



## Changes and continuities among Mishing community: a study on Luhitmukh village of Sonitpur district

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### ABSTRACT

Northeast represents religious diverse region, along with various indigenous religions major religions are also practiced by communities living in this region. Today, religious change in varied forms of taking place amongst the communities in Northeast India. These changes are taking place among the followers are well-established religious as well as small communities that have been following their traditional beliefs. In this study I intend to explore the religious changes that have occurred among the Mishings living in Assam, who have migrated from hills and settled down in the valley in the past.

**KEYWORDS :** globalization, mishing, change, continuity, sanskritization.

Northeast represents religious diverse region, along with various indigenous religions major religions are also practiced by communities living in this region. Today, religious change in varied forms of taking place amongst the communities in Northeast India. These changes are taking place among the followers are well-established religious as well as small communities that have been following their traditional beliefs. In this study I intend to explore the religious changes that have occurred among the Mishings living in Assam, who have migrated from hills and settled down in the valley in the past. Globalization is a universal phenomenon. It is one of aspect which spread its impact on Mishing religion. Through globalization various changes touches Mishing people and their day to day life. In fact attitude, thinking of those indigenous has also change. Sanskritization is also another crucial factor that has led to changes in their religious practices. The process of Sanskritization linked Mishing with religious culture and mainstream culture. Mishing passed through assimilation and face pressure to the local religion, which is factor of outcome of the new religion.

### Methodology

In conducting the study, a fieldwork was took place within the particular village. In this case descriptive research design is based on qualitative research. Both primary and secondary data were the sources of data collection. For the primary data collection both structural and unstructured interview was took by me. Primary data collected from village headman, both men and women. I emphasized on senior person of village for proper information about religious belief, practice, and rituals. Moreover, secondary data collected from books, various journals, newspaper, census, article, govt. The area Luhitmukh village is located under Luhitmukh Gaon pachayat, Pub-Chaiduar block of Biswanath district. It is a beautiful village on riverbank of Brahmaputra that is natural gifts as well as a curse for the village.

Various aspects come out in terms of changes and continuity in religion, culture, belief, and practices of Mishing people. The major finding as follows: like other tribal community, the Mishings have also been under the influence by modernism. We watched modernism impact on various aspects like economic, political, social and culture. Through modernity, neighboring village affected the Mishing people. Earlier Mishing religion later converted themselves to Christianity and some other converted Hinduism or Sankaridharma.

Ali-ai-ligang is celebrated first Wednesday of month of 'Fagun' or at the beginning month of 'Fagun' or at the beginning of agriculture production. This festivals start with when head of the family sowing small amount of paddy seeds. Ali-Ai-ligang is celebrating for ten days. After the 10th day they are celebrated 'lig-gen' which means departing. Main aim of this festival is worship the mother earth. Purang-apin, apong, adin are main element for this occasion. Mishing people observe this festival as Lakshmi puja, which related to belief system of Hinduism. They think that Lakshmi Devi might

bless their seeds. Porag, it is important fest during the spring. This is celebrating after good harvest. Long preparation is required for the celebration of the festival hence it is not an annual celebration, it celebrated in a year or once in two or three later. It has three days celebration where all the neighboring village member, kinship, relatives are invited and is accompanied by singing, dancing, feasting and merry making. It has another name 'Nara Singa bihu' which celebrated moth of fagun. In this, festival young boy and girls take active part. Bihu is the main festival of Assam, every community of Assam more or less celebrating Bihu as a part of their own festival. Since they lived in plain area of Assam, they gradually followed the festival of Assam, rituals of Assamese people. Apart from those festivals there several dance, songs and festival of mishing tribes. Their dance called all paksong or sonam and it bear great similarity with the bihu dance of Assam. They performed bihu with full energy. The Assamese bihu and Qinitom are equally popular among them. Villager withholds dobur uyi, during the performing of dobur-uyi, traffic, and business transaction with neighbouring village. It performed once in a year. Sat-jonia, Na-jonia, Akol-jonia, Satjonia, Najonia, Akal jonia are the rituals, which are performed individually or by group of people. They perform satjonia sokam to remove evils eyes and individual unlucky. Na-jonia is the forms of rituals, where the priest has vital role. In is the ritual that perform for family welfare. According to Mishing people of those particular areas, they believed that Ahom people give those rituals then. 'Dangoria Sakam' is another ritual which is mainly performed by the neighbouring Assamese people. However gradually it becomes a part of Mishing people, they performed rituals for welfare of their family or those who goes for the forest for hunting or fishing. Lakshmi Puja, Durga Puja, both the puja become part of Mishing peoples that particular area. Lakshmi puja called as "Borlr sokam." In Lakshmi puja, Mishing people are worship "pothat dangoria" for good harvest. Among my respondent most of them goes for the secreting of animals during the Durga puja, nearby the durga puja mondap or most prestigious mondri like kaylani mondi, than namely Kalika than etc. In addition, most of them go to mondi without any hesitation and perform regular rituals. During the Lakshmi puja they sacrifices of chicken, fish, other vegetable etc. become a regular activities. They do so because these rituals help them to have good cultivation. They offer puja towards the "pothar Dangoria". Apart from those practices, Mishing people performed annually Bor-sewa collectively, for wellbeing of people of village; it has performed by the Bhakat, Sadhubura and Satula etc. Those are the intermixing festival cum rituals which performed by Mishing people.

In terms of Mishing religion of Luhitmukh village of Biswanath district, constructed a namghar to regular worship. In every morning and evening regular prayer is performed by Mishings, Though they treated Donyi-polo as supreme god, few people belief in Hindu god-goddess, many of them also perform puja during durga-puja, Lakshmi puja and sacrifice animal in prominent "Than" called Kalayni mondi, Kalika than etc. On the other hand, Sankardev and Madhavdev are influential religious leader for them. Among

them who follow Sankari dharma they adopted almost every Assamese ritual. 'satula', 'sadhu-bura' is accomplished after the adaptation of Sankari dharma. Sadhu, satula and bhakat have replaced religious function of Mibu. Along with those religious leader satras are influence on Mishing religion. When Mishing people faced inequality from satras then they convert into Hinduism and adopted Assamese rituals.

Due to certain circumstances ancestor worship also given up by Mishing people. They hold nam-kirtan to remove all the misfortune and difficulties. Instead of ancestor worship, nam-kirtan is performed on occasion of marriage, birth and death rituals. After adaptation of vashnavism they have totally given up the apong, meat, fish, etc. Apong, Fish and meat are used as necessary indigenous rituals only. Some death rituals are different from Hindu tradition but some ritual adopted from native Assamese village. In terms of purification ceremony after birth, Mishing people use "santi pani", distribution of sacred food which emerged out of Assamese culture. Today they take care of women and used scientific method for the process of birth.

Food is the sign of culture. There is some unique feature in food of Mishing community. They use meat like pig, chicken, Apong in any religious ceremony and any festival but after Hinduisation, amount of using meat or apong are become less. In fact, people of Sankari dharma or kewolia bhakat become vegetarian. They follow ideology like non-violence, love of all the life of the earth. However, the notion of purity and pollution emerge recently, people of Sankari dharma do not take food from others, and they take those people as impure. Another changes take place in terms of tea, today tea among them next to apong, Mishing people abandon food item like pig, beef, beer. Event after influence by Assamese people they did knew how to serve food in front of guest; they also learnt certain thing like eat cooked food, drink clean water

In term of their house structure, house is made of wood and bamboo. They are preferred to live near by the river. So they have a unique home called "chang ghar". Which platform with bamboo slits made by wood. During the flood, they live in safely. Under the Chang ghar, people keep their domestic animals and some other portion used for weaving activities.

The Mishing people of Luhitmukh believed that children are blessings (Rune: pune) Good. At the time of delivery a women gets utmost care. For secured delivery Mishing, society serves or experience women as doctor. As soon as the baby is born a special food item "jat" cooked with chicken, "rukji", "takok tajig" with black paper etc is provided. In Assamese society after the 11th day child birth, home where child is born are purified by sacred water which provides by the "priest". Family performs this practiced after the days of childbirth, which called as "xusi kora." "Satula" takes parts of these rituals. Until drinking that kind of purified water, family member in fact father of new born baby cannot go outside the boundaries of the village, can't go to the forest of hunting and can't take part any other rituals, which happened among Assamese people nearby that area. They could not participate in religious function until appearance of next moon. After one month another rituals is performed by them, which is also newly adopted and that is also signified nature of acculturate. Among the Assamese people after a month they performed "xusi sokam" which opened people of that family formally allowed for other rituals or another aspect of society and other people also allowed to take food in that family. In that "xusi sokam" sacred food "Prasad" also distributed among Mishing people, they also perform same rituals and give sacred food to elderly person as well as the children.

Though they have adopted other's culture or different status, yet they cannot totally abolish their traditional culture. The tremendous change touch Mishing world, culture and tradition, due to various reason they gradually lost their originality but major section of society tries to preserve their own cultural identity. Educated people of their community are creating strong cultural consciousness

among Mishing people and work for protection for their language, rituals, culture. Most of places they lost their own cultural identity or tradition but in some remote area people still deals with beautiful culture. Mishing are continued some superstitious belief until today, without knowing scientific facts. This considered as one of important fact of backwardness of Mishing tribe.

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