

## **Indigenous Knowledge System Associated with Hunting among the Padams of Arunachal Pradesh, India**

Queenbala Marak & Jintu Kalita

(Department of Anthropology, North-Eastern Hill University)

Hunting refers to the art of searching and killing of wild animals by using different tools and techniques, and by application of different strategies. It refers not only to the killing of animals for game as was done by kings and noblemen, but also for the safety of people from predators, and most commonly as a form of acquiring food for consumption. As a method of food acquisition, it is one of the oldest forms of traditional practices; and it is assumed that humans have learnt the art of hunting long before they learnt to domesticate animals and plants and built houses.

Hunting has played an important role in the pursuit of economy for humans and their social life, and is considered the oldest form of economic pursuit. The technical skills, knowledge of weapons and devices associated with economic pursuits including hunting are the evidence of development of humans. During the prehistoric times, hunting was done mainly by using stone and wooden tools. But with the passage of time and due to the development and evolution of human civilization, new tools, weapons, method and techniques were developed. Hunting people require technical competence, despite their simplicity, to hunt or trap animals. Wildlife is an important resource for those communities that live in and around forests and is exploited for various reasons, including food, additional income, cultural practices and as a sport (Aiyadurai, 2011). In the life of a tribal people, hunting not only becomes a source of acquiring food and for economic reasons, but hunting is also considered as a favorite activity among individuals as well as groups. Furthermore, the primacy of hunting is that, while it does not bring in the most food everywhere, it produces the kind of food that most people like it best. The majority of the people which belong to north-east India have a rich natural resource which includes animals, which are thus seen as source of food for many communities.

Hunting is a practice that is known to all parts of the world irrespective of people. But due to different geographical locations, climates and resources, the application of the techniques and methods of killing or catching of animals using traps and other methods differs. This paper discusses the traditional knowledge systems associated with hunting among the Padams, a tribe from Arunachal Pradesh who still continue to have their own traditional methods of hunting. It discusses its survival against changes taking place and concludes that it is so since it is intrinsically connected to their cultural tradition. This paper is based on a field study undertaken in January 2013 in Bolung village in Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Padams are a sub-tribe of the Adi group formerly known as the Abor; and thus along with the Millangs, Komkars, Pasis, Pangi, Shimong, Bokar Palibo Ramo, Karko, Bori and Minyongs they collectively call themselves the Adi. The Adi constitute a major group and inhabit the lower part of Lower Dibang Valley district especially Roing and Dambuk areas. These groups perform and celebrate the same rituals and festivals, though they speak different dialects. The Padams residing in the study area believe that they originated from Pedong Nane the creator of the universe and mother of all, the earliest ancestor being Keyum. It is said that from Keyum came Yumka, from Yumka came Kasing, followed by Siang, Abo, Bomuk, Mukseng, Sedi, Dilling, Litung, Tuye, Yepe, and Pedong. The Padam believe Sedi or Sedi-Melo as the creator or god. Pedong Nane gave birth (created) to the vegetations, rivers, insects, birds, animals, spirits and Tani (Nibo) the youngest son from whom the Padams sprang.

### **Hunting among the Padams**

Even though hunting of wild animals has gone down, it still continues to be an important constituent of the Padam food procuring practices. What stands out from the different communities living around them is that it is also intrinsically connected to various rituals and festivals. Mainly two types of hunting can be differentiated. Communal hunting, which takes place on some occasion and of big animals; and individual hunting, which takes place for both big and small animals and does not require any occasion.

Padams usually go hunting in parties. Whenever a hunt is decided upon, the villagers are alerted by the volunteers of the village headman (*gam/gaon burab*) by wandering the whole village and passing on the information. They usually do not go far to hunt except in an emergency, in which case the village headman has to be informed failing which a fine is levied. This process is called *gumlet* in local dialect. Initially, a survey is done by experienced village elders to find out the best suitable places for hunting the animals. This is called *sipo*. Some hunters make a makeshift platform (*sung*) on the trees and lay in wait in the path of the animal. With proper planning they make some noise in the jungle and the animal runs into the path where the hunters are lying in wait. If the animal is killed on the spot then the hunter(s) calls out shrilly “*ooiii habb... ooiii baabb... ooiii baabb...*”. This shout depends on the size of the animal, for if the animal is small three shouts are made and if the animal is big then five shouts are made. These shouts are to inform and alert the other hunters in the area. The dead animal is then carried into the communal hall (*moshup*) of the village and cut up in a systematic way, some parts of which are distributed (to the headman first), while some left to dry over the fire and stored. For the Padams, meat and local beer are important components in a festival. So in the past, for meat they had to go hunting before a festival; the main festivals being *Aran*, *Peme*, and *Solung*. Even today, before the *Solung* festival the village headman informs the villagers through the volunteers that they can go for hunting for more than five nights.

**Strategies adopted according to Game:** Interestingly the Padams have different hunting strategies for different animals. These are discussed as below.

- **Reindeers:** First, they observe the position where the reindeer mostly graze and accordingly they construct the *sung* (platform above the trees) out of bamboo. This *sung* is made wide enough because it might be used as a sleeping place at night while waiting for the reindeer(s) to appear; At other times, they have to shoot in a standing position, and even slight touching of a leaf will create some sound. Thus the “correct” construction of this platform is rather important. They also make a bamboo implement for urination at night called *sunga* so that they do not have to descend the platform.

Salty water is an attraction to reindeers, so the Padam hunters boil some water with salt, and using a stick to make a long empty space in the ground, they place the boiled salty water. The selection and location of this pit is made within the range of the hunter. The seeds of the rubber tree are also a favorite of reindeers; therefore the hunter sometimes makes the *sung* on the rubber tree. Some reindeers go to the river side to have an alga called *belei* and so the *sung* might be set up near the river. Reindeers can see 100 metres away in such type of open space and when they bend their heads then they can see upto a height of 15 to 20 feet. So in the open spaces, the hunter makes the *sung* above the trees beyond the range of the reindeers’ vision.

The reindeers are said to be the “most intelligent” of all animals, and thus it is difficult to hunt a reindeer. The same method(s) are used in the hunting of deer and antelopes.

- **Porcupines:** The hunting of porcupine is not like other animals. It is a small animal not more than 15 kg in weight, and the body is covered with thorns. Other animals or men cannot attack this animal easily for when the enemy approaches they use their thorns like the bullet of a gun. They can attack their enemies even at a distance of 6 metres. For this kind of animal hunt the Padams use a long stick at the end of which they tightly tie a knife or sword to spear and kill the animal.
- **Wild Pigs:** Wild pigs are supposedly “not intelligent” unlike the reindeer. Therefore, the hunter can hunt a wild pig from a very close distance. This range can be from 10 to 2 metres. For the hunting of wild pigs the hunter should know and understand the direction of air flow. For this, they use a little sand in their finger tips and let the sand fall. By this way they can know about the air direction. If a pig is in one direction then they do not stay in the same direction. This is so because wild pigs are good in recognizing the smell of humans, and if humans are lying in wait in an area where the air/wind is blowing, then getting the smell of humans the wild pigs will run away. Thus the Padams mostly hunt pigs in the forest, and not in the open space, since the impact of wind is very less in the dense forest.

- **Tigers:** For hunting tigers, the hunters break up in two parties; one goes out to locate the place where a tiger is hiding and the other sets to build a *sung* on the trees; sufficiently high above the ground so as to be out of the reach of the tiger. The first party encircles the forest and raises a loud noise and gradually closes their ring on the spot where the tiger is. The tiger starts up at the noise, and tries to escape in the opposite direction and is thus driven unaware to the place where the hunters wait for it with bows and arrows. If the beat is successful, and the tiger turns up, the hunters on the *sung* shoot it with poisoned arrows, either killing or injuring it. When it gets away wounded, the hunters wait patiently till it succumbs to the action of the poison.

After sometime the hunters climb down from the *sung*, join the beaters and start searching for the dead animal. There are several rites to be performed after the kill is traced out, and before the hunters return to the village with their trophy. The man, whose arrow first hits the tiger, is not allowed to enter his house, except after a scheduled time limit, at the end of which he is to observe certain rites.

- **Elephants:** For an elephant, the Padams first make a *sung* at the height of 15 feet if they want to hunt the elephant according to their pre-plan. Then, when the elephant passes by, they use arrows to hunt it. Sometimes they follow the steps of the elephant and use the ball type of bullet to kill it in a safe place. At other times, they use a poisonous arrow in the ball and follow the steps of the elephant. The elephant hit by a poisoned arrow will die within a week.

**Other strategies adopted:** There are other important strategies adopted by the Padams when they hunt.

- **Marking the location:** Sometimes the hunters go to the dense forest in the day in order to familiarize. For when they go for hunt in the night they might forget their way. During the day when they go into the forest they notice some landmarks like trees and make some identification mark there on the tree. They select trees which can be noticed from far away. Experienced hunter(s) always notices stars, and by the size and direction of the stars they know the time, and their whereabouts. The sound of river/stream is also a key indicator for hunting in the jungle, since they can hear the sound of river from 1.5 km away, and one can easily locate himself by the sound and direction of the river.
- **Walking inside the jungle:** It is said that whilst hunting, the men should walk like the elephant. For it is said that deer and reindeers walk this way, that is zigzag, and not straight like the way of men. Sometimes while looking for a prey they may walk from 200 metres upto 5 kms, and the length of the way depends on the size of the forest. While walking they should place their steps very carefully, and if possible walk barefoot and not with shoes. After one or two steps they should wait two to three minutes and observe the movements of the jungle, and listen to the sound of the tree leaves. In doing so, if an animal approaches they will know even before seeing it.
- **Careful in making noise or shooting:** At the time of hunting the hunters have to reload the gun with bullets. While doing so the safety-case in the gun produces some noise, which can alert the prey. Therefore the hunter has to take utmost care when reloading the gun. After shooting they have to follow the animal by their foot prints. If the animal is alive then he has to be careful while approaching it, otherwise the animal can again attack the hunter.
- **Important items to carry:** On a hunt, some light bedding, ration, rice beer, cigarette, and some utensils are carried along. At present they take some readymade and metal utensils too, but earlier utensils were made from bamboo while waiting for the prey to appear. These days, they go for hunting with bikes and cars, and leave their vehicles outside the forest and trek inside the jungle carrying all the necessary items.
- **Camping near water:** Water is very necessary for a camp, so usually they set up camp near the river. After making the camp they make a small fire, the smoke being an indication that someone is in that area for hunting. Seeing this, no Padam will go near the spot and disturb the hunters.
- **Examining the location:** Before the hunter goes for a kill, he has to properly examine the location that he chose to go to, for two reasons which includes - whether he can find any kill, and how to be best protected from bigger animals.

**Hunting Implements:** The Padams use different implements to hunt. They mostly use traps, many improvised and manufactured from locally available materials. They traditionally use bow and arrows, along with the *dao* (iron chopper). Today however guns have become popular due to its efficacy in killing.

- *Bows and Arrows*: This is a traditional weapon used in olden times and rarely used today. They hold their bows almost perpendicularly, gripping it by the left hand, the string towards their body. The arrow is held in the right hand. Many times, the arrows are poisoned to be effective.
- *Guns*: These are newer implements but most popular and effective. They use two types of gun for hunting - single barrel and double barrel. Indian made guns are available for Rs. 25,000-60,000 and foreign made guns are price upto Rs. 1,60,000. For big animals like the elephant they use a ball bullet while for smaller animals they use bullets like LD and No. 1 Sera.
- *Traps Used*: The Padams use a large number of traps. These include:
- *Nnkig* (pit) is a simple trap dug on the frequented way of the animal. Some sharp bamboo sticks smeared with poison is placed within the pit, and the pit is then covered with grass and twigs. These pits were used for capturing big animals.
- *Etku* (noose trap) is a bow-shaped noose trap. At one end of the bow is made a small triangle by means of cane or bamboo strips. On the other end of the bow is fixed a string with a wooden spike. In order to set the trap, the bow is given tension by fixing the wooden spike lightly inside the triangle forming a noose, on which the bait is placed. As a bird, attracted by the bait sits on the noose its weight presses the wooden spike and releases the bow which shoots up and strangles the bird in between the string and the side of the triangle. This trap is usually fixed on the branches of trees near paddy fields or on such trees which the birds generally frequent for fruits.
- *Sankit* (noose trap) is meant for catching porcupines and hares. A small rope noose is fixed at the mouth of the burrows in which the animals live. The noose is worked through a system of lever, so that when the animal attempts to pass out of its burrow attracted by the baits outside, it has no other way left than to pass along with the noose. The spike fixed to a bent branch of a tree along with the noose is let loose by the animal and as it shoots up in the air with a jerk, it strangles the animal.
- *Egum* is used for killing rats. A box like cage is made with two sides closed with iron spikes. The base is made of wood. A stone is supported on the top of the box by means of two bamboo sticks which are adjusted to the baits inside. As soon as the rat gets inside the cage through the open passage and touches the bait the two bamboo sticks supporting the heavy stone gives way and the animal is crushed inside the cage.
- *Trap for elephant*: The strategy they used earlier was a combination of force with an arrow. At first the hunter would prepare an arrow measuring 15-20 feet which they would strap it against the trees making a huge acceleration of force which would at least take 5-10 people to tie it. A small thread is placed in the path of the kill, and when the elephant steps on it, the arrow would be released and it would directly strike the animal.

### **Hunting and Rituals**

Hunting is a cultural tradition for the Padams. Most of the men in the studied village either hunt or have hunted in the past. It being a part of their tradition, they follow certain norms, values, and ritual activities connected to hunting. Most of these ritual activities are done before hunting. After the hunt is complete, the procured meat is distributed and either consumed immediately or stored through preservation methods to be consumed in the future.

***Robo: The “Lord” of the Jungle***: The Adis of whom the Padams are a sub-tribe believe that there is a “lord” in/of the jungle who is the lord of all animals living in the jungle, and the care taker of all the animals. This “lord” is an invisible and malevolent power residing in the jungle. Padam lore narrates that in the past, Niibo and Robo were two brothers, and from Niibo descended the human beings and from Robo the spirits including malevolent spirits. The descendents of Niibo is Tani, ie., humans and from Robo is Epom a malevolent spirit. Robo and Epom are invisible spirits dwelling in the jungle and are the lords of the animals and cause harm to human beings. These spirits have to be appeased before every hunt so that the hunters are not harmed when they enter the jungle.

When the Padams go for hunt, they offer eggs, areca nut, betel leaf, rice beer (*apong*), ginger, ginger juice, chicken, *beedi*, cigarette etc to the “lord” of the jungle on a banana leaf. For daily use, the Padams use the banana leaf on the side where the colour is darker, but the hunter when making an offering to the power in the jungle places all items on the opposite side of the banana leaf. They divide it into three pieces and place it in such a way

that it points towards the direction where they will go for the hunt. If that invisible power accepts all the offerings then they will be successful in hunt and will return safe from the hunt. Otherwise there could be accidents leading to death.

Our key informant from the Kartek family in Bolung narrated a story wherein he met this “lord” of the jungle, the invisible malevolent power called Robo. 15 years ago he had gone hunting to Balijaan with a friend and had successfully hunted two wild pigs and was waiting for one more game, when he suddenly noticed a shining light above him at a gap of about 15-20 feet. He heard an unnatural sound too and realized that it was the spirit of Robo. He was scared for he knew that humans lose their mental stability after experiencing this so he desperately tried to think of a way to leave the place. He then remembered his grandfather telling him as a child that there is an invisible power in urine, and that it can fight this invisible power of the jungle. So he urinated and made a circle around him with his urine. He removed his gun and sword and smeared it with urine. It was for his safety for according to their belief no invisible power can attack him within that circle, but beyond that, the power can harm him. He knew he could not stay the whole night in that place, so he came down from the *sung* and after trying out three times the right direction back to the camp, he immediately ran as fast as he could.

**Collecting Emo:** There is one other ritual which some of the older generation talked about in traditional hunting. In traditional hunting they use bows and arrows, and the arrows were usually poisoned. In olden times, this poison (*emo*) was collected from Alang Pahar near Mariang town in Upper Siang District. The Padams believe that an invisible power resides in the places where *emo* is found. That power does not allow easy access to *emo* and so in olden times they had to follow some rituals to procure it. They first pray at the village temple, and approach a priest who knows how and in what manner to pray to the spirit, and along with him they go towards the jungle but do not enter it. They believe that at the boundary the invisible power uses a language which is known only to the power and the priest. They also believe that if the Padams use their local language there then they would suffer in different ways. Sometimes as punishment the head of the people might rotate, sometimes the weather could automatically change, and sometimes they would fall sick and never recover. At this place, the priest prays to the power to let them enter the jungle. Once the rituals are over, the people enter and collect the raw *emo* which looks like yam. They then proceed to mash it up and collect the juice. At this juncture, it is simply juice and if someone drank it, nothing will happen. Then the priest prays over this juice, and after 3 to 4 hours a strange smell emanates from it which indicates that the poison has formed. The party then returns to the village temple and again the priest prays. Thereafter an arrow head is immersed in the poisoned liquid and covered with a banana leaf. Today however there is no use of bows and arrows in the village, since poisons are not available in the village, and once poisons are used the meat cannot be consumed.

**Distribution of Meat:** Distributions of meat are different in community hunting and individual hunting. In community hunting, earlier the meat was distributed according to one's age and status. The “elders” got the “best” meat while the others got the “low” quality of meat. Today this process of meat distribution is not followed. Rather meat is distributed equally. In individual hunting too if there are 2 or 3 hunters then meat is distributed equally. If a gun had to be borrowed for the hunt, then the hunter who borrowed had to give a part of his share to the owner of the gun. Once a successful hunting party returns then some relatives and friends are invited for a celebration. The invited guests should come carrying some gifts such as chicken, pork, beef, other meat, rice beer etc., failing which it is considered ill-mannered and a great shame. If sufficient meat remains after the celebration, some might be distributed among the neighbours, if not then none is distributed.

In the case of reindeers and wild pigs, the first part carved out is the *mishi*. *Mishi* is a part of meat which is from the limbs, and has to be given to the eldest hunter. *Kolkol* is a part of meat which belongs to the chest and is given to the next hunter in rank. *Tarong* refers to the meat of the hip bone and is given to the next hunter. *Kebyak* is that part of meat which belongs to the stomach and is given to the younger hunter(s). *Gasi* is the long meat of the back bone and shared among the younger hunter(s). The method followed while cutting the head of the hunted animal is called *Tuk Yo* (*Tuk* meaning “skull” and *Yo* meaning “skin”). *Tuk Yo* refers to the method of cutting off the head and removal of skin before the rest of the meat is cut.

Excess meat is usually preserved for later use. First the meat is cut into chunks and dried over the fire. After it is semi-dried, it is placed *beyen*, a bamboo structure placed over the fireplace. At times they also use *apey* a small bamboo container where they store the meat. In this manner meat can be preserved upto 2 years even though in actual practice it is not kept for so long.

**Hunting and Festivals:** Traditionally hunting was a part and parcel of festivals among the Padams. The Adis of which the Padams are a sub-tribe have three important festivals, which include *Aaran*, *Peme* and *Solung*.

The festival of *Aaran* is also called the “rat hunting” festival and is celebrated in the month of March (*Gimmur-Kombong*). It starts from the 1st of March and continues throughout the month. This is celebrated after the completion of house construction, to mark the change of seasons, and the beginning of the seasonal *jhum* cultivation. The main event of the *Aaran* festival consists of four days. On the 7th day of March, *Aaranpidum* is celebrated. During this festival the men go for hunting starting from the 1st of March, and they hunt rats, deer, wild boar etc. The hunters come home on the 7th day, and carry along all the animals that were hunted to the *ganggin* (temple) to perform rituals and prayers, followed by a feast. On this occasion, exchange of gifts takes place among the relatives. The hunters offer rats and other animals hunted to female relatives who in turn offer *apong* (rice beer). On the 10th day *Aaranlungak* is celebrated. *Lungak* means “Rituals for wealth of *mithun*”. On this day family members gather animals such as cow, and *mithun*, tie them at a post in front of their house, and make a cut on the ears of the animals marking it as their own. Again, some people bring *sotkia* (rope) from the jungle to bind the animals which are to be sacrificed. On the 13th day, *Yakejonyume* is celebrated. On this day a stick made out of wood known as *yakejong* (tree found in the forest) is collected and carried by dance troops who organize themselves into different age groups, and go around house to house performing *yakejong* dance and *delong* dance. These dancers are offered *apong* and meat, and it is believed that those houses who do not offer them anything will be cursed. On the 16th day *Petpummyume* is celebrated. This day is meant for the *aggam* (fortune) of the pigs so that their pigs will increase in number. On this day they sacrifice chicken and offer it to their children and neighbours who consume outside the house. During this a ritual is performed in which the woman of the house play-act like a pig and children act like piglets. This ritual is not mandatory but is performed by those who think their pigs are not well and thus for their welfare it is conducted. Thus the *Aaran* festival which is done to invoke blessings and *aggam* (fortune) for their homes and families, actually begins with the communal hunting of rats.

“*Peme*” means “new food grains”. The festival of *Peme* is usually held after the harvest which starts from 7th of November (Nüsang). *Kiinaane* (Goddess of paddy) is worshipped during this festival. During this festival *duar* (youth) of the village go for five days of hunting from the 2nd day of November and return on the 7th day. No pigs are killed during this festival, and it is the hunted meat which forms the main meal during this festival. Chicken and buffalo are killed by those who do not hunt. After the hunt on the 8th day all members of the family are restricted from going out of their house or to do any heavy household work. They observe it as the day of rest. From the 12th to the 14th day of November the men go for community hunting (*kiruk-ruk dung*). The animals hunted are given to the *pathormuching* (village elders) as gifts, and *apong* (rice beer) is taken during the festival which is prepared by the women. During the festival a ritual is performed by wives and grandmothers in which fresh ginger leaves (*take kemung*) are hung at the entrance of every house in order to prevent the entry of evil spirits. The rats hunted during community hunting (*kiruk-ruk dung*) are gifted along with *apong* by the men to their maternal uncles.

The word “*solung*” is derived from the combination of two words, “*Eso*” meaning “*mithun*” and “*along*” meaning “together”. There are two types of *Solung* festival – *Lune* and *Etor*. The *Lune* is mainly for women and is celebrated in the month of *yio* (September) after the last weeding and before harvest. The purpose of this festival is to ensure good harvest as well as the welfare of the people. This festival lasts for seven days. During this festival *Kiinaane* (Goddess of paddy) is worshipped in order to invoke her blessing for a rich harvest. On the first day pigs and *mithun* are sacrificed and this day is known as *Ardo-Bado*. The second day is a day of feast also called *Yekling Yekkekeng* in which a feast with family and kin is held. On the third day, *ponung* (traditional dance) is performed which is led by the *miri* (priest). *Abang* (traditional song) is sung by the *miri* while the girls repeat the first line in chorus before every new line, and dance to the rhythm. On the fourth day, women go to the field, dig a pit and put the intestines of the sacrificed pig, rice paste and *apong* to appease *Kiinaane* for good harvest. This day is called *Binyak Bidì* meaning “time for offering”. On the fifth day, the men prepare small bows and arrows, apply pig’s fats on it and hang on the front door of each house. This is done to prevent the evil spirits from entering their houses. This day is called *Binyak Nyo Gap*. On the sixth day all the members of the house stay back at home, and no one is allowed to go out of the house and the outsiders are also not allowed to come in order to prevent the entry of evil spirit into their homes. This day is called *Binyak Nyome* which means “time for fasting”. On the seventh day, people collect swarms (insects) from the paddy and perform rituals on the insects so that they will have rich harvest. This day is called *Ekeop* or *taktor* in which a

ceremony is performed to ward off evil spirits who might be tempted to visit the village in search of the blood of sacrificed animals and might inflict harm and trouble on man. Bows and arrows tipped with pieces of ginger are hung over the entrance of homes and at the gates leading to the village. The main events take place on these seven days though the Padams continue to celebrate the festival throughout the month.

“Etor” in Adi language means “fencing”, and the Etor festival is celebrated to mark the construction of big circular fencings around the village in order to prevent their domesticated animals from going out of the village and damaging their crops. Ladders are built across the fencing for people to go in and out of the fencing, and the construction of fencing is carried out on a communal basis. The purpose of this festival is to ensure that the *mithuns* and cows kept inside the fenced area are well and free from disease and death and to reproduce more. *Solung Etor* is celebrated in the month of *Kjir* (May), and mostly men participate in this festival. During this festival *Dadi Bote* (God of animals), the husband of *Kiinenaane* (Goddess of paddy) is revered. *Dadi Bote* is considered as the caretaker of the animals and thus pigs, cows, *mithun* etc. are sacrificed and later consumed by people in a subsequent feast. This festival begins on the 15th of May, on which day people kill *ek* (pigs) in the whole village. The *ladig* (thighs) and *lakdik* (shoulder) portion of the pig is taken and kept aside in the kitchen, which the *duars* (youth) of the village go house to house to collect the meat noting down their names, taking to the *Moshup* (community hall/morung). This day is called *Yegul*. The second day is called *Gampu* in which a communal feast takes place at the *Moshup*. On this day *patormuching* (elderly man) is chosen to check the meat, and the smallest package of meat is identified and is given back to the owner and a bigger one or money is demanded. The *duars* (youths) are asked to cook a portion of meat in the *Moshup* and is eaten along with *apong* (local rice beer). The remaining portion is given to the *patormuching* (elders) to cook in their own house and to be brought to the *Moshup* on the next day. The next day i.e. the 17th of May is called *Solung Nuti* on which day people construct fencing on this day. The meat cooked by the *patormuching* (elders) are given to those constructing the fence especially the *duars* (youths). After the completion of fencing they perform war dance (*mimak*) from the starting point of fencing to the other end of the village. If the village is big enough then they continue the same the next day i.e. on 18th day of May. This day is called *Solung Nuyin*. On the 20th day *Lungak Apong Tondi* is celebrated which means “day of preparation of *apong* for ritual”. On this day the *patormuching* brings *apong* along with the meat that was given to them to cook on the day of *gampu* to the *moshup* and the people continue to feast.

## Discussion

Hunting is not only an important economic activity for the Padams but also a part of culture and tradition. This is an activity that is solely meant to be followed by men and boys. It is a male activity, and women are not allowed to hunt. Women go only for fishing and food gathering. The Padam society does not allow women to hunt with guns, bows and arrows etc. Thus this labour distinction is very strictly maintained. Today, compared to 10 years ago, there are fewer places where can. Not only has population pressure and modernization impacted the hunting grounds and the wild animals, but there are more hunters and fewer animals to hunt as well. If there are 3 or 4 boys in a family under the age of 18 years, some of them are prepared by the village elders for hunting in their childhood. However, they do not allow their children to go for hunt alone because of their young age. First they accompany the elders and learn the different ways and means of hunting by following the elders. Thus the elders teach the youngsters the use of various weapons and traps, and the young are always eager to accompany hunting parties whenever they get an opportunity. Sachin Roy (1960: 141) says, “Young children are also allowed to join in group hunting parties by beating the forest and they always carry bows and arrows”. Today however young children do not generally accompany hunting parties. There are different strategies of hunting which have to be first learned by all hunters when he is young. For hunting they have to know how to make camp, how to make a *sung* and where they have to make it on a tree and on which tree. They should know how to make a proper plan for hunting. But young boys would not know any of these, so they would have to go with their elders for quite a number of times before they can actually learn.

Interestingly among the Padams different strategies of hunting are seen. In the strategies followed, a number of traditional knowledge systems are embedded and practiced, which have passed on from the older generation to the younger. As discussed earlier, even the setting up and construction of a *sung* (bamboo platform) on which to lie in wait for the animal to approach depends on many factors. For tigers and reindeers the platform has to be higher – so that the former cannot jump up and reach, and the latter cannot spy the hunter for it is said to be longsighted. For hunting a wild pig, they take care not to stand in the way of the airflow for a small whiff of human odour will make the pigs bolt. They also use a number of locally made traps to catch

animals such as the squirrels and rats which are not only a delicacy but also an important part of their rituals and ceremonies. Squirrel hunting in traps still remain a significant game among the Padams for squirrels are not only eaten regularly but are also gifted as presents to the father-in-law by the bridegroom in marriage. Thus it is seen that hunting becomes a part and parcel of many festivals such as the *Aaran*, *Peme* and *Solung* discussed in detail earlier. In these festivals hunted meat forms the main constituent of all feasts and gift giving too takes place. For instance in the *Aaran* festival, the hunters offer hunted rats to their female relatives who in turn offer rice beer to the men. Communal hunting such as *kiruk-ruk-dung* plays a central role in such festivals.

Besides being a part of rituals and festivals, hunting is of great significance. It is considered a male activity prestigious only next to war. It has social significance because a good hunter enjoys special status. He is much respected and talked of with great reverence. Such a hunter is remembered even after death. Many hunting trophies (such as the reindeer antlers) find their way into their houses as decoration and a constant reminder of their bravery and valour, as well as adorn their headgears (such as the beak of birds like the hornbill, and the tusks of wild boar). The hunters display their trophies not only in their homes but also gift it to the *moshup* which is well recognized by the society (Nyori 1993). These trophies decorate their graves after death too and it is believed that these trophies will elevate their status even in their afterlife.

Today the hunting areas have dwindled, but are still public land. Hunting areas near Bolung include Gator, Barok, Pasum, Sukanala, Solong, Lotung, Kirim etc. These places are forest areas near the village. Beyond this place there is another hunting area called Balijaan, on the way to Tezu. Balijaan is an area larger than the area of Bolung village, and is a popular hunting ground. Most of hunters from Bolung as well as different places like Mizu-Mismi Hills, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh etc go for hunting there. However recently, some areas were occupied by the Mishmi community. Therefore, when they go for hunting in those areas then they have to inform the people of that community, and seek prior permission.

Despite efforts of the Forest Department hunting still continues though it has reduced to a large extent. This reduction is likely not due to the efforts of the Forest Department or NGOs but rather due to the fact that the number of animals has gone down in the forests and there are very few animals available for hunt. Another reason could be that meat is now readily available in the market as well as at home since many rear pigs, chicken, buffalo etc at home. The Forest Department organizes meetings and awareness programs on conservation of wildlife time to time. But during the Adi festivals the hunters always go for hunt in the jungle. This fact is known to the Forest Department but they do not interfere much since they too understand the significance of these hunts.

## Conclusion

Hunting is an important economic activity worldwide. However due to many conservation efforts it has gone down tremendously in regions that were once dominantly hunting. However, in Arunachal Pradesh in North-East India, hunting still continues to a large extent. It is one of the favorite activities of the studied people, the Padams of Bolung village, Lower Dibang valley, Arunachal Pradesh. Most men in the village do some form of hunting. Interestingly, there is at least one hunter in a house. Generally whenever they get free time in the winter and whenever they feel the need to, they go for hunting. However in real practice and according to traditions hunting is connected to their lives and therefore undertaken during certain rituals and celebrations. This is the reason why it becomes a part of their culture.

They are seen to practice different types of hunting, such as communal and individual hunting. In communal hunts they go in a large group, and this is generally practiced during festivals like *Aaran*, *Peme*, and *Solung*. There is no particular time and season for individual hunts. However, these hunts were mostly undertaken in winters. Different strategies are followed for hunting depending on the animal hunted such as reindeer, porcupine, wild pigs, tiger, bear, elephant, snake, etc. Over the years the hunters seem to have procured this knowledge from their parents, and elders which they now apply. This knowledge encompasses strategies which are about where to set up camp, where to set up the watch platform or how to move about in the jungle etc.

Today, guns and bullets bought from the government dealer of Arms and Ammunition is popular. However, different traps made of bamboo and cane are still used. Bows and arrow are still found in the village, but they are no longer used. Previously it was the only hunting weapon and every Padam boy was taught the art of using a bow and arrow. These arrows were usually poisoned too so that the hunt was more effective, but it also led to many accidents.

There are certain hunting rituals which they still follow such as praying to the lord of the animals in the jungle. This becomes important since the lord of the animals is Robo who is a malevolent spirit who harms

human beings. So before every hunt this spirit has to be prayed to and certain food items offered as appeasement. Another interesting ritual activity took place whenever the older generation went to collect poisons for their arrows. One important change that has taken place is that only the believers of traditional religion Donyi-Polo follow these rituals. Christians refrain from these traditional rituals but interestingly before a hunt they too pray to the Christian god.

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