

# Tradition of Mising Weaving Craft: An analytical Study

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**Abstract:** *The Mising community people are living in different districts of Assam like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinisukia, Sonitpur, Darang, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Majuli. Mising are very rich in their Folk tradition and culture. They have contributed a lot to the greater Assamese cultural tradition. They have their own Folk-cultural tradition and craftsmanship as found in different Folk-crafts. Some of their traditional Folk-crafts have achieved fame and name across all over the Indian subcontinent. Here we can cite the example of their Weaving Craft. Along this Weaving Craft, their different Folk-crafts have its own traditional skill, art and craftsmanship. This have not only enriched their society and culture but has contributed a lot to the Socio-cultural scenario of greater Assamese society. In this study effort will be made to bring in to light the nature of the Weaving Craft of the Mising community living in two district of Assam, like Lakhimpur and Dhemaji district. So these include the study of traditional Weaving Crafts of this region.*

**Keywords:** Weaving, Folk-Craft, Loom.

## 0.0 Introduction:

Mising Community is the second largest Community in Assam. The Misings officially recorded as *Miri* in the list of Scheduled Tribes of India under Constitution Order 1950 are originally a hill tribe of the Himalayan region of North Eastern India. Either for their better Wisdom or in their necessity of cultivable land. They 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 sometime between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. When the area around Sadiya was ruled by Chutia kings.<sup>1</sup> The Mising tribe of Assam, previously known as the *Miris*<sup>2</sup> forms a fragment of greater Mongoloid horde occupying the hills and dales of north-eastern India. Sir George Grierson<sup>3</sup> has categorically divided these Mongoloids into (a) primitive long headed, (b) less primitive short headed and (c) Tibet to Mongoloids, Linguistic researches reveal that the Mongoloids of India excluding only the Khasis and Jainties speak Sino-Tibetan group of languages; and the Misings who form a fraction of this race, fall in the category of Tibeto-Burman speakers of the greater Sino-Tibetan groups.<sup>4</sup>

According to 2011 census, the total population of the community was 6, 87,310; of which 3, 95,790 are male and 2, 67,520 female.<sup>5</sup> They are mostly found in the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinisukia, Sonitpur, Darang, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Majuli.

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### 0.1 Aim and Objective:

1. Discuss about Historical background of Mising Weaving Craft.
2. This study will analyse about Mising Weaving Craft Tradition.
3. Discuss about Different types of weaving Model of Mising women crafting.
4. This study will try to find out the place of weaving craft in Mising society and how the tradition and belief in their society are contributing to it.

### 0.2 Method of the Study:

In this paper, Analytical method has been applied for the discussion of the topic. This study is based on Primary and Secondary source or data.

### 0.3 Scope of the Study:

The Mising community people are living in different districts of Assam like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinisukia, Sonitpur, Darang, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Majuli. In this study effort will be made to bring in to light the nature of the Weaving Craft of the Mising community living in two district of Assam, like Lakhimpur and Dhemaji district. So these include the study of traditional Weaving Crafts of this region.

## 2.0 Historical background of Mising Weaving Craft:

The Mising are one of such ethnic groups having their own rich traditions and weaving industry is one of those distinctive features. Like other Mongoloid communities in Assam, the different varieties of Cotton, Silk, Muga production and weaving art are entirely carried out by women section of the society. Silkworm and Muga cultivation are not their old tradition but after their permanent settlement in the plains, they have learned the habit of rearing these works in producing silk and muga threads for weaving purposes. Silkworm production has a long and colourful history unknown to most people for countries. The most of the people have known very little about silk and maker of it. The history testifies that the first cocoons of silkworm and their surprising properties were discovered by Chinese almost five thousand years ago. For more than two thousand years, the Chinese kept the secret of sericulture altogether to themselves. For the first time, silk crossed the border of China in the Second century B.C. through the Silk Road.<sup>6</sup> Gradually silk trade extended to the neighbouring countries like Korea, Japan and later on to India and Persia. In the past, they used to cultivate cotton plants clearing fertile land in the foothill areas using a hoe instead of a plough, which a belief that it would yield good quality cotton and these method of cultivation was known as *Pagrig* (Si:pag, Arig= Pagrig, Si:pag means Cotton, Arig Means- filed)

The mature cotton pods, after being connected were spread on a bamboo platter or tray for drying. By using a cotton gin, the seeds were separated out and finally softened them by repeated crushing as cotton. Lastly, with help of a *Takuri*- a contrivance for twisting yarn, the fine cotton fibres were converted to threads of variable thickness as required for different varieties of cloths. This procedure of yarn production is not much practised now, but is a true fact that there is inherent weakness of the Mising women since their childhood, in the art of producing threads from cotton and weaving cloth of their choice.

## 3.0 Tradition of Mising Weaving Craft:

### 3.1 Types of Mising Looms:

The Mising women usually use two types of looms for weaving –

1. A mini loom
2. A common ordinary loom

The mini loom is a very simple and portable loom used conveniently for weaving *Gadu, Gapa, Gale, Sogon, Mibu Galug, Linkog* etc.

The common ordinary loom is not their old traditional weaving system. It is not a portable loom and these types of looms are assimilated of Assamese weaving culture. Now mising women are mostly used this assimilated types of loom.

### 3.2 Different types of weaving Model of Mising women crafting:

A *Mimang* is a model or a data copy of different types of weaving patterns and it gives detailed information on arrangement of lines, shapes, colours etc. The basic pattern, known as a *gai-gamig*, expressed in graphic details, follows a particular system called *Alam*. Its graphic directions consisting of straight, angular, rectangular, triangular, square form etc. Ultimately give rise to a particular design or shape. In giving shape to a specific pattern, mixing different colour threads, a great care, concentration, eyesight, patience and skill are required to a weaver. Moreover a good weaver should have thorough knowledge in every aspect of a *Gamig* inclusive of graphic directions their names, techniques, utility etc. Some forms of *Gamig* which are devoid of *Alam*, being represented by circular, semicircular, curved, irregular lines etc. Could be grouped in a category called *Appun Gamig* and it mostly includes designs of flowers, animals, birds etc. Most of the Mising women are expert weavers and hence it could be said with proud that there are very few women in other communities who can compete and beat them in the field of their weaving capabilities.

The following represents weaving art teaching:–

### MIMANG: MODEL

**Gaigamig:** *Korot koli, Laksin, Meyab, Koligai, Tayob, Yammig, Ke:sikonggar, Duksub-dugior, Gerye Gersang, Dugyi-Duksang, Kingkub-ki:lab, Punbug, Kebyir, kebgur, Tigur, Gorge: tignam, Keteri, Takar, Adoli:, Iki:, Dosnoya, Appun (Ngosig, Ba:me:, Marsang, Adoli, Punjer, Takar, Appun Babori); Moimang (Po:pir, Dumsung, Basoni, Ebong, To:de:, Ta:sang, Peki, Site, Tajmohol Sandronga:r, Mokorang)*

The names of different patterns (Gaigamig) are represented according to their underlying meanings in Mising Language. Such as *Korot-asaw*, *Laksin*–a finger or a toe nail, *Meyab*–a type of fan, *Yammig* and *Koligai*–different types of designs and *Tayob*–a scorpion.

**Duksub-dugjar**– Graphic lines converging and diverging to a particular point in horizontal direction.

**Duggyi-duksang**– Graphic lines converging and diverging to a particular point in up and down direction.

**Kingkub-ki:lab**– a pattern of repetition at regular interval.

**Ke:si-konggar**– a type of *Alam*.

**Kebyir-kebur** – a type of *Alam* at cloth borders .

**Tigur** – a type of *Alam* at borders of cloth.

**Gorge: tignam** – a type of *Alam* bordering the principal pattern horizontally at both sides.

**Keteri** – designs of geometrical area, flowers etc.

**Takar** – a design of stars.

**Adoli** – a design of fifty paisa coin.

**Iki** – a design of twenty five paisa coin.

**Dosnoya** – a design of ten paisa coin.

**Ngosig** – a design of a fish shell.

**Pa:me: appun** –a design of orchid flowers.

**Marsang appun** – a design of vegetable flowers

**Babori appun** –a design of plant flower.  
**Moimang** – a picture or a photo  
**Po:pir** –a butterfly.  
**Dumsung** –a deer.  
**Nasoni** –a dancing lady.  
**Ebong** –a wicker hat used as an umbrella To:de: – a peacock.  
**Ngosig** –a design of a fish shell.  
**Ta:sang akang** – a weaver bird’s nest.  
**Peki** – a dove.  
**Site** –an elephant.  
**Mokora** – a spider  
**Tasmohol** – the Tajmahal.  
**Sondronga:r** –a kind of necklace.

### 3.3 Mising Traditional Dresses:

Mising women can weave varieties of cloths for use to all other members of the family, having designs of artistic beauty. The stars, the moon in the sky, the flowers of different varieties of nature, pictures of birds, animals, historical monuments and so forth, are very beautifully designed in their looms. The art of weaving comprises of in ten mixing, crisscrossing interposing, imposing, transposing, spiralling, overlapping of the threads of different colours giving rise to delicate patterns of attractive beauty as desired.

- a) Male dresses
- b) Female dresses
- c) For baby used by a baby sitter

#### a) Male dresses

**Ugon:** the waist or loin cloth of man.  
**Gonbor:** the waist or loin cloth of man.  
**Gonro-ugon:** a long waist or loin cloth of man.  
**Gontung ugon:** a short or loin cloth of man.  
**Gadu galug:** a shirt made of *gadu* cloth.  
**Tughong galug:** a banyan.  
**Mibu glug:** a *Mibu* shirt.  
**Dumer:** a towel.  
**E:tub:** a turban  
**Lingkab:** a muffler.

#### b) Female dresses

**Ege:** the lower garment, types are Muga, Pu:sung, Leke, Ki:nam, Pidbung and Ko:tor.  
**Riya:** a long narrow cloth wrapped over the breast.  
**Kegreg or Segreg:** a type of waist cloth for women  
**Ri:bi:** a type of shawl.  
**Gero:** a type of shawl.  
**Gaseng:** a type of shawl.  
**Gale:** a type of waist cloth.  
**Bimbung:** a type of shawl.  
**Pe:re:** a type of shawl.  
**Gapagare:** a type of waist cloth  
**Yambo:** a type of shawl.  
**Po:niyang gasor:** a type of shawl for bride.

#### c) For baby used by a baby sitter

- i) Niseg
- ii) Segbi
- iii) Sektag
- iv)

#### d) Common Dresses

- i) Gadu
- ii) Dumer
- iii) Ribi Gaseng
- iv) Erkok

#### 3.3.1 Gadu :Status of Mising Weaving Craft:

*Gadu* which can be called *Mirijim* or *Misingjim*, an entirely cotton product, known for its high value in the society, requires a lot of labour and care in its weaving process. A *Gadu* is a symbol of status and dignity of a family in the community, presentation of a *Gadu* is almost compulsory in the marriage of their daughters for which the parents try their best in advance by any means to weave a

*Gadu* to maintain their honour and respect. The *Gadu* is well known in different parts of world through demonstration as a part of Assam's weaving industry. Now it has been observed that there is growing scarcity in its production because of lack of expert and dedicated weavers in the society.

#### 4.0 Conclusion:

At the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Mising community is growing impact of science and technology, in one or other way in the weaving industry of this society. The necessity to produce cotton plants in the fields for yarns has reduced considerably because of easy availability of variable qualities of cotton threads in the market. Moreover, the repeated affection of floods of Brahmaputra and its tributaries have inundated a major portion of high fertile lands suitable for cotton cultivation, in the Mising inhabited areas. For this reason, they have become reluctant to produce cotton in their limited cultivating land other than growing food crops. Of course, some poor families in remote areas still pursue the habit of silk and *muga* worm production with some interest to fulfil their requirements mostly through traditional way without adopting scientifically developed methodology resulting always low production.

The unique patterns of gaming represented in woven dresses would always reflect distinctly the attractive as well as incomparable beauty of designs. At the present time, the Mising women have been looking forward to commercialize these valuable products in the market which is a positive step towards financial benefits for themselves and to their families.

#### References (End Note):

- <sup>1</sup> Kuli, Jawahar Jyoti Kuli (Compiled & Edited). *The Misings Their History and Culture*. p.61
- <sup>2</sup> The term Miri which is a Mising word itself means a man (W. Crooks. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol.1, pp.33 ff); and it has got an antonym *Mipak* meaning a 'man to be avoided'—a term which is applied by the Misings to denote non-Mising.
- <sup>3</sup> G.A.Grierson. *Linguistic Survey of India. Vol.1. Calcutta, 1927, Introduction, p. 40*
- <sup>4</sup> S.K.Chatterji. *Kirata Jana Kriti. Calcutta 1974, p.20*
- <sup>5</sup> [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mising\\_people](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mising_people), date: 06.07.2019
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. *The Misings Their History and Culture*. p.134

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