

## **Religions Beliefs and Practices of Mising Tribes of Assam; A Sociological Note**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Mising is a plain tribal community of Assam in North East region of India. Misings are second largest tribal community of Assam. This tribal community belongs to the Mongoloid stock and the language of the community belongs to the Tebeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan family of language. The Misings are mostly found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sivsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur. Generally Misings religious cult of Hinduism. The Misings themselves believe to be the progenies of sun and moon. The religion of Misings differs markedly from that genuine Hinduism or vaishnavism. Misings have also their own mythological and ancient stories, all about the creation of living creatures, non-living things, the universe and the existence of super natural powers, as is believed by some other human races, living in the world.

Misings heartily trust Se:di Babu (Sedi the Father), Me:lo Nane (Melo the Mother), Do:nyi (Sun Mother) Po:lo (moon father), Dedong Nane (Rain mother) and Ru:ne (creator) to be their primordial powers having direct or indirect influence in the creation of the universe. The super nature spirits viz., Uye, Urom-Po:Sum, Epom-Yapom and Gu:Min-So:In etc are main Religious deities of Misings.

**Key Words :** Hinduism, Do:nyi, Po:lo, Dedong Wane, Epom Ya Pom, Vaishnavism, Melo Nane, Sedi: Babu, Ru:ne, Uye Urom-Po:sum.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Misings themselves believe to be the progenies of Sun and the Moon; but they worship spirits which are believed to cause illness death and destruction of human life, animals and crops they are also believes of human soul which according to their belief is immortal.

In fact Mising are worshippers of spirits/deities since time immemorial. The religion of Misings thus differs markedly from that genuine Hinduism or Vaishnavism.

Misings have also their own mythological and ancient stories, all about the creation of living creatures, non-living things, the universe and the existence of supernatural powers, as is believed by some other human races, living in the world.

Kuli(2003:27) states that "Mising heartily trust Se:di Ba:bu (sedi the father), Me:lo Nane (Melo the mother), Do:nyi (Sun Mother), po:lo (Moon Father), Dedong Nane

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(Rain Mother) and Ru :Ne (Creator) to be their primordial powers having direct or indirect influence in the creation of the universe”

Uyes are believed to be very powerful spirits of deads, some of them being well wisher (benevolent) of men and some others envious (malevolent), specially the spirits of those who died their unnatural deaths. Taid (2005) states that “ the peculiarity in Mising religion is that their primordial powers like Se:de-Ba:bu, Me:lo Nane, Ru:ne-Ane etc are normally not propitiated regularly excepting calling upon solemnly in primitive rituals to implore assistance.

Despite that according to the Misings, spirits are many and available everywhere on the earth including sky and physical encircling of human habitates spirits are however, classified into different individuals or groups to their natural abodes like yumrang uye (forest spirits) that habitat in jungles, Asi Uye (marsh spirit) that habitate in water etc. All these spirits travel around the earth in the shapes of air, Cyclone, storm, cloud, thunder, lightening etc. Misings worshipping the spirits they offer. Sacrifice of pig or chicken depending upon the importance of the spirit worshipped.

The traditional priest of the Mising is called ‘Mibu’ – who presides over the function of worshipping.

A ritual and all religious functions performed by ‘Mibo’ is performed with their Hinduised priest known as Dhandai, Sadhu Bura, Satula etc. Since immemorial time misings identified themselves as a Hindu and they followed the kalsanghati cult of Hinduism and Mahapurukiya Vaishnavism. In this article we have discuss about the “Religious Beliefs and Practices by the Mising Tribes of Assam.”

#### **Attitude towards concept of soul :**

The Misings beliefs that human soul is immortal. They hold the belief that soul of a person suffers in the world after his death as the Misings believe that concept of heaven and hell. They also beliefs that, soul is immortal and after the death of a man, good soul achieves

salvation and the bad one takes rebirth in a cycle. The Misings beliefs that soul is like as air, no size and it is unseen.

#### **Hell And Heaven :**

The concept of hell and heaven are important concepts for Misings. The Idea of hell refers that those person do not good work in this world that people suffer in hell and they suffered in different diseases, not having good health, who has suffered in the whole life disease that terms called hell. On the other hand the concept of heaven is in the sense of good health living well being and who lives in better in living condition these are called heaven. Misings beliefs that existence of heaven and hell in the world where soul of human goes after the death according to his work and activity done during life time in the world chutia (2004).

#### **Attitude Towards Concept of Death :**

Mising are beliefs that, death is a natural event and it is controlled by a super – natural power, which they beliefs as god. They beliefs that man and animals have allotted days to live on this earth and as soon as the allotted days are over , one has to meet with death and they also beliefs that, man live unto breath, and as soon as the man’s breath fails it is considered as death. According to the Missing tribes death is in the hands of a supernatural power i.e., God.

#### **Procedure of Burial :**

The procedures of Burial is more attractive among the Mising tribes. When the villages get information or news of the death then villages assemble in the premises of the dead and make preparation for Burial. Before the going to Burial ground some rites are performed in the courtyard of the dead, such as message of body with a mixture of background and raw turmeric and then wash the body and put on new cloths reversely. After this, the family members pay homage to the departed

one and then the dead was placed in a wooden box made for Burial or on a bamboo platform and carried the dead with his most essential person belongings to Burial place.

### **Rituals**

Mising observed some important Rituals for their public and family. The traditional or ancestral rituals are Dobur Uie, Teleng Uie etc and some new rituals such as Tithis of Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Damodardeva, Janmastomi i.e, Birth day of lord Krishna (God) etc. they performed Dobur Uie and Teleng Uie rituals with "Dhandai or Satula" instead of Mibo . However, this rituals are performed by only Kalsanghati. But Mahapurukhiya and Neo-Vaisnavite cult do not performed Dobur Uie and Teleng Uie in general and the Neo-Vaisnavites in particular.

In regard to family rituals, the Mising who followed the Kalsanghati their traditional rituals such as Asi Uie Uram Apin, Butta Dobur, Ka:chan Dobur, Umrang Uie etc, are performed. Besides of the rituals the Misings family perfumed some other new rituals viz., Satjoniya, Na janiya, Na purukhiya, Saki loguwa, Ai Sakam etc by the followers of Kalsanghati and Mahapurukhiya Vaisnavite cult. Some Mising tribes also worship to the Devi Durga. Kalsanghati and Mahapurukhiya Vaisnavite group pay visit to the temples of Devi Durga and Sacrifice pigeon, Duck and goat in general during the Durga Puja. Yein (2012:30) states that are Telang\_uyu ritual is to be performed by a Mibu (Mising traditional priest ) but now is rare to find among Misings in the plains. Thus in his absence the Sadhuburah or Satula performs as main priest assisted by the few Bhakats like Medhi, Sadasar, Kewlia Bhakat, Pokka Bhakat etc.

### **Dobur Rituals :**

Dobur is another important religious ritual of the Mising Tribes. The literary meaning of Dobur stands a sacrifice at rituals for appeasement of the malevolent spirits to mankind casting

ailments in epidemic form and such other misfortunes to mass people in the village in which 'Do' means for eat and 'Bur' for fertility. In some of Dobur rituals the motherly earth is adored reverently for enhancing and to the malevolent spirits to stay restrained from casting maladies to mankind and destruction of prosperities belonging to human beings.

Dobur ritual is of various kinds and may be performed individually and collectivity in village. The peculiarity in its celebration is that the same Dobur may be celebrated differently in the different village or localities which might be due to isolation for long time and also non-existence of central coordination body among different groups of ritual men to make sameness in celebration. The necessary ingredients for Dobur ritual are mainly chicken female swine, egg, rice beer and others. However, the necessity may vary because it depends on the type of ritual.

### **Religious Leadership and Institutions:**

Like other communities Religious leader play an important role in the performance of different religious activities. Thus Mising also have some religious leadership for maintaining their own religious activities related to their community as well as their household and society. Traditional Mising's religious beliefs "Mibo" was the only priest religious functions whether it was of family level or of the community level, were performed either in individual household. When Mising adopted trantric Vaisnavism or Kalsanghati since that time they began to perform most of their religious functions headed by 'Satula' the senior most of the Bhakats. The religious temple that is in which they worshiped that house is known as "Namghar" where collectively religious functions / rituals of the village level are performed by the Misings. All the religious functions except "Dobur Uie" are performed headed by Satula with Bhakats. The offering of prayer to 'Donyee Po:lo' and "Karshing Kartang" is done by reciting Namkirtaniya

except their traditional ritual i.e. 'Dobur Uie' Das and Hazarika (2013) contended that "some Mahapurukhia religious groups has performed religious functions like Tithi of saint Shankaradeva, Madhavdeva, Damudordeva, Shri Krishna Janmastami etc are held in Namghar." However they perform "Dobur Uie" headed by a person who is supposed to know the procedures of performing this ritual known as 'Dhandai' instead of Mibo if the later is not available in place suitable for the rituals.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the above Discussion it is assumed that the Mising are more deep rooted in religious activities. They performed different religious rituals in different occasions. The Mising religion in traditional periods may be term as mixture of animism, naturalism, and ancestors worship as they worship different deities, spirits and ancestors and offer apong (rice beer) and sacrifice pig and hen to appease these deities and spirits. The finding reveals that the Mising of their traditional and contemporary religious beliefs and practices, it is found that the follower of Kalsanghati cult is still

maintaining their traditional religious beliefs and practices and new ones without much changes.

But in present times some of the Mising people are adopted new religious cult, Neo Vaisnavite, Mahapurukhiy Vaisnavite, Krishnaguru etc. Due to impact of modern education, come into contact with indigenous Assamese Hindu people.

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