



# THE MARRIAGE SYSTEM OF MISING TRIBE OF ASSAM

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## Abstract:

Marriage is one of the important universal social institutions. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman to create new generation. It is established by the human society to control and regulate the sex life of man. The Mising community has well established institution of marriage. They are colourful tribe of North East India. They have their own history of origin, socio-cultural life and language, political organisation, religious beliefs, practices and Mibus songs. Their clan is exogenous but in case of marriage they are endogamous ethnic group of Assam. Due to impact of modern education, transport and communication, western life style, industrialisation etc some changes are occurring in their marriage system. In this paper attempt has been done to know about the marriage system and changes which are taking place in the Mising society. The paper is based on participatory observation and unstructured interview method.

**Key words:** Marriage system, Mising tribe, exogamous, endogamous, ethnic group.

## Introduction:

The North eastern region of India is land of diverse population; each having their own cultures, traditions and nature linked celebration. Amongst them, the Misings who were earlier known as 'Miris' are considered as one of the major tribes of Assam. Misings were migrated down along the Siyang river in several small groups in different period of history. It is believed that the first group of Misings landed in the upper region of the valley between 13th and 14th century A.D. when the area around Sadia was ruled by the Chutia kings. Presently the Misings inhabit the eight eastern districts of Assam, viz, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Golaghat and Sonitpur. They are scattered and their population has some concentration in the Dhemaji and Lakhimpur and Majuli districts of Assam. There are a few Mising villages in Arunachal Pradesh also.

Marriage is the very foundation of civil society. It has been regarded by all religions as the basis of civilised society, sound moral system and domestic affection. So family is the most significant unit of the society and marriage is the foundation of it. In the Hindu religion, marriage is called as a sacrament and not a contract. The RIG VEDA itself (Reg - Veda-x 85) speaks of the sanctity of the institutions of marriage. The tie of marriage was regarded even at that stage as a binding force all through life.

## Objectives:

The main objectives are mentioned as follows

1. To understand the marriage system of the Mising tribe.
2. To find out the changes in their marriage system.

## Methodology:

The data collected for the present study are based on primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources include books, journals, internet and published articles. In order to collect primary data's on marriage system of the mising tribe, a few renowned and experienced persons were selected, those who have knowledge on the traditional marriage system of the misings. Specially, Mohkhuti and Dhusutimukh villages in Majuli and Dhemaji district were interviewed to get the required information for the present study. So I have taken participatory observation and unstructured interview method.

## Definition of marriage:

Some Sociologists and Anthropologists have defined marriage in their own way. These definitions are given here.

According to Lowie " it is a relatively permanent bound between permissible."

According to Gillin and Gillin " Marriage is a socially approved way of establishing a family of production. "

According to Westermarck " Marriage is rooted in the family rather than the family in the marriage. "

According to Malinowski " Marriage is a contact for the production and maintenance of children. "

According to H.T. Mazumder " Marriage as socially sanctioned union of male and female or as a secondary institution devised by society to sanction the union and mating of male and female for purpose of (a) established a household (b) entering into sex relations and (c) procreation and providing care for the offspring."

## Forms of marriage of the Mising tribe:

Marriage is an important universal social institution. It forms and functions the changes in their traditional culture. In Mising society, exogamy, endogamy, polygamy and cross cousin marriages are seen. Firstly, here exogamy means a boy cannot marry a girl from his own clan in Mising society. E.g. , Payeng clan people cannot marry with anyone having the title Payeng . Secondly, endogamy means, generally a boy of a particular group or branch can marry a girl from different clans. Such as a boy having the title Pegu can marry with a Doley title girl and their marriage is permissible. Thirdly, in Mising society polygamy (a man has more than one wife at a time) form of marriage is prevailing, but polyandry ( a woman marry with more than one man at a given time) form of marriage is totally nil. Fifthly, the cross cousin marriage is mostly found among the Mising society. In the cross cousin marriage one can marry father's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter. This form of marriage is not only found in Mising society but in Mahabharata also. Such as, Arjun married his mother's brother's daughter Subhadra and Lord Krishna married Rukmini who was his mother's brother's daughter. This marriage is preferred to save bride price. The main purpose of this marriage is to strengthen Mising tribal organisation. Misings have five types of marriage and these are , 1. Midang ( Arranged marriage ) 2. Dugla- Lanam ( Elopement marriage ) 3. Mugbo- Dulam ( Obtaining girl by service ) 4. Sola- Lanam ( Marriage by capture ) 5. Divorce and remarriage

### 1. MIDANG ( Arranged marriage):

This marriage takes first place in Mising marriage. Wherein Marriage is arranged and planned by the parents and relatives of the bride and bridegroom . The decision regarding marriage and selection of mate is done by parents in the past years. But now-a-days , mate selection is completely between bride and bridegroom. Generally the parents of the boy and a few relatives visit the girl's parents with a basket of betel- nut 'akun' ( consist of some eighty whole tamol and equal numbers of pan) and handover it to the girl's parents. This basket is opened by the 'Kaki' ( maternal uncle of the girl) in a small gathering of close relatives. If the proposal is agreeable then both parties fix a suitable day, date and held merry making along with the traditional custom. Now-a- days, an astrologer is consulted to find out an auspicious date and time for the marriage ceremony. Invitation for marriage is done by offering tamol-pan. Nowadays however this procedure of invitation for marriage is followed by giving printed letters instead of tamol- pan. Welcome gate, pandal are constructed and reception ceremony is held. On that day invited guests are given feast with rice beer, po:ro apong , meat and offered a packet of betel-nut. In return these guests offer some valuable gift to the bride and bridegroom. Thus after completion of all ceremonial activities the bride and the bridegroom leave the groom house and goes to the bride house.

### 2. DUGLA-LANAM (Elopement marriage):

Elopement marriage is considered as a Dugla-Lanam in Mising society. It can be described as 'Gandharba Vivaha'. It is most common and popular form of marriage among the misings. Both boy and girl run away to distant place and live conjugal life. After some days later, the boy's parents inform the girl's parents and girl's father move towards the boy's house with his few blood relatives and neighbours. Then a meeting is held in the courtyard of boy's house to take decision for bride price and other matters. In this meeting a bride price is fixed . It may be about one hundred rupees and a few jars of rice beer or po: ro apong. After this a feast is offered to all who are present there. In this way Dugla Lanam ceremony comes to an end.

### 3. MUGBO- DULAM (Obtaining girl by service):

In custom of service, the bridegroom willing to marry a girl approaches them and serves his future father- in- law for four to five years. If during the period of service, the bride's father feels satisfied with the bridegroom. Then he offers his daughter in marriage. This bridegroom is called 'Mugbo-Dulam' in Mising society. This form of marriage has almost disappeared from the present Mising society.

#### 4. SOLA-LANAM(Marriage by capture):

In this form of marriage a girl is forcefully taken to the house of the boy and then they get married. Vermilion is put in the forehead of the bride by bridegroom . It is called as 'Sola-Lannam' in Mising society. The custom was very common in earlier Mising society but now -a- days, this custom is very rare. Because such type of marriage is not socially approved and it is considered as a serious offence as per the Indian penal code and condemned to the all people, who are related in that custom.

#### 5. Divorce and remarriage:

Divorce is rare in the Mising society. Divorce is allowed between husband and wife among the misings in their village rules. In some cases, the wife can leave or divorce her husband, if the husband is suffering from insanity, if he is a drunkard ,if she faces any inhuman behaviour , if he is unable to afford maintenance, if he marries more than two or three wives etc. And the husband also can leave his wife on the basis of the above causes. It is mutual agreement between both the parties in their society. But if a husband leave or divorce his wife without the consent of wife, then husband has to bear the responsibility of her livelihood for a period of time and he must compulsorily pay an amount of fine to his divorced wife and for their children's maintenance.

A widow and widower can remarry in their society. However , if a woman becomes widow in her early life then she can remarry with an unmarried youth, a married man and a widower. Specially in Mising society the widowers prefer such widows. This type of custom is allowed in the Mising society till now.

#### Conclusion:

From the above discussion we came to know that marriage is a sacrament between binding husband and wife in any society. A few changes have been taking place in the Mising tribe. We have thus seen that their marriage system in earlier days in terms of mate selection were done by boy's parents but now the decision is totally based on the bride and bridegroom in the Mising tribe. Now a days invitation for guests is offered by giving printed letters instead of tamol-pan ( betel-nut), marriage ceremonies are performed in temple or courts which are different from traditional marriage ceremonies , marriage related problems are solved as per norms of Indian panel code instead of village headman, monogamous and inter- caste marriages still prevail and also divorce rates have increased due to impact of T.V. serials, movies, Facebook, whatsapp etc.all these changes are seen to be taking place in the Mising tribe but obtaining girl by service and capture marriage have disappeared from the Mising tribe.

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