

Roles of Holistic Educational Institution (*Yerko*) for Promotion of Tribal Indigenous of North East India with Special to Arunachal Pradesh, India.

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Abstract

In fast modernization process, the rich tribal indigenous way of life in North East India with special reference to Arunachal Pradesh is at risk of fading away, as beautiful tribal culture with is becoming increasingly drawn to the allure of the modernization aesthetics. Realizing the urgent need to promote the identity and instill a deep sense of important and value of indigenous tribal way of life to carry forward the old age indigenous knowledge system by the indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh, came together to form the trust known as *Donyi Polo Cultural & Charitable Trust (DPCCT)* in 2019. The traditional and modern methods to acquaint about roles and contribution of tribal for preservation of nature through holistic education institution named *Nyubu Nyegam Yerko* which was established in 2019 by *Donyi Polo Cultural and Charitable Trust* supported by *Council of Nyishi Language Research and Training* at Rang Seppa East Kameng district Arunachal Pradesh to impart indigenous knowledge about tradition of tribal way life vis-à-vis natural environment. The roles of tribal indigenous for preservation and promotion of old age human being lives with natural environment and healing system is being inculcated in the yerko through holistic educational by establishing formal education institution for proper teaching and learning to the student and society. It is similar to an ancient Gurukul system of education; it is blended of both traditional and modern education system. The modern education system is teachings of various subjects syllabus prepared by *National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)* whereas the indigenous tribal way of life is being taught on indigenous language (Nyishi), traditional indigenous arts, sports, crafts, cosmopolitan, environment, chanting, hymns and verses, devotional songs, folklores and tales based on syllabus prepared by *Council for Nyishi Language Research and Training* under the aegis of *Donyi Polo Cultural and Charitable Society(DPCCT)* being guided by traditional tribal shamans system. The plantation of various herbal medicines and ritual important plants are also sapling in the *Yerko* which are being taught by tribal shaman. The students are also about cultivation or plantation class in morning and evening.

Key words: Tribal, Donyi, Polo, Yerko, Nyubu, Nyegam, Modernization, Traditional, Charitable, Language, Research, Shaman, Culture.

Brief Profile of Arunachal Pradesh

The Arunachal Pradesh was earlier called as *North- East Frontier Agency*, commonly known as *NEFA*, it was constitutionally part of the province of Assam till 1972. The beginning of administration of the Arunachal Pradesh which has come to be known as the *North-East Frontier Agency*, may be traced back to the Government of India notification in 1914 which promulgated that the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation of 1880 extended to the hills inhabited by *Adis, Nyishi, Mishmis, Singphos, Nagas, Khampis, Akas*, etc.¹ These hills areas were separated from the then *Darrang* and *Lakhimpur* districts of the province of Assam. As a result, the *North-East Frontier Tract* came into existence with composition of three administrative units viz., the Central and Eastern Section, the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract and the Western Section.

The Arunachal Pradesh is horseshoe shaped Eastern Himalaya state, a thinly populated hilly tract lies between the latitude 26°-28' N and 29°-30' N and the longitudes 91°-30'E and 91°-30'E on the North East extremity of India² and sun first touched its rays in Arunachal Pradesh of India. It has long international borders with 160 kms of borders with the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan in West and 440 kms with Burma in East, the Republic of China on its North with 1030 kms and the State of Assam on its South. The area of Arunachal Pradesh is 83,743,743 sq km having population of 13, 83,727 with density of 17 persons per sq.km as per 2011 census comprised of males population is 7, 20,227 and female population is 6, 62,379. Areas wise, Arunachal Pradesh is the largest state in the North-East Region of India having 26 major tribes and around 110 sub-tribes. The principal inhabitants' tribes from east to west of Arunachal Pradesh are the *Wanchos, Noctes, Tanga, Singpho, Khampis, Mishmi, Adi, Galo, Apatani, Nyishi, Sajolang, Tagin, Aka (Hrusso & Khoros), Khowa or Bugun, Puroik, Sherdukpen* and *Monpa* scattered over 16 districts (presently), 44

¹. Includes all the present tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh which are not mentioned like Monpas, Sherdukpens, Membas, Khambas, Tagins, Mijis, Apatanis, Galo, etc.

². Oxford Student Atlas for India, (2005), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.17.

sub-divisions, 85 blocks, 169 circles, 17 towns and 3649 villages. The sex ratio is 901 females per thousand males and S.T. population is 9, 51,821(68.8%) and rest is floating population. Religion wise, the follower of *Christian* is 30.26%, *Hindu* is 29.04%, other religion followers mostly indigenous *Donyi-Polo* is 30%, *Buddhism* is 11.77%, *Islam* is 1.9%, *Sikhism* is 0.24%, *Jainism* is 0.6%, and no particular religion followers is 0.48% having 26 districts. The sex ratio is 938 below national average of 940 with literacy rate of 66.95%, and having density of 17 persons per sq.km.

Methodology

The study is empirical in nature and there was interviews, questionnaire and participant observations adopted by researcher for this study. The relevant data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The researcher involved in running the *yerko* (learning educational institution). The data were also collected from published and unpublished governments' documents and sources were collected from published books, published articles, research journals; newspaper clipping, etc. The modern education system is teachings of various subjects syllabus prepared by *National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)* whereas the traditional education system is being taught on indigenous language (Nyishi), traditional indigenous knowledge system, environment, chanting, hymns and verses, devotional songs, folklores and tales based on syllabus prepared by *Council for Nyishi Language Research and Training* under the aegis of *Donyi Polo Cultural and Charitable Society(DPCCT)* being guided by traditional shamans system. The plantation of various herbal medicines and ritual important plants are also sapling in the *Yerko* which are being taught by shaman. The herbal medicine and ritualistic important plants are also developed as part of teaching-learning process properly guided by the *Nyishi's* shaman thereby the roles of *Yerko* to promote the tradition of shamanism is the main focus of this paper.

Meaning of Tribal

The word *tribe* derived from Latin term *tribu* which means *aboriginal*. According to Collins dictionary, "*tribal is used to describe things relating to or belonging to tribes and the way that they are organised*"

.According to the Oxford english dictionary, "*a group of indigenous persons, families, or clans believed to be descended from a common ancestor and forming a close-knit community under a defined leader, chief, or ruling council. A larger group of bands unified by sodalities and governed by a council of representatives from the bands, kin groups, or sodalities within it*".

According to Cambridge dictionary, tribal is "*a group of people, often of related families, who live together, sharing the same language, culture, and history, especially those who do not live in towns or cities*".

Merriam Webster dictionary defined tribe as "*a member of an aboriginal people of particular place*"

Britannica book defined "*tribe, in anthropology, a notional form of human social organization based on a set of smaller groups (known as bands), having temporary or permanent political integration, and defined by traditions of common descent, language, culture, and ideology*".

The movement for establishment of Yerko germinated in Arunachal Pradesh began after opening of *Donyi Polo Yelam Kebang* under the leadership of late *Talom Rukbo* on 31st December 1986 in Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh than pan Arunachal indigenous movements started in entire Arunachal Pradesh. So, *Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society (IFCSAP)* was formed on 28th December 1999 and *Dr. Tai Nyori* was became founder president. The actual idea of revitalize indigenous tribal culture and wisdom through holistic educational institution in Arunachal Pradesh had been driven by the continuous onslaught of modernity and persistent nefarious influences of outside cultural activities, the indigenous tradition, culture and belief system faces a serious threat from these wants on appropriation activities rendering fast eroding and extinction of indigenous way of life. Taking sadistic advantage of innocent and extreme difficult economic conditions natured by gullible and a sizeable population of the society become an easy prey to the allurements of alien culture or camouflage modernization. So, germinated numerous indigenous faith organizations to protect, promote and preserve the indigenous tradition, culture, languages and belief systems rapidly rise in the state. In year 2015 the common prayer center for believers of *Donyi Polo* (Sun-Moon) was established in the state which is predominant among the five communities viz. *Adi, Apatani, Galo, Nyishi* and *Tagin*. The *Donyi Polo Cultural & Charitable Trust (DPCCT)* was formed on 9th January 2019 to attain the mission and philosophy for protecting, preserving and promoting the Indigenous faiths and cultural way of living and officially registered on 6th September 2019 under Registered under Societies Registration Act. 1860 (As Modified by the Societies (Extension to Arunachal Pradesh) Act. 1978. Regd. No. B-IV/239/19 dated 6th September 2019. The following are members of DPCCT:

1. Er. Katung Wahge: Chairman
2. Er. Pai Dawe: Vice Chairman
3. Shri Tajum Tassung: General Secretary
4. Er. Lardik Kare: Treasurer
5. Er. Tana Neekam: Member

6. Shri Rupesh Mathur: Member

7. Shri Subroto Sen: Member

The tribal people of this part have the tradition of passing down the histories, folk lore, tales orally from generation to generations in indigenous traditional environment oral tradition. But due to advancement of modernity, the younger generation no more live in village, in pursuit to their career they move out abroad and different parts of the country and ultimately get settle in urban area. So the tradition of passing down of cultural and traditional knowledge from parents and elders of the village to younger generations abruptly get disconnected; and the modern younger generation had developed a notion that modernity means giving up the old practices Whereas actual meaning of modernity should be improvising and reforming the old practices and bring it to useable in present context. Hence, this very idea inspired a mission for revitalize indigenous tribal culture and wisdom through holistic educational institution called yerko.

The School Management Committee for Nyubu Nyvgam Yerko was constituted on 27th December 2019 under the chairmanship of Dr. Robin Hissang with following person as members: -

1. Dr. Robin Hissang Tadung: - Chairman,
2. Shri Papu Lamgu: Vice-Chairman,
3. Shri Taro Waii: Secretary,
4. Shri Tara Kamchi: AGS
5. Smti. Raja Cheda Dodum: Treasurer,
6. Shri Longmak Dadda
7. Shri Kaya Rang
8. Shri Machu Dawe

The first SMC meeting was held on 29th December 2019 in where every SMC member voluntarily contributed Rs.2,000/ each to start the yerko's activities. Afterwards, the mass social service was conducted at proposed site of Yerko at Rang. The SMC team rendered service till 15th January 2025.

2.5.1. Objectives of Yerko

The main objective of DPCCT is to establish *Khumko* (holy prayer hall) and to open *Yerko* (holistic educational institution) in Arunachal Pradesh. So, in this way, the concept of *Yerko* system established in 2020. Now, there are total four yerkos in Arunachal Pradesh viz. *Nyubu Nyegam Yerko* Rang in East Kameng district having 125 students with class-IV established on 3rd February 2020, *Nyubu Nyegam Yerko* in Mwia, Lower Subansiri district having 45 students for Nyishi tribe, *Menjik Meqkok* at Basar under Leparada district having 50 students for Galo tribe and *Nilung Tungko* at Pangin having 25 students in Siang district for Adi tribe. The name of holistic educational institution called *Nyubu Nyegam Yerko* Rang was officially inaugurated on 20th March 2021 by Shri Pema Khandu, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh with shri Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State (Independent), Sports & Youth Affairs and Minority Affairs, Govt. India and land is freely donated by *Er, Pai Dawe* and *Er. Katung Waghe* having area of 58,329.74 sq.mtrs./5.83 hectare. The *Nyubu* means shaman/priests; *Nyegam* means intellectual/oratory Skill Person & *Yerko* means learning institution. It is blended with modern education similar to ancient *gurukul* model education system and joint venture of Indigenous faith organizations (*Donyi Polo Cultural & Charitable Trust* and *Vivekanda Kendra Vidyalaya, Kanyakumari*). The CBSE pattern education based on NCERT syllabus is being taught by VKV and indigenous traditional knowledge system by indigenous faith organization. The objectives of Yerko are to impart students for self-control, character development, knowledge on nature and its importance in human life, social awareness in fusion with modernity and indigenous traditional knowledge, personality development; physically fit, mentally alert and socially responsible, intellectual development, spiritual development, preservation of shamanism, indigenous knowledge, tradition and culture with study on change and continuity in present context. The service mission of yerko is also imparting the knowledge and wisdom of *Swami Vivekananda* and his works and dreams for India. The students are totally free education basically taken from *Below Poverty Line* and poor family background. The co-curriculum activities are to impart importance of nature and co-existence, altars of various rituals, various forms of cultivations, various forms of ritualistic festivals, inculcating various knowledge systems about shamanism, teaching of shaman rituals chanting, folktale, folklores, indigenous healing practices etc. In order to teach Nyishi language, on 30th August 2019, the *Council for Nyishi Language Research and Training* was constituted to develop Nyishi language and other activities syllabus for *Nyubu Nyegam Yerko* Rang, Seppa comprised of following persons:

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1. Prof. Tana Showren: Chairman
2. Dr. Nabam Tata: Member
3. Prof. Nabam Nakha Hina: Member
4. Dr. Taba Heli: Member
5. Prof. Hui Tag: Member
6. Dr. Robin Hissang: Member

7. Dr. Tania Tassar: Member
8. Dr. Tech Upen Tara: Member
9. Dr. Lisa Lomdak: Member
10. Dr. Joram Aniya: Member
11. Shri P.G.Dodum: Member
12. Shri Nabam Runi: Member Secy.

2.5.2. Yerko Promotional Activities for Indigenous Faith and Culture

1. The traditional shaman is appointed as teacher after taken proper interview for teaching of Nyishi indigenous knowledge system, Nyishi language, rituals and ritual chanting, principles of shamanism, folk literature, traditional games and sports, local arts and crafts, folklores, folktales etc.in yerko. There is teacher for modern education system to teach NCERT based syllabus on CBSE pattern. The computer class is being taught because the yerko is blended of traditional and modern education system.
2. In the textbook of Nyishi language, the philosophy of Aane Donyi (mother sun) is substantially incorporated and even given the textbook name as *Ajang Lellaq* (Sun's hand and legs means rays) in where the shamanism naming of sun are given with philosophical background. So, the students inculcating the basic about indigenous religion background which are shamanism oriented.
3. The shaman is invited to showcase practical ritual chanting and students are taught to making ritualistic activities like altar making, bamboo blemishes making, teaching about ritual items collection under the guidance of shaman. In this way the yerko institution is promoting shamanism institution.
4. There is separate class routine at 4:00 pm of every day for teaching indigenous knowledge system like traditional arts and crafts, traditional games and sports, traditional chanting etc.through shaman
5. The important ritual called *Moying* is perform in Yerko by shaman in every year before starting the academic session in where all staffs and students are compulsorily participates from beginning to end to learn about shamanistic chanting and ritual activities.
6. There is a daily traditional prayer chanting and song class at 5:00 pm every day. The students and staffs do chanting prayer before sleeping, in early morning, before eating, after classes, during gathering.
7. The folklores, folk tales, traditional proverbs, teaching about customs and traditional healing chanting are also taught in before dinner by the teacher.

Table 2.2.

DAILY CLASS TIME TABLE OF YERKO

Sl.No.	Events	Time
1.	Morning walk up and fresh up time	5:00 to 5:30 AM
2.	Shamanism Chanting, Hymns /Verses	5:30 to 6:00AM
3.	Yoga	6:00 to 7:00AM
4.	Seva/Social Service	7:00 to 7:30AM
5.	Tea/Milk	7:30 to 7:45 AM
6.	Bathing/ Washing/Dressing	7:45 to 8:30AM
7.	Break Fast	8:30 to 9:00AM
8.	Formal Class	9:00 to 12:00 noon
9.	Lunch Break	12:00 to 1:00PM

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10.	Sleeping hour	1:00 to 2:00PM
11.	Class	2:00 to 4:00PM
12.	Indigenous Classes/Traditional Sports	4:200 to 5:30 PM
13.	Fresh up	5:30 to 6:00PM
14.	Evening Prayer/Chanting	6:00 to 6:30PM
15.	Supervise Study	6:30 to 8:00PM
16.	Dinner	8:00 to 8:30 PM
17.	Recitation of Chanting/Folklores/ Tales	8:30 to 9:30PM
18.	Sleeping time	9:30PM

2.5.3. Conclusion

Every year many tourists from national and abroad visits yerko. So, the institution of Shaman is in danger due to rapid outer forces in the Arunachal Pradesh. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh initiative to give honorarium to shaman is appreciable move for preservation and promotion of shamanism institution. It is found that the concept of Nyubu Nyvgam Yerko had touched the very chords of all sections of people for promotion of indigenous culture and tradition including institution of shaman. The appropriate approach to promote shaman, need many more institution like Yerko with documentation of their every oral chanting, verses, ritualistic chanting, hymn etc.with translation is need of the hour for future references. Because, it is found, the shaman number are decreasing now in the state even many have left the practices and adopted others faith, even nil in many villages in East Kameng district, there are around three hundreds (300) shamans (male & female) are remained as per Deputy Commissioner office records. The woman shaman system is socially acetated and permissible to perform all level of rituals. So, separate Yerko for girls is necessary in the state as woman play pivotal roles in shaping the society. The Nyubu Nyegam Yerko Rang is play as mother of all tribal Yerko and Donyi Polo Cultural and Charitable Society declared it as model institution for Yerko in Arunachal Pradesh and such institution need to encourage in the state so that the institution of shaman can get opportunity to shares their knowledge to the younger generation to promote.

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