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INFLUENCE OF THE BHAGAVAT PURANA ON THE MARRIAGE SYSTEM OF THE MISINGS)

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Abstract: The Bhāgavata Purāṇa is the most famous among the Purāṇas and its influence on the religion of the people is profound. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa has been responsible for the rise of many sects of Vaiṣṇavas. Its influence has been phenomenal.

Misings are one of the aboriginated tribes of the north eastern region of India and are primarily settled in the plains of Assam. The tribal community was earlier called as Miris and the constitution of India still refers to them as the Miris. Misings belong to the scheduled tribe community of Assam.

Birth, marriage and death are the three pillars of human life and existence. Of these, marriage is a social convention. In the Indian context, marriage has a religious and cultural background associated with it. In missing language, the marriage is called Midang. Mising tribes also follow the system of monogamy (one wife one husband), but polygamy is also allowed. In this research, we shall try to focus on marriage system of Mising society based on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

Key Words: Mising, Miri, Midang, Bhagavata Purana, Da'ro-Midang

I. INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial the land of Assam & Arunachal (known by different names in different periods of time) have been the abode of different social and linguistic groups of people. These lands have been the centre of social amalgam with distinctive culture of their own. The Misings (earlier known as Miris) have own cultural traditions and customary laws of their society, social system and religious belief. The Misings conceptualise, the social system marriage as a sacrament (Religious binding) and expect that all unwritten marriage code prescribed by their forefathers be followed in performance of marriage. But some forms or types of marriage system of the Misings are homogeneous to those of the marriage system found in Hindu Śāstras, the Bhabīṣya Purāṇa and Bhāgavata Purāṇas. There are eighteen 'Mahāpurāṇas' (great Purāṇa) among which the 'Śrimadbhāgavat Purāṇa' is perhaps the most popular of the Purāṇas frequently read in all parts of India even to-day. The word Purāṇa literally means narrative of 'ancient times'. According to tradition the purpose of Purāṇa is the expansion of the

teaching of the Vedas. Bhāgavat Purāṇa is also called ŚrīMadhbhāgavat Purāṇa, an authoritative text dealing with life and work of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, on incarnation of Viṣṇu and other related topics. Like other Hindu 'Śāstras' and the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa deals with the marriage system too. Some types of marriage system of the Mising society resembles with those marriage system described in Bhaviṣya Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

II. The Misings:

The Misings (earlier known as Miris) are indigenous people of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh as per 2011 census report the total population of Mising in Assam is 6,80,424 and in Arunachal its is 14,000 in number. At present the Mising people are distributed throughout the nine districts of Assam viz Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Kamrup(M), Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and four district of Arunachal Pradesh viz- East-Siang, Lower Dibang valley Luhit and Sanglang districts. The Misings were earlier known as Miris, derivative meaning of which may be- Mi-man and Ri=hills i.e. it may be called dwellers of the hills. Now they like to call themselves as the Misings derivative meaning of which may be Mi=man, si/si-water, ng=word ending phonetic sound. Therefore it may be called dweller of the waterside area. They are fond of water and live in river side maintaining peaceful co-existence with the river i.e. nature. Most of the Mising people live in cluster of villages raising platform made of wood and bamboo. They have their own social order, marriage system and culture.

Sub groups and clans of the Misings: To know the marriage system of th Misings, one must know the sub groups and clans, the clan gods, clan en titles of the people of Mising society. The following two tables show the list o sub-groups, clans, clan gods and titles of the Misings.

Table-1

Sub-groups and Clans of the Misings

Sl. No	Sub-groups	Clans
1	Pagro	Mili, Medak, Pegu, Doley, Kuli, Kutum, Kaman, Kumbang, Patir, Lagachu, Taid etc.
2	Delu	Mili, Yein, Pangging, Chungkurang, Taye
3	Dambuk	Mili, Perme, Taid
4	Sa:yang	Sayengia, Taid
5	Oyan	Oyengia, Payeng, Taid
6	So:mua	Dai (Regon), Ra:tan (Narah)
7	Moying	Mili, Pa:dun, Narah Chinte, Kardong, Polong, Taid
8	Tamar	Paw, Bori, Loying, Paje, Morang, Pathari, Taid
9	Samguria	Paw, Paje, Taw, Mili, Barua, Konwar, Morang
10	Bongkual	Daw, Paw, Morang
11	Bebejia	Saikia, Hazarika, Bhuyan

12	Biyya (Bihiya)	Saikia, Hazarika, Baruah
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Table-2**Clan gods, Clans and titles of the Misings**

Clan Gods	Clans	Title
Bomi	Mili, Kuli, Kutum, Kaman	Mili, Kuli, Kutum, Kaman
So:bo	Doley, Misong, Kagyung	Doloey, Misong, Kagyung
Longging	Narah, Porag, Sinte	Narah, Popage, Sinte
Lo:ying	Sara	Sara
Bomi/Boki	Kumbang	Kumbang
Bom/Sunger	Kardong	Kardong
Kondar	Pegu	Pegu
Jo:tjir	Pa:tir	Pa:tir
Lo:yo	Taid	Taid
Longging/Lo:ying	Taye	Taye
Ke: do/Keyi	Tayeng	Tayeng
Longging	Paw	Paw
Dogyong/Kentu	Medak	Medak
Lungging	Lagachu	Lagachi
Lo:rin	Mo:di	Mo:di
To:ri	Bori	Bori
Pedong	Sungkurang	Sungkurang
Pengkong	Payeng	Payeng
Boju	Pa:di	Pa:dii
Jobo	Taku	Taku
Linking/Loying	Lason	Lason
Miyong	Ngate	Ngate
MB.: Some of the titles, clans of which are not known are not indicate.		

Concept of family and clan : A Mising family consists of parents and children. It is the smallest unit of a society. Joint family system under the same authority is also common in the Mising society. The family is particle one. The headman of them is the senior most male of the family.

'Da'ro-**Midang**' (Brahma marriage) 'Da'ro' means real, 'midang means marriage i.e. really great marriage. The most formal and socially respectable marriage is 'Da'ro' - midang'. The 'Da'ro-midang' is performed formally through mutual consent and it is arranged with the involvement of both the parents of either side. The parents of each side takes the consent of bride on bridegroom Due to

expensive and lengthy process involved there, most household do not prefer this type of marriage normally.

As per the traditional system and customary law of the Misings, clan plays an important role in marriage. Clan exogamy (system of marriage outside one's clan) is followed in marriage. According to this socio legal system a person on seeking a mate must marry outside one's clan. i.e. marriage within a clan is prohibited. Any violation of this system is penalized and boycotted socially. Moreover, the marriage between the followers of same clan god, even though they belong to different clans are also prohibited. But this practice is not strictly and uniformly followed as a whole among the different clans of the Mising society. According to customary rule of Misings, the general marriageable age is taken to be eighteen to twenty five years in case of male and eighteen to twenty years in case of female. Mising society recognizes remarriage after death of husband or wife. Child marriage is not recognised, but there is a custom to make oral agreement between the parents of a male and female child to execute the marriage between their children's in future at the marriageable age.

With the advancement of time changes have been taking place among the educated youth and enlightened sections to do away from the traditional system and taking recourse to the civil marriage under the special marriage Acts, 1954.

Marriage System Under The Śrīmad Bhāgavat Purāṇa:

It is needless to reiterate that 'Śrīmadbhāgavat' or 'Bhāgavat Purāṇa' is the most popular among the eighteen great Purāṇas. It is an authoritative text dealing with the Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life and work, on incarnation of Viṣṇu and other related topics. It is worth mentioning that "Bhābiṣya Purāṇa' and other Hindu Śāstras recognise eight forms of marriages, namely Brahma, Daiva, Projāpatya Ārṣa, Asura, Gandharva, Rākṣasa and Paisāca marriages. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa recognizes the following forms of marriages:

- (i) **Rākṣasa Marriage in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:** Rākṣasa marriage is the one where the bride is abducted and married. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa it is specially mentioned that Śrī Kṛṣṇa married Rukmīni's according to the Rākṣasa mode of marriage. But in case of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmīni marriage it is said that Śrī Kṛṣṇa carried away Rukmīni with her consents and not forcibly. Hence this is a combination of the Rākṣasa and gandharva form of marriage.
- (ii) **Gandharva Marriage in the Bhāgavata:** Gandharva is the marriage in which the bride and bridegroom get married after falling in love. The marriage of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā is an example of this kind of union.
- (iii) **Brahma Marriage in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:** Brahma is that form of marriage which consists in the gift of a daughter by the father (after decorating the bride with ornaments) to a bridegroom, being learned in the knowledge of Vedas and having a good character.

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa the Brahma form of marriage is very often mentioned in connection with Brāhmaṇas. The sage Kardama is described as marrying Devadhuti according to Brāhamaṇa rites,

(iv) **Svayamvara in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa:** In the Svayamvara marriage bride selects the bridegroom from a number of suitors. The bride is given to a bridegroom who distinguishes himself outstanding one in particular event to display courage and strength.

On reading the Bhāgavata Purāṇa one feels that polygamy is not unusual and in fact was the rule of the day. Lord Kṛṣṇa had sixteen hundred 'Gopinis' (consorts) which were not recognized as wives in view of Bhakti Cult. But in reality he had eight wives beginning with Rukmīni. The system of polyandry (One women having more than one husband) is also found in Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Marriages were arranged at marriageable age. Brides were grown up girl.

Influence of Bhāgavata Purāṇa on the Marriage system of the Mising Society

Having gone through the marriage systems and forms prevailing among the Mising Society and the system of marriage as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, it is evident that some of the systems and forms of marriage of the Misings are homogeneous to those described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

The 'Rākṣasa' marriage system of Bhāgavata Purāṇa resembles the 'Kumna- Sola-La:nam' form of marriage of this Misings. The Gandharva marriage form is akin to the 'Dugla La:nam' marriage form of the Misings while Brahma Marriage form is homogeneous to the 'Da'ro-Midang' form of the Misings. But the Sayamvara form of marriage of Bhāgavata Purāṇa is not known to the Mising society. Polygamy was not unusual in Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Likewise the polygamy is allowed in Misings; but at present it is often looked down as outdated of the past. Polyandry is also found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa but it is unknown to the Mising society.

A question arises. Is the marriage system of the Misings influenced by the system of the same of Bhāgavata Purāṇa? It is not certain as to the influence of Bhāgavata on the marriage system of the Misings.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata belongs to the class of Hindu religious literature known as the Purāṇas. The earliest beginning of the Purāṇic literature are to be traced back to the narrative portion of the Vedic rites. Purāṇic literature began to take its present shape only from the 5th century BC.

Conclusion:

We have to infer that Purāṇa was a branch of Vedic learning and not a separate and diversified religious literature that it came to be in later days. The Vedic literature were not easy to the common people, which were simplified through Purāṇic literature.

It is presumed that the Purāṇic literature in Indo-European language had little to do with the speakers Tibeto-Burman branch of greater Sino-Tibetan linguistic groups like Misings in totality. But Bhāgavata Purāṇa being the most popular among the eighteen greater Purāṇas, the narrative of its ancient times, might have attracted the Mising people too. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa might have exerted influence to a certain extent, as a result of which we have seen the resembles of marriage system of the Misings akin to the marriage system of Bhāgavata Purāṇas

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