

# Reflection of Social Life in Missing Folk Song

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**Abstract** - Folk literature is a valuable wealth for any tribe or race through which the social, culture and religious aspect of life of past and in history get reflected. A kind of particular folk writing has been prevailing in the missing ethnic tribe, the second largest tribe residing in Assam. Among these writings, the songs enriched with heart touching tune are profusely found. Out of them, some songs are related with different programmes and some are associated with the union and separation of the lovers. There prevails one kind of song which can be divided into two parts on the basis of gesture and whose words and tone are heart-touching. On the other hand, Ko:ni:nam Ni:tom and Lotta So:nam songs highlight the occupational and working life of the Mising community. The treasure of Mising folk songs is enriched by the popular Oi:ni:tom which is presented by the youth and maiden, making it artfully playful and humorous to some extent. These songs, despite contributing to the history of Mising tribe, added a form to the Assamese culture. Thus, on the basis of the disappearing and prevalent songs in the contemporary period, the present paper attempts to highlight this discussion.

**Index Terms** - Folk, Ethnic tribe, Ko:ni:nam Ni:tom, Lotta So:nam, Oi:ni:tom.

## INTRODUCTION

Among several ethnic tribes inhabiting Assam, Missing tribe is one such tribe. This tribe originally belonged to Mongolian race and related with the Chinese-Tibetan clan dwelling in the Northern part of Assam. Identified as scheduled Tribe, the ancient habitation of the Missing community bordered on Howang-ho and Yangsi rivers in the North-west region of China. In the later period, the Missing people migrated through Tibet and started to settle down in Arunachal Pradesh and possibly, prior to 14<sup>th</sup> century AD, they came down to the plains of Assam and settled on the bank of river Brahmaputra. In the present time, the Missing tribe dwell in the northern part of Brahmaputra River as in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Sunitpur districts and in the districts of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Tinsukia, Jorhat in the southern region.

However, they are also seen inhabiting near Assam-Arunachal and Assam-Nagaland borders.

## MISSING FOLK SONG AND ITS DIVISION ON THE BASIS OF SUBJECT-MATTERS

Like other ethnic tribes, various folk writings of the Missing emerged orally. Among these, the direction for songs is abundantly found through which the struggle in life, ups and downs, cry and laughter, emotion and feelings, worshipping nature, the praise of beauty of the beloved, their hope of union, divorce, etc. of the tribal people have found expression in simple and vigorous way. To express in other words – “The treasure of Missing lyrical literature is rich in different heart-touching songs. The chief characters of Missing folk songs are the eternal feelings of countryside life filled with nature, themes, profuse colloquial dialect – passion for union, etc. The Missing folk lyrics bear the living picture of Missing community”.

In Missing language, the folk song is called Ni:tom. On the basis of the purpose for organizing on the festive occasions and composition by versatile singer in different occasions, the collection of the Ni:toms are divided into five kinds based on the subject matters –

- 1) Performance based
- 2) Secular folk songs
- 3) Tragic songs
- 4) Work related folk songs
- 5) Folk songs based on themes.

Attempt has been made on the theme representing the lives of the Missing people in these above-mentioned divisions of Missing Ni:toms.

- 1) Performance based folk song: -

The performance based folk songs can be sub-classified into two kinds –

- a) Religious based and
- b) Secular on the basis of the subject-matter and presentation.
- a) Religious based Ni:tom:

In the aa:baang Missing society, religious festivals or programmes are organized for various purposes on different occasions. The priest who performed the religious worship are called “Mibu” or “Mirri” or “Miri Devodai”. The priest who judged the clans of the tribe, the element creating God are known as Mi:bu. On the other hand, the priests who communicated with the spirits certain rituals when someone suffers from disease, ill-luck are called Mirri. These two classes of priests (Mibu and Mirri) while performing their ritualistic activities recites different kinds of songs to describe about the celestial mysterious world. These songs are termed as Aa:baang.

Aa:baang is of two types – Mobo and Mirri aa:baang. Based on the two classes of priests, aa:baang are also divided into two kinds. Though there is existence of singing of aa:baang in the beginning of worship, but no particular aa:baang exists in Mibu and Mirri aa:baang. The Mibu or Mirri, who represents the God or Goddess, also recites the aa:baang of that particular God or Goddess. However, it is to be noted that the language of aa:baang songs are not very intelligible to the common people. It is belief among the Missing people that Mibu and Mirri are divinely gifted and their language, therefore, is of classical standard. Those who have a little knowledge about Missing’s glory and heritage can only understand the language of aa:baang. The Mibu at time of songing the aa:baang though states the names of different elements of the world, but these elements are seemed to be given celestial colour and particularized in such a way.

In Mibu aa:baang, the creation of the universe, trees, birds and animals, mountains, ant and insect, the description of human creation are included. The Mibu, in Missing history is called historian. Such Mibu, who does the worship is called priest. The Missing people worship numerous Gods, supernatural beings and their ancestors. They find remedy for suffering and ill-luck through the Mirri who through his songs communicates with the divine power and provides solution to the sufferer. The Missing people believe that the Mibu and Mirri aa:baang are invested with divine power. So, for particular purpose in religious celebration, the Mirri pray God –

“Umlou bumna  
Dongko lou briyon rumna  
Doun loubriyon rumnou nomou  
Gordu: bouronou roman  
Gorop: yoronou roman

Lrigu aa:nou rumna  
Posum togunou gu:mrinou nomou.....”

Gist: -

O, the owner of the mystery of creation, O the recorder of history, we salute you. We pray you in the form of the mother who takes all the burdens on her shoulders and give birth to the infant keeping for long time in her womb.

In Hindu system of belief, like Nirgunj nirakar, Niranjan Brahma, Mibu aa:baang is also considered as imaginary “Rupok” –“Koyum”. Its form is vacuum. It is mentioned in the songs –

“Koyum kan mango yayanko  
Ke:ro kamang ye yayanko”. (10)

Which means invisible past and the invisibly invisible. Out of this Koyum’s phenomenical evidence, Kasi, Siyang, aa nof, bogum, mukseng, these five truths or untruths, Sida bhak emerged and later Sedi Mela i.e. emergence of the first creator of purush-prakriti. In the explanation of aa:baang, its form is expressed –

Ko:yum se dri na:noko  
Me:l mambu aa:di mambu du:namou  
Koyum me:l ya:yikou  
Konkou gol lonyo gol na moum  
Sedri drigrirou okrirkonya konkiya  
Aanou kolang ko:mank (11)

Through the aa:baang songs, the historical beliefs of Missing, the creator of the Universe thinking attitude, customs, behaviour, the ritualistic activities are expressed.

b) Formalistic secular folk song: -

This type of songs are classified into two types – (i) Mi:dang ni:tom and (ii) Birik ni:tom or Birduk ni:tom.

(i) Mi:dang Ni:tom:  
The meaning of Midang is marriage and Ni:tom refers to song. Hence, Midang Ni:tom means marriage song or biya nam. Generally, in non-tribal Assamese society, different types of wedding songs have been prevalent. Generally, in Assamese society, there prevails different songs, but in Missing society such songs are seen in greater number. Even then, it is observed that when a girl has to leave the house of her parents and relatives, the expression of tragic song by the bride can be heard, from distance –

“Ma ma, kampo maa, kapo yo  
Kumpang labo ma da, koba yem  
Pama da, dakta de gima da” (12)

Interpretation:

Bogitora, sister-in-law, don't cry. The preparation to bathe the bride is not yet ready, and the bridegroom has not yet arrived to accept you.

It is also found in other song –  
 “ Baboi baba, nanoi nana,  
 Yampo koneng ke  
 Jutok saraiye kanam kanoi  
 Omke du po noi  
 Donam orik kipari rangam ye kunoi  
 Aasi tok prigodoi rangam ye kunoi  
 Opin nok soyar doi rangam ye kunoi”

Meaning:

“Father, father, mother, mother, my bed will be empty from tomorrow, alnah, pounding rice, the paddy will also be empty, the dining room will be empty”.

The charm of the bride, humorous and melodious song is also found in the Midang Ni:tom: -

“Tarow row tarow row tarow row  
 Tarou rou tarou rou tarou rou toura  
 Adi toulou ditou toulou kou kou randanang  
 Banji so:yink yangye tagoi kou kou randanang  
 Baaji ko:bang pageyola kou kou randanang  
 Torou rou tarou rou routoura  
 Ma:me kampong sa: mada pou tarou routaoura (14)

Paraphrase:

In bride's house, in the deep forest of the hills, stairs made from palm trees and the seater for the bridegroom. The beautiful bride is to be received.

In mocking tone – sister-in-law, don't climb on the beautiful step of pooma wood. You are so unlucky that the newly made strong step will be broken into two parts. The wooden seater made of pooma will be broken into two half by your large buttock. Along with dribi tapung beat the Tajuk Takung. Welcome her by putting on the wedding garland around her neck and pick her up.

Lullaby song:

put down the step made of pooma word. Bind both side of steps orderly and in a line arrange the leaves of Megela tree and Ko Pat(leaves). Beat the “den dum” made with mega stem.

ii) Bir:rick Ni:tom or Birduk Ni:tom:  
 The presentation of the birduk ni:tom in different seasonal ceremonies or festivals is called birduk ni:tom. Birduk or Bri:duk means season. This type of

song is called seasonal songs. Ali:aye Li:gang and Porag festivals are remarkable festivals of the Missing society. The Ali:aye Li:gang is celebrated on the first Wednesday of the Fagun month with the beginning of the Spring season, the Ali:aye Li:gang is celebrated. Through Biruk Ni:tom or Birduk Ni:tom the male and female, youth and maiden united to amuse and enjoy themselves.

Song –  
 (i) “Lo:le lo:le lo:le  
 Dabo lo:le lo:le lo  
 Sisuk suk bo bo diya  
 Regam gambo bodiya (16)”

Meaning:

We also enjoy like the deer jumping in amusement.

(ii) “ Yo dumla bom laam sutoka  
 Lowiti dumla bom laam sutoka  
 Yo doeri ro ponkrir la:je  
 Gri: daab dow erirow ponkrir lo:je” (17)

Meaning:

Combining your long hair impressively, come out, we will celebrate merrily.

(iii) “Yampop ya:yanyoi ro ro ya:yanyoi  
 Rognio nouguppou gubaang yeku pou  
 Yo ki:tumour tuning yeku pou  
 Ki: bo pou ki:tunou tunaang yekupou”.

Interpretation:

The days are passing away one after another. As the hen becomes thin after laying eggs, in the same way, man's life comes to an end with ageing. Human life becomes like dog's condition. When a dog grows old, it wonders from door to door.

Po:rag Festival: -

“Da-daam bonou” is one of the songs which is presented in the Po:rag festival. The young boys and girls perform dance with the rhythmic beat of the drum and tune of the song. They perform the dance in a circular motion with the hands clasped together. When all are involved in joyous moment, sometimes some youth elope his beloved and marry her. The song of da-daam bonou is given below –

(a) Ghuya : da-daam bonou mou bonou mou da-dimou  
 Mibu.....dekadol.....  
 Verse:

Sou : kum tom donou ? Gapa Gonou Doumbol !  
Sou : kum tom donou ? Gali Gonou Doumbol !  
Sou : kum tom donou ? Garo Gonou Doumbol !  
Sou : kum tom donou ? Gaajok Gonou Doumbol !

Gist:Gugaa – the girl who knows to work and who understands.

## 2) Oral type songs:

One of the components of the folk songs in Mising societies, this type of song is found. This kind of song is known as lipo ni:tom or lupu so:nam ni:tom in Mising society. On the subjective basis, these types of songs are classified into –

- (a) Mimbir Yamei and
- (b) Do ying domo.

the first one is the song of love-affairs. Tobu tobaang is one of the suitable examples of this song. This type of song contains 63(sisty three nos.) and three tones. This song is mainly composed on the basis of rejected illegal love affairs and capital punishment Tobo Tabaang. The subject matter of this song is related with the tragic story of Tobo Tabaang. Among these songs twp songs are indicated below –

Aabu oi:

Oiya touka : lok toubkou toukaa:lok  
Omuma touka : lok grikrinou laaju kaa  
Omum nomanou kaa: lring nom danou.” (3)

This song is one of the examples of how much lovers are punished by the society. ‘Do:ying do:nu ni: tom’ is the second type of oral songs. In such song the subject –matter begins orally. In these songs, the subject-matter is limited to conversation and introduction and to love proposal.

Example –

Ya:me : Nok aamin okkon..... kobonou  
Nok do:lumg okkon.... Ka:yumaa  
Mim bir : ngok aamin douromi.... Kouwa  
Aamik taatkol luyobong..... Kaan kana

## 3) Tragic type songs

The songs which express grief, sorrow, memory, imaginary emotions of man, society and related to different subject-matter are Binoni type folksongs. In mising language, Binoni type songs are called Ka:ban. This kind represents the pathetic aspects of mising life. On the basis of the subject-matter Ka:baan songs can be classified into two types –

i) Story telling. ii) Descriptive.

### a) Narrative ka:baan song

In mising language, this type of song is called Do:yin ka:baan. This song is composed on the love-affairs of the youth and maiden. The aim and objective of do: yin ka:baan is expression of sorrow of individuals, strangeness, courage, individual grief and sadness. Such songs have similarity with ‘Ballad’ or ‘Malita’. Among such songs, Binod Pipuli songs of devon taali etc. can be referred to.

Gela gaan songs consist of set of 100 (hundred) songs. Puwal boriya cultivate on lease the land of ‘Gela gaam’, the death in the hands of ‘Gela gaam’, transport to kaala paani etc. are described in such songs. Similarly, committing of suicide by Binod – Papuli rejection of their illegal love-affair are described. This type of song consists of three lines and 201 stanzas.

### b) Descriptive ka:baan song:

These songs are divided into three kinds – a) Dobo ka:baan b) Me:bo or Su:saan ka :baan c) Yabaan

#### a. Dobo Kabaan

The subject-matter of such song is centered on failure of dreams of individual aspirations. So, the subject-matter and expression is subjective or individualistic. Society dominates the individual when a person makes progress. Th e unfulfilment of the dreams breaks the heart of a person. The afflicted person blames the parents and society. For example, the song given below:-

“Na- nou bri okolok odagilolna

Na: nou bri aalagoum ingmur toneya modoum

Na: nou bri gangnaamri doum gagnur taneya.....”

Gist: Did mother touch the restricted untouchable part at the time of birth. Did my mother mistakenly give me birth, when mother tied the rope made with clothe. So, I am suffering.

#### b. Mou:bo or Me:bo Ni:tom

In order to lessen the cruelties of real life, to lessen the memories of the golden life, are the subject-matter of this song.

Example –

“Kamji: lokobo royiyo lokkoybo

Pitpa: lokkobo jiyayan lokkoybo”

#### c. Yabaan Ni:tom

Yabaan ni:tom is related with women folk. Generally, this song is sung in poignant voice of women. On the basis of presentation of the yabaans are classified into Yamnoi Kabaan and kabnaam. Yamnoi Kabaan refers to the crying of bride. The bride becomes grief-sticken when she remembers the days of early childhood. For instance-

“Owa owa dum ti o, dumla bou lab:manou kodouna”  
Kabnaam refers to the crying of women when she remembers the old days of love and affection of near and dear ones. As for example –  
“Anerinou anerinou nokkou su:jani aajani ”

4. Work related folksongs:

These songs reflect another aspect of missing social life. This song is basically classified into – a) Ko:ni:nam and b) Lotta so:naam.

a) Ko:ni:nam

Lullaby songs are known as ko : ni: naam ni:tom in missing language. Particularly, missing women are very hard-working. They do not get leisure time to look after their children in the busy hours of work. So, the caretaker has to take care of the baby who sing lullaby songs when the baby cries or disturbs. Such type of songs is composed for such moments. The subject matter of the lullaby song depends on the caretaker. For Example-

“oiyow ah kap poyo pak kou ah de: ma:da  
Dou: dou pri: yemana kab langka  
Onkao na oiyumon se: konou down  
tonou..... (18)

Explanation – Don’t cry my baby. The birds have still not grown its wings. Cry when the birds fly. Mother has gone to cultivate. Talk to her when she returns. The baby’s cry is so sweet that I desire to hear it again and again.

The scholars of Mising folksongs referred to such type of songs as momannaam or mamnam ni:tom (lullaby song). Basically, although these songs are Lullaby songs, on the basis of the subject-matters, difference can be noticed among these songs. These two kinds of songs reflect another aspect of Mising society.

b) Lotta So:nam

In Mising language ‘lotta’ implies courtyard and so:nam signifies light-hearted mirthful dances. Hence, lotta so:nam is not a group of several dances of one kind, but combination of different dances rather. The subject-matter of this lotta so:nam involves the

migration from hilly region to the plain of the missing people. This song basically includes subject-matter relating to the impediments the traditional dresses, various items of food, etc. during migration in the oral form. It was a dance presented during leisure time in the court yard. In this way, they forgot their sorrow and felt delighted. In the presentation of this song, the musical instrument is not used. While singing this song, when the ‘swar-mattra’ is faster, the dancers hit the ground to keep the rhythmic movement. This song is also known as ‘seloia ni:tom’. For example-

Sa:sou sa :sa seloya  
Okolok lenkupan seloia  
Oye oye seloia,  
Sidgou lennangkoi seloia  
..... (30)

Meaning –

“Brother, brother, don’t go away to plain leaving me alone. Sister, sister, I won’t go away leaving you”

5) Various types of folksongs on the subject-matter:

Basically, three types of songs are included in this class of song. These are a) Oi:ni:tom  
b) Lereli ni:tom and c) Playful songs.

a) Oi:ni:tom

Among the most popular songs Oi ni:tom can be considered as one. Oi ni:tom reflects the love and tragedy of youth and maiden, their hopes and aspiration. Oi ni:tom is similar to Assamese ‘Bongeet’. This type of song also expresses hopes and aspiration of the youth. This song is the most famous because it applies different kinds of ‘Upama’ and for its lyrical sweetness as it is capable of giving delight to the mind and soul of the Assamese and Mising people. From the view point of subject-matter, this song represents all aspect of missing social life. It is that where there is no oi ni:tom, there is no missing society. The inspiration for this song is the blows and obstacles in the life of common people, changing of the environmental scenery and indomitable dreams. Standing on the chest of changing society, oi ni:tom has taken numerous new forms. Oi ni:tom covers a wide field from past historical events to contemporary events. It is not the language of anyone, but for all of them. The field of oi ni:tom is very vast and full of sweetness and tears. The missing youths are determined to fulfil the indomitable dreams of agile young age-

“Goru aa:lam laagimang, manjek aalam  
lagimang..... “(34)

Gist: No need of ploughing with bullock or cow if I get you, then I will cultivate with spade. Because elephant, buffaloes etc. can be bought through earning by labour. But human life cannot be bought easily.

This oi ni:tom is reflection of these images-

“sitou menjek bonapou erisula pa:yopou

Oiya onsin si:sa:soum srow sula pa:pouma.”

In this way, the breaking of hopes of youth and maiden comes out from their mouth-

“Asi jili : jilli:ko miksi ji:li jilliko

Asi jili: pinyepe’ mikisi jili: pinpomang” (36)

Meaning: The water of a stream is stream and the tears of eyes are also stream. The stream will dry up but tears of eyes will never dry.

In this manner, in such oi ni:tom love and marriage, obstacles given by laws of society, reflection of different social scenery imparts complete form to the Oi: ni:tom.

#### B) Playful/Mirthful song

This type of song is sung by the youth and the maidens. It is also prevalent among the old man. Sometimes, the past is memorized by the father-in-law and sister-in-law and presented in front of grand children and in this way get delight. After that, the youth in order to lighten the surrounding, singing mirthful song. One such song is-

“Ori ori orison payog yaboyakokang

Ba:boi denub bang kin ma:al ursukod ju yangkang”

(37)

Meaning: Hari hari hari son. Tobacco fell down from the package. Uncle did not how to swim and drown in water.

#### c) Lereli song

Such type of song is artful. The young boys and girls perform and present together. These songs represent the natural beauties and changes of the short span of Human life. Such songs express the realization in life that enjoyment during youth till there exist health and wealth. Example of such type of song is –

“Silo kou bomyang lereliya”

Gist: the spreading of the sun rays in the morning time, at that moment of sprouting of new leaves, the moon rising in the sky.

#### CONCLUSION

It is not possible to discuss all the prevalent folk songs of mising in limited scope which have been mentioned

in the earlier discussion. But in those which were discussed about the ways of missing social life are reflected as a whole. Their migration, religion and ritualistic belief system and culture, dreams and memory, cry and laughter, love and affection, method of cultivation, role of women in social life, philosophy, participation by different age groups in different organizations severe punishment meted out by taboos for unsanctioned activities. All the elements of historical perspective are reflected in the folk songs. Through these elements, the solidarities of mising society, their views and images are reflected. Thus, the preservation of the folk song will be considered a great wealth for the Assamese society.

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