the Mishmis; Mol/Moh, Kuk/Kuh and Champang of the Tangsas; Loku of the Noctes; Oriya of the Wanchos; Gumkum Gumpka of the Sulungs and Mokhosil of the Lisus. Most of these festivals are associated with agricultural activities and propitiating of deities to invoke their blessings for better health,
production and prosperity. Animal sacrifice is invariably associated with most of the festivals.

There are many traditional games and sports in Arunachal Pradesh, though many of these are now disappearing. The common games among the tribes are wrestling, hand wrestling, the snake game, hog’s rub, skipping, dragon’s tail, cat and mouse, mimic warfare, hunting, archery, tug-of-war, the long jump, high jump, putting the shot etc. There are different local names of these games as these are popular almost all over the state. Wrestling is known as Gublaka sha in Subansiri region, Roga and Lamin in Lohit region, and Garrang Wog Pom, Bhai Jakpo, Barjakpan & Cham-Cham-Po-Ana in Kameng region. Hand wrestling is known as Yatbom in Siang region. It is generally playing during the Eran and Etor festivals. The snake game is a unique game that played by 10 to 12 player, who bent down from the waist, lightly hold on to each other and cover themselves completely, as a unit, with blankets. It is known as Harram Peya in Subansiri region whereas Idu Mishmis call it Tabu. The Mishmis call skipping as Kambu whereas the Mijis call it as Sithang Rai Disubou (Pugh, 1958).

Various tribes inhabiting Arunachal Pradesh have some unwritten customary laws of their own which are applicable for maintaining peace and harmony and settlement of disputes to the respective societies. The laws were framed by the people and applied through organized bodies or village councils called variously. These unwritten laws are handed down from generation to generation through application and necessary addition and alternations have been made in these laws subsequently to cope with the changing situation. Each of the adult individuals of that particular society are supposed to be well versed with their laws. These village councils are called variously such as Kebang of Adis, Mele of the Hrussos, Badiang of the Apatani, Khapong of the Tangsas, Ngothun of the Noctes, Wango-Wangsa of the Wanchos, Bang-Nyile of the Bagnis etc. The crimes and disputes are generally related with marriage, adultery, theft, murder, assault and bodily injury, divorce, disputes about land and fishing sites (Dutta and Duarah, 1997).

The food habits and culinary traditions are more or less similar among the tribes of the state. Their main agricultural products are rice, maize, millet, arum, potatoes, garlic, chilies, soybeans, sugarcane and a variety of leafy vegetables. Rice is the staple food for most of the people; however the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Pailibos, Boris, and Tangams take maize and millet as their staple food. Other food items are wild roots and shoots, wild edible leaves and fruits including oranges, pineapples, papayas, pears, bananas etc. Almost all the communities of Arunachal Pradesh are non vegetarian and relish almost all kind of fish and meat. They also take drink and have no taboo with the drink unlike the other Indians. Rice is mainly used to prepare the drinks. Rice, maize, millet, vegetables, meat and fish are usually taken boiled, though some food items, especially meat and fish are smoked over fire and preserved for months together. Smoked meat and fish are very popular among all the tribes and they consider it delicious. They also consume roasted meat or fish, which are normally taken with the drinks. In some groups, taking meat is a taboo for women while some Buddhist tribes do not take beef. Only Monpas and Sherdukpen consume milk and milk products and though the other tribes domesticate cattle but never consume their milk, as milk and milk products are taboo in many groups. The preparation of food items during festivals is
not much different from day to day cooking. Many tribes like Digaru Mishmi, Idu Mishmi, Singphos are addicted to tobacco and opium.

**Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe**

It includes knowledge, knowhow, skills and practices of the communities developed through the interaction with the natural environment and expressed through language, oral traditions, memories, spirituality and worldview. Traditional knowledge is shaped by the natural environment and in turn, strongly influences values and beliefs of the communities and lie behind many social practices and cultural traditions. This domain includes numerous areas; Traditional Ecological Wisdom, Indigenous Knowledge, Knowledge About Local Fauna And Flora, Traditional Healing Systems, Rituals and beliefs, Initiatory Rites, Cosmologies, Shamanism, Possession Rites, Social Organizations, Festivals, Languages, Visual Arts.

Many tribes of the world are rich in traditional knowledge. The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are also very rich in the domain of traditional knowledge and practices related nature and the universe. They have many traditional healing systems, indigenous worldviews, social organization that can prepare them for the life, indigenous religious beliefs, visual arts etc.

A complex system of beliefs in the spiritual qualities of nature and simultaneously conception of a Supreme Being are the two ideas that characterize the tribal religion of this state. They believe in good and evil spirits and the evil spirits are believed to be capable of causing diseases, miseries and misfortunes to human being. The idea of the soul and a spiritual existence beyond death coexist with this belief. The beliefs in malevolent and benevolent spirits and rituals performed to propitiate them, corroborated by the concept of the Supreme Being or god (called variously as Inni, Jab Malu, Matai, Nani Intaya, Ske, Rangfroa, Rangkauhauwa by different communities), constitute the animistic tribal religion. The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh believe in spirits presiding over crops, rainfall and cattle and over various diseases which are dwelling in rocks, mountains, rivers, waterfalls, trees, etc. These spirits are diligently propitiated to ward off the dangers associated with their influence. Divination is another characteristic feature where an omen is explained or attempt is made to know the future. Every tribe has its priests or shamans for performing rites and sacrifices, who is also the medicine-man of the tribe and who pass the oral tradition. A shaman has a very responsible role among the tribes who known by different names in different communities such as, Nyibu for the Adi, Tagin, Nyishi; Gampa or Giva or Rami for the Wancho etc.

Donyi-Poloism is a reappearing and returning religious idea that gets a form of religion for many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, especially for the Adis, Apatanis, Tagins and Nyishis. It has a vast mythology with all its mundane and supernatural elements. Donyi Polo is a combination of two terms – Donyi means ‘sun’ and Polo means ‘moon’. These two physical and material objects, particularly Donyi, are the source of power and energy for living beings which cannot be disputed scientifically and philosophically. Thus Donyi-Polo, the spiritual source and symbol, is believed to be the supreme power governing the universe. In the Donyi-Polo faith there is no idol or image. The concept of Donyi-Polo as god is in everybody’s heart and the followers have a deep belief...
that one’s happiness or suffering after death is the result of one’s deeds in this worldly life. If one leads a righteous life in this world, one gets a peaceful and happy life after death. There are numerous hymns and myths in Donyi-Poloism, though it has no written scripture.

The dormitory provides a place to learn the art of living in an informal manner. It gives an opportunity to young unmarried boys and girls for courtship prior to selecting a life partner. The moshup (bachelors’ dormitory) is a very important institution in Adi society, which is used as a sleeping house by all young men from the age of 10 till they take wives to their homes. The moshup is used for holding different types of feasts and festivals and meetings, especially those of the kebang. It is not only a training centre for all practical purposes but also the centre and upholder of cultural traits. The institution is called by different names by the different sub-groups of the Adis. The Minyongs call it ders, the padams term it moshup and among the Milangs and other allied groups the institution is known as ngaptek. The Boris and Ashings call it bango. The moshup is usually constructed in the centre of the village from where different approaches to it can be watched and guarded. During some festivals, girls are allowed to dance inside the moshup. The Adis have also a dormitory for girls called rasheng. It is a small hut with only one square room with a fireplace in the centre, where the adolescent and unmarried girls of the village sleep in night and return to their respective houses early in the morning. Like the moshups, and rashengs are under the supervision of a senior and experienced boy and girl respectively who maintain the discipline and are empowered to punish any defaulter. For girls, raseng is the training institution for spinning, weaving, dancing, singing and discipline. Young boys from different moshups come and join the girls in the rashengs at night and mates are selected in the process. In the Adi society marriage succeeds the selection of a life partner by the boys and the girls during their stay in the moshup and rasheng. Among the Singphos, when the girl attains puberty she is segregated from the family and provided a separate room called pinta-khak in the house. The girl's dormitory or pinta-khak is always situated towards the end of the house so that the girl and her friends may enter without being noticed by any member of the family. Among the Noctes, the boy's dormitory is called pang, but the girl's dormitory is very rare. The Wancho grown-up boys sleep in dormitories called morung, though there is no separate dormitory for the girls. Each Wancho village has several morungs for boys. Among the sub-groups of the Tangsas, the Mukloms have a girls’ dormitory.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh have their own traditional methods of diagnosis and cure, and they have faith in their own medicine-men and priests. According to their beliefs, the diseases are caused by evil spirits and therefore, can be cured only by spiritual means. In case of any illness, fowls, pigs and mithums are sacrificed to appease the evil spirits who are believed to have caused it. Herbs, roots and leaves of wild plants are used by them as preventives against indigestion, stomach trouble, cut and wounds, diarrhea and dysentery. The village physicians have in their processions some really effective local herbs for the treatment of the patients (Dutta Chaudhury, 1981:318). Some of the common herbal remedies are:

Baye - It is a kind of ginger root chewed up by patient subfreezing from dysentery, diarrhea and flatulence. The Monpas, Sherdukpons and Khowas use this root as a cure.
Changmo - The Khowas use it with warm ghee as an analgesic for sprain and joint pain.

Somharu - A kind of creeper that is cut to pieces and boiled and then its juice is applied as medicine for the snake bite among the Noctes.

**Traditional craftsmanship**

Perhaps the most tangible manifestation of intangible cultural heritage is traditional craftsmanship, though it is mainly concerned with the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft products themselves. The objects are varied in form and type— from delicate, detailed art to rugged and sturdy tasks and from used for a short time, such as for festive events to the objects that are passed from generation to generation. There are numerous forms of traditional craftsmanship: tools; clothing and jewellery; costumes and props for festivals and performing arts; storage containers, objects used for storage, transport and shelter; decorative art and ritual objects; musical instruments, household utensils and toys, both for amusement and education.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh present an extraordinary tradition of artistic craftsmanship which manifests itself through their various products. From the perspective of art and crafts, the region may be divided into three zones. The Buddhist tribes include in the first zone, the second cultural zone occupies the central part from East Kameng to Lohit and the third zone is formed by the south-eastern part of the state. A variety of crafts i.e. weaving, painting, pottery, smithy work, wood carving, bamboo-work and cane-work are practiced by the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

The people of the first zone make beautiful masks. Beautiful woolen carpets, woolen and yak-hair caps, shoes, painted wooden vessels and silver articles are the specialties of the Monpas. They are also experts at dyeing and painting. Wooden masks are made by the Khambas and Membas. In the second zone, the people are skilled in cane and bamboo work. The Nyishis, Apatanis, Hill Miris and Adis make beautiful articles from these materials, like Hats of different sizes and shapes, various kinds of baskets and a variety of cane belts and necklaces. The people of the third zone, i.e., the Khamptis, Wanchos, Noctes are famous for their wood carving work. The Khamptis make beautiful religious images, toys and other objects. The Noctes and Wanchos make beautiful strings of beads with attractive patterns and carve beautiful bamboo pipes and human and animal figures.

Making silver ornaments is the specialty of the Idu Mishmis of Dibang Valley. The shawls and jackets of the Apatanis, the Adi skirts or gales, jackets and shoulder bags and the Mishmi coats and shawls are reflective of the weaving talents and artistic sense of these people.

The ornaments worn by the people of Arunachal Pradesh vary from one community to another. Some of them tattoo their bodies, while others colour their teeth to decorate themselves. Man and woman, both wear ornaments. The ornaments are made of silver, costly beads and shell. The Tangsa men wear a few coloured beads strung on a copper wire, on their ear-lobes and the Tangsa women wear a number of bead necklaces of different sizes. Tattooing is practiced among the Hrusso women. The Adi women wear heavy yellow necklaces, and iron copper bracelets. The Wancho men wear bead necklaces decorated with human figurine and other
symbols of hunting. The traditional identifying mark for the Apatani women is the yapinghule (wooden nose plug) worn on both sides of the nose. Like their men, the Nishi women wear numerous strings of multi-coloured beads and a couple of brass or silver rings on the fingers. Among the Noctes, the chiefs wear costly bead necklaces which cannot be worn by others.

The style and format of an indigenous dress is the product of a long interaction between the people and their ecological setting. Usually they make their own clothing. The different ethnic groups of Arunachal Pradesh, in spite of belonging to the greater fold of Mongoloids, mostly have a distinct style and fashion regarding their dress. This is manifested in their choice or selection of the colour for the fabrication of embroidery and the shape and size of their costumes. The dress is similar in all the Mahayana Buddhist communities, but they have different names for them. Among the Buddhist groups of Eastern Arunachal, the Khampti men generally wear the chyu (a tight-fitting cotton jacket) and fanoi (lungi), usually checkered and patterned with green, red, violet and black. They also wear a white turban. The female dress consists of the sein (black shirt), Khenyao (a long sleeved jacket) and longwat (embroidered waist cloth).

The Digaru Mishmi men use the ting (a sleeveless coat), athu (loincloth) and kahang (turban), while the Idu Mishmis use the Kathu, etoyo and apatolo (cap made of cane). The women of these communities wear the tinga (blouse), kajunging (shawl) and galsai (jacket), respectively. The male garment of the Nishis consists of a coarse loincloth and a blanket whereas the Nyishi women wear a skirt with a green striped border and the upper part of their body is covered with a blanket. The Adi dresses have slight distinction in colour and decoration among the sub-groups, the Ashings, Boris, Bokars, Gallongs, Padams and Minyongs. The Singpho men wear the haka (checkered lungi), palong (skirt), longka (jacket) and a boong bam (turban), while the women wear the jookang (skirt), ningwal (waist band), palang (blouse) and bapai (lower dress). The traditional male dress of the Noctes consists of numerous cane belts round the waist, a strip of cloth worn in the fashion of a longoti (loincloth) and bamboo rings worn round the legs and arms. The Nocte women wear a skirt, usually white or black in colour.

**Socio-cultural Change: Disappearing Intangible Cultural Heritages or Reappearance in a new form?**

The close interaction with nature and the ability to adapt and adjust with surroundings have considerably influenced the lifestyles of the communities of Arunachal Pradesh. This ability of adaption and interaction with nature is visible in their distinctive social structures: family, kinship, marriage institutions, economic life, political organization and so on. However, over time social and economic transformation has taken place in the state and it reflects in their traditional socio-cultural structure ([Arunachal Pradesh development report](#), 2009). The traditional socio-cultural structure of Arunachal Pradesh has undergone tremendous changes in the post independence period with the new politico-administrative configuration. Today changes are visible everywhere, whether it is in economy, polity, education, material or other elements of culture, religious beliefs and practices. These changes collectively made an impact on the traditional socio-cultural structures. The old social structures do not exist anymore in their pristine state and new elements have seeped into the old patterns very rapidly ([Arunachal Pradesh development report](#), 2009).
Arunachal Pradesh has changed to a considerable extent and the changes can have seen in all the domains of intangible cultural heritage.

In Arunachal Pradesh, though each community has a voluminous oral literature, the common man of the these communities knows very little about them and they depend on their priests who preserved the mythical tradition on their memories. Bagra (2005) noticed that modern education is the root cause behind this dependence and gradual disappearance of oral traditions from Arunachal Pradesh. The younger generation is going away from their traditional social atmosphere with the fast economic and political movement and the growing challenges of change which affects oral traditions in such a way that these traditions may evaporate along with elderly people of the society (Pandey and Duarah, eds., 1999). Sarkar (1980) argues that diffusion and acculturation is behind the changing patterns of the performing arts, especially dance forms in Arunachal Pradesh. The traditional legal system is changed as the administrative structure is changed in Arunachal Pradesh and villages are now under the Panchayatiraj. Food habits are also changing rapidly in the Arunachal Pradesh and the people have now adjusted to new food products such as sweets, oil and spice (Chakrabarty, 1981). Individual ownership in cultivable land is gaining importance over community ownership and the traditional consumption pattern of the people have changed which has led to an increase in the demand of cash. The traditional economic systems have become non-compatible with the market systems and with the introduction of monetary system; economy has witnessed a fundamental transformation (Arunachal Pradesh development report, 2009:193).

Behind these socio-cultural changes, multiple forces are working together, though their intensities vary from one tribe to another. In Arunachal Pradesh, the emergence and expansion of modern education, the extension of agricultural lands and settled agriculture, the increasing popularity of new religions, introduction of new politico-administrative structure by nation, new economy system based on cash and mostly, the urge of younger generation to join in a global life that is far from their own traditions and customs weakens the older tie with nature and surroundings, which have resulted in these changes.

As any living body, intangible cultural heritage follows a life cycle and therefore some elements are must to disappear, but after having given birth to new forms of expressions. Perhaps, certain forms of intangible cultural heritage are no longer considered relevant or meaningful for the community itself. Arunachal Pradesh stands on the threshold of a total socio-cultural transformation which changed the forms of intangible cultural heritages of these communities. However, whether the transformation will force intangible cultural heritages to disappear or accepting the nature of cultural change, the heritages will appear in new forms, will only depend on the people themselves.
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