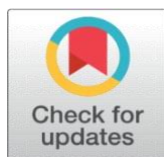


A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE MISING COMMUNITY AS REFLECTED IN RAJANIKANTA BORDOLOI'S MIRI JIYORI USING THE CONCEPT OF ASSAMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The Concept of 'Assamology' is a new concept. The popularisation of the concept can be credited to Maheshwar Neog. Assamology as a concept has been developed on the basis of concepts like Orientology and indology. The scope of the concept of 'Assamology' is very broad. The geographical, political, socio-economic and the cultural study of Assam and many other such areas of study can be included in Assamology.

DOI

10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.2618

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Keywords: Miri jiyori, Assamology, Mising, Socio-Economic, Cultural Aspects.



1. INTRODUCTION

Rajanikanta Bordoloi is one of the prominent novelist of assamese literature. Known by the name 'King of Novelists', Rajanikanta Bordoloi has written many novels to enrich the treasure of Assamese literature. Among them, Miri Jiyori is his first novel. Published in the year 1895, this is the first novel that has the tribal society at the point at the centre of its plot. Centred on the Mising community that lived by the Suwansiri river in the Lakhimpur district, this novel has very portrayed the socio-economic condition and cultural heritage of the community through the love story of a young Mising couple. A try to study the Socio-Economic condition and the culture of the Mising community using the concept of Assamology as reflected in Rajanikanta Bordoloi's Miri Jiyori has been done in this paper.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study discussion is to examine how the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the mising people are reflected in the novel of Miri Jiyori of Rajanikanta Bordoloi as a resource of Assamological study.

3. METHOD

Descriptive and analytical method has been adopted to study the issue.

4. MAIN DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-Economic aspects of the Mising Community as reflected in the Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novel Miri Jiyori

4.1.1 Agriculture

The main occupation of the Mising community is agriculture. They mainly engaged in the cultivation of crops like paddy, mustard etc. Within the category of paddy cultivation, they mainly cultivate ahu rice and bao rice. Aside from these they also cultivate crops like potatoes, taro, black lentils, ginger, garlic etc to earn their livelihood.

In the novel Miri Jiyori, it has been mentioned about Jonki and Panei guarding the ahu paddy field in their childhood. Also mentioned in the novel is that after panei agreed to jonkeis love proposal Jonki planted 12 bighas (three pura) of mustard in order to make Panei his own by paying Ga dhon. Ga dhon is the money paid as compensation to the guardian of a girl sought to be married.

4.1.2 Society

We can get to know about the Mising community and their society through Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novel Miri jiyori. The Mising society is orderly. According to the societal rules every village has a headman. All the decisions and judgements regarding the village are taken by this headman, also known as 'gam' communal meetings. Among the gams there are two types of games; Baregam and Dohgam. There is a reference to such gams in Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novel Miri jiyori.

4.1.2.1 Social Customs

The novel Miri Jiyori mentions some of the customs prevalent in the Mising society. In the Mishing society, there is a rule of taking 'Ga dhon' in the case of marriage. Ga dhon is the money to be paid by the groom to brides parents or guardian. In the past, there was a rule in the Mising Society that the boy who wanted to marry a girl had to work in the house of his future father-in-law and live like a son-in-law for three to four years. This rule was called Magbo-dugnam or juwai khota. With the passage of time this practice has loosened down a lot, but the boy who is about to get married is still seen comes to the girls house two or one days. The novel mentions paneis parents taking Ga dhon from kumuds father Naren gam and Kumud coming to paneis house to stay as son in law.

4.2 Cultural aspects of the Mising community as reflected in the Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novel Miri Jiyori

4.2.1 Festivals

Almost all the communities of the world celebrate different festivals in different times of the year. These festivals are an unavoidable part of their traditions.

There are mentions of several such festivals seen in the Mising community in Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novel Miri jiyori. Some of them are—

4.2.1.1 Festivals related to Agriculture

One of the primary festivals associated with agriculture in the Mising community is Narasiga Bihu or Po:rag festival. Narasiga Bihu or po:rag festival is an agricultural festival of the Misings. This is a post harvest festival. In the novel there is a detailed description of the Narasiga Bihu of the Misings. According to the novel, on the seventh day of the month of Kati, in the Miri village on the banks of Subansiri, Narasiga bihu celebrated with fanfare. Young men and women, old men and women, childrens have all arrived in the morang house. According to the novel, the yong men and women are wearing new cloths and going from house to house picking up rice, salt, oil and beans. Twelve people are carrying six pigs and two people are carrying about twenty chicken in a large ditch. Most of the old miris gathered in the morang house are devotees of the 'Rati Sewa'. The novel describes 'Rati Sewa' as follows--- There is a religion called Rati Sewa in Assam. It is very secret religion. The people of this community are called 'poka bhokot'. There are people of all races here. No one has yet figured out what is religion is. 'Sewa' sits at night and breaks at night. I have heard that it has different acts. We have heard names of acts like Gopidhara, Naga Kirtan, Phool kirtana, Digambari etc. But no one has actually figured out what these things do. I hear that there is such a 'secret religion' in every country.

(p-16)

For the first time, the description of the religious tradition called 'Rati Sewa', which was earlier practiced in the Mising society, is reflected in the pages of the novel.

The poka bhokots (devotee) sat apart from the kecha bhokots. Among the poka bhokots there was a priest. He sat alone on a different seating. Along with the Deodhai of the village the kecha bhokots sat in a line. After this saint blessed the youths by taking the names of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva and then he sang some ritualistic songs. This is followed by both the poka and kecha bhokots drank rice beer. The youths make rounds among the gathering carrying several pots of wine.

4.2.1.2 Other auspicious festivals and ceremonies

4.2.1.2.1 Chorog Puja

There are different types of pujas dedicated to appease different Gods and deities in the Mising community. In the novel the Mising community is shown celebrating chorog puja to appease the deity Mugling Mirema. The Chorog puja mentioned in the novel is a ritualistic celebration celebrated by the Misings. The puja dedicated to the god Mugling Mirema, also known as the god of lightning and clouds. The village by the subansiri is often struck by lightning. They are very scared of the sound of thunder and the flashes of lightning. Because of the fear they often make pig sacrifices to Mugling Mirema to appease him. They wash the pig and make him lie on a clean leaf and then start hitting it with a stick. As soon as the head of the pig is split open and blood starts oozing out they collect the blood on a second leaf and offer it to deity and plead to appease him. There is a description of the efforts of such appeasement in the novel.

4.2.2 Songs

4.2.2.1 Deodhai song

The Deodhai (priest) of the Mising community often sing different types of slokas, ghoshas (a stanza to be sung in prayer) or verse to appease the deities on different occasions. These ghosas-verse etc sang by the deodhai are called deodhai songs. A few ghosa and verse sang by the deodhai in the novel are mentioned below—

Ghosa—

(a) "Dormisi tulay oi tirmeke tirmangaya

Okobe kombong apune reyepe reyabay."

(b) Dadam boneng boneng dading-

Pekama kamdama kolopi-kolopi

Kamdang nitunga Kolopi-Kolopi."

verse—

"Ngokkerumone -tare likre".

It has been mentioned in the novel that the meaning of the ghosas can't be deciphered by the ordinary Mising folks: only the deodhais know the real meaning.

(p-14).

4.2.3 Dance

There is a description of the deodhai jumping on the floor of the morong ghar and singing ghoshas, verses etc while youths accompany him with by dancing in the novel Miri Jiyori.

Keeping the deodhai in the middle, the youths performed a new type dance by moving in circles around him like the dances performed by the kacharis on the tunes of their traditional drums or the Jhum dance of the Santhals. (p-14)

Apart from this, there is also a mention of the male youths performing a different types of dance using their dhols when the youths perform husori.

4.2.4 Musical Instruments

Different types of musical instruments like dhol, horns, cymbal, gogona etc are mentioned in the novel Miri Jiyori. It has been said in the novel that the youths use these instruments to perform dances and songs during the Bohag and

Norasiga bihu. We can also see paney playing the gogona along with her friends atop the boat while coming from their work in the rice fields. The novelist Rajanikanta Bordoloi has called the gogona an instrument used by the Mising females. A muga silk string is bound to a small strip of bamboo. When this bamboo strip is placed on the mouth and the string is pulled, it creates a sound like that of a frog. He has said that the females dance bihu to the tune of this sound.

4.2.5 Folk belief

An Important aspect of the folk culture is its folk belief system. In every community there is a set of beliefs associated with their day to day way of living from time immemorial. Like other communities, such beliefs and practices also exist among the Mising community.

In the novel Miri jiyori, Rajanikanta Bordoloi has discussed such beliefs and practices present among the Misings through a bihu song—

Nachoni noriya poril oi koneng

Nachoni noriya poril.

Nachonir oloni kukura katilu

Nachoni utiye boyil.

(p-9)

(This song tells us about the sacrifice of a chicken to treat a female dancer who has fallen ill)

5. CONCLUSION

The novel Miri jiyori by Rajanikanta Bordoloi can be considered as a document of Mising society and culture. The novel beautifully presents the traditional customs of the Mising society that have been lost over time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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