



Research article

Hunting and Trapping Technique Among Idu Mishmi Community of Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract: The tribal people obtain their numerous requirements from the area they inhabit with the help simplest tools and without any technical aid. They face multiple challenges with the modern way of life but yet these people are the most caring and loving people. Idu Mishmi is one of the scheduled tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. It has a population that spread over Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, and some parts of the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. Idu Mishmi community of the state is also one of the tribes involved in hunting and trapping activities for live subsistence and leisure purposes too. From this piece of study, the author tries to understand the hunting and trapping technique used by the Idu tribe. This hunting and trapping are obsolete nowadays. Nevertheless, Hunting and trapping shall remain strongly linked to local culture and tradition as long as tribal lives exist.

Keywords: Hunting, Trapping, Subsistence, Idu Mishmi.

I. Introduction

The total population of Scheduled tribes is 84326240 as per the census 2001 which accounts for 8.2% in India. Tribal life is one of the arduous lives that one can find on the globe. As a whole tribal people are technologically and educationally backward. Economically, socially and politically they also have weak bargaining power due to which tribal people are inbound to be in the poor living standard and in all other fronts of modern amenities. They face multiple challenges with a modern way of life but yet these people are the most caring and loving people.

Geographically tribal people live in the hard belt and hills areas as a life of the tribal is a close relationship with natural environment or habitants which is, in a general forest. The structure of the tribal economy is generally based on forests, rivers, sea, or coastal areas where they have easily accessible resources. The Bhils of western India depend on the forest for *Mahua* and *Biri* Leaves, the basket-maker of Bihar gets the bamboo as raw materials from their inhabit, the pastoralist Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh depends on the forest for the pasture of *Dhar* for their flock consisting of goats and sheep.¹ Socially and culturally forest is the best source of life among the tribal peoples.

The tribal people obtain their numerous requirements from the area they inhabit with the help simplest tools and without any technical aid. In fact, the life of tribal is very complex in the sense that they use all

¹L.P Vidyarthi et al (1985) "The tribal Culture of India", p100.

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available means to eke out their subsistence and combines minor forest produce a collection with cultivation or shifting cultivation, simple cultivation with food collection that depicts the complex life of these tribal people. According to Majumder (1966:153), the economic life and occupation have been classified into three stages (i) Hunting and collection stage, (ii) shifting and Jhum cultivation, lumbering, manufacturing, etc, (iii) settled farming, who keep poultry, cattle, weaving and spinning, pottery, etc. socio-economic life of tribal people cannot be fit into particular typology in a strict sense as their way of living is totally depends upon environment circumstances and adapt accordingly and has a common generalization. Nevertheless, means of livelihood of tribal people in the way or other way may revolve around the primary activities like- hunting and trapping, hill-cultivation type, pastoral, agriculture etc.

Arunachal Pradesh is an ethnic state composed of different colorful people of diverse culture, traditions, and lifestyle who co-exists in the hard belt in the Himalayas. All of them have their own unique culture and tradition which clearly depicts cultural & traditional beauty distinctively. It is important to note that the inhabitants of this state have the spirit of democracy inherent in their traditional laws and practices. Therefore, any sort of disputes and misunderstandings are settled through village councils such as *Abella* in Idu, *Kebang* in Adi which are governed by the governing body in all areas of the state tribal population. In Arunachal Pradesh tribes constitutes 64% of the population and 36% of the population are immigrants, being ethnic tribes from adjacent states. There are 26 major tribes and 110 sub-tribes inhabit the state. The majority of these communities are ethnically similar, having been consequential from an original common stock but their geographical isolation from each other has brought among them definite uniqueness in dialect, language, dress, customs, tradition, etc.

Idu Mishmi is one of the scheduled tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. It has a population that spread over Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, and in some parts of the East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The word Mishmi is commonly termed is used to refer to three sub-tribes which include Idu, Digaru, and Miju.

Prior to the 1950-earthquake, Idu Mishmi was one of the tribes who have good trade relations with the plain people of Sadiya, Assam. The agriculture produces such as ginger, chilies and *Mishmi tita* were the main items traded during that period and gives a good source of substantial income generation to traders. After the earthquake, a big town known to be a trading hub of the east has lost in that earthquake devastation. Idus people had lost its market place for its trading and consequently have influence in the economic life of the people. Nonetheless, there were good barter economies do prevail between different tribes of the state which sustain many lives of the community thereupon.

Most of the Idus people preferred to live in the hard topography and hills areas in search of better access to natural resources, security from internal clan feuds, and another socio-economic factor, etc. One of the

important factors is to have better hunting and trapping purpose. Due to the absence of modern physical amenities like transportation, communication, telecommunication Idu people who lived in the hills area left no choice but to opt for hunting and trapping as a primary activity with little agriculture output and product. All these facts bring lots of interest among many scholars to know tribal life especially when people have the least access to modern amenities and a large chunk of society primarily depends upon forest product, hunting, and trapping.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of this study is to understand old aged traditional hunting and trapping techniques used by Idu people. The study has been made through referring to various literature which includes books, journals, websites, etc. this piece of research is descriptive in nature and research have done according to own understanding, experience, and observation on Idu people and its society.

HUNTING, TRAPPING & FISHING TECHNIQUE:

Like other hill peoples, the Idus is very fond of *Aanjih*². Hunting is an essential source of the supplement of foods. Hunting in itself is the manifestation of various facets of the socio-cultural life of the Idu community. The weapons that are usually used for hunting by Idus are *Eliprah*³ and *Makrota*⁴ and *Agere*⁵. Guns were the very sophisticated medium of hunting which were usually used by rich and affluent persons in the community. *Appa*⁶ is usually used for purpose of self-protection which is not a popular medium of hunting in the Idu community as it has less scope and reaches to prey. In the month of *Mauala*⁷ and *Yoala*⁸, men enjoy a great deal of leisure and favorable climatic condition which they usually devote to hunting excursions nearby villages or in agricultural surroundings. One of the prominent and successful hunting is to track the game and stock it, sit near salt-licks or remain in the fields for animals that come to feed on the crops. This type of hunting is generally conducted in a group.

The Idu hunt all kinds of birds and animals. Hunting practiced in among Idu can be broadly divided into two types- in the village /nearby area hunting and off the village hunting. Under former types of hunting, generally, a group of people gathered and locate the place of hunting where possible animals/ birds are identified and predetermined. Then they march in the jungle and hunt animals and birds by coordinating and supporting one another. In such an arrangement, *Ekku*⁹ plays a key role in successful hunting. They make

² hunting

³ Vows

⁴ Arrows

⁵ Guns

⁶ Spears usually made up of bamboo cane with sharp tip.

⁷ December

⁸ January

⁹ Dogs

encircle the prey with help of other hunters and dogs which help the hunter to kill the animal. If two or three men are out shooting together, the man who draws blood first is entitled to the animals' i.e *Takku*¹⁰ even if the prey is killed by a second or third person. The killing of prey is immaterial, especially in the group hunting for owning title or *Takku* what material is one make injured or draw blood prey first. *Am-mroni*¹¹ enjoyed high status in the Idu society possibly next to *Igu*¹². Therefore, Am-mroni enjoyed distinct status in the Idu society. If we rank the Idu people as per their profession then first being occupied by *Igu*, Am-mroni and followed by *Ahsrah-nga*.¹³ All these people have different significance for different reasons in the Idu society.

The later type of hunting is usually practiced in far off the villages & even by traveling 15-30 days. This type of hunting may be individual or group, but to ensure security and successful hunting, Idu people preferred to have group hunting. But once they reached the *Appo*¹⁴ they resort to a different route to hunt. Therefore, it became individual hunting primarily because of greater scope in terms of meeting more prey and animals.

To have a bumper hunting expedition, a special ritual is arranged which is called *Ambu*¹⁵ before leaving for hunting. When *Ambu* is conducted strict *Angi*¹⁶ are followed as Idus people believed that hunting is successful when you make *Golo*¹⁷ happy which can be ensured through *Ambu*. *Ambu* performed by *Igu*. There is a lot of preparatory work are done before hunting. When *Ambu* ritual is done, they have to avoid attending funerals or other rituals, eating mushrooms, and avoiding food cooked by women who are menstruating. Idu people believe that *Golo* is the one who supplies animals to the hunters so when there is a successful hunt, an offering has to be made which is called *Aphu*. In offering i.e *Aphu* a small piece from the ear of the animal hunted is cut with a machete (*dao*), inserted into the bamboo fork, and is planted on a nearby tree or on the ground. Using *dao*, the hunter scrapes the brass metal over the dead animal and chants some thanking words. Overall, Idu people believe in the Holy Spirit/*Golo* who is considered to be the caretaker of jungle and forest. Appropriate behavior in the forests and in the mountains is crucial for hunters and some important taboos must be adhered to.

Generally, *Anji-mu*¹⁸ has been inherited from ancestors by a hunter. All mountains, rivers, and forests in the Idu valley are not free or unoccupied as someone's ancestral had once might have hunted or reserved the area by any other means. Possessions of land, rivers, or forests are socially recognized through one who has done hunting practices or by practicing agriculture in that particular area. Therefore, all hunters have limited areas where they can hunt. If they want to hunt in other *Anji-mu* then prior permission is to be sought from the

¹⁰ Accounting for wild animals killed by a hunter

¹¹ A person who is expert in hunting or have secured highest Takku

¹² Local priest

¹³ Valiant/gallant

¹⁴ Camp at where hunter gets shelter in a cave

¹⁵ Preparatory shamanize by priest for successful hunting

¹⁶ Taboos

¹⁷ God of Mountains

¹⁸ Particular place for particular person

owner otherwise it may turn violence and social unrest which had have resulted in many clan feuds and another social antagonism in the society.

Throughout the hunting excursion, hunters have to pursue some ‘moral code’ of conduct. Following a code of conduct is considered to be a prerequisite for success during hunting excursions. For example, getting annoyed, abusing or cursing someone; vulgar language should be austere avoided. Hunting is well thought-out a very risky activity, therefore no jokes or ridiculing someone is deemed to be against the rules and code of conduct. If appropriate conduct is not followed, then hunters may not successfully hunt or may face major accidents or sudden illness during the expedition. It may cause very detrimental to the rest of the family and villages if proper rituals and taboos are not followed. The following table shows some code words for animals which are locally known as *Laa-Angi*.

Code (Laa-Angi) words for animals used during hunting

English Name	Idu Name	Code Name
Goral	<i>Aamee</i>	<i>azo chi</i> (the one on rocky slopes).
Takin	<i>Aakrun</i>	<i>ambeka chi</i> (tambe-meat, kachi-big). The one with big meat.
Musk Deer	<i>Aalaa</i>	<i>tambe aaroku chi</i> (tambe-meat, aaro-high mountain, ku-place). The meat of the high mountains.
Wild Boar	<i>Aamme</i>	<i>enabolon</i> (enambo-nose, lo-long). The one with a long nose
Barking Deer	<i>Maanjo</i>	<i>tambre-shu</i> (shu-small). The one with small meat
Serow	<i>Maaren</i>	<i>aazo-chi /ama-dro</i> (ama-tree name, dro-two horns
Bear	<i>Aahun</i>	<i>ikku-zongon</i>
Monkey	<i>Aame</i>	<i>aadichi</i> (aadi-above). The one who lives on the tree
Satyr Tragopan	<i>Peba</i>	<i>apipa-chi</i> (apipa=leaves). The one who lives near leaves.

Sclater's Monal	<i>Pidi</i>	<i>aaron chi pra-a</i> (<i>aaron</i> -mountain). Bird of <i>the mountain</i>
Himalayan Monal	<i>Chendan</i>	<i>kaanei</i> (color)
Blood Pheasant	<i>Cheekhoo</i>	<i>brunshu</i> (<i>brun</i> =leg, <i>shu</i> -red). The one with <i>red legs</i>
Tiger	<i>Amra</i>	<i>ketrebo</i> -stripes
Snake	<i>Tabu</i>	kanlon-long
Elephant	<i>Atta</i>	<i>Enonohoya-both sides, imina-tail, gila-chunlaa</i> (<i>having</i>).The one having tail on both sides

Sources: A. Aiyaduri, Report Submitted for 2nd rufford small grant for nature Conservation, March'2014

In addition to hunting with bows and arrows and guns, the Idus have some ingenious ways of snaring and trapping animals and birds. In a commonly used trap, *Papuche*¹⁹ by *Ambrato*²⁰ is erected which may stretch for a considerable distance through a part of the jungle that is frequented by *Aahu* and *Manjo* and other animals and birds. Openings made by hoops of split bamboo are left at the interval in the fence. A *Sikhebra*²¹ is placed at each gap and one of its ends is tied at the tip of bamboo which is bent over, and its roots fixed tightly near the fence. The *Sikhebra* fits in the gap and is kept extended by a small piece of sticks tied to the upper end, the other end of the stick pressing against the lower end of the hoop. When an animal enters the gap, it pushes the stick out of position; the hoop is released and flies up tightening the noose around its neck.

Another trap that is often used for catching rats and birds is made of a piece of bamboo split into three at one end. A separate piece of bamboo is fixed horizontally to the unsplit end of the bamboo. A strip is tied to the upper end of the horizontal post which is slightly bent over and the loose end of the string is attached to a small piece of stick that keeps the split strips apart. A little quantity of food is spread over the bamboo strips in between the gaps. When a rat comes for the food, it causes the loose stick to fly off, and the strips close on it and press it to death.

The usual method followed by the Idus for catching *Anga*²² is to make in the stream-bed go dry at the convenient spot by diverting the course of the water higher up the stream. They construct a barrier of stone across the stream a little above the point where it bifurcates. In the barrier are left small gaps which are then filled in with leaves allowing the water through, while stopping the *Anga*. Now a weir is built with stones and is

¹⁹ Fence

²⁰ Bamboo

²¹ Noose, A trap for birds and animals

²² Fish

covered by mud so as to make it watertight, thus diverting the water into the main channel. As soon as the weir is completed, the river bed between it and the barrier is kept dry, and since the fish are unable to escape they are left stranded and are easily caught.

Another way of fishing is by poisoning the riverbed. Leaves of a genus of fern are tied up in bundles, beaten out on stones at the edge of the water, and the juice is allowed to mix with water. This kills the *Anga* after a while, and they can be picked up. But fishing through poisoning is prohibited and not socially accepted in Idu society as it is not sustainable. The killed *Anga* can be collected using *Tha*²³. *Ayu*²⁴ is another prominent type of fish catch is small Nalla or *Chebra*²⁵. To catch this type of fish i.e *Ayu*, *Ayuku* is used by channelizing water into one direction. In one *Ayuku*, one can have *Ayu* of more than 10-15 Kg at once.

CONCLUSION:

Hunting for wild meat is the main concern in several countries across the world. The reckless hunting through using modern techniques has lots of impact on bio-diversity and poses a serious threat to the lives of the jungles. Wildlife hunting is widespread in Arunachal Pradesh. There was a time when hunting and trapping used to be a major source of livelihood, but surely it had less impact on the lives of the jungles as there were several taboos and restrictions on hunting which itself as self-regulatory to hunters. With the advent of much modern technology hunting and trapping technique got sophisticated methods that really threads for many flora and fauna as people do hunt for pleasure without caring about vulnerabilities of nature and has less hunting ethics. Now, hunting and trapping have no more source of livelihood except a few highlander people but the average number of animals killed is relatively higher in modern days. So, it is *hunting-livelihood paradox*²⁶.

The paradigm shift from jungle lives to modern life has also been experienced in Idu society. Idu society has also been greatly influenced by Hindu, Christian, and intra-tribe continuum. Many socio-cultural aspects were at stake when closed society integrated with other communities and the mainland. There was a possible risk related to dress code, local dialects, food habits, traditions, and customs. The process of transformation and equilibrium in the traditional society has definitely been greatly disturbed especially to the local dialect. Both positive and negative aspects of cultural-traditional infusion have been accounted and Idu society adopts changes accordingly.

With changes in lifestyle, improved infrastructure like roads, providing easy access to remote forests, and availability of modern hunting technology, the pressure on forests and wildlife is tremendous, and hunting is reported as one of the major threats to the avifauna of the state (Kumar & Singh 2003). There is a tremendous

²³ Basket type made up of bamboo

²⁴ Small species of fish which comes in the small tributaries of rivers in a month of June and July. This is a seasonal fishing.

²⁵ Small tributaries of river

²⁶ It is situation where hunting has become less importance with regards to livelihood question of mankind. It is paradox because, average animal killed in modern time is higher than that of olden days, despite fact, that hunting is no more a source of livelihood unlike olden days.

change in the mindset of tribal people. Now they also engage themselves in other economic activities replacing hunting and trapping as primary activities. Many people from little-known societies have a formidable number of administrators, professors, doctors, engineers, teachers, and businessmen. It may be presumptuous enough to rank Idu community as a fast-moving society but surely Idu community will be able to unshackle all socio-economic barriers and achieve a decent way of living. Idu people with a little population in highly rich natural vegetation, untapped resources, caliber & potentialities of human resource will surely be attributed for good future.

Nevertheless, Hunting and trapping shall remain strongly linked to local culture and tradition as long as tribal lives exist. Hunting and trapping supply wild meat, fish, rats, etc in the socio-cultural ceremonies such in Reh²⁷ festival, marriage, birth ritual, death ritual, etc. hunting and trapping have still its importance in the socio-cultural life in the Idu society. Therefore, effort must be to conserve wild animals from reckless hunting and trapping through involving various stakeholders in the society and, so as to ensure a sustainable environment. Various projects need to be implemented which must encompass the social, economic, and cultural aspects of the local communities and thereby creating participation of the local community in the process of development activities. That development is ruthless development where no interest and participation of tribal people are ignored.

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²⁷Reh festival of Idu Mishmi community. The Reh may be of two types i.e individual reh and general reh. The individual is reh in long-term arrangement where one individual arranges such ceremony with the help of its villagers. The date and day of such reh festival are fixed by *Reh-heta* (one who organizes festival). While general reh is community festival where all individual in the society contributes some amount of money or in other kinds and celebrate general reh in 2nd Feb every year.