

# The Status Of Women In Mising Tribe Of Assam

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## ABSTRACT

The Mising, officially known as Miri, are one of the earliest aboriginal tribes of Assam. Ethnically, they belong to Tibeto-Burman group, were originally hills tribe who inhabited in the range of Miri Hills in between the present Siang and Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The social, economic, and political status of women is crucial for the development of both society and the nation. In the Mising community, women played an important role in society as well as in economy but their roles are often underappreciated or overlooked in many ways.

**KEYWORDS:** Mising, society, women

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follow-

- 1) To study about the position of women in Mising society.
- 2) To understand the social, economic and political status of **women** in the Mising community.

**METHODOLOGY:** The study uses descriptive and analytical methods to explore the status of women in the Mising community. It is based on secondary data from published books, journals, newspapers etc.

## INTRODUCTION

The Misings, ethnically who belong to Tibeto-Burman group, were originally hills tribe who inhabited in the range of Miri Hills in between the present Siang and Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh( Kuli,p-4). Officially they are known as “MIRI”. Legends say that the Mising people came into contact with communities living in the plains of Assam as early as the 13th century. This contact led them to lose their violent tribal nature, and many embraced the Vaisnava religion, which was propagated by Sankardeva, the 15th-century Vaisnava guru from Assam. Sankardeva also mentioned a Miri disciple named Paramananda in his teachings. In his devotional poetic work, the *Kirtan-Ghosha*, Sankardeva referred to the Miri along with other tribes like the Garos, Khasis, and Kacharis. This transition and assimilation continued for two to three centuries. In more recent times, some members of the Mising community have also converted to Christianity. It is said that there has no written accounts or any recorded history about their migration from the hills to the plains of Assam. Though they are part of the Tani group of tribes, traditionally known for their hill-dwelling lifestyle, over the time, they began settling along the banks of rivers in the plains of Assam. At present they are mainly concentrated in the areas like Golaghat, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia etc.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

“To awake the people it is women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves”.

---Jawaharlal Nehru

The status of women varies from society to society. According to Dr A.S.Altekar “one of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilization appreciate its strength or excellences and realize its limitations is to study the history of the position and status of women in it”. In the Mising community of Assam, the society is mainly patriarchal and patrilineal. In the book ‘Theorising

Patriarch', Sylvia Wolby defined patriarchy as "Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women." Traditionally, the decisions of the male members of the family in Mising community considered more superior than women. They are typically not consulted in significant matters such as acquiring or disposing of property, holding social and religious activities, or making decisions related to children's education and marriage. These decisions are generally made by male members of the family or community leaders.

Socially, the women status in the Mising societies is not considered equal to men. They are treated inferior to men in all aspects including education particularly in the rural areas. In village and other organisations, they are not given due place and their opinions are of no value at all (Kuli,p-8). In the traditional *Chang Ghar* of the Mising community, the status of women has generally been considered lower than that of men. For example, their house is horizontally divided into two parts- 'Rising' (the upper portion) and "Koktog" (the lower portion). The 'Rising' part is considered as more valuable and prestigious part of the house which is reserved for male members of the family. The Koktog is for women which is considered as lower portion where female members of the family seat and carry out most of their daily domestic duties. Thus, this division signifies the inequality between men and women, as it symbolizes their exclusion from the most valued and prestigious part of the home.

In Mising community, women, traditionally played a key role in creating cloth at home. They are often seen as symbols of handloom weaving and spinning. In many families, the loom was used to make the clothes they needed, meeting most of their domestic textile requirements.

In the field of religion, women don't have the same position as men, even though they have played important roles. They act as helper to the priest. The priest is called "Mibu" who is generally a male. Women cannot become a Mibu in Mising tradition. It is only the men who can become Mibu. The women were not allowed to seat in the same row as priest. In 'Dobur ui', a traditional religious ritual of Mising community, women are not allowed to participate. Other traditional religious rituals like Taleng Ui, Yumrang ui, Urom, Dodgang, Urom Apin etc, women typically have a lower status than men. They are often restricted to supportive roles, helping but not leading or participating in the main activities. In contrast, men can take part in rituals or hold important positions in these traditions. They help by preparing the foods and other essential things which cannot be done without women participation.

Mising women play a key role in both the economy and daily life of their households. They work alongside men in farming and help manage the home, ensuring their children's education and health are looked after. In addition to farming, they also raise livestock like pigs and chickens, which are important for the household's income and provide a valuable source of protein.

In the field of polity, the position of women in the Mising community is often considered subordinate to that of men. Women's active participation and representation in political system is very essential to mobilize the women section of any community. Without equal participation and representation of women in decision making bodies is not suitable in any democratic form of government. Regarding women participation, in 1925 Mahatma Gandhi said that, "as long as women of India do not take part in public life; there can be no development for the country. Further, Gandhi also declared as long as women active participation in public life can purify the political system, we are not likely to attain Swaraj". In Mising villages, local political bodies are called *Dolow Kebang*, which are led by the *Gaon Bura* (village head) and assisted by older men. In these bodies, women cannot serve as leaders or general members. However, after the introduction of the Panchayati Raj system, women gained the opportunity to participate in modern politics, which has helped improve their status, both in Mising society and in society as a whole. So, it has been seen that the position of Mising women in their society is unequal. They are positioned next to the male. One most important organisation for women is 'Mimbir Ya:me' where the women have equal rights. In this organisation, the youth of the village perform for the welfare of society.

## CONCLUSION

The social, economic, and political status of women is crucial for the development of both society and the nation. In the Mising community, women played an important role in society as well as in economy but their roles are often underappreciated or overlooked in many ways. They are active participants in both domestic and economic activities, such as agriculture and other household work. However, despite their contributions, women face social, economic, and political challenges that limit their advancement.

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