



Oral Traditions of Mising: As a sources History

Dr. Ranjit Kaman

Chaiduar College, Gohpur

Mr. Mohendra Doley

H P B Girls' College, Golaghat

ABSTRACT

Oral tradition played very important role in reconstructing History. In case non-literate and script less society, oral tradition are main sources of their traditional history. Now a day the oral tradition are recognised as non-written sources and gained respectability for social scientist and historian. The oral traditions whatever statements reported are specially about the past. A oral tradition must be transmitted by the word of mouth at least a generation. So, oral traditions are the transmission of cultural items from one generation to next generation. These traditions are heard stored, stored in memory and when appropriate recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the oral tradition of the Mising and its in the historical perspective which can be process of reconstruction of their past history. The Mising are largest tribal community of Assam. They are comprising of nine sub-groups such as Pagro, Moyengia, Chayengia, Delo, Dambok, Oyan, Samuguria, Tamar and Bangkowl. Mising are generally inhabiting in the eight district of upper Assam. The Mising have rich oral tradition in the forms of myths, legends, folklores, proverbs, folktales etc. These transmitted from generation to generation which can be use as a important sources of material to reconstruct their early history.

KEYWORDS : Myths, Legends, Folklores, Proverbs and Folktales,

Oral tradition played very important role in reconstructing History. In case non-literate and script less society, oral tradition are main sources of their traditional history. Now a day the oral tradition are recognised as non-written sources and gained respectability for social scientist and historian. In strict sense of the origin of sources of knowledge orality is the basic human mode of communication and although peoples all over the world now use literate means to represent the past¹. The oral tradition is more positive association and the term orality has been conceived to avoid the obvious negative connotations of 'illiteracy', 'literate or illiterate we are our memories to try shade our future in the light of past experience². The oral tradition is a bridge to communicate between past and future.

Different practitioners of the oral tradition of the contemporary time have express various meaning of oral tradition according their own understanding and perception of the subject. According to Bruce A Rosenberg, oral tradition are both more specific and less ambiguous communication, because the speaker reinforces his her specificity of meaning with gesture, expression, intonation and so on and various self-correcting mechanism of which fixed print is incapable³. Jan Vansina defines, oral tradition as oral tradition consist of all verbal testimonies which are reported statement concerning past⁴. The oral traditions whatever statements reported are specially about the past. A oral tradition must be transmitted by the word of mouth atleast a generation. So, oral traditions are the transmission of cultural items from one generation to next generation. These traditions are heard stored, stored in memory and when appropriate recalled at the moment of subsequent transmission⁵.

In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the oral tradition of the Mising and its in the historical perspective which can be process of reconstruction of their past history. The Mising are largest tribal community of Assam. They are comprising of nine sub-groups such as Pagro, Moyengia, Chayengia, Delo, Dambok, Oyan, Samuguria, Tamar and Bangkowl. Mising are generally inhabiting in the eight district of upper Assam. Lack of own script and written documents of the Mising, the understanding of their early history and migration and cultural transformation remained in mystery. As they do not have own script but having myth telling that they had lost of it in the remote past whenever they migrated one place to another place. There is no historical evidence about the origin, migration and settlement of the Mising. Nevertheless, the Mising are great orator, and have unusual power of memory, being able to recite interminable genealogy tracing from beginning of the universe to the birth of human being.

The Mising have rich oral tradition in the forms of myths, legends, folklores, proverbs, folktales etc. These transmitted from generation to generation which can be use as a important sources of material to reconstruct their early history. The oral tradition of Mising is very rich in form of mythology called Abang. Mibu Abang is tracing the origin of

the human evolution from Keyum to the birth of Pedong Nane and finally Abo-tani, the first human being. The Abang deals with the mythology on the creation of universe. Beginning with the Keyum nothingness and transforming through various stages, it evolved to solid form of the transformation called Sedi-Melo. It is Sedi-Melo, the origin of all the thing of universe created things like Pedong-Nane and Abo-Tani⁶. In addition to these, the Abang narrates the existence of spirits and deities which they worship in different occasion. It also informs that they worshiped two type of spirits –benevolent and malevolent.

An another form of Abang recited by the Mibu (the shaman of Mising society) called Mibu Abang. Mibu recited the Abang on the occasion whenever Mibu Dagnam is held to detect the cause of sickness of the sickly person or unnatural accident. With a view to contact with the responsible spirit or deity Mibu seeks help from clan deity by counting the genealogy of the family⁷. It is believed that when Mibu chanting the Gumin (clan deity) they are pleased and help the him to detect the spirit responsible for disease of sickly person.

Nitom Abang another form of Abang which Mibu performs in the Porag festival (post harvest festival) called Mibu Soman. This Abang narrate the beauty of universe, beauty of girls and boys, beauty animals grazing in the world, beauty of Murong Okum. Mibu performs the Abang with a group of girls and boys in the festival. A In the function of Asi- Kitgat, Mibu on behalf of Mising society pray their deities for the wellbeing Mising society. It also narrates the responsibility Murong Okum (dormitory of bachelor) in impart social education to youth of Mising society.

Doying Nitom is another form of oral tradition. They are narrative songs based on tragic events of a person or society. These song are basic stories of tragic life stories of persons like Dhanbor- Dentuli, Gelagam, Maniram Dewan, Beula- lakhindhar etc⁸.

Oi Nitom another form of oral tradition sung by the Mising since the time immemorial. Oi- Nitom are composed based on the internal feeling of the youth and important incident of the society. Although, Romanticism is the real features of Oi-Nitom, it also exposed the important incident occurred in different times in the society. The intellectual capability of the Mising youth are reflected in their songs, which mostly composed of extempore. They have been handed down from generation to generation by the elders singing them to the youngers and making them sing. Lo-lo-le, Lo-lo-lele is the another mythology of Mising society called Ligang Nitom performed in Ali-Aye- Ligang. When Mising migrated to the plain of Brahmaputra valley they were very impressed with the natural beauty of valley. So, the Mising youths performed the dance by describing natural beauty, geographical location, and animals grazing in the valley. Lerely, lerely is another form of oral tradition performed by the youth in some special occasion. A war was fought between the Mising and Ahom during the

time Pratap Singh. At the end of war, the Mising soldiers sought each other to know the casualty. Whenever they could know that there was no casualty from their side they began to dance singing Lerely, Lerely with great rejoice⁹.

The folklore of the Mising is treasure of indigenous wisdom and knowledge of evolution of universe, bird-animals, trees, hills and mountain etc as well as socio-cultural of the Mising which may be considered as valuable wealth of Mising oral tradition. The folklores such as Yaka Mirem, Mikapalat, Kepsi Simad, Mabang Baper, Siyang, Abung, Peg- Siyeng, Batum-Bali, Ranu-Raku, Doyit-Pumit etc. narrate the origin of Mising, their migration history, relation of different Mising clans, lost of language of Samuguria clan of Mising, existence of river Siyang, Mising relation with Donyi-Polo etc.

The Mising are very rich in folktales. Their folktales narrate the beginning of Ali-Aye-Ligang, Porag festival, Dobur Uie, birth of Donyi-Polo, Sedi-Melo, spirits and deities, war with Burmese, birth evil spirits, Grandfather Ampolung, Yakko Kobe etc.. Further, some folktales are stories about the birds, plants, family life, love and romance, humour, jealousy, cruelty, wickedness, magic etc. The folktales reflect the faithfulness and underline their character, tradition, religious beliefs and social customs.

Proverbs are an integral parts of oral tradition of Mising. They have many proverbs which impart them moral value. The literary meaning of proverbs show the liberal mentality, social conscious and need to provide necessary guidance to the people. The oral tradition had positive impact on the ethics of the Mising to a certain extent.

In addition to the Abangs and Nitoms there are numbers of songs related to agriculture, festivals, lamentation, lullaby, nursery rhyme, appraisal song and recreation songs. It is noted that in every small or big occasions songs are performed to add cheerfulness such as welcome guest, flag hosting, construction of new house, performing rituals and appease spirits. *Yamgur Nitom* is performed to welcome the honourable guest. *Petom-Peki* is one kind of chanting to appease traditional

god and goddess of the Mising community by the gathering of this occasion.

In conclusion, it is observed that the Mising have rich treasure of oral traditions which very relevant as supplying important sources of materials to reconstructing their past history. It is noteworthy to mention that oral traditions give great scope to situate the socio-economic and political life of the people with right perspectives and history proper. Moreover, at present oral tradition are becoming a specialised knowledge to understand the culture, traditional beliefs and practices, music, customs, political institutions and dances. It is important to noted that with change of time and impact of modernization the rich cultural heritage of oral tradition of Mising culture and history is fading out. For example, Abang the traditional devotional songs of Mising almost extincted from the society. The main performer of Abang, the Mibu's number is considerably reduced from the society. The celebration of Porag festival also almost stopped due to lack of Mibu as recitation of Mibu Abang is essential on this occasion. Besides, Abang number of songs eliminated from Mising society. It is high time to pursue dept research on the subject. A process of documentation of these oral literature is highly needed in this time. Otherwise it would be lost from the society in the near future.

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