

# The Misings: An Ethnographic Profile

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**Abstract – India's north east is known for its rich tribal cultures. Assam is inhabited by total twenty three numbers of notified tribe. Some of them have common origin while others had migrated from different places in different point of time. All of them have distinctly visible culture which makes this land a unique one. The rich heritage and colorfulness are a special feature of the North Eastern tribes. The Missing's (in the Scheduled Tribe list of Assam referred as Miris) constitute the second largest group of Schedule tribes (Plains) of Assam. Missing's inhabits in the far flung riverside areas of upper Assam with a population of 6,87,310 (census 2011). In this paper we are trying to present the ethnographic profile of the Mising tribe of Assam.**

**Key Words: Missing, Tribe, Migration and Social Life.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Missing's (in the Scheduled Tribe list of Assam referred as Miris) constitute the second largest group of Schedule tribes (Plains) of Assam. The word 'Miri', 'Mising' and 'Mising' were earlier found to be used synonymously in the colonial and their own literature, written in English and in their own language. At present the people preferred the word 'Mising' as the name of their community though in the constitution they are referred as 'Miri'. The word 'Mising' is comprised of two words. The 'Mi' (means 'people') and 'sing' (means 'water'). According to Jewel Pegu (student leader) another meaning of the word is 'cold' also. In an informal chatting he referred the meaning of the word 'Mising' as 'Calm loving people/ simple people. They are mainly concentrated in the riverside areas of Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Sonitpur districts of Assam. Stray pockets of the tribe are located in Golaghat district also. In spite of changes all-round the community has been able to preserve most of the traditional culture intact. They claim they had self-governing system during British rule and prior to that during Ahom rule, which lasted for more than six hundred years, they enjoyed a great deal of autonomy (Kuli 1998). Gait (1963) observes "the Miris are found both in the plains where they are peaceable British subjects and also in the hills to the north where they are quiet and inoffensive." The Mising inhabited areas of Murkongselek, Jonai and Sadiya maintained self-rule till 1911 although Assam was brought under the British rule in 1826 as per the treaty of Yandabbo (Pegu, 1998).

After Independence the growth centers near the Mising villages were mostly occupied by the non Mising and the Mising preferred to leave their habitat inhospitable far flung inferior areas without infrastructural facilities.

Dr. Doley amply illustrates "It is said that the present Paltanbazar area of Dibrugarh town and the court area of Lakhimpur town and similar other places were originally inhabited by Mising families. But they deserted all these places as soon as the immigrants from unknown land came into close contact with the Mising. Probably in fear of losing their culture and for other reasons such as language, religious practices and mode of living, the Mising families into the areas surrounded by jungles where others cloud not easily go into" (Doley, 1998).

The Silapathar township of Lakhimpur district was once the hub of the Mising but consequent upon establishment of the Rangia- Murkongselek's one of the main station at Silapathar and in flow of heterogeneous population with their business skill, the Mising had to leave the area. Lands were sold to the non Mising at cheaper rates. Besides the shrewd non- tribals gave money and materials to the needy Mising families who spent the money for consumption purposes and Indebtedness grew year after year compelling the Mising to hand over plots of land. The non tribals brought their cultures which were foreign to the local people making adjustment impossible. Our experience shows that one or two Mising entrepreneurs started hotel business in the newly created rail station but due to cut throat competition and lack of expertise in business, they had to hand over the hotels to non Mising coming from West Bengal and Bihar (Doley, 1998).

## Migration of the Missing:

"It is truism that the Mising were originally a hill tribe within the ranges of the Abor, Miri and Mishmi hill of the erstwhile NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) now known as Arunachal Pradesh. They came to the

plains before the reign of the Ahom kings who ruled over Assam for more than 600 years beginning 1228 AD and since then began settling in the riverside areas of the Brahmaputra valley and the Subansiri river of Assam. The exact date of their migration to the plains is still shrouded in conjecture as the Mising had no authentic records of their leaving the hill abode. However the legends and folk stories prevalent among them throw some light in respect of their migration. It is believed that they came down to the plains on the eve of the dissolution of the Chutiya dynasty” (Bordoloi and Sarma Thakur, 1987)

“Originally there was no such tribe as Miri. The Plains tribe known as Mising now inhabiting the riverside areas are blood related kin of the tribal people living in the Abor hills of Arunachal Pradesh”. Dr. Pegu (1998), observes “The history of the Miris is essentially the history of the missing, Minyongs, Pasi Padams and other hill tribes, who profess the cult of ‘Miri’, worship Donyi (Sun), Polo (moon) as their principal deities and call themselves ‘Ami’ or ‘Tani’ meaning man”. Oiboram Payeng (2009) in an article mentions “one more reason to believe that both the Adis and Mising lives here in nearby areas at the contemporary period that once during the possible outbreak of an inter-village war spies sent by the Damro village minutely observed and Lengko Kobang- which helped the Padam people to make a country boat for using in the communal war. Still Padam Miri Ponung sing: Doley lengko, kobang bi, Ngolum, Etkung Pabito, Ngolum Miri gogbot, Kimoni Kolioi Oiyong ga. It is comparatively and historically proved that major Miri (Missing) people has been migrated down from Pasi Padam and Minyong area since 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Now they are settled in various places of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh” (Payeng 2009).

Although there is no recorded historical evidence to show the exact date and cause of the Miris coming down to the plains of Assam, the folktales prevalent among them indicates their origin of the Abor hills and the people now living there. One such folk story is depicted below:

“Moying was a handsome young boy of Minyong clan. There was a very beautiful girl in the Damra Village named Turi. When Turi achieved marriageable, her father announced that Turi would be given in marriage to a wrestler. Hearing Turi’s father announcement, Moying proceeded towards Damra village as he was a renowned wrestler and could easily defeat his rivals of Damra Village. Turi’s father was glad to find such a hero for his daughter and gave her in marriage to Moying.

The youth of Damra village could not bear the humiliation and wanted to take revenge upon Moying. After some days of the marriage, Moying visited his father in law’s house with his wife as was the custom. He also carried rice beer (Apong) jars and other food items with him for presentation to the wife’s family. In the meantime the youth of the Darma village arranged

a feast in honour of the newly wed. A pig was killed for the purpose. When Moying came to participate, the youth of Darma Village caught him and tying his hands and feet with a rope and packing him in a ‘tom’ (a large sized bamboo container) threw away into the river. Turi could not bear the separation from the husband and committed suicide.

The most tragic piece of news spread like fire everywhere. The villagers of Moying village became furious and they also made a plan to teach the youth of Damra Village a lesson. They arranged a feast and invited all the members of Damra village. The youth of Damra village scented a rat in the strategy and they allowed only the elderly villagers to go to the feast. The people of Moying village welcomed the guests with apong (local Beer) and when the guests were fully intoxicated the host villagers locked the doors of the house where the guests were resting. All the guests were butchered except an old man who escaped miraculously and he informed his fellow villagers about the ghastly incident.

In those days Damras were in large numbers while Moying were minority people so far as clan members were concerned. The people of Moying village in fear of being attacked fled to the plains. Since then they are residing permanently in the plains” (Kuli 1998).

Even today the Miris nostalgically refer to the hills in their folksongs because the hilly tracks of Arunachal Pradesh (Subansiri District) were once the abode of Miris. The song goes like this;

“Adi Lokke Kang Kandak

Baggum chindole

Okumso kang Abude

Brahmaputra Abude

Enolemsine Diuryadeng

Ngke Mennam Oimebui”

Meaning; in the hills “Bagum” woods are beautiful spots and in the plains the Brahmaputra; but my darling surpasses all those in her beauty” (Pegu 1981).

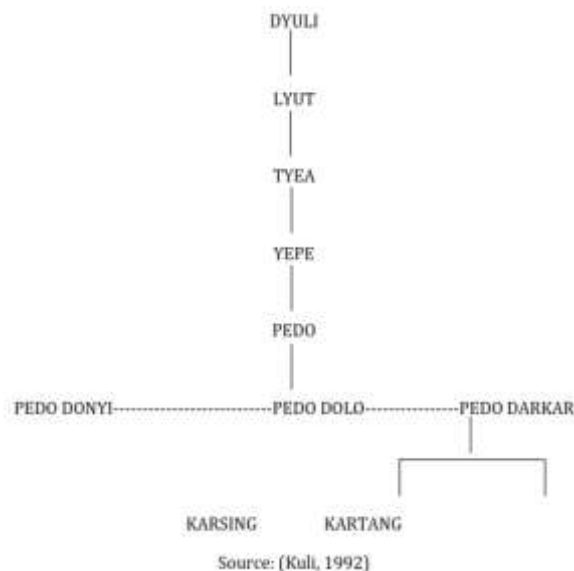
The Miris and Abors (Adis) thus have a close relation. Alexander Mackenzie wrote (1884), “The Abors and the Miris coming no doubt originally from the same habitat are still, so alike in all material respects as to warrant us in calling them earlier and late migration of the same tribe, the Abors as the last comers retaining more of their pristine savagery with hardihood while the Miris have been to some extent influenced by free association with the plains and the settled habitats of civilization. The Miris of the plains are here claimed

by the Abors as their descendents and the runaway slaves and under the Assam” (Mackenzie, 1884).

But Dr. Legu (2005) opines that Missings were not slave of the Adis. Many clans, sub-tribe, tribe of Abotani group migrated to the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam from the Siang vally in about 16<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. “Many of the Adi’s slaves joined the large scale Mising emigration in order to liberate themselves from the bondage of Adi Society. This large scale exodus of the Mising and Adi slaves compelled the Adis to pursue the fugitives and demand them to pay compensation and returned to the old haunt... declined to return to the hills.”

The inter-tribal relationship between the Abors and the Mising is still maintained. The Adis of Arunachal Pradesh call the plains Missings as Aying Birrang (plains brothers), while the plains Missings call the Adi as Adi Birrang (hill brothers). Both the Adis and Missings introduce themselves as descendents of Abotani, the inheritor of Donyi Polo. They also claimed that they descended from the heaven in a golden ladder. In the Mising folk songs we find “Taniye Donyi Poloke Thaowe Awn Murkong Bangkok Ngolu Regi Regam Lelek Aila gidung. Jili Legwem Songkongka Maying Mangkolog Legwem Songkongka”. The Meaning- “We are the tanis, the inheritors of Abotani, the offspring of Sun and Moon. We descended to the earth from a golden ladder from heaven. On our way we encountered dangerous waterfalls and hills. We crossed those barriers with bridges made of tress” (Kuli 1992). Another meaning of the folk song is “Tanis, offspring of Donyi (Sun) and Polo (Moon), we swim across the golden and silver routes of Regi Regam hills, continuously with prosperity. The streams narrow deep gorges and covered by Maying creeper and we crossed those strenuous through that creeper (Mr. Tenzing Medok, M. Phil. Student, RGU 2009).

Originally there was no human being on earth. At first a liquid substance appeared from which grasses grew. The earth gave birth to Dyuli, his son lyut, his son Tyea, his son Yepe and his son pedo came to earth in succession. Thus appeared Pedo Donyi (Gods and Goddesses), Pedo Dolo (birds and reptiles), Pedo Darkar (human being) and Karsing Kartang (Mising Non-Mising) (Pegu N 1998)



B.C. Allen (1906) has given an account of the Miris in his “Assam Districts Gazettee”. The Miris as they style themselves as Mising were originally settled in the hills to the north of Lakhimpur between the Dafla and Abor territory. The members of the Tibeto Burman family and Chutiya Miris claim kinship with the Chutiya. According to their own account the descended from the hills with the Chutiya when they first conquered Lakhimpur and returned again with them into the mountain fastness when they were finally defeated by the Ahoms in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. On the advent of the British, the Miris again began to settle in the plains, a process which has been in steady progress ever since” (Allen 1906).

Thus the Miris in the past had close linguistic affinity with the Adis, (Pasi Minyongs and Padams) in the hills now falling with the jurisdiction of Arunachal Pradesh. The missing do not like to introduce them in the same nomenclature which they think was given to them by the non-missing. According to them the term Miri is an incorrect pronunciation of the Mising word ‘Mirui’- an ambiguous term denoting the socio-religious functions prevalent among the Adis, Pasi, Minyongs, Padams, and Galongs, of Abor hills of NEFA now Arunachal Pradesh, as etymologically the word Miri bears out no meaning in Mising language. Again, the term by which the present day Mising prefer to call themselves has no etymologically affinity with the term ‘Mirui’ because ‘Mi’ means man and ‘side of water/ river. The missing are lovers of riverside habitation, although they have no control over the problems arising out of natural calamities such as flood, erosion etc. every year.

**Population and Physical Structure:**

As per 2011 census their population is 6,87,310 (Male-3,95,790 and female-2,67,520) consisting of 17.76% of the total tribal population of the state (Census of India 2011). They belong to the Tibeto Burman linguistic family of the Mongoloid

morphological features. They are Mongoloid and are characterized by yellow or yellow brown skin colour, black stretched or flat wavy and coarse head hair. Their eyes are black or dark brown in colour. The eye slit is oblique and palatal fissure is narrow. One of the typical characteristic of the Mongoloid is the presence of Mongoloid fold in their eyes. Their face is broad and zygomatic arches are very prominent. Another characteristics feature of them is scanty growth of facial and body hair. They are medium statured people with appealing features characteristic of the Mongoloid type of people. The surroundings on which the people are living compel them to be strong built.

#### **Family:**

missing family pattern may be called unique in the sense that two or more primary families live peacefully together in a single house. All the members abide by the orders of the head man of the family. There is cooperation among the members and every one works for smooth functioning of the family life. The womenfolk play their assigned roles and they are not treated as subordinates. The oldest man in a family and the eldest members of a village are highly regarded. Production of food is the responsibility of the individual family. Similarly the individual family has to arrange for the education of the family. Illness in the family is a private matter. The worship of the deities is done on village basis. Marriage, death rites and most of the festivals are broadly speaking, community affairs of the whole village.

#### **Institution of Marriage:**

Missing practices clan exogamy and tribal endogamy in their matrimonial system. Two forms of marriage i.e. formal and informal (dugla lanam) marriages are prevalent among the Misings. The former is an expensive affairs and it is usually planned and arranged by the parents of the boys and girls. In a formal marriage the boy's party always takes the initiative. Boy's parent or his close relatives sent information to the proposed bride's parents expressing desire for the marriage proposal and if the girl's parents indicate their consent, the boy's parents make necessary arrangement for the formal proposal. A day is fixed for the purpose and on the stipulated date the boy's close relatives proceed to the girl's house with present like jars of 'Apong', betalnuts and leave and formally announce the marriage proposal. On the date fixed, the would-be groom is led by his relatives to the girl's house. The groom is formally introduced to the parents of the would-be bride in presence of the other relatives of the girl. As per the tradition the prospective groom has to stay at the residence of the girl's parents for five days. During these days he is required to help the girl's parents in various agricultural activities. This is called 'Magbo Ginbik'.

After some months or a year the date of marriage is fixed. On this occasion also the boy's parents proceed to the girl's house along with the relatives with present

like rice beer jars, fish betal nuts and leaves. All the near relatives or the girls and the village elder are invited for this occasion. Details of the marriage expenses as well as the items to be bought to the girl's house on the day of marriage are discussed. 'Apong', 'pigs' and fish are the major items to be carried to girl's house on the date of marriage.

The marriage continues for two days. On the first day the bridegroom is led to the bride's house by the relatives and friends and he stays at the bride's house for the night. The ceremony takes place next day when all the villagers gather in girl's house. A grand feast is arranged. The couple sits before the elderly villagers who bless the couple while advising do's and don'ts of conjugal life.

#### **Dugla Lanam:**

Besides formal marriage, which is beyond the reach of the poorer section, marriage by elopement is prevalent which has social recognition. In most of the cases of elopement or run away is resorted to mainly due to dissent of either of the party's parents or due to poverty. The boy takes away the girls with the help of his friends on the appointed date and the bride is receiving in an unceremonious function at the groom's house. The parents of the girls get the information from the third party and the father of the girls along with the co villager's proceeds to the boy's house. The elderly people of the boy's village receive the girl's party. A meeting is held where the bride price is fixed. In such case a higher bride price is demanded by the girl's father (generally Rs. 100.00 or more and jars of Apongs). The total expenditure incurred in this type of marriage is usually less than that of a 'Midang'. In selected cases installment payment of the bride price is allowed.

Kidnapping is also not rare occurrence among the missing. Cases of such incidents are decided by the 'Kebang' concerned. The 'Kebang' inflicts penalty upon the offender who has to pay the fine in case to the girls' parents. Sometimes penalty is imposed in kinds also. The amount of such penalty ranges from Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 2000.00 depending upon the whims of the girl's parents.

#### **Bride Price:**

The Mising are adhering to the traditional system of paying bride price to the bride's parent on the day of the final marriage ceremony. The payment of the bride price is known as 'Alig'. Formely a Mithun or its equivalent of Rs. 100.00 or so was charged as bride price. Today the amount has been considerably minimized. Among them a token bride price is prevalent.

#### **Institution of Divorce:**

Divorce is not absent in missing society. But it is very rare in missing Society. The polygamy is prevalent in

missing society, so there is opportunity to marry new one without following divorce. Widow re-marriage is also allowed. The widow is allowed to marry the younger brother of the deceased if she desires.

#### **Clan:**

The society is divided into clans which are exogamous. The clan are: Moying, Chayang, Taye, Pamegam, Murung, Bori, Pangying, Yein, Panchang, Norah Koman, Pogag, Paow, Bosing, Ayan, Padu, Saro, Regon, Darik, Doley, Kutum, Kuli, Pait, Patir, Basar, Pasor, Kardong, Misong, Pegu, Kumbang etc, Knowledge of the clan is essential when the boy enters into conjugal relation with a girl. In the day to day life, however, clan distinction is not taken into account. Marriage must not take place within the same clan. The Mising use clan names as titles or surnames. The clans name derives from their ancestors. People from a certain clan prefer to live together in a village or a locally exclusively of themselves. But as they are a riverside people and affected by flood regularly of late clan wise habitation has become unpractical.

#### **Kinship:**

The Kinship system of the missing is, by and large, of the kind known as descriptive. The main feature of this system is the application of the relationship terms which refer to one type of relationship only. For example for father they use the term 'Abu' for mother 'Name' or 'Ane', for father's elder brother 'Abatta' and so on. They use the same relationship term 'Baboo' for father's younger brother and mother's sister husband. Similarly the same term 'Nanyin' is used for father's sister, mother's brother's wife and husband's mother. They used two terms for a single type of relationship i.e. a term of address and a term of reference. For e.g. when a Mising addresses his fathers he calls him 'Babatta' but when he speaks of his father he uses the term 'Abatta.'

#### **Property and Inheritance:**

The Mising are matrilineal and the descent is traced through the male line. After the death of the father the property is divided equally among the sons. The sons can demand a partition of the family property during the lifetime of the father provided they have attained a matrimonial status. In the event of such a partition the father may not keep a share for himself. He can choose to live with any of his sons he likes. Daughters are not entitled to share the property. If a man has no son, his daughter may share the property provided they bear the funeral expenses of their father's death. If a man has no son but his son-in-law lives in his houses till the death of his father-in-law, the son-in-law may inherit the father-in-law's property. In the absence of children the nearest agnates of the deceased inherit the property.

#### **House Type:**

Being a riverside habitation of the missing has no option but to construct their houses in raised platform about 5 feet above ground. A typical missing house is sometimes as much as 30/40 meters in length and contains 30/40 persons without compartments. The roof is thatched and the walls and doors are made of bamboos. There may be a separate place in front portion of the house where guests mostly non-missing are entertained. There may be a covered portico in the front portion where guests are entertained. Access to the portico can be made with a ladder which is placed in the courtyard connection the portico. There may be an open space below the portico front which is used for processing paddy by the womenfolk. Every missing house has a loom which is placed in the open place in front of the house or below the platform house. There is only one house for one family and if the members of the family increase, the house is lengthened to accommodate the increased number of persons. Houses are constructed facing east, south and north but not west. There is no separate accommodation for pigs but a place may be kept apart under the platform of the houses for the pigs. A shade is erected for the cattle adjacent to the house. Majority of the houses do not possess granaries and paddies are stored in a corner of the houses. The fireplace 'Meran' is considered as sacred and outsiders are not allowed to go near the 'Meran'. Besides cooking their daily meals, certain offerings are made in the fireplace. During winter season there may be an additional fire place in the portico (Bordoloi, B.N. Sarmah Thakur G.S. & M.C. Saikia, 1987).

#### **Morung:**

The Morung or bachelor dormitory was an important institution in a missing village. At present the old character of the 'Morung' is greatly changed. No more 'Morung' is used as dormitory rather 'Morung' are constructed today in plinth which get a new lease of life every year during religious festivals. Formerly, Morung was constructed in platforms in the central part of a village. The wooden posts and beams were decorated with wood carving of primitive design. The unmarried youth spent the nights in the Morungs learning various skills, are designs and bamboo and cane artifacts. The youth kept a vigil throughout night and performed various welfare activities within the village. Today Morungs are used as venues for public gatherings as well as venues of the village assemblies/ Kebangs. According to Sarma Thakur (1998) in some advance villages many of the old function of the Morung have been taken over by the *Namghar*.

#### **Eme:**

Among the missing, co-operation in socio-religious matters is a salient feature of the society. There is an

institution called 'Yame Mimbir' where the young boys and girls become members. This is organized by two officials namely 'Deka Bora' and 'Tiri Bora'. The latter is responsible for organizing the young girls. The main aim of this organization is to socio- religious occasion like marriage, death ceremonies, construction/ repair of house, harvesting paddy etc. All the youth of a village become members of the institution. Of late clubs, libraries, community centre have taken much of the traditional activities of the 'Yame Mimbir', yet the institution survives (Sarma Thakur, 1972).

### **Economy:**

Their main occupation is agriculture but it is mostly at the subsistence level. The agricultural lands are suitable mainly for Ahu paddy cultivation (summer). Besides Ahu paddy they produce mustard seeds, sweet potatoes, pulses, cotton, maize etc as subsidiary crops. Transplantation and weeding are traditionally the work of the womenfolk while ploughing, threshing, carrying paddy bundles etc are done by the men folk. They now cultivate different type of rice. They perform certain religious ceremonies connected with agricultural operations. Ali-Aye-Liyang, Sarag Puja and Dabur Puja etc are observed customize sowing, harvesting operations. There is no joint ownership of land. The womenfolk contribute much towards the economy by weaving clothes, rearing pigs, poultries etc (Kuli 1992).

### **Hunting and Fishing**

Traditionally the Mising were great lovers of hunting and fishing but today hunting is almost extinct while community fishing has lost much of its original character. However individual as well as group fishing is done with much merriment. Individual and occasional group hunting is resorted to particularly during summer. Fire arms, spears, bow and arrow are the main hunting weapons. Fish catching in groups is an affair of winter season. "Zulki," 'Chlani,' 'Dirdang' and 'Porang' (fishing implement made from split bamboos) and 'Ei Jamborok' (a cross bow like fishing implement) are commonly used as fishing implements. Of late fishing nets are becoming popular among the missing. Formally they caught fish mainly for household consumption, as well as for festivals occasions. But today some of the Mising catch fish not only for local consumption but also for selling in the local markets. Formally selling of fishes was considered against social norm but today a liberal attitude towards this is noticed.

### **Food and Drink:**

Rice is the staple food of the missing and they relish Ahu rice produced locally. Along with rice they take locally produced vegetables, creepers and edible roots. Meats and fish are taken when available. Fowl, pork are their delicacies. The preserved fish called 'Ngo San' has a great demand for entertaining guests. Formerly they did not take milk, dal, mustard oil and spices purchased from market but now a day's these items

have entered the kitchen of the missing, particularly of the well to do sections.

The missing observe taboos in respect of certain food items. If any member of the family dies, then taking of meat or fish is prohibited for all the members of the family until the purification ceremony is observed.

Consumption of tea is not very popular among the missing. The locally brewed rice beer 'Apong' serves as a drink for everybody young and old. 'Apong' is considered to be the most prestigious item for entertaining guests and every family is expected to preserve some Apong for this purpose.

Now-a day's, they also take tea and entertain guest with the same. Some well to do families like to include bakery item and biscuits in their menu.

### **Political Organization:**

The Socio- Political structure of the missing is democratic. Every missing village has a Kebang which can aptly be compared with a village Panchayat. The elderly men of a village constitute the Kebang which is supreme in all matters within the village. The head of a Kebang is called 'gam,' who conducts the proceedings of the 'Kebang'. The 'Gam' is selected by the members of a 'Kebang'. Although 'Gam' may be selected from a particular family for a few generations, the post of 'Gam' is not hereditary. Complaints, whether social or religious, are brought to the notice of the Kebang for trial, judgments and punishes of offenders. Of late position of 'Kebang' has been considerably eroded due to the existence of the Gaon Panchayat. The role of Gaonbura or Panchayat President has been felt more than that of the traditional 'Gam'. But Kebang is still a living institution and the people regard the decisions of the Kebang with sincerity. Of late the missing are becoming politically conscious and the Autonomous status has much to do in this regard (Mipun 1993).

### **Religious Beliefs**

The missing religion is based on the belief in supernaturalism and animism. They believe that the spirit called 'uie' is the guiding factors of their life and there is spirit everywhere. The spirits, if not properly worshipped, cause sickness, misfortune and death. The 'Mibu' (village priest) is the only person who can appease the spirits. Pigs, fowls, Apong etc. offered in the name of the spirits. The 'Mibu' possesses supernatural power of finding the cause of illness and offers suitable remedies. The missing are animistic in their religious outlook. Their religious philosophy is mainly based on animism. They believe SEDI MC: LO as the earliest representing father respectively. They also believe in the existence of ABO: TANI, KARSING, KARTAG, etc. as other deities like YARI, MUGLVNG, CSAR, ASI etc. are considered to be the spiritual beings possessing power much greater than man. The minute affairs of the individuals and then

even the greater and important events of the world, they supposed to be under the influence of divine spirits and agents. They believe that these spirits delight in sacrifices. There are different kinds of UIE such as TALCNG, DOBUR UROM and PO: SUM, GUMVN etc. sacrifice of animals is performed to pacify them. The MIBU is known as the priest of the society. He is believed to be empowered with some supernatural powers and on all important religious occasions he conducts as chief priest. Now, Hinduism has been following in some places in the religious beliefs of the people. The performance of worship in the NAMGHAR, recitation of KIRTAN and BHAGAWATA are some of the example. Moreover, literacy has not touched the core of the society particularly those living in the remote corners. Sorcery and witchcraft are not uncommon.

### **Festivals:**

They observe various festivals according to their traditional beliefs and practices during the year. The following festivals are most important Ones:-

**PORAG** It is one of the biggest socio-religious festivals of the missing. A MORUNG house is necessary for performing this festival. The host invites the youth organization from a neighboring village to participate in every aspect of the festival. A priest known as MIBU is invited who conducts to SEDI: MCLO, DO: NYI-POLO etc. At least 6-8 pigs are sacrificed in the name of different deities in the festival. The MIBU, at night sings A: BANG leading the dancing youth forming in a circle. The festival runs for three days. The whole village people irrespective of age, sex, caste enjoy the feast and dance.

**DOBUR** is one of the most important rigid festivals of the missing people. It may be organize by a single family or collectively by several families. It is one of the different types performed for different purposes. BURTO DOBUR is performed only on occasion of blood- shed of some grade ARVG DOBUR called the agricultural DOBUR is performed by individual family toward of attack of pest and pestilence from the fields. KO: SON DOBOUR is performed is performed by the hunters to save themselves from the evil spirits during hunting in the jungles. Chic hens are usually sacrificed for performing this festival.

**ALL-AYE-LIGANG** is sowing festival and meaning of ALI-aye lagan stands for first sowing of roots and fruits in which ALI, stands for roots, AYE for fruits and LIGANG for sowing. The oncoming of the "Abu" and "Bau" season is marked with the celebration of ALI-AYE-LIGANG. The missing believe the Wednesday as Lakshmi day, and on that day the family marks the sowing of seeds in their respective fields, with a handful of seeds, a YOKPA, APONG, PURANG TAKE, PEERO, and SI: PANG ONNO, Preferably carrying in a VGVN. Using the YOKPA he clears a small pitch of land in the eastern most part of the field and is decorated with the PEERO and cotton threads in a

square or circular pattern. The APONG, PURANG, TAKE and SI: PANG, are placed within the decorated area. Then the seeds are sown over the area.

### **Women Status:**

A Missing woman is a cultural idol of the society. Apart from her daily activities she devotes herself in deferent constructive and productive activities of the family.

The Missing women actively participate in the agricultural activities of the society. In the field, they have a hand in every aspect.

Missing women are a symbol of handloom weaving and art of spinning. Most of the domestic requirements of cloths are met from the family looms. Every Missing women is a born weaver, Girls are taught spinning and weaving from every childhood.

Animal husbandry is a common practice of the Missing women. They rear cow, buffalo, goat etc. besides these; they also rear pig and poultry which are sold for each income. Earnings from the animals go into the house of the women. They purchase necessary articles for themselves.

Socially, the Women status in the Missing societies is not considered equal to men. They are treated inferior to men. They are treated inferior to men in all aspects including education particularly in the rural areas. In village and other organizations, they are not given due place and their opinions are of no value at all.

### **Dance, Song and Music:**

Dance and music are integral parts of the life of the person. They have retained their age old traditional dance. Their folk dances are not bound by any rigid rules. The dances are basically so simple that virtually they require no special preparation. The dances are accompanied by appropriate songs and music. The songs include of OI NETOM A: BAG, KABAN etc. Songs are sung on all social occasions.

The musical talents of the people at their best are evidenced during some festival occasions. They are to play the instruments on every social function. The musical instruments include DUMDUM, MARBANG, LC: NONG, DENDN, DENTUG, DUMPAG, TAPUNG, TU: TOG, GUNG-GANG, PEMPA, PI: LI, RAI-KO: RCF, YOKSA etc.

### **Dress:**

Every Mising women are expert weaver who weaves clothes not only for herself but for all the members of the family. The dresses of the womenfolk include a 'Sumpa' worn around the waist extending down to the knee. Around the breast they wrap a narrow strip of cloth called 'Galuk'. A small piece of cloth called

'Hura' forms the head dress. The married women use a small piece of cloth round the hips distinguishing them from the unmarried ones.

The male persons generally wear modern mill made dresses. A traditional long narrow piece of cloth 'Kaping' is used around the waist. On festive special occasions, both male and female use various colourful dresses. The ladies wear 'Yambo' Riwi Gaseng' and 'Ege' and the males decorate themselves with 'Mibugaluk', 'Tangali' and 'Gouroo'.

The Missing people have their own colorful traditional dresses. They weave out the clothes in their traditional looms. To mention some of these are GADU, MIBU GALUG (MISING GALUG), EGE, DUMCR, UGON, PO: TUB, SCNG, MATAGAPA, TAPUM GASOR, GON-YAB, POTOI, RI: BIGASCNG, YAMBO, SOGON, PAYCG GASOR, NISCG, KIMBU GASOR, SCGBUNG, POTALI, GAPA, GERO, KEGRCG, KEBBUNG etc.

#### Ornament:

The use of the traditional ornaments confines mostly in the rural women folk. Their ornaments are DOGNC, TADOG, KENTU, PISVRVNG, KONGGE, ONSALMORA, ORDONI, GOLPOTA, SONDRONG AT, IKOLI, and PUAL LV: TOG etc.

#### LANGUAGE & LITERATURE:

The Missing language belongs to the Tribeto- Burman Branch of Sino- Tibetan or Tibeto- Chinese speech family. The Missing had originally no script of its own, but Roman script in modified form is being now used for their language. It has been introduced as a subject language in Primary Schools in the Missing dominated area in Assam with effect from October' 1986.

The Missing literature was composed mainly of oral literature such as folk songs, folk tales, proverbs etc. the written literature merged first in the wake of the movement led by the MISING AGOM KCBANG- The Missing Literary Organization. At present, the Missing literature has been growing rapidly and the MISING AGOM KCBANG is making untiring effort in inspiring writers, compiling and publishing literary works in different fields of literature.

With the spread of education and increase in the number of Missing readers, the Missing language is expected to attain maturity in the near future THE MISING AGOM KEBANG and all the Missing people have considerable responsibility to enrich and develop the language.

#### Disposal of Death:

Burial is the prevailing practice among this community. Every village has a common burial ground called AGOGOLUNG and dead bodies are buried irrespective of age, sex and nature of death after keeping the corpse in a long coffin called RUNGKUG. Purification

ceremonies are performed afterwards such as TILONI, MAHEKIA and DODGANG.

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