

## **FOLK BELIEVES IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE AHOM, MISING AND DEURY COMMUNITY IN ASSAM.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Folk believes are the residue of assembled experiences of a society which the concerned society gathers after a prolonged observation. There are many ethnic tribes all around the world who have followed their own folk beliefs. In a nutshell, folk believers always make an attempt to impart some sort of practical knowledge to its clansmen in order to run the tribe smoothly. This article makes a study of three prominent ethnic tribes from Assam i.e., Ahom, Mising and Deuri respectively with their own set of folk beliefs. While analysing their folk beliefs, this article studies the implications of prevailing folk believes of those tribes in connection to some of the essential issues including nature conservation, maintaining social discipline, providing moral education etc.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Folk believes are the residue of assembled experiences of a society which the concerned society gathers after a prolonged observation. It can be assured that such experiences are based on the observation of various natural and supernatural assurances seen by different people on different occasions. Such experiences become so much vital that they gradually give rise to different emotions including hope, aspirations, depression, fear etc. Such folk beliefs not only provide us knowledge about history but also teach us about the way of a particular society.

It is impossible to say who created folk believes but there is no doubt that they are the harvest of different times. Various folk beliefs gripped the minds of people in various times and different circus arrives. It can be said that folk-believes came into existence based on needs of the contemporary people and society.

There is a proper need for social rules/directives for the smooth management of a society. Chess rules/directives contain certain thoughts of social science weaver it. It can be observed that the folk beliefs of a society also contain several elements or thoughts of social science. Several thoughts of social science including moral education, domestic & social discipline, social decorum, health directives, nature conservation etc. are clearly reflected in folk beliefs. However, there are certain folk beliefs which are devoid of any logic or reasoning. For instance, there is no logic behind the belief that if one consumes a training fruit, then he/she will have twin as kinds. Such thoughts give us a glimpse of the psychology of a particular society. The Ahom, Deury etc. communities of Upper Assam have such folk-believes which reflect such ideas of social-science.

### **MORAL EDUCATION**

Moral education is a conflict element which could be easily found in the folk-believes of several communities in upper Assam for example, the Ahom, Deury & Mising Community people believe that one should not steal the woods related to boot or bridge on Yoke etc. These folk beliefs are directly connected with moral education. These beliefs were circulated so that no one steals necessary items and help the society run smoothly. Yokes were essential for cultivation and boots & bridges were important for transportation. So, such beliefs were circuit a tied so that human lives run smoothly without destroying anything. It should be noted that Ahomes, Misings & Deury communities are agro-based communities. Therefore, they had these types of believes to impart moral education to their people. Besides, they have a belief that if anyone steps Chili then it would burn/create discomfort in the thief's hands. Such beliefs were created with sole purpose to prevail people from committing any social crime.

Missing people believe that pregnant ladies should not utter harsh words to the elders as it causes labour pain. Anger is an instinct. It never causes anyone any benefit. If a pregnant lady bursts out in anger, it may harm both the child and mother. Besides, decorum never permits us to misbehave with any elderly person. Therefore, these types of believers try to correct human behavior by scaring with the pain of birth giving. The Ahom

community has developed to some extent, however Mising & Deury's are still very downtrodden communities, so they have such believes with are corrective idea in mind.

### **HEALTH RELATED DIRECTIVES**

Folk-believes also advice people not to indulge in any kind of activities that may cause harm to our health. Such examples are easily available among the believes of the Deuries and Misings. For example, a menstruating woman should not sit on 'Dheki' or 'Udal' an indigenous machine to grind rice and a pregnant lady should not come out and accept meal in another family. Besides, items like 'calcium carbonate' (sun) or turmeric powder etc. should not be given to others at night. These folk-believes are strictly based on the principles of good health first.

During menstruating cycle, a woman is comparatively weak. So she must maintain a good hygiene. Since 'Dheki or Udal' are such things that are generally full of dust. So a lady in such condition must presence herself from sitting there. Apart from that Dheki & udal is not meant for sitting at all, hence no one should sit there ever me her menstruating days, a lady produces toxin & menotoxin in her blood, which also harms micro-organisms. As a result each women must be barred from performing certain activates.

Sun rays always carry some amount of UV rays to the surface of Earth. This UV rays affect Erygosferal component of our skin and produces D vitamin. Vitamin D is very essential for the health of teeth and bone. However, the amount of UV rays that come to the planet is minimum and its increased amount may cause ever deadliest diseases including cancer. But we cannot do away with UV rays either. During solar eclipse, the amount of UV rays come down to earth varies from its normal amount and if a pregnant lady comes out during such occurrences, then it may cause harm to the would-be child. Such folk believes have been in circulation considering such health hazards.

People have selected certain time slots to complete certain tasks recording to their convenience. If such tasks care not done in these time slots, then it is certain that the concerned people will have to face lots of troubles. Calcium carbonate should not be offered at night also comes as a result of such thoughts. Calcium oxide is a white material and if it comes into the contact of water it creates calcium Hidroxide and heat. Such chemical reactions are harmful for health. So if it is given to others at night, it might cause such havocs due to the lack of careful observation. So such folk-believes come into existence.

Similarly, finding needles are hard to use at night. It is very small and the thread hole is smaller too. If it slips from our hand, it is hard to find out at night. It may harm anyone. To safeguard everyone such folk-believes were created. Now a days electricity has made lives lot easier. But Mising & Deury people are still engrossed in extreme poverty. So these folk believes still have certain importance in these areas.

All these three communities also believe that flowers and chili should not be plucked at night. The reason behind this is that, at night trees produce lot of  $CO_2$ . It is very hazardous for health. As a result, people have been instructed not to pluck flower & chili at night. Besides at night people can also be bites by insects on serpents. At night, lack of light may also cause harm to the tree. So, considering these ideas such folk-believes came into existence.

### **DOMESTIC & SOCIAL DISCIPLINE**

Discipline in domestic & family life becomes necessary to maintain social decorum. Several folk-believes among the Ahom, Mising & Deury people are created around maintenance of domestic & family decorum for example, Ahoms, Misings & Deuries believe that people should not wash/clean clothes at night, chop firewood, open boxes, ring bells, keep two threads & earthen lamps together etc. They have also believed that if anything slips out of hand, then guests may arrive; these believes are connected to some directive principles related to family life.

At night generally everybody including human beings take rest. So everybody should complete their important tasks including washing of clothes, opening of boxes, chopping of firewood etc. during day time. It indicates discipline. So such tasks must not be kept till night. On the basis of such thoughts these folk believes came into existence. On the other hand, boxes contain wealth & other valuable items. If one opens boxes at night then some important valuables may get lost. On the basis of such ideas these folk believes came among the Ahom, Mising & Deury communities. One should not ring bells or blow whistles as it may cause disturbance to the person who are sleeping.

Mising community people believe that if there is spilling of blood because of fighting between two persons or families, it is a bad omen. It is also an important example of social discipline. Men are servants of their

instincts including rage, jealousy etc. This folk belief was created to control such harmful instincts and maintain domestic & social discipline.

It is easier to maintain social discipline if people of the concerned society live in a harmonious manner. Mising & Deury people believe that if anyone dies, others should not indulge in activities like weaving, farming, spading etc. Had this belief not been among people, then there would have been shortage of man power to perform cremation of the deceased.

These three communities believe that Jujube trees (Bogori) and Elephant Apple (Ou tenga) should not be planted in the front part of the house. These trees tend to make the place barren. Beside jujube trees are full of thorns. So these trees may not be planted in the front side keeping in mind safety. In elephant apple trees, birds build their nests as it is suitable for them. To eat of birds, serpents also keep on falling on the ground. If it falls on human head it can cause serious trouble. They are also favorite food of elephants, so wild elephants may come & destroy nearby houses. So such trees can cause harm to the nearby houses and disrupt social stability. If anyone is disturbed by such unwanted accidents it becomes cause of anxiety for everybody concerned. So such folk beliefs came into existence.

### NATURE CONSERVATION

Men are dependent on nature. On the other hand, all the elements of nature are related with something or the other. Men cannot balance their life and society if there is imbalance in nature itself. Folk beliefs also raise their voice for the conservation of nature. There are certain such folk beliefs among the Ahoms, Mising & Deury. To throw new cloths to the mating snakes, not to kill cows-cats, not to catch pregnant fish, not to cut bamboo trees on Saturdays and Tuesday etc. folk beliefs are abundantly available among the Ahom, Mising & Deury. Such folk-beliefs have tried to maintain balance in nature snakes are venomous and they have caused threat to human lives sometimes. As a rescue people tend to kill snakes. Snakes also run away as soon as they see human beings. But at the time of mating, they do not run away easily and hence it becomes easier to kill them. So this folk-belief came out that if any one throws new clothes to the mating snakes, it is profitable. It in a sense encourages people not to kill mating snakes & indirectly helps in increasing snake population. Among the Deuries it is believed that the first person to notice a mating snake pair will undergo certain troubles. However there is not any valid reason behind such belief. Similarly, not to catch pregnant fish also indicates same thing.

These communities also believe that people should not kill animals like cats-cows. These beliefs are connected with nature love and good health of the farmers. Cows are used in farming and transportation of heavy things. It also gives milk. Cows cannot increase its numbers rapidly. If oxen are dead, then it takes a long time to get a new pair of oxen. It harms the farmers primary activities. To purify one from the sin of killing a cow, one has to keep the thread around his throw and make sounds like a cow. Such harsh punishments are indeed an attempt to preserve cows. Cats also help farmers by eating rats, mouse that harm paddy field. However it sometimes steals edibles from kitchen and people punish them. But cats may have bad qualities, but they also benefit us keeping such things in mind these folk-beliefs were created.

Ahom, Mising & Deury people believe that one should not cut trees on Saturdays and Thursdays. These beliefs were created to increase number of bamboo trees. Bamboos are backbone of these three tribes. So if cut in excessive numbers, the number of bamboo trees would be greatly affected.

### OTHERS

Majority of the folk-beliefs among the Ahom, Mising and Deury have certain inherent authenticity and believability. However, some beliefs lack cause and effect relationship for instance, if marriage ceremony of frogs are organized during draught and 'Dheki', Yoke etc. are kept in land in the reverse order, then it rains. One cannot be sure whether such beliefs actually work. These can be termed as 'magical beliefs'. Such beliefs have also helped the society to stay united. Besides, since sounds of frogs could be heard during rainy season, so people believe that frogs' wedding is connected to raining. But many folk beliefs like experimenting over sacrificed pig's heart is nothing but result of superstition only.

There are certain mystical beliefs among the Ahom, Mising and Deury people. For example they have a tendency to find remedy of diseases by wearing 'Tabis' and drinking 'purifies water' etc., are superstitions beliefs. They have even disturbed social harmony too. For example Mising & Deury people still believe in 'Witches'. They believe that these witches harm others. These beliefs are not based on any reason. Other communities have also this belief of witch hunting. In contrast to that, Ahom community does not have social chaos as they have less superstition.

Since these communities have certain baseless believes, they have importance too. They have kept people in sound health and sentiment. So people have accepted them without looking too much into its believability. Some of such believes have helped society to progress and others have kept the society in dark side. Such folk-believes should be avoided as soon as possible.