



Reflection Of Nature In Mising Folk Literature

Dr. Polyshree Pegu

Assistant Professor

Department of Assamese

Silapathar Town College,

Silapathar, Dhemaji, Assam, India

Abstract: Mising tribe is like one among several ethnic tribes inhabiting Assam under the spectrum of Tani group of people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language speaking group of the greater Mongoloid race. Mising tribe is rich in folk literature and has abundance of folk tales and these folk tales are null and void without the mentioning of nature. It is found that nature plays very important role in the day-to-day life of the Mising people. The Misings people are directly associated with the elements of nature and their social life would be null and void without the mention of the nature be it traditional life, cultural life or religious life which have a genealogical association which has been transmitted from generation to other orally. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to study the role played by nature and how the natural elements are associated in shaping the life of the Mising people. Many works have been written down as a record keeping in the form of books and documents by the people of the community and others mentioning natural elements but no any specific research has been carried out so far in this specific topic on how natural elements play an important role in shaping the social life of the Misings people and to what extend those elements are associated with the life of the Misings people. This research would fill the gap and provide new information on the role and how the natural elements directly or indirectly have an impact on the social life of the Mising people.

Keywords: Folk Literature, folk tales, shaping social life, natural elements.

1. Introduction:

The Mising is one of the prominent tribal communities belonging to Tibeto-Burman language speaking group inhabiting in Assam. Ethnologically, they belong to the Sino-Tibetan branch of the Mongolian group. The Mising is commonly known as 'Miri' but they identify themselves as Mising. The Mising of Assam has settled in the present Districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat of upper Assam. According to the available record, they are the second largest plains tribe of Assam next to Bodo, having 6,80,424 as per 2011 census report.

Mising is rich in folk literature. The initiation of collecting different genres of Mising folk literature started from the 2nd decade of the 20th century when Tarun Chandra Pamegam published his first collection of folk tales and folk songs in 1962 as *Mising Sahu* (Doley: History of Mising language and Literature.P.34) The book was published by Asom Sahitya Sabha. It is believed that their history and culture lies in the air in the form of *Abangs* (a type of Mising folk song) and *Leke do:ying* (folk tale) where the origin of ethnic identification has been mentioned. As there is scanty of works done in this field, this paper would try to bridge the gap about their identity through folk literature which can be considered as their unique cultural worldwide and bring home about their ethnic identity that have been conditioned since the past and nurtured till present.

2. Statement of the problem:

Taburam Taid (2007) observed that Mising is one of the most prominent communities with their distinct identity symbols (p.56). But it has been observed that significant research have not been done till today. The Mising community is rich in folklore but they are not in the written form. Most of them still exist in the form of oral tradition till the last decade. Therefore, definitely the research on the above topic would be in problem specially in the collection of data.

3. Scope and Limitations:

The scope of the study has been limited to examine the folk tales in tracing the role of nature in shaping the soial life of the Mising community. There is enormous scope for the next generation to explore and study more about nature in relation to the role of nature and how this particular community is null and void without mentioning the role of nature in every day-to-day life of the Mising community.

Besides, there are number of limitation of this research. This are-

- (i) Lack of previous research studies on the topic.
- (ii) Limited access to data.

The study is entirely limited to the folk tales of the *Mising* folk literature.

4. Rationale and Significance:

The following points would be the significance of the Research:

- (i) The study would reflect on the uniqueness of Mising folk literature.
- (ii) The study would focus on how the folk tales helps in tracing the role of nature in shaping the social life of the Mising.
- (iii) The study would also provide information to some extent on the changes and continuity.

5. Hypothesis/Research Questions:

The questions used in this study tries to address “To what extent the **folk tales** tell us about the role of nature and how this particular community is deeply associated and rooted with nature in every spear of life?”

6. Research Methodology:

- (i) This study will use analytical and interpretative method.
- (ii) The study consists of both primary data and secondary data collection.
- (iii) The primary data is collected through direct conversation with elderly and literary person of the Mising community.
- (iv) The secondary data is collected from important books on folk literature including folk tales, historical books, articles, magazines, newspapers, journals, periodicals etc. and internet based relevant materials on topic.

7. Review of related Literature:

The review of related literature speaks that there are large numbers of studies been carried out on *Mising* folk literature. Many books, published thesis, articles in Journals have been looked into for the investigation that has similar studies. A large number of full-length studies and articles are available on the aspects intended to be covered in the present study. Few works already done on the topic are cited below.

Borang, K (2019), '*Ekop Taktor A:bang*', Mising Adné Ope:, Silapathar, an oral text of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh collected by the author. According to the writer of this book, this *A:bang* (Ekop Taktor A:bang) is narrated once in a year during the *Lu:né* festival of the Adis in full in the Po:nung style of singing. Some parts are narrated during the *Lu:tor* and *Unying/ A:ran* festivals in the *Délong* and *Bari* style of singing. The last part of the whole A:bang which mainly deals on the fight between the Good and

the evils, the Good being embodied by Abu Tani and the benevolent spirits, gods and goddesses and the evils embodied by Abu Tani's elder brother Taro and the malevolent spirits and the ultimate establishment of supremacy on earth by Abu Tani which is narrated as the EKOP/TAKTOR. The mystic period of creation, beginning since the Creation and Evolution of the Earth, coming of microbes, procreations, insects, reptiles and the birth of spirits and Man and Man's ultimate establishment of supremacy on earth crossing over numerous hurdles posed by the evils as narrated in the sacred Oral Text of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh. There is a mention of origin of the race but there is no mention about the role of nature in shaping the social life of the *Mising* community. So, there is much scope of investigation and study in this field.

Kuli, J.J (2014 2nd ed.) “*Mising Folklore*” is an attempt to piece together folklore materials. It has given more emphasis on the folk songs and folk tales only and other related folk materials has not been mentioned and how these natural materials are associated with the life of the people in the book. So, there is much scope to investigate and study in this field.

Doley, G.K (2022), ‘*Mising-Myths legends and Folktales*’ Rahul offset printers, a collection of Mising folktales, myths and legends. In those writings picture of *Mising* culture, migration, religion and traditions have come into light and the functions of *Mibu* and the analysis of *Abang*, that is, the oral devotional text prevalent in the *Mising* community have been highlighted but the book lack an in dept analysis on nature. So, there is much scope of investigation and study in this field.

Taid, T (2013) “*Mising Folk Tales*” is a compilation of folk tales by different people. The book is about the tales of the *Mising* people, tales about nature, tales about destiny, tales of the supernatural, tales of birds and animals, adventure tales and other tales. This book lack the tales on the origin, migration of the *Mising* people and a very important role played by nature in protecting this community. So, there is much scope of investigation and study in this field.

8. Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of the study will undertaken following:

- (i) To study various folk tales mentioning about nature and how they are associated with the Mising Community.
- (ii) To study the use of natural elements by the Missing Community.
- (iii) To study the changes and continuity of the traditional laws of the Mising.

9. Analysis of the topic:

Mising is rich in folk literature. There are different folk literature in Mising which includes folk tales, folk songs, myths, legends, riddles, drama, lullaby, rhymes etc. These folk literature have been passed down from one generation to other generation through oral tradition. There are many genres that tell about their migration from one place to another and at last sttlement in the plains of Assam. There are many reasons behind their migration for generation after generation. Therefore, it is obvious that most of their culture and tradition have might been diminishing and many other culture and tradition might have been accepted. But despite their hard toil and hardship, this particular community has tried to preserve their culture and tradition in form of oral tradition which is clearly reflected in the folk tales of the Mising community. Through oral tradition they have even preserve the origin of many culture and tradition

which have become their identity. Taburam Taid (2007) observed that Mising is one of the most prominent communities with their distinct identity symbols (p.56). Therefore, it can be said that folk literature play very important role in tracing the identity of the Mising community where nature play vital role in shaping the social life of the Mising tribe.

Folk Literature is also referred to as Oral Literature in simpler terms as it is the oral form of the narratives which are being conserved by people of any tribe from the current generation to the future generation. It is a depiction of a heritage that is being handed down orally from one generation's descendants to the next, although many of them have since been preserved in writing. When we go far back in time then there was only one form of literature available that is the oral one as no writing system has been evolved then and every clan passes their cultural specific traditions to their future generations orally. As Slith Thomson expresses in an article, "Until about 4000 BCE all literature was oral, but, beginning in the years between 4000 and 3000 BCE, writing developed both in Egypt and in the Mesopotamian civilization at Sumer" (Britannica).

9.1 Folk Tales:

Folktales help people see, feel and understand life--both personal and cultural, from many different perspectives. Many of these stories have been passed down through generations and can offer a sort of collective wisdom. Folktales convey indicators of the prevailing ideology in a society. Thus, they are suitable sources for an inquiry into culture complex in a given social formation. The people of the agriculture-based rural society of Mising has their own life and culture that get projected through the oral tales. Though the people were illiterate, they were life oriented. Therefore, the society of such people was so vibrant that their folk literature became a medium of their life like expression and, hence, an integral part of society validating the basic cultural pattern.

There are many folk tales that directly reflect the role of nature in shaping the social life of the Mising community. Say, the main festival of Mising *Ali-ai-ligang* which is considered as the most important festival which directly depicts the role of nature. in this particular festival, there is seen to be mentioning of a herb called "**Pi:ro**". **Pi:ro** is a plant with long leaves and it has no any branch. It is like a sugarcane plant. This particular festival cannot be celebrated without using this particular plant. So, this tells how nature is deeply associated and rooted in Mising community. The reasons for using this particular plant can be numerated as -

- (i) This plant can grow in type of soil which symbolically means that we Mising people can adjudge and live at any circumstances.
- (ii) It is an evergreen plant from the bottom to the tip of the leaves which symbolically means the progress and prosperity of the Mising people.

There is also a mention of the community house of the Mising called "**Murong**". This particular house which is use for village gathering and **Po:rag**, a kind of village puja festival is constructed by using natural materials like bamboo, thatch, cane etc. Through this festival the life style of the Mising tribe is beautifully depicted. It depicts the way of dressing, way of living, way of cultivation, animistic rituals, etc. This festival is world famous for it represents the culture and tradition of the community.

This festival is a sowing festival usually celebrated with great enthusiasm by every people of the

community wherever they live in the month of February every year which beautifully depicts the role of nature in shaping the social life of the Mising people. There is a folk tale that tells about the origin of the festival and the folk tale also tell about why this festival is traditionally celebrated by the Mising tribes. This folk tale has been orally transmitted from one generation to another generation and there has been many omission and addition to this tale and the way of telling also has undergone some changes. It is because oral tradition constantly undergo changes because of their nature. As stories are repeated, people embellish or alter them, sometimes changing the content to fit with new ideas or the time (J.J kuli- Mising Folklore. P-13). Ultimately the culture and tradition of Mising tribe have undergone acculturation in many ways. Say, its lifestyle, dressing, fooding, housing, religion, culture, tradition etc. Through the collected data, it has come to know that the folk tale which tells the origin of the festival dates back to the **Keyum Period (nothingness)** where the cosmos was filled with darkness and no light. It was the time when God created the earth and the human race and God now had to facilitate and guide the human race their ways of living. It is considered that the festival *Ali-Aye-Ligang (Sowing festival)* was originated in connection with it. The story goes like this- Mising consider themselves as the children of the Sun and Moon. The rhapsodic chants of a mibu tell us this story about the creation of the world. Originally, it was complete darkness all around, with absolutely nothing in existence. The beginning is referred to as *keyum* in the rhapsodic chants. The 'existences' that followed *keyum* are traced as *keyum* > *Yumkang* > *ka:si* > *Siyan* > *Anbor* > *Bomug* > and *Mukseng*. From *Mukseng* emerged *se:di* and *Me:lo*. From *Se:di* emerged *Di:ling* > *Li:tung* > *Tu:ye* > *Ye:pe* and *Pe:dong*. From *Pe:dong* emerged *Do:mi* and from *Do:mi* emerged *Mi* and *Mimang*. From *Mi* emerged *tani* and from *Mimang* emerged the *earth, water, air, stones and vegetation*.

The first man on earth was named *Abotani*. The folk tale tells that he descended from the heaven by climbing down the gold and silver ladder. To beget the next generation of man after him, he started a family by marrying *Karmi*, the daughter of the Sun (*Do:nyi*) and the Moon (*Po:lo*). The Sun and the Moon imparted them the prior knowledge, required for living as a family. As advised by *Do:nyi* and *Po:lo*, *Abotani* and *Karmi* obtained paddy seeds from Mother *Remi*. They also obtained other materials from *Ninur (the god of iron)* for cultivation. From *kari-tori* they also learned the use of bows and arrows as well as swords to protect themselves from attackers and live heroically.

There are also many folk tales about nature as listed by Taburam Taid, father of Mising Language.

- (i) Folk tale on Lighting and Thundering
- (ii) The Dark spot on the Moon
- (iii) The Sky goes High
- (iv) Why Thunder Crashes
- (v) Origin of the Saga Palm
- (vi) The fruit of the Borun Tree

9.2 Changes and Continuity:

It is observed that culture and traditions of the Mising are being followed by the people wherever they are and are still continued but there are changes despite it. In this modern competitive era, people have no enough time to preserve and protect their culture and traditions. Besides, due to urbanization many plants and other natural objects has extinct and many are in the process of extinction. Therefore, due to lack of those natural objects many changes have being seen among the culture and traditions of the Mising community. Nowadays, the **Moron Ghar** which was constructed with natural objects are seen to be constructed with cements and bricks, plastic materials replaced greenery leaves, western wine replaced the local wine which were made from the natural herbs and there are many other changes. It can be said that culture and traditions continues with the mixture of modernisation.

10. Conclusion:

Therefore, from the above analysis, it is clear that the Mising people are deeply associated and rooted with the nature and gifts of nature in shaping the social life of the people and this provide us the evidence that nature is truly reflected in the Mising folk literature.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the paper declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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