

THE MISING TRIBE OF NORTH EAST INDIA- A GLIMPSE

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Abstract: The Mishing people or Mising also called Miri are an ethnic tribal group, the second largest tribal group in North-East India, first being the Bodos in Assam. They were earlier called Miris in historical days and the Constitution of India still refers to them as Miris. They are in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India Under constitutional order 1950. They were originally hill tribes of the Himalaya region of North Eastern India, living in the mountain ranges lying between the Suvansiri and Siyang district of Arunachal Pradesh. They are one of the major sections of tribal population in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam and now spread over wide range of plains and are found in the district of North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Tinsukia. They have been gradually assimilating themselves with other indigenous people of the Plains of Assam and their culture. According to the census of India 2011, the total population of Mising in Assam is 5,87,310. They are now a part and parcel of Assamese society of India and have been contributing a lot to the growth and enrichment of the Assamese society. But still they maintain their own distinctive socio-cultural system and tribal traditional belief and customs. Therefore, this paper attempts to provide a glimpse of the diverse socio-cultural life of Mising people with special reference to Assam, India.

Keywords: Mising, Marriage system, Agriculture, Socio-cultural organization and Religious life.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mishing people or Mising also called Miri are an ethnic tribal group, the second largest tribal group in North-East India (Bhandari, 1992), first being the Bodos in Assam. They were earlier called Miris in historical days and the Constitution of India still refers to them as Miris. They are in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India Under constitutional order 1950. They were originally hill tribes of the Himalaya region of North Eastern India, living in the mountain ranges lying between the Suvansiri and Siyang district of Arunachal Pradesh, India.

The Miris were ethnically belonged to the Tibeto-Burmese group of Mongoloid stock and originally they belonged the same group of tribe comprised of Nishi, Monyongs, Pa:dams, Pasis etc. who are found in the district of Siyang and Suvanshiri of present Arunachal Pradesh. The census report of Assam 1881 stated that Miris, Dafalas and Abors are names which have been given by the Assamese to these sections of one and the same race inhabiting the mountains between the Assam valley and Tibet. In fact, the Miris of the Brahmaputra Valley and Daphalas and Abors of Arunachal Pradesh have more or less identical religious beliefs, socio-cultural system and speak the same dialect.

The Mising who were originally hills tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh, migrated down to the Plains of Assam in search of a peaceful and better economic life in comparatively early times. It is believed that the first group of Misings landed in the upper region of the valley sometime between 13th and 14th century A.D. when the area around Sadiya was ruled by the Chutia kings (Dole, 1978).

The Mising have been living mostly along bank of the river of Brahmaputra and its tributaries. They now spread over wide range of plains and are found in the district of *North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Tinsukia*. They have been gradually assimilating themselves with other indigenous people of the Plains of Assam and their culture. According to the census of India 2011, the total population of Mising in Assam is 5,87,310 (Census India, 2011). They are now a part and parcel of Assamese society of India and have been contributing a lot to the growth and enrichment of the Assamese society. But still they maintain their own distinctive socio cultural system and tribal traditional belief and customs. Therefore, this paper attempts to provide a glimpse of the diverse socio-cultural life of Mising people with special reference to Assam, India.

II. FAMILY STRUCTURE OF MISSING PEOPLE

The Mising follow the patriarchal system of family structure. The eldest male member in the family becomes its head. They have their traditional of living joint family. The head of family including his unmarried son and daughters and married sons live under the same roof. In terms of family authority, next to father comes the eldest son. The earnings of the family are usually deposited with their father who bears all responsibilities for maintenance of the family. Both the man and woman of the family accept the division of labour without any question and grabbing. After the father's death, the property is equally divided among the sons. Daughters have no right over the property. Basically they are peace loving and fun loving

III. MARRIAGE SYSTEM

There are three types of recognized marriage system in the Mising society. They are as follows :

3.1. Da:roMidang : this form of marriage is settled by the parents or guardians according to social system.

3.2. Dugla la nam : This is a form of marriage by elopement, at the consent of bride.

3.3. Kumna sola La:nam : This is also a type of settle marriage. But the performance is not gorgeously done. This type of marriage is performed only after receiving consent from both the parent and guardians of the bride and bridegroom. From the view point of marriage they practice both monogamy and polygamy. But monogamy is becoming more popular than polygamy Marriage is strictly within the same "Gumvn So: Yin i.e. forefathers. It would be contraindicated within sub-clan families and the offspring of a matter with that of her own or closely related sisters are regarded their brothers and sisters. Inter caste marriage is not advocated.

IV. AGRICULTURE:

By occupation the Misings are traditionally agriculturist. They have been following agriculture as the main source of subsistence. Their old habit of Jhum in the hills and to a certain extent, shifting in the revering belt of the plains no longer there. The agricultural economy based on production of rice, mustard seeds and black pulse and vegetables. Rice is produced mainly for domestic consumption and mustard seeds and black pulse are produced for commercial purposes. There are ceremonies and festivals associated with agriculture such as 'Ali-Aye' Ligang', 'po:rag' etc.

4.1. Ali-Aye-Ligang :

The literary meaning of 'Ali-Aye-Ligang' stands for first sowing of roots and fruits in which 'Ali', stands for seeds, 'Aye' for fruits and 'Ligang' for sowing. Roots and fruits were staple food of livelihood in the hills. Gradually there ways of living have been changing and rice cultivation has become a part of their agricultural production. At the advent of the monsoon and before ploughing the field they observe 'Ali-Aye-Ligang'. It marks the beginning of agricultural cultivation. Prayers, dances and feast are integral part of the festival. In old days, it was celebrated the occasion on the first Wednesday of Fagan all over Assam which is considered as auspicious day. They belief the day as Laksmi Day and on that day head of the family makes the sowing of seeds in their respective fields. Apong and purang are essential items of 'Lapang'.

V. SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

5.1. Murang :

Murang is the most important and traditional socio-cultural institution of the Mising people, In the Mising society Murang is a symbol of village unity. The origin of the Murang system could not be properly traced but it is fact that Murang is an old traditional connected with one of their ways of defenses from other tribes during their life in the hills. Murang system is observed in many other tribal communities of North East India and known by different names. The Murang house serves the purpose for annual 'Porag' and other major festivals. Generally the 'Murang' is constructed is a central place of the village. It is also the usual venue for the village 'gams' to give judgment of different cases. The youth and the village people gather in the 'Murang' to chalk out the programs and to take social decisions.

5.2. Do:LungKebang:

It is supreme social body of a village. It is constituted by elderly people of the village who assembles in the 'Murang' under the village headmen on specific occasions. This body takes all important social decisions and delivers judgment and punishes to the offenders. Membership is open to all. But no women will join the 'Kebang' the apex administrative unit.

5.3. MvmvrYa:me:

It is an organization of the unmarried boys and girls. This is the most important and powerful organization in rendering social service to the village people. This organization stands as an organization cum caretaker in the whole circumstance of the activities of the village, in 'Murang' during 'Po-rag' festival, 'Ali-Aye' Ligang' etc. When a family wants manpower to construct a house, to harvest paddy etc. the headman of family invites the 'MvmvrYa:me'. The family has to offer only 'Apong' and other eatables. If the family is poor, they satisfied with 'Apong' only.

5.4. Abvr Gvnram :

It is also an important village organization. 'AbvrGvm' is means of rendering physical labour on invitation of co-villages who can't otherwise get things done by his effort. This system helps the people for social integration at the village level.

VI. RELIGIOUS LIFE

In respect of religion they regard themselves as Hindu but maintain some of their traditional rituals, beliefs and practices which can simply be called tribal form of religion. Firstly, about the creator of the Universe, Secondly, existence of sprits around human habits

and thirdly, about the human soul. During the long period of their settlement in the plains, the Misings experienced sea changed in the every sphere of life. The Misings have become vaishnavities and have given up the traditional spirit of worshiping except the ancestral ones.

Although the Mising people are maintain many of their traditional socio-cultural traits, yet modernism has been gradually penetrating into their culture.

CONCLUSION

From the point of view of socio-cultural system, the Mising people are very rich. However, during the

recent years, the Mising society has undergone transformation and changes. The Misings have now come forward to accept the developmental schemes of different sectors with a view to changing their own destiny. But at The same time, they are maintaining their culture which distinguishes them as a separate ethnic group.

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