

The Origin of Mising Tribe and Women's Role in their Society

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Abstract:

The Mising tribe is the second largest tribe, among the tribes of North-East India. They belong to the Yiluto-Burmese group, sub category the of the Mongoloid race. The Mising tribe has own their culture and traditions that has been handed down form age. Some indigenous rules also govern their society. This colourful ethnic group living amidst the fellow Assamese people for many centuries has been able to maintain its traditional socio-cultural traits unimpaired in spite of the changes that have taken place in Assam's socio-political and religious spheres. The Mising presently living in plains of Assam were not single tribe, but various Tani tribes of Arunachal Pradesh migrated to the plains of Assam. This explains the presence of many Mising clans with different Mising dialects as well as different levels of development. They were originally hills tribes of the Himalaya region of North Eastern India, living in the mountain ranges lying between the Subansiri and Siyang district of Arunachal Pradesh. 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 is total 7, 37,836 that are Assam is 6, 80,424 population and Arunachal Pradesh is 57,412. It is believed that the first group of Mising 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.

In Mising society men and women enjoy different positions. The women enjoy lower position than the men in their social structure. The greatest challenge today is to improve the role of women who constitute half the population of the country. The fundamental rights and directive principles given in the constitution of India bear faithful application of the principal of non-discrimination so principle that women are entitled to the same right as men as citizens of India.

Introduction:

The Mising tribe is the second largest tribe, among the tribes of North-East India. They belong to Yiluto-Burmese group, sub category of the Mongoloid race. They presently reside in different districts of Assam like Tinsukia, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur and others. The community has own their culture and traditions that has been handed down form age. Some indigenous rules also govern their society. This colourful ethnic group living amidst the fellow Assamese people for many centuries has been able to maintain its traditional socio-cultural traits unimpaired in spite of the changes that have taken place in the socio-political-religious life of Assam. There is no written history of the Misings about their migration from Northern China to the plains of Assam but history was passed down orally in the folk of songs and stories by the ancestors from generation to generation and is still

prevalent among their society. The Misings presently living in plains of Assam were not one single tribe but various Tani tribes of Arunachal Pradesh migrated to the plains of Assam. This explains the presence of many Mising clans with different Mising dialects as well as different levels of development.

They are listed under Scheduled Tribes Orders Act of the Indian Parliament, first notified by the President of India as constitutional order in 1950. In the latest amendment of the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes Order under reference, notified by the government of Assam in 2003, the Mising has been listed as 'Miri' (Miching). They were originally hills tribes of the Himalayan region of North Eastern India, living in the mountain ranges lying between the Subansiri and Siyang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. 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 is 7,37,836. In Assam their population is 6,80,424 and in Arunachal Pradesh it is 57,412.

The Mising currently enjoys constitutional autonomy under the 'Mising Autonomous Council', which was formed after the Mising Autonomous Council Act of 1995 Passed by the Assam Legislative Assembly. Since 1983 Mising organisation have been demanding Sixth Schedule status under the constitution of India in Mising dominated areas. Various Mising nationalist organisations have been formed during the modern area of civilization like Mising Ba:ne' Ke'bang (Mising Council) and Takam Mising porin kebang (All Mising Student's Union), Mising Mimak Ke'bang, Mising Debrbe' Ke'bang, Mising Agom Ke'bang.

Objective of the study-

- ❖ The main aim of study is to trace the origin of Mising tribe and their position in society.
- ❖ The studies also throws light on the role and status of women in the Mising society.

Methodology-

This paper has utilized both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are collected from some of the Mising tribe areas of Assam, and the secondary sources are found in by some books about Mising people, journals of the Assam Research Society, articles, materials and other relevant sources like the internet which have been consulted for the same.

The Origin of the Mising people: The world of Mising is derived from the two words 'Mi' and "Toshing/Anshing". 'Mi' means Man and Anshing/Toshing means worthiness. The word is familiar to many tribes in South East Asia. Another name 'Miri' also stands the Mising people. The Mising, who were originally hill tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh, migrated down to the Plains of Assam in search of a peaceful and better economic life in earlier times. It is believed that the first group of Mising 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. The Mising tribes belong to the greater Tani community that comprise many tribes in Arunachal Pradesh in India and Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in China. All Tani tribes

share linguistic, culture and ritual similarities. All Mising trace back their root to Abutani or Abo Tani (the first man of earth) like any other Tani tribes. The plain tribe people known as 'Miri' or Mising now inhabiting the riverine area of Upper Assam Valley are blood relations of the tribal people living in the Abor Hills of Arunachal Pradesh. The history of the Miri is essentially the history of the Mising, Moyongias, Pasi, Padams and other hill tribes, who profess the cult of 'Mirui', worship 'Donyi' (Sun) and 'Polo' (Moon) as their principal deities and called themselves "Ami' or 'Tani', meaning is Man. The Mising typically live in a house, which is called 'chang ghar'. Now some Mising have started constructing Assam type house. A Mising family has several fireplaces.

Dalton also noticed that the plain Miris were divided into such clans as the 'Saiengya' and the 'Ayiengya'. He noted that members of these clans got their hairs cropped like the Abors. Dalton also conjectured about the origin of the name Miri. He pointed out that, from a very long time, the Miri monopolized the entire trade between the plains of Assam and Abors who lived in high mountains to the North. Dalton wrote: "As being thus the only medium of communication between the two peoples they obtained this name Miri, which means mediator or go-between, and is the same word as 'Mina' or 'Milia' used with the same signification in Orissa".

Role of Women in Mising society: According to Jawaharlal Nehru "To awake the people it is women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves."

"Education of a boy is the education of one person, but education of a girl is the education of the entire family".

But in any society women's role in the production process is crucial especially where agriculture is predominant. Women's role in household and reproductive activities played an important part in economic activity and it provides the basis for the productive activities in the society. To maintain the system of production process, women's role in terms of subsistence activity and reproduction of children is crucial. This patriarchal Indian society and caste system placed women in an inferior position in society. Other example accorded to 'United Development Programme' in 1995-"The husband has 'queen of commodities', money in his pocket, but the wife is not paid for her work. The husband must give her only board and lodging, as he would also have to do for a slave. The house wife's working hours, conditions of work, holidays, and leisure are not settled by contract. The marriage contract is not comparable to an employment contract. There is no right to strike no sisterly organisation of housewives they are instead individualist and atomised. They enjoy no social security on the basis of their works as housewives, nor are they protected by law from the despotism and violence of their husbands. In the home nobody ensures the observance of human rights; hence they are a private affair, which allegedly do not concern the public even when there is no guarantee of physical safety". The Mising women have played an important role in every part in the Mising society. In social culture religious and economic fields the women have to play a vital, more hard working than the men in some cases. Some of the important roles of the Mising women are as follows:

Social role of Mising women: In Mising society men and women have different positions. The women have lower position than the men in their social structure. The Mising women do not have much role in important decisions of mates either in the family or in public. They are least consulted in matters related to acquiring or disposing of property, holding social and religious activities children education and marriage. The house of the Misings have a specific structure, especially in the kitchen in the two parts are called “Ri’si’ng”(the upper portion) and “Koktog”(the lower portion) and is occupied by the male member in the upper portion and the female members are occupied in the Koktog(lower portion). In Mising society the Ri’si’ng is most valuable, thus privilege to sit in the Ri’si’ng is status symbol but the women are deprived of the privilege, which shows the lower position of Mising women.

Religious role of Mising women: Women have played an important role in the development of various religions like Hinduism to other religions. In religious matters, the Mising women play a secondary role, that is, they participate in the performance of the rituals as helpers rather to priestess. The traditional priest of the Mising is called ‘Mibu’ who must be always a male person. A woman could never become a ‘Mibu’. The Mising women cannot sit the same row in which the male priests and co-priests are seated. The women work in the religious functions cook food, prepare ‘Apong’ a kind of rice beer and males also perform even without women’s participation.

Political role of Mising women: In the political sphere, the role of the Mising women is not less important. The most important political organisation in the Mising society is the ‘Dolung Ke’bang’, which is an organisation or association for discussing various problems or important issues of a village or more. In this Ke’bang, both the male and female members of the society take part in reachang suitable solution. But the most important political organisation in which women have equal rights along with the men folk is the ‘Mimbi-Ya:me’. This organisation is the benevolent organisation where the young unmarried men and women of the village are its members. In this organisation, welfare activities are discussed and performed by the youth of the villages. A Ke’bang is presided over ‘Gam’ (village headmen) and participated by the elderly men of the village. A Ke’bang may be called in by any person on any day according on his or her needs for settling a matter.

The indigenous organization of Mising women: The TMMK (All Mising Women Forum): In human society, each individual can utilise his or her own thoughts and ideas and that is considered to be the basic human right of an individual. But it is a matter of irony that in reality one of us hardly gets any opportunity to display our own individual ideas. Especially the women the most valuable section in society is often being sidelined from taking any important decision. Another vary important aspect of this point is that women themselves are still ignorant about their own rights and policy formulated especially for them. According to Mahatma Gandhi “when women, whom we called abala become sabala, all those who are helpless will become powerful”.

The TMMK is an important women's organization of all Mising women and formed in Gogamukh on 9th, 10th, and 11th January 1990 named as "Takam Mising Mime' Ke'bang" all Mising women's forum(TMMK). The elite realized the necessity of such an organisation to exert pressure on the community itself or the government so as to fulfil their needs and aspirations. They started their agitation mainly in two fold- fight for equal rights within the society itself and fight for over all development of women folk. The TMMK is constant demands for equal right and development have compelled men to think for them Besides their programme for awareness to the women in the community in the spheres of economical, social imbalance, educational and political rights the TMMK and the movement led by them became popular in the community and in the locality respectively.

The greatest challenge today is to improve the role of women who constitute half the population of the country. The fundamental rights and directive principles given in the constitution of India bear faithful application of the principle of non-discrimination so that women are entitled to the same right as men as citizens of India. The growing sense of 'women protection and uplift themselves' numbers of programmes, several important development have been laid on increasingly the percentage of education among the women folk in the Mising community. Schools and college have been gradually coming up in Mising dominated areas. With the constitutional protection and economic help an educated class has emerged. Before the foundation of TMMK the women folk had no political interest. After independence a few women from the community took active part along with others. It is a pity that the representation of women in parliament and state legislature is very poor even today. The growth of political consciousness among the intelligentsia has resulted in significant progress in the Mising society like co-operation, equality and village self-government and its replacing by the individualistic, bureaucratic and money oriented values. TMMK, since inception has been working in the field of development in the socio-economic condition of women folk of the community. Particularly in the field of traditional weaving. The traditional craft of weaving is the brightest feature of Mising culture.

Conclusion:

The Mising people inhabiting by the plains believe "Gumin" as one of the earliest ancestors, the forefather of a lineal family of Abotani. The son of Gumin is grouped in clans (opin), the names of which are represented by the existing surname in the society. They are blood related brothers with a social restriction of matrimonial relationship among them. The Mising community is a patricidal society. There is certain gender inequality among the men and women folk. The Mising are well organized. They obey certain strict rules and regulations in their society as they do on the household. They always obey rules and regulations in terms of work, like fishing, merry making etc. The primitive method of social group or polity is prevalent among them. There is a democratic set-up where members of the society have a power to point out any problem of them in their society council or Gaon Panchayat or village council. The village headman (*Gam*) controls this system. In Mising society father is head of the family. He advises all the members of the family and they obey his advice. The Mising men and women have been doing all the agricultural activities which increase their annual income. In a nutshell, the Mising women are the backbone of the whole society and their

progress and empowerment alone can ascertain the everlasting development of the community as a whole.

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