



Empowerment of Mising Women and the Role of Takam Mising Mimé Kébang (All Mising Women Wings)

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Abstract

Most importantly the tribal women are considered an asset to the economy of their society. Tribal women are traditionally hard workers and have played a pivotal role in every aspect of the tribal society. Right from the household chore to the social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects tribal women have been playing a very constructive role. Although, tribal women seemed to be hard workers but in practice, their work has been marginalized by the male sections of the society so they have been lagging behind self-empowerment as well as quality education. This study sought to assess the ground reality of Tribal women empowerment by emphasizing the Mising women and the role of Takam Mising Mimé Kébang (All Mising Women Wings).

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Tribal, Mising.

1. Introduction:

India is a village-based country where the majority of the population is belonging to the villages. Inhabitants of the village used to possess their traditional ways of living style and follow the traditional ethos. However, in the 21st century most of the villages are also connected with the cities of the nation but due to being far away from the mainstream people are unable to assess the quality of services from the nation. Particularly the tribal people are traditionally inhabitants of forests and more particularly the Mising people usually stay in the remote area and on the bank of the river. Because of inhabiting the remote area most of the families of Misings lacking from quality education as well as the services of different government schemes. In the Indian social system, Scheduled Tribes are considered as marginalized groups where the Mising community is a subgroup of the greater tribal society. Mising women are playing pivotal and substantial roles in their society and women are taking a more crucial stance in Mising society compared to other societies. Mising women are being involved in every activity right from the household chore to social, cultural, agricultural, and economic activities of society. So, Mising women are regarded as the backbone of the economy of their families. They cooperate in every activity of the family and along with these activities they also work for themselves which is known as '*Rikséng*'. By involving in '*Rikséng*' they make themselves independent from the family. Although Mising women have been playing a vital role in the all-around development of the family and society as a whole but due to remaining deprived from the education, employment, political, and social position they lag behind the empowerment. The empowerment of women determines the status of women's economic, social, and political position in society. Most of the Mising women have



been involved in the private and unorganized sectors and they have less opportunity to involve in public sectors. They also got less education, quality health services, and productive resources. So, over a few years, the Indian government has introduced different policies and schemes that focus on women's social dignity and equality. The government of India aims to ensure ways of earning for women through these schemes and policies. Gender inequality is a major challenge in Indian society so to overcome the issues of gender inequality the government of India come forward to entitle equality at every level of society where empowerment of women and child education can be uplifted. The National Commission for Women is a useful example that was set up by the Act of Parliament in 1990. This commission was set up to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women section in India. To promote women in politics the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have been made for the reservation of seats to women in local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities. Which are empowered women to participate in the decision-making body at the grassroots level of the nation. To bring up the advancement, development, and empowerment of women the government of India also introduces the *National Policy for Empowerment of Women* on 20th March 2001. This policy aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and ensure the active participation of women in all spheres of life. Along with these Acts and Policies, the government of India introduced different women empowerment schemes such as *BetiBachaoBetiPadhao Scheme*, *Working Women Hostel Scheme*, *Mahila E-Haat Scheme*, and *Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)*, etc. are being implemented for the safety and empowerment of women sections in India. Though different Acts, Schemes, and Policies have been introduced for the empowerment of women but in practice, Mising women continue to be socio-economic and politically backward. So, this study sought to assess the empowerment of Mising women and the role of TakamMisingMiméKébang by reviewing different works of literature.

2. Objectives of the study:

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To assess the empowerment of Mising women.
- To examine the role of TakamMisingMiméKébang in empowering Mising women.

3. Operational Definition of the Terms:

Operational definitions of the terms are as follows:

- **Empowerment:** Empowerment means the dignity and power to control their own lives. It means improving one's standards of living, self-reliance, self-esteem, and self-confidence.
- **Mising women:** Mising women are a subgroup of the greater tribal women. They seemed to be very experts in every activity but due to less education and inadequate productive resources to improve their status in society, they remained as the deprived and marginalized sections of the society.
- **TakamMisingMiméKébang:** The *TakamMisingMiméKébang* (All Mising Women Wings) is the only women's organization of Misings. The organization aims to fight



against all forms of discrimination against women and to remove all forms of social or domestic violence against women as well as all social taboos, superstitions, and unscientific customs of the society.

4. Delimitation of the Study:

This study is delimited into the issues of empowerment of Mising women. How the *TakamMisingMiméKébang* is organizationally and ideologically empowered to ensure the empowerment of Mising women in their society. The prime concern is given only these areas.

5. Methodology:

This study employs the descriptive method to find out the fact with the help of secondary sources. This method is used to discuss independently for the sake of clarity of the objective of the proposed study.

6. Discussion and Analyze of the study:

The role of women in tribal society is significant and crucial in comparison to other human groups. The social status of a person depends on the level of income, education, productivity, and employment. Hence, women's position in society is also dependent on all these issues, and social justice matters on the position of women in society as a whole. The women section constitutes half of the population so most importantly their status highly matters in ensuring social justice. The Mising tribe is the second largest tribal community in Assam. The Mising are known to be of Mongolian descent, and some historians consider them to be parts of the Burmese family of Tibet because of their similarity to the Burmese linguistic group in Tibet. At present, the Misings are available in different districts of Assam such as Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Majuli, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivsagar, Darang, Tezpur, and East Chiang District of Arunachal Pradesh. In Mising society, women are more important than in other social groups because they can work hard and they involve in every household chore to the social activities of the society. The Mising women participate actively in all agronomic activities including plowing, digging, sowing, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, and storing food grains. Along with all these activities, Mising women are also experts in waving and it seems beneficial for boosting the economic base of their family. The role of Mising women is omnipresent in operating the different functions of Misings. Without the presence of Mising women cultural and socio-economic activities of the Mising society are incomplete. In the cultural programme like *Ali Aye: Ligang* (most popular agronomic festival of Misings) and *Po:rag* (another most popular festival of Misings), Mising women play a determinant role in observing the programme with exultation and zeal. Right from the preparation of *Épob* (starter cakes) to producing Apong (very essential and locally prepared rice beer) and welcoming all guests to the programme to showing *Gumrag* (most popular traditional dance) and signing *OiNi:tom* (most popular romantic songs), Mising women play a very pro-active role. So women are also considered as the cornerstone of the cultural and social tradition of Misings. Although Mising women are involving every



activity of the family but they are marginalized in the decision-making process of the family and society as a whole. Along with this issue, Mising women also face problems in achieving a sustainable livelihood due to climate change and environmental degradation as well as interference of outsiders. The national students union of Misings as well as the different socio-political groups and wings of the society organize several awareness programmes and orientation programmes for the empowerment of Mising women so that Mising women can improve their socio-economic and political conditions and status in society.

The status of women in Mising society is reflected in the oral histories like the prevalent folktales of Misings. These folktales, novels, poems, lullabies, etc. are the fertile records that can depict the nature of society. The folklore of *YakaMirém* is about a tale of a girl who flees from the Burmese invaders. 'Yaka' was a Mising young girl and she was detained by the Burmese soldiers. She strategically fee from the detention camp of the Burmese soldiers. While she ran away from the detention camp of the Burmese soldiers she brought a box of diamonds and silver from the storeroom of the Burmese soldiers. And later on, she got engaged to a young person from their village and after they married, they became the richest family in the Mising community of that time. It has been seen that from the very past Mising women were symbolized as a source of courage and brave to fight against outsiders and society has not questioned the so-called purity issue of women. The tale signifies the courage of the girl who not only flees from the brutal Burmese invaders but also brings with her precious gems and gets married later. Here too, the girl getting married after she was held captive by the patriarch of another country signifies that the Mising society does not follow the rigid constructs of chastity/purity.

Right from the traditional folktales and social system Mising women are reflected as hard workers and experts in every activity of the family and society as a whole. But, in practice, women have been dominated and subjugated by their traditional norms and values of society. Usually, all decisions of the family or society are maintained by the concern of a male person. It is also the fact that most of the time female children of the family or society are being neglected from providing quality educational facilities. Most of the time they consider that educating female children of the family is of no value to their family because the female children of the family will no longer stay in their home after marriage. So, instead of providing formal education, they used to provide skills regarding how to operate domestic tasks in their day-to-day life.

To cope with these issues and empower women in Mising society many educated elite women have been associated with themselves and started to fight against all the prevailing social taboos and evils that restricted Mising women folk from practicing their rights freely. Their movement was influenced by different liberal ideologies and factors which inspired them to raise women's questions in their society. Since ancient times, Mising women were treated as the second option of the family, and female children of the family had given less



care than male children.¹ Thus, a few prominent Mising intellectuals gripped a very significant role in the upliftment of the Mising society to a large extent by improving the status of women as well. At this juncture, prominent leaders like *MuhiMili*, *BimolaKantaDoley*, *Tarun Chandra Pamegam*, *MalchandraPegu*, *NameswarPegu*, etc. were highly remarkable. They tried their best to bring all the issues to the attention of the people of the Mising community. They thought that the advancement of a nation is dependent on the collective work and the active or vibrant role of socio-cultural and political organizations of the society. It is a fact that the different communities of the world form their own socio-economic and political organization for ensuring a solution to their specific problems. Like the same Misings also formed different socio-economic and politico-cultural organizations for representing the ethnic problems that emerged from socio-economic, politico-cultural so, and so forth. At the very beginning, the Misings formed their first socio-political organisation '*MisingBa:né Kébang*' (*The National Convention*) under the banner of '*All Assam MiriSanmilan*' (*AAMS*) in 1924 at Gejera, Majuli.² It was the oldest and great convention of the Mising community which was established under the presidentship of Satradhikar, GarmurSatra, Lt. PitamberDevGoswami.

For the very first time, *TakamMisingPorin Kébang(TMPK)* raised the voice for a separate woman's organization to represent the women's questions of Mising society. It has been observed that although women were getting chances to participate in the *TMPK* platform, basically the very problems and issues of the women were different from the mainstream problems addressed by the *TMPK*. So, to solve and discuss publicly the problems of women at the organizational level it was necessary to form a separate women's organization in Misings. This was the reason the leaders namely ProhladSah, ParamanandaChayengiya, BanikantDoley, JuktanathDoley, PurushuttamDoley, Dr. RonujPegu, etc, thought for the creation of a separate women's organization and many enthusiastic women and educated women leaders also came forward to the same ground. As such promising women leaders were ProvatiPegu (Doley), AjudhyaDoley (Pegu), NanditaPegu (Chayengiya), UsaraniKumbang, DayantiKutum, Lt. DebilotaDoley, etc. have also cooperated in the initial activities that were taken by *TMPK* to create a separate organization for women.³ They expected that this women's organization will play the role of a supplementary women's wings particularly in the self-reliant movement of the Mising community as well as integrate all women's questions of the society. To create a separate women's organization they gave a proposal to form a *Convening Body*. The convening body was composed of eight members namely *UsaraniKumbang*, *AjudhyaDoley*,

¹Saikia, Kr, Achintya and HorenGoowalla. A Study on the Socio-Economic Condition of Women of Mising Community in Assam: An Overview. *J. Arts Soc. Sci.* DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20936/JASS/160102>

² Kaman, Nabin. 2014. *Dakor*. Bhabani Offset & Imaging system Pvt. Ltd. Lachit Lane, Rjaghar Road, Guwahati-781007, Assam

³ The proposal of TMMK Central Convention.



DamayantiKutum, RinaPatir, RadhikaPatir, PremolataPatir, Lt. DevilotaDoley, and TonujaDoley. This Convening Body organized a *National Convention of Mising* community on 2nd and 3rd September 1989 at *Jiyadhoh Higher Secondary School*.⁴ In that convention different issues of Mising society like the causes of the lower status of Mising women in their society, the socio-economic role of Mising women in their society, and the relevance of a separate Mising women organization, etc. were discussed very dynamic and constructive ways. After the constructive discussion and getting innumerable support and public opinions, they proposed to organize the first-ever *National Convention of Mising Women* on the 9th, 10th, and 11th January 1990 at Gogamukh Higher Secondary School. On the 2nd day of the convention i.e. 10th January 1990, a unanimous resolution was passed to create a separate women's organization which was entitled as '*TakamMisingMimé Kébang*' (All Mising Women Wings).⁵ Thus, 10th January is observed as the Founding Day of *TakamMisingMimé Kébang, TMMK*. On the same day, they formed a full pledge Central Committee of *TakamMisingMimé Kébang* by taking unanimous resolutions of both present and voting members of the representatives of various districts of Assam. The members of the full pledge committee are mentioned (as written in the proceeding book) as below;

On that day the first Central Committee of *TMMK* was formed for the session of 1990-92 and *Mrs. PravabatiDoley* and *Mrs. NanditaPegu* were elected as the President and Working President of *TMMK* respectively. *Mrs. UsharaniKumbang* was elected as the General Secretary of *TMMK* and *Mrs. LeenaPegu* and *Mrs. SwarnalataPegu* were elected to be the Vice President. There were also four joint secretaries, seven organizing secretaries, one cultural secretary, a sports secretary, a magazine secretary, and almost two members were elected from each district of Assam.

The *TakamMisingMimé Kébang (TMMK)* has been also inherently involved in the self-reliant movement of the Mising community. The *TMMK, TMPK, and MisingMimag Kébang (MMK)* had demanded collectively for the *Mising Autonomous Council (MAC)* for safeguarding the Mising identity and for the all-around as such economic, social, political, and educational development of the Mising society.⁶ *TMMK* also carried forward the movement by consolidating the Mising women along with addressing the women-related issues. Because of this, *TMMK* approached the government of India and Assam for the fulfillment of their demands such as:

1. Establishment of a weaving industry in the Mising dominated areas for the development of entrepreneurial potentialities of Mising women enhancing self-reliance and productivity.

⁴ The proceeding book of *TMMK*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Chayengiya, Paramananda. *TMPK, ItisasaruPorikroma*. Li:sang, mouthpiece of *TMPK*, Amarpur Session, Sodiya.



2. Establishment of Government-run Schools and demand for provincialisation of the other schools situated in the Mising populated area for spreading affordable education facilities to their children.
3. To provide reservations in Schools, Jobs, and Politics for the Mising women.
4. To establish a primary health center in each region of Mising populated areas for the interest of health and hygiene.
5. To establish small industries in Mising populated areas to guarantee employment of Mising women.
6. To provide necessary accommodation or hostel facilities ('Tribal Girls Hostel' for the tribal female students) for Mising women studying outside the state.
7. To take necessary actions and the strict penalty for restricting uncultured activities like rape, kidnapping, torment, and massacre.
8. To establish a trade center and museum for selling handicrafts Mising traditional attires and conservation of clothes prepared by the Mising weavers.
9. Demanded slots in All India Radio programmes for broadcasting Mising drama, seminars, and songs for the development and spread of Mising culture, language, and literature.

Above all the TakamMisingMiméKébang is also concerned with the overall development right from the development of mental, and physical to the development of education and economy of an individual as well as a group of individuals. Since 2005 TMMK published a magazine namely '*Muksiri*' for the sake of the development of literacy and intelligence of individuals. The leaders of TMMK formed the '*GejigGero*' NGO for the sake of empowering women sections of the Misings in 2012 and along with this NGO they also introduced a child club called '*SísangOtsur*' for the smooth growth of mental and physic of children.

7. CONCLUSION:

From the discussion, it has been found that the drive initiated by the TakamMisingMiméKébang for the empowerment of Mising women seemed to be significant gaps between programmes advancements and actual empowerment of Mising women. As the background of society and level of the workforce of Mising is different from the non-tribal women so the government has to formulate separate empowerment policies for the Scheduled tribe women so that Mising women can also get privilege from that policies and schemes. More strategic awareness should be generated to make aware of the rights and responsibilities of Mising women so that they can possess equal status at every level of the state. Along with making awareness about the rights and duties of women they should be inspired for quality education so that they can raise their voices against all forms of discrimination. Because education is the key to empowerment so driving for quality education should be a prime concern to the empowerment of women as well as to the Mising society.



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