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Folk songs of Mising People : A Study on Customs and Social Consciousness

Abstract :

The North East of India has a rich tradition of folk song since ancient times. In terms of folk song tradition, other parts of India have been inhabited by ethnic people since ancient times. These early inhabitants the ethnic groups have lived in different parts of the diverse environment of India with their own customs and traditions. Therefore, folk songs occupy a special place among all the ethnic groups of the world. The folk songs of the Misings are also colourful. The Misings are very brilliant in folk songs and have a rich heritage. Through these the joys and sorrows of the Mising people's life, human love, joy-pain, hopes and aspirations, imagination, emotion, feeling etc. can be found. These folk songs are a very fine example of Mising life flow. Therefore, the study of these folk songs as mirror of public life, can be said to be a major tool for understanding the Mising folk culture. The research paper will attempt to bring to light the heritage of Mising folk song and aspects of social consciousness.

Key words: folk culture, folk literature, folk life, music, folk song, customs, consciousness

Objectives of the study :

The Mising folk songs are the notable documents of the community. These folk songs are considered to be a common resource of the community. The knowledge of this folk music is traditionally passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, this paper will attempt to highlight various aspects of folk music heritage, and exploring social consciousness of the ethnic people.

Importance of Study :

There is a long history of ethnic folk song in Assam but no systematic research studies have been conducted so far. There are many different types of folk songs in Assam where it is not easy for everyone to get an idea of this at the same time. Through this paper, there is a need for a literary evaluation of folk song of Assam. This study will reveal many aspects of the discussion and criticism of ethnic folk song of Assam in the field of Assamese literature and culture. In parallel, this study will pave an important path in the future practice of Mising folk song of Assam and will help in gaining heritage and consciousness of folk songs.

Scope of the Study :

34 The study of the heritage and socio-consciousness field of ethnic folk music of Mising
35 ethnic groups. These ethnic groups have a systematic discussion of their songs, mainly folk
36 literature and folk dances, as well as their contributions to the socio-cultural view and socio-
37 consciousness sphere of Assam.

38 **Method of the Study :**

39 The researcher adopts descriptive as well as analytical method and data are collected in this
40 paper is primary and secondary sources. Alongside the descriptive method for theme analysis, a
41 field based (data collection) method has been followed revealing key theme findings.

42 **Review of Literature :**

43 There are many researchers who have analysed the cultural history and folk literature of
44 ethnic tribes of Assam. These include Culturalist Prafulladutta Goswami, Leela Gogoi and
45 Maheshwar Neog, Birinchi Kumar Baruah, Hem Baruah, Nirmal Prabha Bordoloi, Ajanta
46 Rajkhuwa, Nabin Chandra Sarmah, Prahlad Kumar Baruah etc. Prafulladutta Goswami's *The*
47 *Ballads and Tales of Assam* is a comprehensive discussion of the various type folk(Jono) songs or
48 ballads (malita) of Assam. Prahlad Kumar Barua's *Asomiya Lokosahitya* is an analytical study in
49 folk literature of Assam and its various types tales, songs, ballads and different types of folk songs.
50 Similarly, Atul Chandra Baruah has highlighted the Assamese folk songs in *Assamese Folk*
51 *Literature*. There are many different types of folk songs, including 'bihu' songs, 'malitas', karbi
52 folk songs, Mising folk songs, etc. in 'Folk Literature of Assam'. The book also discusses the
53 Assamese Ainaam, Biya Naam, Nichukni Geet, Deh Bicharar Geet, etc. Famous culturalist Hem
54 Baruah has written several articles in English on folk songs in *The Red River and the Blue Hills* and
55 *Folk Songs of India*. Historian of Assamese literature Satyendra Nath Sarma has discussed in his
56 *Asomiya Sahityar Samikhatmak Itibritwa*. Hem Baruah in *History of Assamese Literature*, and
57 Dimbeswar Neog in his *Asomiya Sahityar Buranji*, Hemchandra Goswami in his *Asomiya Sahityar*
58 *Chaneki* discussed folk literature and folk songs. Nabin Chandra Sarma's *Asomiya Loka-Sanskritir*
59 *Abhas, Lokosanskriti and Asomoar lokosahitya* is a notable books in this regards. Sarma's books
60 discussed the various type of folk culture, folk literature, folk songs like aainam, biyanam, bongheet
61 and ethnic songs. Some of the notable books discussing the folk culture and folk literature of
62 Mising people's and their culture, literature and social consciousness. In this regard famous scholar
63 Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya's *Asomar Janajati*, Nahendra Padun's *Asomiya Sanskritiloi*
64 *Janajatiya Barongni*, Basanta Kumar Dole's *Mising Samaj Sanskriti*, Indreswar Pegu's *Mising*
65 *Samaj aru Sanskriti*, Ganesh Pegu's *Mising Jano Sahitya*, Bhrigumoni Kagyung's *Mising Sanskritir*
66 *Alekhya*. Birendranath Dutta's *Folk songs of the Misings* etc. are notable books. These books
67 provide a detailed discussion of the various aspects of folklore of ethnic Mising people as well as
68 folk songs. The scholars have continued their study and discussions in the field of Assamese folk
69 literature and folk songs in this way.

70 **Introduction :**

71 Folk songs lives on in the efforts and traditions of folk society. In the formation of the larger
72 Assamese nation, there are many different types of folk songs that have been prevalent among these
73 ethnic groups. There is a reflection of the picture of life.

74 The origin and in artificiality of folk music based on various reactions of nature can still be
75 seen in folk songs of Mising tribes. The folk song of Mising sings the truth of life, love and the
76 depth of perception of beauty. It is the pulse of the nation, the history of life and the reflection of
77 society. In short, folk music is a golden source of folk literature, a free expression of the psychology
78 of the peasants and the rural environment. It is significant that the popularity of this folk music is
79 declining among the younger generation. If these songs are not properly preserved, the folk songs,
80 one of the treasures of folk literature of Mising tribe will be lost in the lap of time.

81 The overall way of life of a society is culture. People's happiness, sorrow, hopes, aspirations,
82 and limitations etc. are inherent in folk music. These folk songs contain detailed accounts of the
83 birth, death, marriage, festivals, etc. of a society. Folk songs, folk dances, etc. created by unknown
84 people expressing happiness and sorrow at a particular moment in their lives have many
85 characteristics when passed down from generation to generation. Through this process, folk music
86 acquires the ability to survive in a changing society. Therefore, it is important to take steps to
87 preserve the potential of folk music with various types of dances, songs and instruments inhabited
88 by Mising groups through information technology, media, electronic media, etc. to become a place
89 of interest to the younger generation.

90 It is very important to use modern information technology for collection, compilation and
91 dissemination of folk music of Mising tribe through various media, books, seminars etc. has
92 become necessary. Besides, the study of folk songs and music will be fruitful through various
93 disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, folklore, folk literature, art and culture
94 etc. Since prehistoric times, many ethnic groups have migrated to this part of the Brahmaputra
95 Valley from different parts of the world. Some have settled here permanently and some have left
96 with their mark. Therefore, the emergence, development and progress of the larger Assamese nation
97 and culture is possible only through the mutual cooperation and unity of the Mongoloids, Austro-
98 Asiatic, Dravidians and Aryans in this territory called Assam. The ethnic groups living in Assam
99 include the Ahom, Aiton, Karbi, Kuki, Koch Rajbanshi, Khamti, Khamyang, Garo, Chakma,
100 Chinteng, Singphou, Chutia, Sema, Jemi, Tangcha, Taiphake, Thengal Kachari, Dimasa, Turung,
101 Deuri and Nakte, Hmar, Burman, Beite, Boro, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Matak, Maran, Mess, Mising,
102 Hrangkhoh, Rengma, Rabha, Kachari, Sonwal Kachari, Hajong etc. The Misings are a prominent
103 ethnic group in Assam with a rich heritage and rich culture.

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106 **Ni:tom (folk song):**

107

108 Folklore is one of the parts of culture. Folklore has followed in people's memories from one
109 generation to another, from one society to another. Songs play a major role in this regard. Because
110 songs are the main vehicle of memory and the signature mirror of society. Therefore, folk songs
111 have occupied a special place among all the ethnic groups of the world. The Misings have a rich
112 culture and folk songs. These are the happiness and sorrow, love and affection, joy and sorrow,
113 hopes and aspirations, burdens and imaginations, emotions and feelings of the Mising people. These
114 folk songs are excellent examples of the Mising lifestyle. Therefore, the study of these folk songs,
115 which are the mirror of people's lives, can be considered a major tool for understanding Mising folk

116 culture. All the people of the Mising society know folk songs to a greater or lesser extent. Folk
117 songs with their own melodies and characteristics can be divided into formal, religious, narrative,
118 conversational, invocative, verbal and miscellaneous. Linguist Nahendra Padun's Mising Lokogeets
119 are categorized in 8 parts-

120
121 'A:bang ni:tom' (Deodhai Geet), 'Kaban Ni:tom' (pleading song), 'bí:rig ni:tom' (seasonal festive
122 song), 'lupo ni:tom' (the narrator's theme song), 'Midang ni:tom' (wedding name),
123 'Moman ni:tom' (a song of play), bíní: /koni:nám ni:tom (lullaby song), and 'Oi ni:tom' (love-
124 marriage song). (*Nahendra Padun, Mising Lokageet, Documentation of Miching Culture, 1989, P-*
125 *142*)

126 In his essay 'Mising Folklore: Characteristics', Vidyeeswar Doley divides folk songs into three
127 categories – 'A:bang, 'Kaban' and 'Oi Ni:tom' and 'Mehb', 'Duhb', 'Dahyong', 'Loop' and 'Midang'.
128 and 'Koninam' - these two parts are shown to be included in the 'Kaban Ni:tom' (*Murkanselek*
129 *(ed.), Royal Pegu Year 1, Issue 3, p.29*)

130
131 The following is a discussion of these folk songs :

132
133 **A:bang ni:tom :**

134
135 They are said to have been written at a very ancient date. The language of this A:bang is not
136 understood by the common people. Only the priests of the Misings-Mibu understands this A:bang.
137 These Mibu people use the songs like verses in the auspicious rituals of the Mising community—
138 A:bang. The main characteristic of A:bang is that the emotions expressed through it are very
139 profound, theoretical and miraculous. The subjects of the A:bangs are the beginning of creation, the
140 creation of the universe, the eternal glory of the primordial forces, the violence of the demons, the
141 judgment of the nations, etc.

142
143 Many times 'A:bang Ni:tom' are like story songs. The songs describe the beginnings and ends of
144 flight, burning, walking, and the origin and development of these four creatures. The songs are so
145 old that they are incomprehensible to the common people. The Misings believe that the common
146 people do not understand the songs because the 'Mibu' speaks in the language of the gods during
147 Deo Utha. Below is a 'Mibu A:bang' quoted.

148 DilagRangim
149 Keyum chedri nahniki
150 mell mamb aji mam dunami
151 keyum mell jayyiki
152 kanki golwanggi ghalamim
153 chod drigar ekrangi kankiyi
154 ani kalang kamank yayik..."

155

156 A:bang songs are sung to the beat of dance. The rhythm of the songs is also distinctive.

157

158 **Brihrig Ni:tom:**

159 Brihrig Ni:tom or seasonal songs - performed during a particular season or festival. These songs are
160 especially sung during the Ali ai Irigang and Parag festivals celebrated by the Mising people. The
161 heroine is a character who is very charming and has a lot of characteristics.
162 The seasonal festival Ali ai Irigang emphasizes auspicious aspects. The festival also celebrates the
163 rich folk arts and culture of the Mising people. Performing sexually appealing dances and songs in
164 the fields is a magical attempt to increase production. The Misings have a different melody and a
165 different drum beat. Examples of Brihrig Ni:tom:

166

"La lale lale lale

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168

Dabai lale lale longle chichug chugb chugb badia

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170

Rigam gamb gamb badia y dumlabim lamm chutka

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172

Leahti Dumlabim Lamm Chutka."

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175 (Meaning: Come out, young men and women, dress up in beautiful hair. Play the drums, let us
176 rejoice. When they grow old, they will crow like a laying hen, move like an old male chicken, etc.)

177

'another one-

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"Achi Jili: Jilikh

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Mitchie Jilly: Jilik:

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182

Achi Jili: Priniyapi Michi Jili: Purnpimang."

183

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185 (Meaning: The stream of water is also a stream and the stream of tears is also a stream. The stream
186 of water will dry up, but the stream of tears will never dry up.)

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188

189 **Midang Ni:tom:**

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191 Midang Ni:tom is the wedding song of the Mising people. These wedding names contain
192 descriptions of the bride's appearance, dress, preparations for the bride's decoration, and satirical
193 idioms. There is no mention of marital union in the wedding names of the Assamese society.
194 Daughters are bound by affectionate bonds with their parents, brothers, sisters and neighbors for a
195 period of their lives. One day she has to leave all this and move to someone else's house. As a
196 result, the songs that imitate the emotions in everyone's hearts are called 'Midang Ni:tom'. There are
197 many wedding songs in Assamese society, such as Hara-Gauri, Ram-Sita, Krishna-Rukmini, etc.

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Lupo ni:tom :

Lupo ni:tom is a conversational song sung between two groups of lovers or young men and women. These romantic songs reflect the laughter, tears, emotions and separation of the hearts of young men and women. These songs proceed through questions and answers.

Tib-aiya tikhalak tibaki tikhalak,
aiya tikhalak grkani aamang,
Ai Namdani Aum Namdani,

The ni:toms like Tib Tikamba Dahab Dankung, Chalaya, etc. belong to the lupo ni:tom.

Kaban:

Kaban Ni:tom is a song of separation. These are the songs of the Mising people. They are used to express the sorrows and cries of the Mising society in the form of melodic sabak and are called kaban or binni geet. Kaban has a specific melody, beats and rhythm. The special features of Kaban Ni:tom are the painfulness of the subject matter and the compassion of the melody. Kaban songs can be divided into 'Dahb', 'Mehb', 'Yaban', 'Day', 'Kallam' etc. Dahab Kaban is a song of separation sung about the life of an individual, family or society. The Misings blame their parents, fate or Creator for the suffering and disappointment of human life.

The songs of love and separation are called Mehb Kaban. All young people have many colorful imaginations and dreams in their love lives. But in real life, reconciliation is replaced by separation and joy by unbearable suffering. The unfulfilled hopes of failed love become sweet memories in the minds of such people. Therefore, the Mising youths spontaneously embody the sufferings of their hearts in the form of stories in a pathetic tone which is called Mehb Kaban. Among the songs about Kaban that express separation are –

Pikritmahni Piyahamahi,
Aink Dunkh Dahp Dihlahamahi,
Others are kahlink kahlahamahi.

(I'm not even a bird, I'm flying to go, to see you etc. ...)

Bribrig ni:tom:

238

239 It is a traditional custom of the Mising society to sing a mourning song called 'yaban' along with
240 the bride and groom during their weddings. The heart-touching story begins with a special tone in
241 this Yaban.

242

243 The Dahyung Kabans are stories and songs of separation. They are used to tell stories about tragic
244 events in the Mising society. These Dahyung Kabans have long been popular as an expression of
245 alleviating the suffering of real life through the sorrows of the human mind. In addition to their
246 emotions, these songs also have historical and social value. There are many songs like 'Vinod
247 Pipli', 'Dhanbar Ratani', 'Deubar Dewali', 'Gela', 'Padmi' etc. which are still popular among the
248 Mising villagers.

249

250 **Koni:nam ni:tom :**

251

252 Konninam is a lullaby. There are many popular songs sung to lull babies in the Mising society. After
253 the parents go to work, the babysitter Nibring soothes the baby by singing rhyming songs with
254 various natural objects. Such lullabies are called Koninam or Brinih Ni:tom. When their parents go
255 looking for firewood, fish or fields, these 'nibring' or baby girls tie their babies together and sing
256 songs to lull them. Below is a lullaby:

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258

Pikkauyi Dihmahda,

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Dihyimil Kablanka Dai.

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262 The themes of these lullabies include the reason for the baby's crying, the promise of revenge on
263 the baby who made it cry, etc., in an attempt to comfort the strong mind of the child. In addition,
264 the hunting stories of fathers or uncles are also given in the 'Koninam' or 'Brinih Ni:tom'.

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266 **Oi-Ni:tom :**

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268 The most popular and interesting of the Mising folk songs are the 'Oi-Ni:tom' or 'Ainitams'. The
269 desires of human life are natural instincts of human beings. This instinct is the reason for the
270 emergence of love in the hearts of young men and women. As a result, someone is liked. However,
271 the path of love is full of bumps. Every step along this path is pierced by thorns. There is nothing
272 wrong with that. There are waves and storms in the ocean of emotions. This is how the 'Oi Ni:tom'
273 can be said to have been created. Therefore, 'Oi Ni:tom' can be described as a perfect expression of
274 the wild desires of youth.

275

276 The 'Oi Ni:tom' can be compared to the Assamese forest songs. Like forest songs, these songs are
277 open expressions of youth. Like forest songs, these songs are sung in the forests, and in the fields.

278 Similarly, they are closely related to the Bihu dances of 'Bihutali'.
279 "Naiyi ningan bhanduhbang dag achar charduhbang ranky oiya rankpi achinabhi aduhbang."
280 (Meaning: The trees are blooming, the snow is blowing, I remember you redly.)

281
282 The laughter, tears, happiness and sorrow of the Mising people are eternally associated with the
283 river. It is here that the childhood, youth, joys and sorrows of Mising youth are nurtured. Therefore,
284 the movement of the river brings the Oi-Ni:tom to life.

285
286 "Akkam Dala Mitpanajin Atman Atiri
287 Akkam Tula Mitpanalini
288 Abanari Punayipi
289 Achung Alang Chaipi
290 Adna Mitpanajin Di"

291
292 (Meaning: What shall I eat and forget you, 'O Chenaiti'? When shall I forget you? When the forest
293 dries up, the trees and forests grow, then I forget you.)

294
295 The Oi-Ni:toms are the Dagon of the Mising society. It has its own melody, rhythm and
296 performance posture. These songs have survived among the Mising community since ancient
297 times. There is a universal sense of humility and a clean rural society in the use of language.
298 However, the influence of the present time is seen in this Oi-ni:tom. The main features of this song
299 are that it is suitable for use by everyone, at all times and in all places. It can express everything
300 from sorrow to joy and sorrow to jokes and ridicule. In Oi-Ni:tom, the uncontrolled appetite and
301 desires of the body are also expressed naturally. Therefore, the Oi-Ni:toms are sometimes
302 burdened with the pain of separation, sometimes they are colored with sweet dreams and
303 sometimes they are soaked with tears of broken dreams. The melody, beats and rhythm of the song
304 are used in accordance with the theme, meaning and purpose of the song. Oi-Ni:tom's rhythmic
305 style, holism of content, characteristics of melody and fluency make it evergreen and most popular.

306
307 **Maman Ni:tom:**

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309 Maman Ni:toms are songs sung by Mising children. These songs have no set melody. Children sing
310 these maman ni:toms in any tune. These songs are usually sung in unison by Mising children in
311 flocks in forests, fields, river banks, sand dunes, etc. No instruments are used to sing these songs.
312 The rhythm of the song is maintained in the rhythm of the song.

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315 **Reila:**

316 Raila Songs and associated dances are a notable dance performed by the Mising people during
317 Bohag Bihu. The main instrument of this song is money. When performing a song, one starts by
318 singing aloud and the rest of the young men and women repeat it. When the melody of the song is
319 over, they play the money and dance to the fast beat. The main characteristic of the songs is that
320 they are sung in a mixture of both Mising and Assamese languages. However, these songs are not
321 sung in Assamese society.

322

323 **Lirili:**

324 These songs are popular as awakening or appeal songs among young people. These songs
325 are used to encourage young people to move forward on the path of life's duties through the vibrant
326 energy and joy of youth. This song is sung by one person at the beginning and then the other young
327 men and women sing in unison.

328

329 The folk songs of the Misings are also valuable in terms of literary beauty. These folk songs
330 are beautiful in their metaphors. The expression of folk songs is very simple. Therefore, all who
331 understand the language of the heart understand the meaning of these things. These songs reflect the
332 subtleties of all aspects of the social life of the tribe (from the basic necessities of human life, food,
333 clothing, shelter, collective and personal life, laughter, joy, love, sorrow, life and youth). There are
334 many social images of the Assamese society as well as the thoughts, consciousness, experiences,
335 sorrows, laughter, tears, hopes and aspirations of the nation throughout the ages. Therefore, these
336 songs are made more vivid and heartfelt by the anonymous poet with various metaphors of nature.

337 The Mising people's folk songs express their hopes, emotions, desires, love of nature, etc. in
338 the language of the farming mind. These songs bring to life various events of society. These folk
339 songs also tell the mysteries of the creation of the universe and the stories of the birth of creatures,
340 both large and small. There is also a spontaneous reflection on human love, the obstacles faced by
341 men and women in love.

342

343 **Conclusion:**

344 Assam is home to various ethnic groups with distinct social and cultural characteristics since
345 ancient times. There are many ethnic groups in Assam attempts to give a clear idea of how folk
346 song has shaped the social, cultural and musical life of Assam through folk literature. In the process
347 of forming the larger Assamese nation, the Mising ethnic groups also inspired the tasteful minds
348 with musical consciousness.

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