

Belief System of Adi in *Ridin*: A Sacred Thread

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ABSTRACT: The Adi people of Arunachal Pradesh are practicing the indigenous knowledge of using *Ridin* thread traditionally. In fact, since origin of *Ridin* thread to till 21th century, there are many religions penetrated in Adi region like Christianity, Hinduism and Bhagavatam but still it seems that the value of *Ridin* increase without any influence of religion. In Adi, the use of *Ridin* is very common as well as important. *Ridin* is a thread which is yarned from fiber of *Ridin* plant, a wild creeper abundantly available in jungle of Adi belt. Some people say that *Ridin* is a Religious plant use in tradition festival which is also use as a medicinal plant because paste of its bark is applied to cuts and wounds to stop bleeding and for quick healing.

They are very proud of their own culture because they ensure the survival of culture for centuries but in their belief system, the value of *Ridin* thread is increasing rapidly. Because in earlier days, the *Ridin* thread had been prescribed by only priest but nowadays it is available in *Gangging* (Worship place of Donyi Poloism). In every worship, it is tied in the wrist of the devotees which symbolized the blessing of Donyi Polo and ends with closing prayer. Even many drivers tie it nearby steering to protect from any accident. Among the friends also they use it as special gift and exchange it as a blessing. Many people also keeps it below the pillow not to have bad dream which denotes the increasing value of *Ridin* thread.

It has many social, cultural and spiritual uses among Adis as it is believed to be gifted by their deity called *Pedong Nane*. Socially, it is worn to symbolize marital status of the person. Culturally, it is used as symbol for ethnic identity and spiritually. It is a strong shield from any malevolent and harmful spirit. So, during rituals, it is considered as one of the important components. Another important aspect of *Ridin* is that it is used for knitting traditional textiles like fishing net, bag etc. The textiles made of *Ridin* are durable and strong which can hold good amount of goods.

It is used for the recovery of lost soul by chanting hymn. According to them, the bad spirit attacks on weak soul and put under their captivity. When the bad spirits capture the soul of any person then their health started deteriorating gradually. In other cases, many of them sees bad dreams and feel that their soul is remaining under the captivity of evil spirit. In such problem, they inform *Ayit Miri* (soul priest), because soul priest can only detect and call back the soul from such problem. It is believed that a soul priest is supposed to posses strong enough spirits to encounter evil spirits and find the place where the soul is kept in captivity. The soul priest communicates the captor by chanting with spiritual words. After well dealing with evil spirits, the soul priest brings back the soul at home and put it into the body of the person. When a soul of an adult goes out of the body is called *Ayit Poknam*

and when a soul of a child goes out of the body is called *Leyo*. The process of calling back of soul is called *Ayit Goknam* and *Leyo Goknam*. To recovery of lost health and soul, the basic song of priest is sung like this “Oh my beloved one, if you lost your health due to ill luck I come forward here to save you with this *Emul* (metal ornament) to call back your lost health. Listen to the sound of this sweet ornament and follow me to your sweet home. I tie this *Ridin* thread to fasten your soul to your body. Follow the footprint of this cock, come, come with me to your home”.

Sometime an ill person’s maternal uncle also chants to attract the spirit of good health back to the body off. They believe that a person falls ill when the spirit of good health abandons the body due to some shock which may lead to suffering. They chant like this “oh my beloved one, oh my beloved nephew of niece. What is happening with you and why you are suffering? Don’t fear, here I am your maternal uncle comes for you to bring back the spirit of good health. Listen the sound of this sweet *Emul* and follow it without fearing because this is your real home of the spirit of good health. To fasten your soul to your body, the *Ridin* thread, here I am tying the spirit of good health to your body”. In this ritual, they use the *Ridin* thread as having special medicine to recover the good health.

This thread commonly also used in exorcism. Sometime human beings are possessed by the bad spirit which is known as *Urom Kanam*. Remedy to such problem, they perform the ritual of *Urom bomnam*. In this ritual, many eatable items like tobacco, sugar, tea leaves with piece of any animal’s half burnt bones are kept together on *ekkam* leaf and placed outside of house by saying oh spirit! Whoever you are, we are presenting you a fill basket of rice and a big Gaur’s thigh flesh, take this offer and go away from the body. After this ritual, *Ridin* thread is tied on arm to protect victim soul and to resist from the bad spirit enter again in body.

The Adi wove their mythology by themselves with their own indigenous materials. The Adi have been placed by historical circumstance in a most difficulties country.” They wove the texture of their mythology out of their belief on the phenomena of nature as ghost and spirits. As per Adi myth, *Ridin* thread had been gifted by *Pedong Nane*, due to that this thread regarded as powerful thread. They knit bag from this thread which is called *Lagli*. The textiles made of *Ridin* are durable and strong which can hold good amount of goods.

It is believed that once the war took place between the *Tani* (human being) and *Banji Banmang* (blood thirsty spirit). In this war, *Tani* defeated *Banji Banmang* and while returning home after war over, the *Engo Takar* (mermaid) sisters led by sister *Karpung*, tied *Ridin* thread on hairs of the *Tani* to cover the face in order to hide them from *Banji Banmang*. Because of the descendants of *Tani*, they inherit this ritual practice in complete sense. If someone returns from a war, his maternal uncles and aunties receive him at the entrance of the village and tying *Ridin* with a piece of beads. They put a bunch of beads around his neck and cover him with cloths in order to hide him from *Banji Banmang*.

They believe in malevolent and benevolent spirits. Therefore, they use this thread to protect any harm from evil spirits. In their house they tie the bundle of *Ridin* thread nearby door for resisting evil spirit to enter inside the house. Maximum of people are tying in their hand but many of them use it as waist cord to protect their body. But in the case of death, the *Ridin* thread which was tied as a waist cord and in hand are to be cut and remove from the body because it can lead confuse in soul journey. It is also tied in the hand of decease’s family by maternal or paternal uncle to relief from grief.

This thread is commonly used by any priest. *Ponung* and *Delong Miri* (singer priest) use this thread as *Dumling* which is a bundle of *Ridin* thread ties on head that cover the back portion. It is believed that the knowledge of song’s lyrics are revealing by the priest’s spirit who hanging on priest’s back with support of *Dumling*. Soul priest use it while chanting dirge to protect the departed soul in soul

journey toward abode of the ancestor. They tie it in a *Sumpa* (weaving device) and chants the dirge. They also tie it in a hand of ill person to recover the spirit of good health, to calling back the lost soul captured by bad spirit and in exorcism.

The process of preparing *Ridin* thread is very simple and easy. Socially, there is no any taboo for preparing it. This plant is generally found in remote and hilly area and has two varieties. The thread is prepared from inner bark of stem which thickness is as much as pencil. Due to long creeper plant, it has to be cut into pieces of around 15cm to 20cm long. After cutting into pieces, the stem is separated in three parts that is outer, middle and inner layer. From these three layers, only the middle layer of stem is collected. After then, the collected bark is to be dried for one week. After drying properly, they directly use it in their needs.

They believed that *Ridin* not developed by itself naturally, in fact it was powerful gift gifted from the goddess *Pedong Nane*. The myth reveals that in the beginning *Keyum* (creator) created the rocks, earth and water in this world. From this rock, earth and water, goddess *Pedong Nane* incarnated. From her, all the living things originated in this world. *Pedong Nane* became very old and aged. Later she realized that all living and non- living things in this world gave birth by her, nothing is left behind, now she even became menopausal. But miraculously again she menstruated which shocked her greatly. In this way again she became pregnant.

She was very frightened of her health. She thought that it was a bad omen which might be caused of her death. Such kind of negative thinking affected her health badly. She became very weak and thin. Ultimately, she summoned the highest priest *Doro Rosi* for the remedy. *Doro Rosi* came to her resident and heard her problem. After everything investigation, he told her not to be worried. He further conveyed her regarding the pregnant and he predicted that the energetic baby will be given by her. One day her abdomen pain started. She laid down in a bed to give her baby. She screamed alone, no one heard her voice. At the last moment *Kongki Botte* and *Komang Nane* (god and goddess of designer of nature) heard the voice of *Pedong Nane* and came for midwifery assistance. She gave birth to *Doni/Tani* from which humans are believed to be descended. When *Doni/Tani* was newly born, *Kongki Botte* and *Komang Nane* required a powerful thread for baby's safety. Both were searching for the powerful thread but unable to find it.

While *Kongki Botte* and *Komang Nane* searching for the powerful thread, suddenly remembered the waist cord of *Keyum* which was cut off and threw into the premises of *Kine Nane* (goddess of fertile land). Both moved toward the location to find out the waist cord. When both reached the location, found *Ridin* plant there. They believed that it was none other than *Keyum*'s waist cord. It was taken and prepared as *Ridin* thread. After converted it into thread firstly umbilical cord had tied up to stop the bleeding and secondly tied in the hand as a bangle for the protection from bad spirits and for good health. In this way *Ridin* thread is regarded as the powerful thread in their society. Till today they are practicing this rite and ritual traditionally.

Some sub-tribes of Adi believe that *Ridin* is a sacred thread that signifies a lifesaving string. According to them, the *Ridin* is originated from the vital vein and limb of *Sedi* and blessed as life savior by all the priests in yonder days as medicine and as a strong weapon against all evil spirits and because of it, every one tied in the wrist and neck to cure ailment and to give protection from evil eyes.

Conclusion

For Adi, *Ridin* is just like a device to face any kind of circumstances. It boosts up confidence to overcome the situation. In present day-to-day life, its significance emerging in their belief system

which make it powerful. Though this sacred thread is powerful and valuable yet it is not sold in the market rather available in the *Gangging* (worship place) of Donyi-poloism and distributed free of cost. It is an identification, marking, shield, fort etc. to protect from any jeopardize. They are very proud of their own culture because they ensure the survival of culture for centuries but in their belief system, the value of *Ridin* thread is increasing rapidly.

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