The Misings' folk song ‘Oi-Ni:tom’ - An Overview

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Abstract: Oi-Ni:tom is the most popular song of Mising society. Love and yearning is the foundation of Oi-Ni:tom. This song is sung by all sections of the Mising community. Folk literature of Misings can be broadly divided into four categories: Folk Tale, Proverb, Riddle and Folk song. Their folk songs can be described the five broad headings- i) Formal based folk song (Song of devotional and festival), ii) Song of Conversation, iii) Love Song, iv) Song of Lamentation and v) Lullaby and Nursery song. The main subject matter of Oi-Ni:tom is the remembrance of love. Oi-Ni:tom is the poetical expression of feelings and emotions of Misings youths and girls. Pain and Sadness are the another theme of Oi-Ni:tom.

Keywords: North – India, North East India; Mising; Folk Song; Oi-Ni:tom

1.0 Introduction

The Misings are one of the most colorful Mongoloid tribes of the North East India, largely inhibited in Assam. They are the second largest tribe of Assam. They lived in Himalayan region before entry in Assam. They are said to be migrated in the 11th century, from Himalayan region to the range of Miri Hills (Miri Pahaar). The Miri Hills situated in between the Siang and Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. At present, the Misings are found to be living in seven districts of Assam; that’s Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivasagar and Dibrugarh. Misings are also living in three districts of Arunachal Pradesh as natives. The three districts are East Siang, Lower Dibong valley and Lohit. They are very fond living in bank of the river from ancient period.

Many researchers have taken keen interest in the folk life ethnic communities of Assam, more specially the Misings of Assam. The Misings are known for their rich oral folk tradition and their colourful folk literature and tradition reflects their folk life. Folk literature of Misings can be broadly divided into the following categories:

1. Folk Tale
2. Proverb
3. Riddle and
4. Folk Song

Their folk song can be described under the broad headings:-

1. Formal based folk song (Songs of devotional and festival)
2. Song of Conversation
3. Love Song
4. Song of Lamentation
5. Lullaby and Nursery song

Oi-Ni:tom is the main folk song of Misings.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Objective of the Study

The detailed study of Oi-Ni:tom is the main objective of this study. The main aim of the study is to find out the different sides/aspects of Oi-Ni:tom (folk songs).

2.2 Design of the Study

The descriptive research design was used for this study. The data has been collected through analytical study method to find out the new dimensions of Oi-Ni:tom. Research discovery of new dimensions of Oi-Ni:tom and its original characteristics have been shown in the Findings.

2.3 Data Collection

The data which has been used in writing of this research article have been collected through field study. The data has also been collected by visiting Mising settlements in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Some Misings folk-songs collected from books as secondary data for the study.

2.4 Data Analysis

For this study, the researchers used the qualitative method of data analysis. The entire data collected through both interview and observation were analyzed using narration; in a qualitative approach. Then, it was presented in a systematic approach of describing, analyzing and interpreting the Oi-Ni:tom.

3.0 Discussion

3.1 Background of Oi-Ni:tom

The love and yearning folk songs of Misings are very rich and prosperous. The most popular and numerous of this class of songs are those of the type known as Oi-Ni:tom – literally meaning the song for the beloved. Oi-Ni:tom is multicolored folk song of the Mising society, representing the spirit of the youthful and emotional capabilities of the community. Thus, the love and yearning is the
main theme with their cultural background in Oi-Ni:tom.

3.2 Meaning of Oi-Ni:tom

The word ‘Oi-Ni:tom’ made from three term- Oi, Ni: and Tom. The meaning of the ‘Oi-Ni:tom’- Oi-lover, love and affection, Ni:- to console or lull and Tom- who is consolo or lulled. An Oi-Ni:tom define a song to be sung with motif of expressing one’s love and affection. Of course, the meaning of the word; Oi-Ni:tom’ is not limited to one meaning only. But, its’ expression and uses are varied in meaning according to their cultural context. If we observe an Oi-Ni:tom generally has two lines made up at two parts, structurally.

3.3 Classification of Oi-Ni:tom

Oi-Ni:tom can be divided into six categories:

1. Ngenman Ni:tom (Introduction based Oi-Ni:tom)
2. Je:yar Ni:tom (Tone based Oi-Ni:tom)
3. Yaapa Ni:tom (Clapping based Oi-Ni:tom)
4. Ni:tom Dum Dum (Drumming sound based Oi-Ni:tom)
5. Mine Ni:tom (Ancient song)
6. Oi-Ni:tom (Love song)

Oi-Ni:tom is sung at different moment and occasions. When Oi-Ni:tom is sung for introduction and identification among girls and boys, then it is known as ‘Ngenman Ni:tom’. Ngenman Ni:tom main theme is expression of humorous with a jolly moment.

‘Je:yar’ means long tone. Je:yar Ni:tom is sung before the main part of Oi-Ni:tom. When a folk singer sings an Oi-Ni:tom with clapping with hands (haat chapor) and clapping with bamboo (toka), is called ‘Yaapa Ni:tom.’ When the tone reflect like drumming sound(dum dum) that type of songs called ‘Ni:tom Dum Dum.’

The ‘Mine Ni:tom’ is the another significant category of Oi-Ni:tom. ‘Leke Ni:tom’ is the another name of this Oi-Ni:tom. Normally, this songs are sung by aged (elderly) people of Mising society. This type of songs is very popular among the aged class of Mising people. The Mine Ni:tom uses two language- Assames and Mising. Of course, the song is written in mixed language but the Mising language and particular Mising tones are predominantly found to be preferred by their community as a matter of fact.

3.4 Theme of Oi-Ni:tom

Oi-Ni:tom is the most popular song of Mising society. Love and yearning is the foundation of Oi-Ni:tom. These songs are sung by all sections of the Mising community, rich or poor and young or old. An Oi-Ni:tom’s central theme is pathetic expression of painful life and sadness in nature and mind. Hope and hapless and dream and dreamless is the another component of Oi-Ni:tom.

Therefore, Oi-Ni:tom has been the most important and significant song of Misings. In reality, it is a form song which reflects emotions, feelings and love of young men and women. Mising boys and girls sing it very effectively to extend and absorb their emotions. They sing Oi-Ni:tom normally at five different places-

1. While working on the field (at cultivation)
2. Moving on the bank of the river
3. Working on the forest
4. Celebrating about the Mising soman (dance) and
5. Sitting lonely

The poetical expression of Oi-Ni:tom is extraordinarily beautiful as the chief theme is that of love which is universally found to be true to all human beings over the world. Thus, Oi-Ni:tom depicts the actual folk life of Mising community, as it truly mirrors the social practices and conventions of Mising society.

4.0 Different subjects in Oi-Ni:tom folk song of the Mising

4.1 Farmer life in Oi-Ni:tom folk songs

One of the mentionable aspect of Oi-Ni:tom is that it expresses their life of cultivation and farming. Actual Farmer life of Misings are reflecting in Oi-Ni:tom folk songs. An example can be cited as:

‘Mijing sobo oturu nangoloi jungoli
Oi ngoyike oturu do:lungolok ya:me:de
Mepe emna me:tom
Mepagola du:la:ma.”3

(The enemies of the old bullock are the plough and the yoke. Our enemies are the mischievous young men of the village. My dear, I can never leave you even if I think of doing so.)

4.2 Love and Yearning life in Oi-Ni:tom folk songs

The Mising youth express their love and affection through Oi-Ni:tom. For example, a song goes like this:

‘Oino okol dunkangkun oino okol dakkangkun

(When are you living? When are you sitting? I am daily crying to remember you.)

4.3 Pain and Sadness life in Oi-Ni:tom folk song

Pain and sadness are the another component of Oi-Ni:tom folk song. It’s main subject is to describe sadness of life. The song shows the pain and pangs of one’s unsuccessful in life. Pathetic-rhetorical
form is the chief foundation of Oi-Ni:tom. A song goes like this:

‘Kouwo pettang kadbune isi nerid dunggela
Ngokke asin odune ronki: oi ronki:la.’
(The Kouwo birds are crying, sitting on the tree. On hearing the cry of the bird, my heart also cries with sad and sorrow.)

4.4 River based folk life in Oi-Ni:tom folk song

River and Misings are inseparable from the time immemorial, thus the socio-cultural life and the bond with the river are like two sides of the same coin. Mising society cannot alive out of river. So, various colour of river based Mising folk life’s are reflected in all the forms of Oi-Ni:tom. An example can be cited as:

‘Aane ruid du:li:dag asi bidnam ka:lidag
Oinok kerad du:li:dag aasin aayang bili:dag’
(I want to sit on bank of the river to see the river flow. Same to same, I want to sit on your side to give my heartiest love.)

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the analysis and discussions of Oi-Ni:tom, the following conclusions have been reached:

a) Oi-Ni:tom is one of the remarkable categories in Mising folk-literature
b) It is a form of song reflecting the feelings and love of Mising youths and girls.
c) As a folk-poem or folk-literature, Oi-Ni:tom is of high standard.
d) Oi-Ni:tom is the actual expression of Mising folk life.
e) The love and yearning is the main background of an Oi-Ni:tom.
f) An Oi-Ni:tom define a song to be sung with motif of expressing one’s love and affection.
g) Love is the main subject of Oi-Ni:tom.
h) Pain and Sadness are the another theme of Oi-Ni:tom.
i) The ‘Mine Ni:tom’ written at two language-Assames and Mising.
j) Oi-Ni:tom is rhythmic in nature.
k) An Oi-Ni:tom closely related to Mising’s life like agriculture, farmer, plough, hoe, harrow, paddy, fishing, boating and waving etc.

5.2 Recommendations

There is a relation between Oi-Ni:tom and the Mising people who used to live in China’s Yang-Chi-Kiang and Assam’s different river basins. If comparative study is made between the Oi-Ni:tom’s written during living in China, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, then there is a possibility of discovery of some of the remarkable dimensions of Oi-Ni:tom folk songs.

Basically, Oi-Ni:tom is a song. Comparatively, in Oi-Ni:tom, its musical value is more important than its literature. Actually, in literary form, it does not get visible. Instead of experiencing it in literary form, its beauty can be felt in musical form only. In other words, ‘Oi-Ni:tom’ gets its soul in musical form only. When it is presented in theoretical form, some of its aspects does not get expressed whose pleasure cannot be perceived. The main motivational force of a Oi-Ni:tom is its presentation. The beauty of a song can be felt after it is sung. Without presenting in the form of a song, a Oi-Ni:tom is like a body without a soul.

6.0 End Notes

1. A tribal community of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh which has been mentioned in Indian Constitution as “Miri”.
2. Nitom means song in Mising language.
3. B. N. Dutta: Mising folk songs, Tribal research centre, Guwahati, 2002
4. A river; situate in China

7.0 References

7.1 Assamese

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7.2 English


7.3 Mising