
DOYA RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH

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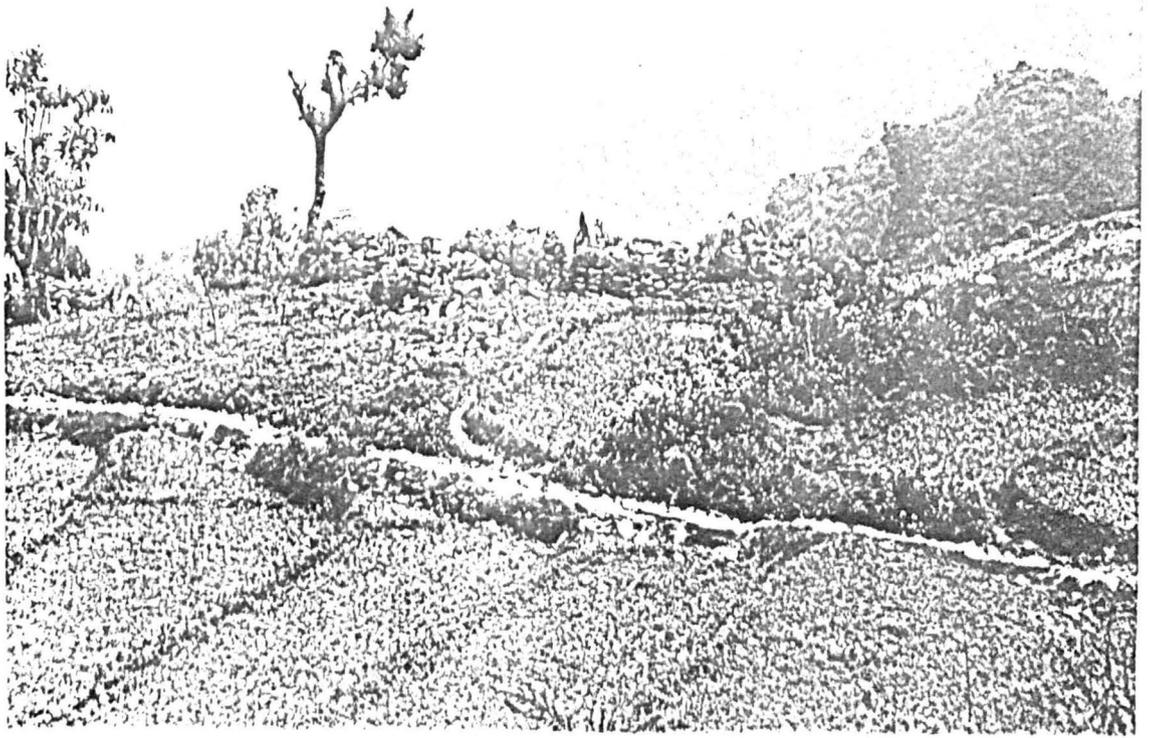
4.3.4 Beliefs, Restrictions and Austerity

Every society with an ethnic identity has certain set of ideas, concepts, ways and beliefs that give meanings to the matters relating to life and death. The society (1973:iii-iv) in their collectivity defines the ways of life and impress upon a set of rules, roles and status in their collective conscience (1963:85). An individuals born through a physiological process of mating between a male and female does not necessarily become a member of the society. Similarly, when a member of a society dies it is not because of any physiological failures rather some spirits who have been meted with indignities by someone who has done something wrong unto him/her that causes it. And if, the decease carried some hurt feelings against any mortals his spirits will give troubles and more miseries.

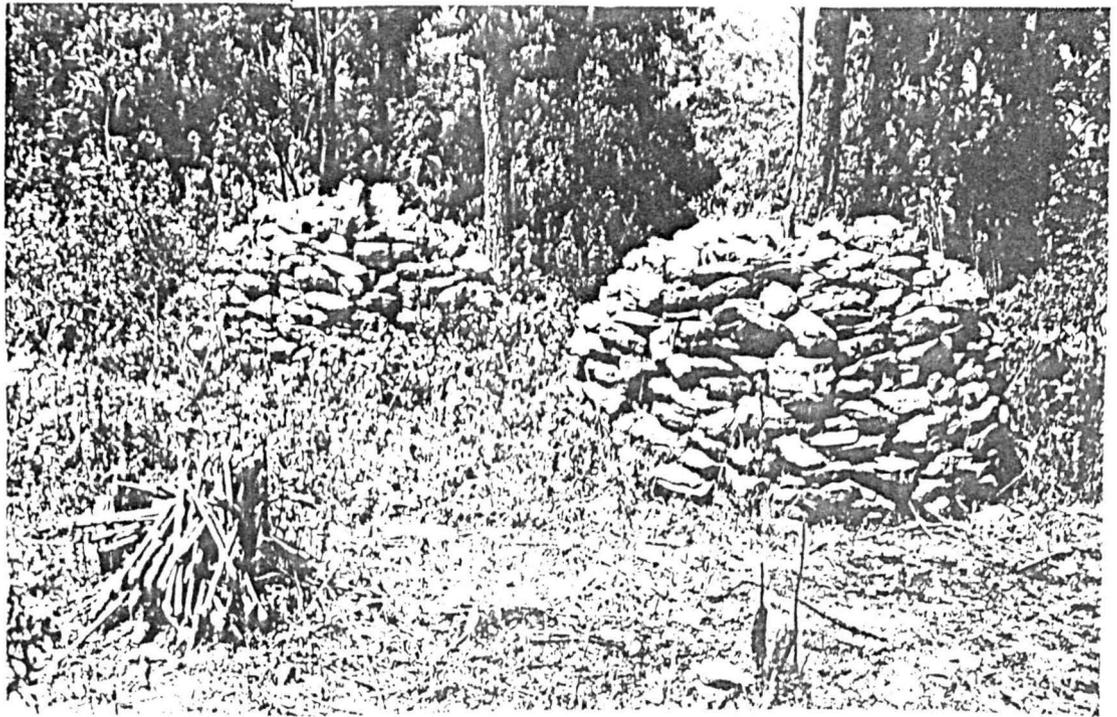
There are undisputable ideas and concepts that define birth, death and beyond that facilitate a harmonic life process of the society. These are the ways in which an individual member need to be educated, to sort out problems of life, to take up such roles to relate with other members within which they find themselves, to involve in the activities, to sustain the livelihood of every souls, to meet with their mates to reproduce members of the group in relation with other of their kind, to continue their existence based on the simple fact of life, death, nature and its powers and spirits they know of.

Doyas believe that human body is made of flesh and bone. Female and male carry the seeds of flesh and bones, respectively and when they contribute the flesh and bone a child is formed in an act of copulation. However, a member of their society is born only when a pair of prescribed and matured male and female from a well-defined set of group comes together. A social harmony is there when these groups are in full strength to produce enough to eat and drink to reproduce connubial of exchange to sustain and continue the groups with everybody adhering to the set of rules and ways of life. No one can make a mistake, not even the gods and spirits who have made life possible and guarded every mortal. For if ever there be misfortune, death and miseries it is because of a mistake or folly of some one among the mortals. This consciousness of the Doyas make them relent and invent certain ways and means of performing such remedial rituals and reflect on their mistakes or to at least regularly seek grace for the well being of the member of the society thereby, involving participations of the whole member of the group(s) in offering the best of the things they have to the gods and spirits who must be kept happy. In this chapter I shall describe how new born become member of the society what are the processes through which the newborn members are educated to further reproduce the society. Who performs what roles to ensure a smooth passage of life in the society? What rituals and performances are involved in legitimizing union between reproductive partners, child conception, pregnancy, childbirth and death? What does life of an individual mean? How do they look at a male and a female, father and mother, parenthood in the society? What does death of a male and female member mean to the lineal family, group and the society? These are some of the questions I would try to answer from the ways the Doyas conceive and enact in their society.

Doyas too, have their own ways of interpreting the physiological and morphological change processes of birth, growth, aging and death as it unfolds to them. It is enough for them to have kids born to every legitimate couple. It is a serious matter if they don't have kids the best one can do is try with some other optional partners. Any child born to legitimate couple is welcomed as a member of the matrilineage and on the third day it is given a personal name. However, personal names have nothing much to do with the kin terms with which s/he will be related and referred to with other member in the society. The child discovers



40 Old *Chens* in middle Lotukuchu



41 Very old *Chen* in upper Lotukuchu

his or her status, roles and responsibilities as s/he gradually grows up in the society. Exciting moments of life unfold as they mature and become responsible for the sustenance of the matrilineage family. They qualify taking responsibilities by practically proving their productive and reproductive capabilities. Slowly and gradually they get educated in life skills and rituals of life. Ultimately, they leave behind rich experiences of having lived through different stages of life. This departure or separation is honoured with elaborate rituals and ceremonies. Life begins small and ends up big.

4.1: Birth of a Child

Although Doya say that conception is result of copulation between male and female in which male contribute the bone and female the flesh⁹² it does not mean that any male can impregnate a female and the fatherhood or for that matter husband is some one else. There are well-defined categories of males and females with predetermined relations who only can contribute the basic components of conception. Cross cousins are referred to as *Lhir-ra* and *Lhi-met*, laterally meaning male and female seedling (*Lhi* – seedling, *met* – female, *ra* – male).

Therefore, ideally it is the cross cousins only who can give birth to a legitimate child in the society. It would be difficult for Doyas to accept a child from a female who has no prescribed partner in the society and also from any other alternative mates arranged by the society under normal circumstances. Once cross-cousins partners are born to siblings their conjugal match and their issues thereon are legitimate member of the society is a foregone conclusion.

The child born to them over a period of time is already member of the lineage and the society. It is just a matter for the cross cousins to come to their ages and live together in matrilineal household and then one day announce the pregnancy of

⁹² They say that human body like animal is also a combination of flesh (*Sa*) and bone (*Ruishi*). Also in the conception of child male is like that of seed (*Ihi*) and rain (*wai*) and the female is like that of land or soil (*boh*). The soil holds the seed and rain waters to germinate and grow so does the combination of bone and flesh from a male and female give rise to an individual. I asked Ap Yangku what would happen if few males have sex with a woman. He said that it would not make the woman conceive any child because the

the women. However it is also not simple process of mechanically fixing a pair of nut and bolt together rather the individuals concerned undergo an educational process of identifying persons around them within one's group and others. They slowly develop the accompanying mindset, attitude and behaviour along with the physiological⁹³ and social changes occurring with the growing age so that when right time comes individuals beings are self motivated to execute the conjugal rules and take up such roles in the society⁹⁴. Male partner undergoes a change in his life by taking residence in wife's household that the female partner would find it difficult to understand. On the contrary for the female household to have her a resident husband and become pregnant all means a matter of pride and importance for the household, the matrilineage and partners themselves. It is definitely an occasion to celebrate in the matrilineal household.

4.1.1 *Yu-Tungmini*

When a woman is conceived the news is announced and shared with all the kith and kin of the lineage. All of them are invited for celebrating the pregnancy by observing the *Yu-Tungmini* ritual on a particular day. The whole processes are as follow:

Between 2 to 5 fives months of the pregnancy the couple prepares *Yu* from *ewui ka Jarto* (brew from local millet). When the *Yu* is ready, one fine day the resident-husband (*Mahnkpa*) wakes up early in the morning. He takes a *Belheng* (Bamboo Tumbler) full of fermented millet (*Yu*) mixed with blood from freshly cut toes of a hen. He goes door to door, leaves a little fermented millet and smears a little blood of the hen at entrance door of all his kith and kin before they wake up. He leaves the following invitation message while leaving everybody's house – *Na mato Mato ha ta wei. Ta-hin dak ta wei. Ta-hin na rak an ba wei. Elka ya ta. Ya che yah rang ta wei.*

On discovering this symbolic message of invitation at the doorsteps, all the kith and kin come to the house of the couple. For those who cannot attend the

bone from the other male will spoil the bone from the first male as a result no child will be born to the woman. On the other hand, if a male has sex with two different women they will conceive children.

⁹³ The anxieties associated with the physiological changes from childhood to adulthood remains with the peer groups and family circles. Certain rituals and restrictions mark puberty and menstrual cycle in the case of women. Manipem, mother of two kids says that the first menstruation comes between 12-14 years. During the period a woman is neither allowed to serve drinks to other nor take drink herself. She is also not allowed to go near any blooming crops. However, she does not observe isolation in the family. She can do all other household chores as usual.

⁹⁴ Van Gennep (1960) has coined the term '*Rites-de-passage*' to describe the '*ceremonies accompanying an individual crisis*',...activities associated by distinguishing three separate rituals; '*separation*', '*transitions*' and '*incorporation*' of the individual in the society.

celebration at the house of the couple, the husband reaches a Belheng of Yu at their homes, later. When close kin gather at the house, the husband offers *Yu* to all the brothers-in-law, wife's maternal uncles first (who is most often his own father) by taking the container to their mouths three times and then all other kinsmen. All the kinsmen including children are offered with *Yu* and butter. Then, the brothers-in-law and uncles put *Maika-Tashi* (a mark on the forehead) on the forehead of their resident son-in-law while saying the following words: *Guley tashi tshering ta wei. Mayo ta wei. Lo Ku ta wei. Pu ku ta wei. Sa mei ta wei* (Let good luck be on the mother, brother and maternal uncles). This is a very important stage of transition for the couple and this celebration has several integral meanings to the couple and to the husband in particular, as he would slowly discover in his life.

4.1.2 *Ma-mang*

When the pregnancy counts nine months they observe another ritual called *Ma-mang* that involves a ritual performance with the help of a Rai Bijuwa or an elderly man. In this ritual performance either a goat or a cock is sacrificed to the household deities by cutting off the head. The head is buried in the earth in front of the house. All others in the household except the expectant mother and her husband consume the meat. It is believed that if this ritual performance is not done, the woman will have difficulties in delivering the child.

4.1.3 *Panksang & Mins-tang*

The husband is always at a helping hand when the wife is advancing to last stage of pregnancy particularly when it is the first delivery for the couple. His parents-in-law and brothers-in-law give necessary helps and guidance. He erects a small house or improves the room to make it comfortable for delivery and makes all other necessary preparations.

The delivery is done with the help of his mother-in-law and/or wife's sisters who have the experiences. The husband also stands by for his part of role in the delivery and assists the others. Once the child is delivered, the husband is instructed to cut the placenta (*sema*) with a sharp blade of bamboo called

Payung, wrap it in a piece of cloth/leaf and hang it on a branch of a tree not very far away from the house.

The newborn child is considered defenseless and vulnerable to bad spirits and spells. So it is protected by putting up a branch of a tree called *Changsing* at the entrance right from the day of the birth. It is believed that this branch of tree has the power to ward away evil spirits. The mother and child are kept isolated for three days. The husband takes all care of feeding, washing and cleaning in the house. The mother is given chicken to eat during these days.

On the third day the isolation ends with a ritual called *Panksang*. Any elder male of the household or the husband carries out this ritual. On this day some water (*Moti chio* –water from AmMochhu River) is collected from the AmMochhu River before sunrise. The house is cleaned up and the *Moti chio* is sprinkled inside the house and on the mother and child with the help of a branch of a plant called *Lusing* (*Antemisc vulgaris*). Matrilineal kin and other in the neighbours turn up including old and young ones for a drink especially prepared for the occasion. On the same day naming of the new born child *Minstang* is done by an elder person of the residential group who may be grandparent or the parents (Ya or Ta or Mayu or Payu) in presence of the kith and kin. All are served with Yu. They take the drink after chanting some words and sprinkling it out three times with their fingers as follows: *Torra tung an. Tahi ahlum Panksang ka yu tung an.*(meaning – let us drink for the naming ceremony of the new born child.)

The mother is also given some drink and meat to take. From this day she and her child are no more isolated. Normally, she is fit for work in 15 days after delivery.

Both the husband and wife take equal responsibility to take care of the child once the mother can be on her feet. There is no fixed day or rituals for giving the first solid food to the child.

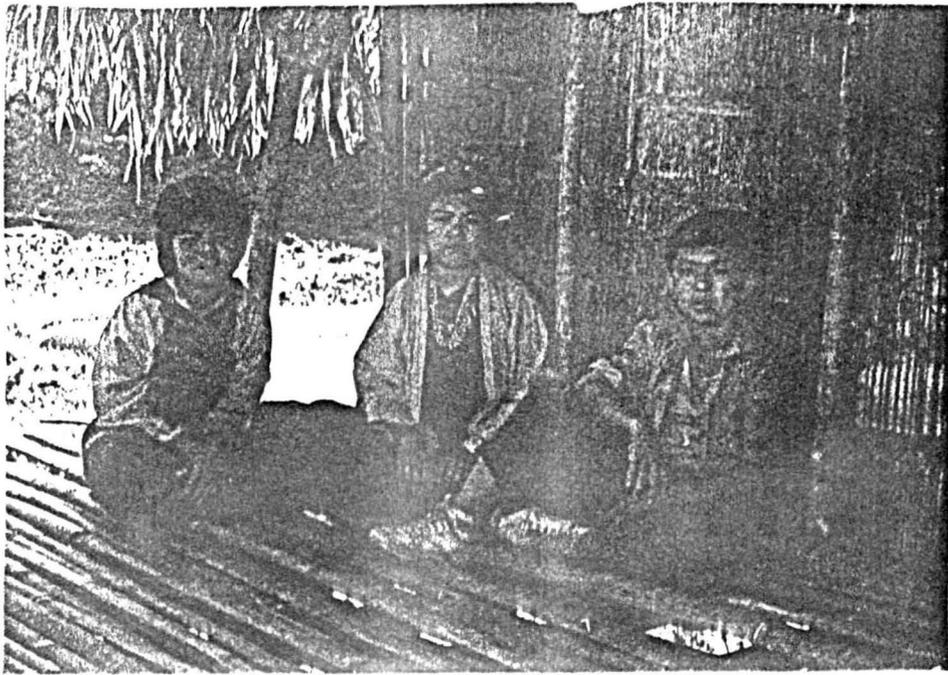
4.2: Parenthood

Yu-tungmini and *Maika-Tashi* are both very important events in the life of new couple. Having these occurred in the couple's life means; One, it is a matter of great happiness for the couple and the whole matrilineage as it ensures the lineage continuity. Two, it takes the couple to an important transition stage in their lives they would soon become Payu and Mayu (F/M) with great responsibilities of the household, matrilineage and the lineal properties. The husband in particular raises his status from being a resident-husband by qualifying to be a father of the future child and then as time passes he shall also become a Ku (maternal Uncle) with the responsibilities towards his own sister's children and wife's brother's children for the furtherance of the both the matrilineage. An issueless couple fails to take these responsibilities adequately and they live a handicapped life. Therefore, having this *Yu-tungmini* ceremony is a matter of social pride and status. The biological proof of fatherhood is not necessarily important in Doya society as usual in all the traditional societies. A legitimate male becomes a legitimate father of a conceived child by the act of offering *Yu* to his wife's parents, as the relationship is already predetermined by the fate of having born cross cousins.

Children born to legitimate couples are usually incorporated as Chu/Chan (grandchildren/children) in a matrilineage as bonafide members of the society. As the chu/chan grows into Lhi-ra and Lhi-met their parents would have greater responsibilities and after carrying all the duties in their life when they die they are given an elaborate send off with full honour and respects. Individuals dying even before getting conjugal relations in young age are not given any ceremonial rites.

4.3: Death and Funeral Rites

No other event of life is so pronounced as the death and funeral is in Doya Society as well. An individual below age of 12 is considered to be still a child though s/he may be very helpful or productive at work. So, the death of a child is not given a formal funeral ceremony. They are simply buried in the earth without giving a ceremonial expression to the feelings of the parents and matrilineage group. If a women dies in labour without delivering the child, her husband cuts



42 Young couple with her elder sister at Taba



43 Pregnant mother with her kids

open the abdomen with an attempt to rescue the child. If the child is found alive the father and close kin take responsibility to bring up the child and if the child is found dead inside the womb, the fetus is taken out and buried separately without any funeral ceremony. On the other hand, mother's dead body receives elaborate funeral rites, little different from that of father or a resident husband.

4.3.1 The Death

Death is taken as the end of the physical life. They seem to believe in the duality of existence. They say, at the death of a person *Sehok* leaves the body continues the journey without in the open space. And finally at the end of the journey beyond the *Sehok* joins another world of "*Simpu*". Unnatural, death is most feared and taken seriously, as it is often believed to have been caused by some evil spirits or bad spells from somebody or by having caused indignities to some deities. In the case of such unnatural death, the '*Sehok*' of the death is believed to trouble those who are believed to have been behind the death of the person. The bereaved kith and kin seem to mind their guardian deities for not preventing the untimely death. They appeal the decease with food and drinks not to cause troubles to the surviving kinsmen before removing the body to the burial site.

4.3.2 Funeral Rites

When death occurs, the dead body is kept in the house for 3 days. During these three days the deceased is given elaborate treatment. Much care is taken in feeding and looking after the deceased body. It all looks as though the deceased would take grudge against the survivors for allowing the death to come.

Dead body of a woman is kept inside the inner room of the house while that of a man who is often the *Mahnkpa* (residential husband) is kept in the entrance room of the house. Funeral rites of a married man are normally carried out at the wife's house but this can also be done at his own natal house. A woman's funeral must be carried out only at the natal household. She must also take her eternal rest in the ancestral land.

When a person breathes his or her last, the body is folded and tied in the fetal position. After that the body is rolled up in a bamboo mat, tied round by three

strong strings of cane (*Lising*) running parallel. Tying up the body reduces the length of the body under 4ft in any case. The food that is offered to the deceased is dropped at the head side of the body that is already rolled up inside the bamboo matting. The dead body is kept inside the house for two nights guarded by at least one person who would also take the body to the burial site. The person who sits guard is not allowed to leave the body except for natural calls. S/he also feeds the deceased. The food for death of a man is prepared outside the house by his niece or grandson/daughter. And that for the deceased who is a female the food is prepared inside the house by her own kin but not belonging to her household. These persons can be the deceased's sisters, sons, daughters who are already separated from the household. The preparation of the food is done separately for the deceased and is elaborate with Yu, meat, butter and cereals. When the food is offered all the kin of the segmentary matrilineages join together. The food is offered amidst sympathising wails and chanting – pleading the deceased to accept the food good or bad for that is what they could offer to him/her. The deceased is also pleaded not to mind or take any grudge on anybody while leaving for the death that has seized upon him/her - *Go happily, they say in chorus. It is not only you to leave the living world. We all have to follow you behind one or the day, etc, to the dead one*⁹⁵.

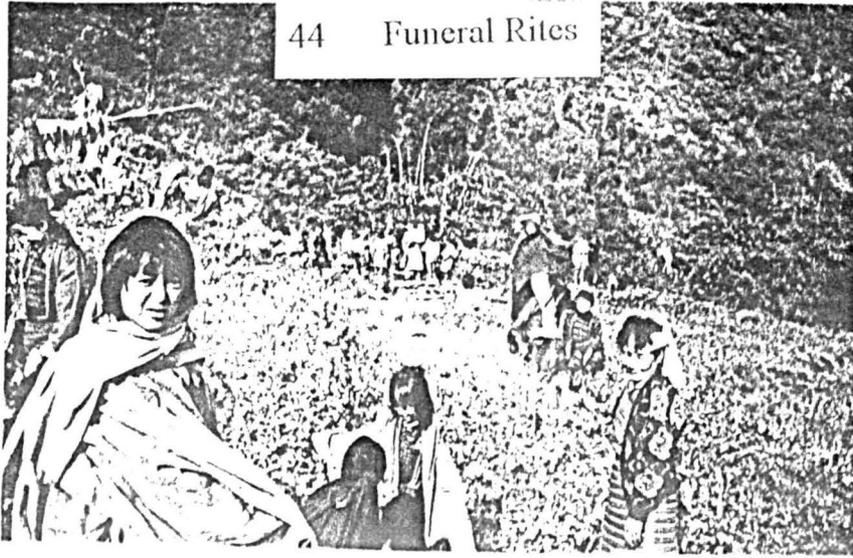
During these three days of mourning, relatives from both the mother's matrilineage and father's matrilineage pour in with packets of fermented millets and uncooked cereals (Chakto).

On the third day also all the relatives comprising almost the whole of residential territory come with gifts of unprocessed fermented millet (Jarto) and uncooked cereals packed in leaves. This is also the day the dead body is to be finally laid at the burial site.

Preparation starts early in the morning at the selected site⁹⁶ that is at least 30 meters away from the house towards the north direction. A day earlier, some

⁹⁵ The exact Lhokpu wordings of the chanting could not be recorded, as it was very difficult to catch the words from the chorus amidst wailings of many kinsmen. However one of my informants gave me the meaning at a later time.

⁹⁶ A site is selected next to the pre-existing burial sites of the kin towards the north direction. The next burial (Chen) is to come up farther towards the north direction away from the house.



a. Kinsmen gathering stone for burial



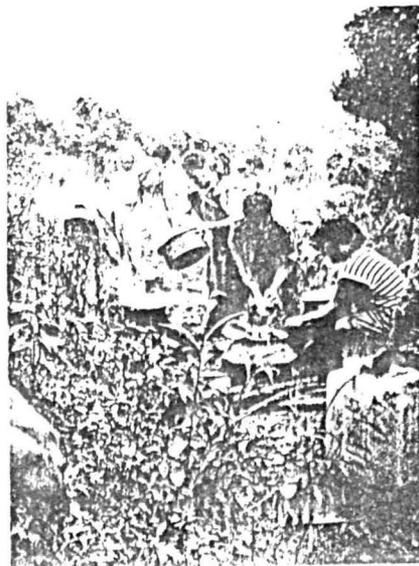
b. Laying the stone foundation for burial



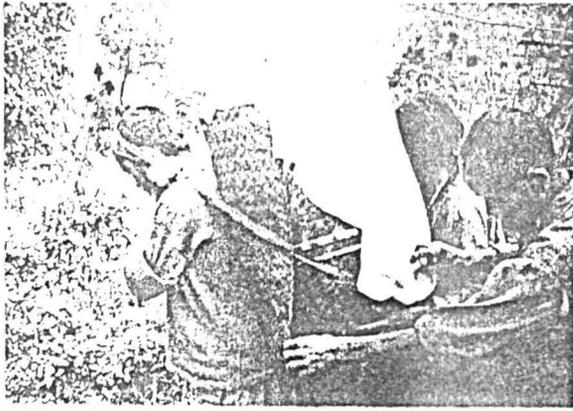
c. Arranging the coffin planks on the foundation



d. Erecting a hut over the burial mound



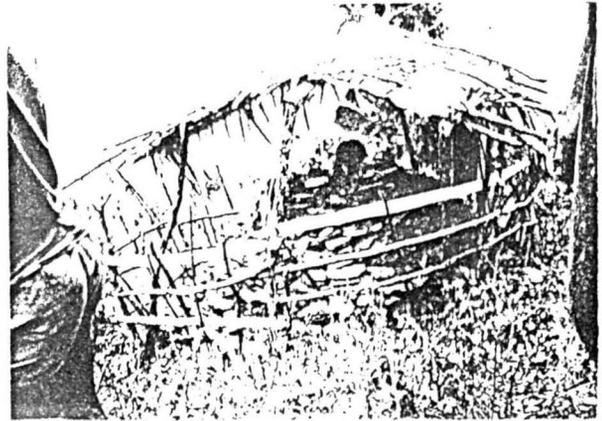
e. Preparing the funeral feast near by the site



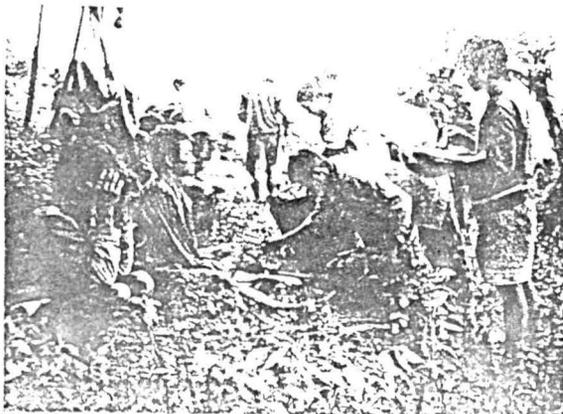
f. Moving the body for final rest



g. Eldest daughter of the deceased leading the procession



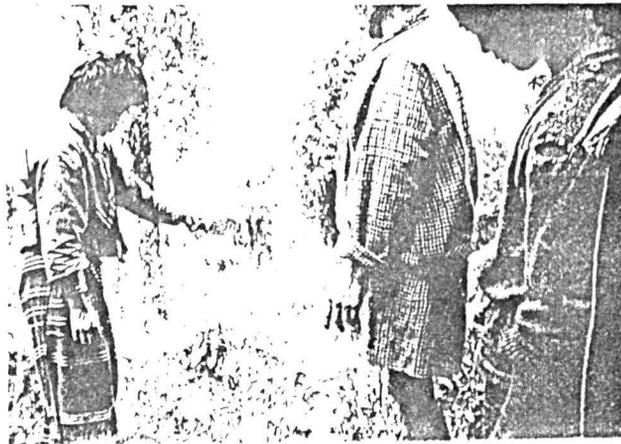
h. Body buried under the mound and hut
Protected a strong fencing around



i. Kinsmen partaking the funeral feast



j. Bereaved family stays behind at the burial site



k. Offering the evening meal of the day at the site.

kinsmen would have already fetched enough planks⁹⁷ from a freshly cut *Kimbur* (*Moraceae-morus levigata*) tree.

A small area next to the earlier burial is cleared and made even while all others engage themselves in finding and collecting stones from all around the fields surrounding the house. On the piece of land cleared, a horizontal stone foundation is erected just above the ground. On this plinth of stone, the planks which are cut to standard sizes are arranged to form a cuboidal box measuring 3 x 2 x 4 ft. Around this arrangement stones are piled up to hold the planks in position to form a coffin/box in place. While the stone level around the box comes up to the height of the box, others erect a small hut to house the whole stone mound that would finally come up. The lifted ridge of the hut runs almost northeasterly direction and is roofed with leaves. And around the hut a pole fencing is erected. But before enclosing the arrangement inside the fence the dead body has to be laid. There are gaps and holes between the planks, these gaps and holes are filled with especially collected gray clay from a sacred stream⁹⁸. This is done to prevent any insect inside the box where the deceased would lie. The person who stands guard to the deceased and none others does the filling work. Once this is done, it is time for the same person to bring the body to the site after the last meal is served at home.

The body rolled up and wrapped in the bamboo matting is taken out from the house by the bearer and carried on the back with rope harness supported by his forehead and shoulders.

No one else should help him. He should complete the carry at one go and not in stages. An unmarried daughter of the matrilineage carrying a basket (*Wank*) containing crockery, knife and other articles of day-to-day use of the deceased, leads the procession to the burial site. In the meantime, other kinsmen prepare food, Yu and flat bread for funeral feasting of all those who are gathered. Many men and women get engaged in cooking and preparation.

⁹⁷ The mastery of cutting out planks from a tree is worth mentioning. They do not use any saw but they manage to chop out fairly uniform and smooth planks with the help of choppers and axes only.

⁹⁸ The clay (*Buli*) is to be collected by kinswomen only. There are only few places where from the clay can be collected and not from any other places. The one in Lotukuchu is called '*Geyti*' and *Kanti* at Satakha. They think that the clay from these places have special property of keeping away from insects.

When the dead body is brought to the burial mound others help to lift the body above the box with the head to the north and the face looking upward. The body is swung up and down 3 times over the burial box and then lowered into the box for the final rest. All his belongings especially his/her valuables⁹⁹ including money and knives are also kept beside the body in the box while vocally informing the dead one each time that nothing of him/her is being held back by anybody, when all his articles are being kept in the box. After this the box, is closed with the remaining planks and the gaps on the covering planks are filled up with the same the clay. Soon after many hands come together to pile up stones over and around the box and finally it takes the shape of a pyramidal stone mound over the ground inside which the body is encased in an insect proof closed box. A pointed stone is put on the top of the mound as the last piece of stone under the hut. This stone mound with the dead body is called a *Chen*. On the mound the dead one's crockery are mounted and his household items like baskets, bamboo containers are hung below the ridge of the burial hut. Around the hut at the feet of the fencing poles, the girl who led the procession sows some food grain and cottonseeds in three circumbulations around the hut. When everything is kept inside the hut the fencing is completed by thickly pegging pointed logs all round the hut. Finally long cane strings running three times around bind the fencing. And then the roof of the hut is also bound by running three strings across from side to side over the ridge and tied to the fencing poles. Lastly, a tall bamboo pole is put up near the *Chen* with a spear shaped wood cut out and a piece of white clothe on the top¹⁰⁰. This completes the work of burial into the *Chen*.

Now, the lineage people along with the bearer of the dead body offer the last meal of the day (*Lipto*) near the *Chen*. After this, a ritual feasting of specially prepared food and drink takes place at the burial site. The food is to be taken in a different manner. No one should eat the food with bare hands. They have to take it with the help of a piece of hard leaf to pick the food and throw it into the mouth without touching the lips. The drink is taken as usual in bowls or leaf pouches.

⁹⁹ In earlier times, they said that they used to keep personal valuables like precious stones and gems in the coffin(*Chen*) of the decease. There were curious incidents of breaking open some of the very old *chens* in *Lotukuchu* suspected to be works of treasure hunters in the region. The matter was being reported to the sub-divisional authority and it was being investigated during my stay.

¹⁰⁰ This pole is put up only at *Man's Chen*.

The funeral food should not be thrown away. It can be taken home and consumed. Small children are closely guided in this matter. After the food and drinks, people start moving home after paying condolences leaving behind the bereaved family near the Chen. If any relative of the family stays back on this day s/he has to stay continuously for another three days at the deceased's home.

When all these works are completed and people leave for their home, it is taken that half of the day is over. Because they believe that in the next half of the day the dead man will do his share of work. There is a division of distributing working days between the death and living.

4.3.3 Division of Working Days

The disruption caused by death of a person takes several days of mourning, restricted activities and heavy drain on resources, all of which is made possible with cooperation of several kinsmen and relatives, to finally restore things into normal order.

The first three and half days until the dead body is finally laid to rest in the chen are taken to be the working days for the survivors. In the second half of the third day the bereaved family would just sit and mourn - no one should do any work. Any non-resident kinsmen cook their food. The fourth day, following the disposal day is again working day for the survivors. The fifth day is again for the death. And from the sixth day onwards, the surviving members of the lineage can resume their normal works at home and in fields, if the deceased is a female. For male's death up to the seventh day is for the deceased and from the eighth day the living can resume their normal works (Table-4.1).

Table-4.1: Division of Working Days¹⁰¹.

<i>Elhni</i> (Good) days	Activities	<i>Zehni</i> (Bad) days	Ritual activities
Day - 1 to 2	Death occurs. Kinsmen go around to make necessary arrangements for the dead body.	Day-3	In the second half of the day after burial rites, kinsmen keep away from normal works.
Day – 3	The first half of the day (when all the burial rites are accomplished with feasting and last offerings of the day at the burial site) is for the kinsmen. The third day kinsmen cannot take food with bare hands.	Day-5	Special offering of Honey, Fish, and butter along with elaborate meal is made to the death twice a day at the burial site.
Day – 4	Kinsmen go out for normal works.	Day-9	Kinsmen keep away from normal works.
Day – 6	Kinsmen can take food with bare hands from this day. Normal work resumes in case of female death.	Day-12	Non-working day for the kinsmen.
Day – 7 & 8	Normal working days for the kinsmen resumes after 8 th .	Day-15	Non-working day for the kinsmen.
Day – 10 & 11	Normal working days for the kinsmen.	Day-18	Non-working day for the kinsmen.
Day - 13 & 14	Normal working days for the kinsmen.	Day-21	As above
Day - 16 & 17	As above	Day-24	Observed as <i>Dalhni</i> for female deceased. Elaborate feasting and offering is made to the deceased. A cow is slaughtered for the female. For male deceased <i>Dalhni</i> is observed on the 27 th day. An ox is slaughtered for the purpose.
Day – 19 & 20	Normal working days for the kinsmen.		
Day – 22 & 23	-Do-		

The offering of food and drink to the deceased at regular intervals however, has to be continued till the 15th day when final ritual feast is offered to the death in the presence of all the kinsmen. A cow for females or an ox for male's death is

¹⁰¹ As part of ritual observance after a death has occurred, days are divided as *Elhni* and *Zehni*, alternatively between the deceased and surviving kinsmen. *Elhni* days are considered good for the survivors to do normal works and *Zehni* days are considered bad for the survivors to do normal works. They keep away from normal works.

slaughtered on the 15th day for the feast. All those who attended the 3rd day ritual have to join in this feast.

The cooked meat along with food (Chakto & Kersey roti) and drink (Yu) are offered to the deceased first in the same manner near the Chen. After this all partake the meat, food and drink. The Sehok of the death is believed to be leaving the body and household on this day to join the others at Simpu (world of the death). It is believed that the Sehok hovers around jungles and streams within the residential territory after this ritual.

Every three years, the deceased's Sehok is offered with Yu in the first harvest of Jarto, which coincides with the yearly Loh celebration. Most often, people believed that most of the common sicknesses and illnesses are caused by one of these Sehoks of the death persons who may have been neglected or disregarded. The witch doctors help them identify the particular spirits through oracles. So whenever anything, food or drink is offered to a deceased s/he is requested not to harm or curse any of the poor living kinsmen. They say while offering, please, accept whatsoever we could manage to offer to you and stay *happy and contented wherever you are*.

4.3.4 Beliefs, Restrictions and Austerity

For the first three days after the death, the dead person's guard is isolated untouchably from other resident or non-resident people. Other bereaved members of the household do not touch any pots and pans of the household and do any work. They observe austerity and mourn the death. Non-resident matrilineage people come to help in cooking and doing all the household chores. The bereaved members of the household cannot touch their mouth with their hands while eating; they have to eat with the help of leaf spoon without touching their mouth for the first three mourning days after the death. All the resident husbands (Mahnkpa) also observe all the restrictions when death occurs in his wife's household. Meat and fried food is strictly avoided for the first 3 days.

In case of resident husband's death a set of crockery which includes, a pot, a pan, a plate, a bowl, a Yu tumbler (Belheng), a bamboo basket (Wank), a Ladle



45 A Widower wearing long hair at the background

(kulik) and other articles are separated and kept outside the house. A hanging fire place (Jikpu) is made along the front side of the house to prepare food for the deceased husband. For females these things are kept inside the house and cooking is also done inside the same house.

When a husband dies, the bereaved wife has to observe austerity for a period of 3 years during which she should not enter into anybody's house and also look for another husband. And if a wife dies, the bereaved husband has to observe austerity for a period of 3 years if he has fathered kids to look after or otherwise for one year if he hasn't fathered any children. He is restrained from cutting his hair for the austerity period. So, it is very easy to find out a widower in a village by looking at the long hair, he keeps.

During this austerity period bereaved ones cannot enter into anybody's house. And if any body is found doing so s/he is hit with dead charcoal and residue of *Yu*. If a bereaved one comes in another's house, s/he is believed to bring misfortunes in the household. So hitting with charcoal and residue of *Yu* is to ward off or neutralise and a way of showing the disapproval to the defaulter.

The Matrilineage in which a death occurs does not worship any deities or celebrate Loh for the following austerity period of 3 years.

SUMMARY

Life is a fact. Its passage is also a predetermined fact as the flesh and bone of human body. Likewise, childbirth is also a matter of fact as the seed with the rain from the sky fall on the earth sprouts to grow to fruit plenty of seeds for consumption, sharing and exchange between own groups for further reproduction. All these are made possible by the grace of gods and spirits who control over all the facts of life and nature.

Individuals follow well-defined set of rules in executing the roles in one's life and any deviation from it or mistake out of ignorance causes indignities to the gods and spirits who can in turn cause death and miseries to life.

Life and birth is desirable death is not. Life after death joins the realm of the spirits. Their spirits must be pleased and kept happy by all the kinsmen together for the well being of all the members of the society.

For all these reasons relations between males and females should be discreet, sacred and predetermined. Doya society also accepts the child born out of this sacred relationship without having to solemnize with ceremonial rituals at the time of physical union. The child that is conceived as an outcome of the sacred relation between them is a matter great pride and happiness for the kinsmen and the household. This occasion is marked by ritual offering of *Yu* to the members of matrilineal household including the father of the husband to bestow the couple's roles of father and mother.

Sex is secret acts. Out of this secret acts when a child is finally born the mother and child have to be looked after, protected and guarded against anything evil by the husband in isolation for three days. On the third day with an ablutionary ritual the elders give the child personal identity. They celebrate this occasion with drinks and the kinsmen.

The child grow in the close company of the mother's matrilineage group, educated in sorting out things and people around him/her in discreet categories to differentiate people around. The child observes the reproductive behaviors of the man and animals around, enacts them in the role-plays and games while still

young. Finally when the child matures they follow the ways of the social life to take up different roles to execute rules of the society.

For the lineage to continue, the land is to be kept intact, the member of the matrilineage need to work together for the livelihood, the women needs to be respected in her own place. Men can be mobile like seeds and rain. When women dies it is an irreparable loss but when men dies the matrilineage loses only a resource of the exchange groups of the lineage and there can be alternatives, although men in matrilineage do have important roles to play in the rituals of life.

Death as such is not desirable for both. The spirits after life still rules the well being of the surviving kinsmen of a lineage. They should be pleased while leaving the surviving group. The separation of the soul (Sehok) from the physical body after death takes three days of consoling and pleading with gifts and offerings of food and drinks. The death is sent off with all the basic commodities of livelihood with the hope that s/he would continue to live happily even after. S/he is contacted at regular intervals through elaborate offerings of food and drinks to assure the linkage and ensure continued well being for the surviving kinsmen and their descendants. The Doyas live in the past and present. Future is not theirs.