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### Rites of Passage of Mising Community: A Brief Overview

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#### Abstract

Assam is a multilingual and multicultural state from North-East. The dynamic cultural milieu of several caste and tribes have beautified the culture of Assamese society. Each caste and tribes has their own specific features that have contributed to distinguish each from others. Each caste and tribe has their own traditional rites and rituals that have given them specific status. The Mising is one of the important communities residing in different parts of Assam. In their social system viz. rites of passage or marriage ceremony traditional practises are being used. In the proposed research paper attempt is made to do analytical discussion on Birth rites, Death rites, Marriage rites and several other rites that the missing community practises in their society.

#### Introduction

Social practice or tradition is the prevalent rites, rituals culture that a particular society follow. Such practice are the result of folk belief developed on the basis of religious and *adhyatmik* faith. The role of these social practises in educating people, making them disciplined, moral, and dutiful are immense. The element of culture of a society is reflected well through the folk literature, folk culture and folk belief. The rites of passage, marriage rituals, initiation ceremony are the examples of folk custom. Assam is a mingling ground of people with several caste and creed, tribe and belief. The specific and concrete features of the caste and creeds are reflected throughout the culture and social practices of these caste and tribes. The specific ideas of life style, specific psychological aspects found full expression in the beliefs and culture of each caste or tribe.

#### Significance of study:

Man is a social animal adhere to certain common rules to live happily, unitedly in a society. This is essential for all to follow. Such rules in the form of culture, tradition rites and rituals are being practised among Mising community too. It

is observed that the Mising Community has been practising such rites and rituals even today. Therefore the main objective of writing this research paper is to –

- A. Discuss on folk practices of the Mising community and
- B. To do an analytical study of the rites of passage of the Missing Community.

### **Methodology:**

In this study analytical and descriptive methodology is applied for preparing the research paper.

**Source of data collection:** A few reference books is used as secondary source while preparing the paper.

**Discussion on Subject Matter:** The Mising community is one of the remarkable communities residing in Assam. Alike other communities they are also enriched with immense folk customs. They have been preserving and practising different traditional rites and rituals since antiquity. As per their specific traditional folk culture they practise certain rites of passage. Still due to influence of modern educational ideas and scientific temperament, flexibility can be felt in their social system. Folk beliefs are the belief or practices followed traditionally by the people of a community. The experience that they derive throughout the centuries from primitive to modern age has given birth to folk belief and folk culture.

### **The rites of passage of the Mising:**

The Mising community like the other communities in the world to follow certain beliefs, rites of birth. In some other community too certain pregnant lady centered beliefs have taken birth-for example a pregnant lady should not cross over any wire or tether else the baby in the mother's womb faces complexities. Eating eggs by a pregnant lady is prohibited. If the pregnant lady or her husband kills or breaks wings or legs of birds or any other animals the child in the womb get handicapped.

There is also a belief to predict whether the child in the womb is male or female. For this the cow herds utters the name of the pregnant lady, take a *birina* leaf and tears equally the leaf holding tightly at the two opposite ends, if in the process the leaf gets torn smoothly, the child will be a male or if fibre appears the child will be a girl child.

As per popular belief, the lady who delivers still birth child must eat vegetarian food for a whole month. Such woman has to take bath in pond or river and dive for five times along with her husband into the water and come back home leaving the wet clothes at the bank of the water body without looking behind. This magical belief is practised later so that the woman do not give birth to a still baby in the next time.

To get relief from pain and injury after giving birth to a child the woman is offered chicken curry, *Nol Tengacurry* and a local liquor named *PorApong*. To get relief from stomach pain, the woman is cared with message of mild heat with a plant leaf named *tarapat* keeping *fut sigh* a kind of sparkling fuel mixed with ash wrapping inside the leaf.

The Missing have birth rites. As soon a baby takes birth the duct that connects with mother's womb is dissected. They keep belief that if the duct is wrapped around the wrist the child gets enough energy. In order to keep evil spirit away *Lakjin* and *Lejin* are tied to the hands and legs of the child after taking bath. The first five days after the child birth is called *Abaitnam* or *Genalaga*. On fifth day both mother and her husband along with the child are purified by feeding *Mantraput* water fetched by the old person of the village. Before this purification they are not allowed to eat along with other people. In some other areas after one month purification is done sprinkling water around the house from the date of child birth. As per another belief called *Pol:Karke* that is with the appearance of new moon the family gets purified naturally. The initiation ceremony is accomplished by the parents or any one of the old persons of the village. The child is named as per the day of birth-for example if the child is born on Sunday *Deubar*, he is named as Deubas, Deben, Deubar and Deumoni, Deubari in case of girls. In some other cases the child is named as per its colour, nature etc. *Annaprasan*, *Surakaran*, *Tolanibia* are not practised in Missing community.

### **Death Rites in Mising Community:**

There is no practice of cremation of the dead bodies like other Hindus in Missing community. The practice of their last rites are similar to those that of Christians, Muslims and other tribal community. The villagers before taking the dead to the graveyard strip the cloth and wash the body with warm water and rubs the body with oil. The body is then wrapped with the wooden mat and carried to the burial ground by four men on a *Changi*. The body is then put in a 6 by 7 feet coffin known as *Boon Kook*. A little amount of land is purchased by the family at the grave yard against meagre cost. Then the coffin is taken around the graveyard for five times. Later the body is put in the pit dug for burial. The person who is to offer *Pinda* rolls into a little soil in the pit with his left hand followed by the rest of the mourners. The dead body is left head west. Several other instruments that the person used in his life are also buried along with his body. Belief goes that he can use those belongings after his death. A fire is lighted at the courtyard of the deceased family so that people coming back from graveyard may take bath, change cloth, get warmth and can go back to their respective home.

The Misings too have three phases for purification of the other family members survived. *Tilani* is held on the third day after the death of the relative. *Dod-gang* and *Uram Agin* is performed after that. Preliminary purification is done consecutively for three days moping the area with fried soil and the ritual is known as *Bululen Sunam*. After this as per financial condition of the family on a particular day *Uram Apin* and *Dodgang* is held.

**Uram Apin:** *Uram Apin* is a ritual conducted to get the social company. On that day *Pinda* is offered in the name of the dead. Youngsters, friends, the well-wishers, relatives and neighbours are invited on these occasions for feast.

**Dadgang:** This is the closing rite for the dead. Building a pedestal at the backyard of the house, food is prepared for the dead and *Pinda* is offered with the left hand. All the ancestors are also offered *Pinda* so that the recently departed soul might live along with the forefathers happily in the other world. The invitees are hosted offering Chicken, Pork, *Apong* etc. in *Dodang*. They are also offered token of respect as per the capacity of the family. Marriage,

*NaPurusiaSoradh* and other pious rituals can be held only after accomplishment of *Dadang*.

### **Findings:**

Folk culture is not something imposed through the scriptures. This is the practice or rituals followed by the members of a community throughout the centuries. This reflects the religious, social and *adhyatmik* up-liftment of a community. This is undeniable that Natural, Geographical and Religious tradition also help to create rites and rituals of the tribes. Such kinds of dynamic folk cultures have enriched, strengthened and widened the foundation of folk culture.

### **Conclusion:**

From the above discussion we can conclude that Folk culture is the outward expression of the experience obtained by the members of the community throughout the tradition. These folk belief and rituals practised in daily life influence several facets of social life of the tribes. The rites and rituals of the Mising community is not confined to the rites of passage. Of course the influence of modernization, expansion of science and technology is felt on the folk culture of the tribal people. The Mising community is not exception to this. It is expected that their specific features of their culture will exist until the existence of their traditional customs, rites and rituals.

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