

Folk Elements in the Dances of the Mising Tribal Community in Assam: A Comprehensive Study

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Abstract

Assam is the state of diverse cultures. Sub-national Assamese demography has been formed with the confluence of many communities. Each community which lives in Assam has enriched themselves by practicing their own traditional art and culture. One of the prominent tribal communities of Assam is Mising. Originally from Siang valley of Arunachal Pradesh, they have come to live in the Brahmaputra valley. Nowadays, Mising populations are seen in many districts of Assam like Majuli, Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Sivsagar, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, etc. Although they belong to the Mongoloid ethnic group, they have their distinctive tradition and culture. Their festivals are reflective of their culture. They have several traditional folk festivals, and these are closely connected with their civilization and culture. Mising people belong to an agrarian society, and it is seen that their many folk beliefs and activities have permeated their festivals. This is, in turn, mirrored in Mising performing arts. A rich kaleidoscope of traditional elements inform Mising songs and dances. There is a kaleidoscopic tradition behind Mising songs and dance. Specifically, Mising folk life is depicted spontaneously through their folk dances performed during their several folk festivals.

This paper focuses on significance of traditional dance form of Mising community. It attempts to trace the genesis, development and evolution of Mising dances. Cognizant of the fact that modernity has had an invasive impact on tradition, the paper highlights the fact that many traditional folk dances of Mising community have suffered from this. The paper tries to show, at the same time, that cultures are somewhat resilient— although a lot of traditional Mising dances do not exist now, the ones that do still retain some of the old elements.

Keywords: Assam, Mising tribal, Folk Festival, Folk Dance, Tribal Community.

1.00 Introduction:

Many indigenous tribes have been living since the past in the valley named Assam, situated in northeast India. The tribal people living here since ancient times belong to the Tibetan-Burmese linguistic group. One of those tribal groups is the Mising, and these people belong to an ethnic group called Mongoloid originating from the greater Tibetan branch. It is known from legends

that Mising people were original inhabitants of Huanghe and Yangtze valleys of China. Mising people emigrated from Tibet on several occasions and started living in the hilly areas of Arunachal Pradesh. It is known that a clash happened between early tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and Mising people, and due to that, Mising people came down to plains from hills. After coming down to plains, they settled in the places near the Brahmaputra. However, there is no written evidence about this fact when the Mising people came down to the plains.

Earlier, Mising people were known as Miri. It is considered that *Bhagavat* by Shankardeva is the first Assamese literature where the word 'Miri' was used. Moreover, the word 'Miri' was found in the documents of the British government, and in the information mentioned in a book named *Ahom Buranji* (History of Assam): "According to Edward Gait, the word 'Miri' was used to denote a person as mediator. According to Indian Census Assam: 1881, 'Miri' is an Assamese word, and it means mediator." (Kagyung, 2018, p. 30) On the other hand, 'Mi' means human, and 'Ri' means hill, that is why people belonging to hills were called Miri. But those people used to introduce themselves as Mising or Tani. They started using the word 'Mising' to introduce their own language, literature, and culture.

In present day Assam, Mising population are found in districts of upper Assam, such as, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Majuli, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh, and Golaghat. Assam is a land of diversity. This state is rich with its natural resources and has a vibrant culture as well. Here several communities and tribes are known for their distinctive art and culture; Mising people are no exception to this.

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the Mising people, and they lead their lives with their simple folk beliefs, and from these many folk festivals of Mising society were originated. Moreover, many folk festivals of tribal people, who also depend on agriculture for livelihood, are also based on their own folk beliefs. Many folk songs, folk dances, folk musical instruments, and performing arts have originated from the folk festivals celebrated by Mising people. Mising performing arts have played a crucial role in enriching the cultural heritage of Assam. In the subsequent sections, the paper would focus specifically on several folk dances originating from the folk festivals of the Mising tribe.

1.01 Review of Literature:

Many referential literatures have been researched during the study of the topic titled *Folk Elements in the Dances of the Mising Tribal Community in Assam: A Comprehensive Study*. Following is a review of a few scholarly texts and interventions:

Mising Samaj Itihas Aru Sanskritir Aitihya by Ismail Hossain. This text discusses subjects like the historical position of Mising people; when the Mising people came down to plains; and several folk festivals related with Mising folk life.

Mising Samaj Sanskriti by Bijay Krishna Dole seeks to present the tradition and transformation of Mising society and culture. It discusses Mising society and their lifestyle; their religious tradition, and folk beliefs; and how their awareness about nature and environment is infused in their culture.

Kramabivartanat Mising Lok Utsav by Mrinali Kagyung has dwelled in detail on many topics like folk beliefs related to traditional folk festivals of Mising people; classification of their folk festivals; how they celebrate their folk festivals; several folk dances, folk songs, and folk musical instruments related to their folk festivals; and traditional costumes and ornaments worn by Mising people during their folk festivals.

Asamar Lok Paribeshya Kala edited by Dipa Mani Baruah has 47 articles written by several researchers. The articles are about folk performing arts of Assam and northeast India. One such article is *Mising Sakalar Paribeshya Kala* by Bitopan Das. It discusses topics like performing styles of Mising folk dances and folk songs; and how the Mising performing arts are on the verge of extinction due to lack of preservation. Another article in this text is *Mising Samajar Gumrag Nritya* by Tileshwar Kaman. It discusses the Gumrag dance which has a close relationship to agrarian festivals of Mising society.

Mising Sanskritir Jilingani by Purnananda Bhuyan discusses agrarian and religious folk festivals and performing arts of Mising people. It deals with some aspects related to the Mising community like their wedding ceremony; their folk beliefs regarding birth and death; their costumes and ornaments; and their social life.

Although several scholars have studied the cultural social aspects of the Mising tribe, there remains noticeable lack of comprehensive documentation and critical analysis of their dance traditions. Most existing studies focus broadly on tribal culture, festivals, and rituals, offering only a brief or descriptive references to dance as part of these celebrations. Therefore, a detailed study that documents the structure, significance and contemporary evolution of Mising tribal dances is vital to a comprehensive understanding of Mising culture.

2.00 Folk Festivals celebrated by Mising people:

Folk belief is a sum of some generational concepts and ideas of a society. People on earth face many problems due to natural phenomena like flood, earthquake, lightning, and they suffer from many diseases as well. In early ages people tried to find ways to keep themselves safe from those problems, and as such, many folk beliefs originated. Mising people also depend on such folk beliefs. They came down to plains from hills, and in plains a cultural exchange took place between them and the early natives of plains. In that way, Mising folk beliefs were influenced by some Assamese folk beliefs. But Mising people did not completely abandon their own folk beliefs which they used to follow traditionally. Some of those folk beliefs are the base of folk festivals celebrated by the people belonging to Mising tribes. For the sake of the discussion, we have categorized the folk festivals celebrated in Mising society below:

- a) Agriculture based Folk Festivals
- b) Religion based Folk Festivals
- c) Folk Festivals Stemming from New Cultural Developments

a) Agriculture based Folk Festivals

Ali Aye Ligang-

Ali Aye Ligang is a seasonal and agricultural folk festival of Mising people. It is celebrated mainly during seed sowing. It starts on the first Wednesday of *Phagun* (mid-February to mid-March) month. Paddies called *Ahu* and *Bao* are sown with some auspicious rituals, and a feast is also organized. Family members have fish, meat, *Purang Apong*, and *Parah Apong*, and they welcome their guests with those foods and beverages. *Ali Aye Ligang* has a literal meaning.

“*Ali means underground crops, such as potatoes. Ah Yai means seed or fruit of a tree. And Ligang means start sowing. So, Ali Aye Ligang is celebrated from the first day of sowing crops.*” (Gogoi, 2014, p. 180)

During this festival, at night people irrespective of ages of any Mising village assemble, and start singing songs called *Huchuri* from one corner of the village. These songs are also called *Gumraag Changnaam*. Mising people perform dance with this song, and this dance reflects their agricultural society and practical life.

Mising people used to do jhum cultivation when they used to live in hills. So, during *Ali Aye Ligang* they sow seeds of those crops which they used to cultivate during their jhum cultivation. Therefore, it can be assumed that Mising people might have celebrated this festival when they were on the hills. In this sense, although geographical location has changed, older elements have somehow survived.

Parag-

Mising people celebrate another agricultural festival after harvesting, and that is called *Parag*. This festival is celebrated when paddy straws fall off on fields. That is why non-Mising people call this festival *Nara Chiga Bihu*. *Nara Chiga* means falling off of straws. But this festival is not feasible; that is why, Mising people celebrate it every four or five years during *Aghon* (mid-November to mid-December), and *Magh* (mid-January to mid-February) months.

As this festival is celebrated once in four or five years, it attracts many people from places far away. That is why, Mising people need a lot of money to welcome the guests. They arrange money by selling pigs they rear, and by singing *Huchari* door to door; and they donate the money for the festival celebration.

“*There is no specific information regarding the significance of the term ‘Pah Raag.’ According to Ganesh Pegu, Pah means Apong, and Raag means celebration.*” (Rajkhuwa, 2015, p. 86) *Apong* is a kind of beverage used in Mising society. They use it during several festivals, and ceremonies.

Parag festival is celebrated in an architectural structure called *Murang Ghar*. It is celebrated after harvesting to satisfy Dayin-Pal and ancestors, and for the well-being of the entire community and other living beings. Guests are invited to come to *Murang Ghar*, and then are welcomed with a dance called *Raag Changman*. (Gogoi, 2014, p. 182)

Mising people used to erect a kind of house called *Chang Ghar* with their distinct method. Tribal people generally erect such houses which are suitable to live in the hilly areas and in the areas near rivers, these houses are built above the land.

Most tribal people erect such houses separately from their residence in the form of *Chang Ghar* at any place of the village. The villagers use these separately built houses to conduct meetings, celebrate festivals, and perform ceremonies. That is why such houses are used as community halls. Each tribal group calls these houses with different names. These houses are called *Murang Ghar* in Mising society. *Murang Ghar* is considered as the cultural center by Mising society. They have the tradition of celebrating *Pah Raag* and *Ali Aai Ligang* in *Murang Ghar*.

Guests come from the neighboring villages of Mising village. So, a great assembly takes place during this festival. It brings the message of integration and harmony.

b) Religious Folk Festivals:

There is no written history regarding agricultural festivals of Mising people as well as their religious festivals. But for centuries many religious folk festivals became part of their social life through oral traditions. They primarily celebrate these festivals to please their deity or to keep themselves safe from some evil spirits. They perform worship during these festivals with auspicious customs. “*Mising people believe that there are many Uyu (incorporeal spirits) in this world. Uyu is the only word they use to denote incorporeal spirit, ghost, ghoul, goblin, and evil spirit. They have this traditional belief that Umu exists everywhere such as in hills, plains, sky, air, water, land, trees, and in homes and outside.*” (Kagyung, 2018, p. 76) Mising people celebrate many festivals and perform elaborate prayer rituals, such as, *Taloing Uyu, Dobur, Yumrang, Achi Uyu, Yapum Uyu*, etc. to keep themselves from the wrath of such *Umu* and evil spirits.

c) The Folk Festivals became part of Mising folk life later:

When Mising people started settling in plains after coming down from hills, then a cultural exchange took place between them and other tribes. Due to such cultural exchanges the Mising people came close to the people of plains, and they started celebrating festivals of plains within their community. Such festivals are Bohag Bihu, Kati Bihu, Magh Bihu, Birth and Death Anniversaries of Shankardeva and Madhavdeva, Naam Prasanga or Naam Kirtan, and Saraswati Puja. The Bihu festival is celebrated by all communities living in Assam, and Mising people used to call Bihu as *Biu* in their pronunciation.

3.00 The dance related folk festivals of Mising tribe:

Each ethnic or tribal group in this world has been expressing their joys and excitements through songs and dances since time immemorial. In this regard, the folk dance of Mising people is also very rich traditionally. “*Paksong and Maksong are the two words used in Mising language to denote dance. These two words mean dancing. On the other hand, the word Chongman is used to denote fun and frolicking with songs and dances.*” (Bhuyan, 2011, p. 35)

Researchers categorized the folk dances related to the folk festivals of Mising people in many ways. Nahendra Padun classified these folk dances in three categories, such as, religious, agricultural, and recreational.

Mrinalini Kagyung classified these folk dances in seven categories. Such as, Chaillaya Changnam, Lairaili Changnam, religion based Mising Changnam, agriculture based Changnam, Changnam performed as recreation, Changnam performed for fun and frolicking during festivals, and other Changnams.

For the sake of study, we classified the Mising folk dances in three categories in this discussion. Such as

3.01 Agriculture based Folk Dance

3.02 Religious folk dance

3.03 Recreational Dance

3.01 Agriculture based Folk Dance:

Mising people start sowing crops as soon as the *Phagun* month begins, and they start celebrating the festival called *Ali Aye Ligang*. They perform songs and dances during *Ali Aye Lrigang* with the hope to bring in rain on the surface of earth by uniting the sky and Mother Earth. One of the dances the Mising people perform during this agricultural festival is called *Gumrag*, it is a very attractive dance form. It is said regarding the word *Gumrag* that, when the drum is beaten with the dance, the sound of that beat awakes the sky. That is why, it is said that, as soon as the *Gumrag* dance is started, then the rain starts falling on earth, it fertilizes the crop land, crops are produced in abundance, it brings well-being for all the living beings. Mising people celebrate this festival with the purpose of bringing welfare for all the people.



Figure 1: Gumrag dance performed by Mising boys and girl together at the ali aye ligang festival as they go from house to house to perform.

Image source:
<https://www.facebook.com/100069338974317/posts/820399410281351/?rclid=7B9Y17ptRNRf6aTR#>

During the Bohag Bihu festival in Assam, the groups of Bihu dancers perform a dance called *Husari* in the courtyard of each house. Such a custom is seen in Mising society as well. *Gumrag* dance is performed in the premises of each house in Mising villages during the Bihu festival. This dance is mainly performed in the evenings. In big villages this dance performance goes on till midnight. Children, young boys and young girls, and even elderly people of villages take part in this dance (Figure 1). The dancer groups start their dance from the house of the village headman.

The *Gumrag* dance has a distinct feature in terms of style. As soon as the drum is beaten for the first time, the women dancers enter the premises of the house from the left side by dancing.

Footsteps are the main features of Mising folk dance, which play a vital role in Mising folk dances like Mibura Daagnaam, Laurali Changnaam, Chaullaya, etc. These dances do not have many hand gestures or hip movements. However, such stiffness in hand gestures and hip movements had gone away in later periods. The distinctness of footsteps is found in the dances of almost all the tribes of northeast India. People belonging to the Mising tribe used to call these footsteps as *Dangke Kengla Changnaam*. In this dance footsteps start slowly, and gradually it increases speed with the beat of the drum. This dance is primarily based on foot-steps, and later it became a sophisticated dance form, and now it is being performed with the beat and tune of musical instruments such as, *Dhol*, *Taal*, and *Pepa*. (Kaman, 2018, p. 445)

Apart from foot-steps, the *Gumraag* dance of Mising people has another distinct feature, and that is the hand gesture. These gestures are not very important in other folk dances of Mising people. But in *Gumrag* dance the hand gestures are very significant. However, there are different kinds of hand gestures in different locations. The hand gesture used in *Gumraag* dance performed by people belonging to the Mising tribe from Jonai sub-division of Lakhimpur district looks like someone is calling another person by spreading arms. In some places it is seen that palms are placed below the hip and the fingers are used to move the palms in a circle with the beat of the drum. But when the song named *Longle* starts, which is performed with *Gumraag* dance, then the hand gesture goes above the eyes from the elbow. (Kaman, 2018, p. 445)

The songs used during *Ali Aye Ligang* or during *Gumraag* dance are called *Ligang Nitam*. Songs are called *Nitam* in the Mising language. Mising young boys and young girls sing these songs to express their love, joys, and excitement. Additionally, one can get an idea about agriculture and the tradition of Mising people.

Such as:

“La	la:le	la:le	la:le
Dab	la:le	la:le	la:le
Cicug	cugab	cugab	bodiya
Raugam	gamab	gamab	bodiya

Meaning: Today we are celebrating our festival and we enjoyed it a lot like the overjoyed deer jumps with its doe.” (Hossain, 2015, p. 74)

The costumes of Mising people are described in a *Ligang Nitam* sung during *Gumraag* dance. Such as:

“Ri-bi-gacheng go:leya yakan ege go:gela

Unaluk Mising mri:ngmabrir chil go:gel Cha:man Dung

Meaning: Our Mising young girl is dancing today by wearing Ri-bi-gacheng, and draping a phulam gamocha.” (Hossain, 2015, p. 75)

However, the songs called *Ligang Nitam* are sung with different tunes in different locations. Moreover, the beats of drums and other musical instruments used with *Gumraag* dance also change as per location. Specifically, there are variations in the beat and rhythm of Dhol. Such as:

a. *Gumrag* *Gumrag*

Keknaulak *Gumrag*

b. *Gumrag* *Gumrag*

Gumrag *Rag*

c. *Gumrag* *Gumrag*

Agin *Agin*

d. *Gumrag* *Gumrag* *Gumrag* (Kaman, 2018, p. 443-48)



Fig 2: Gumrag dance performance by mising girl on stage. Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gumrag_dance_of_the_Mising_tribe_of_Assam_at_Central_Park,_Connaught_Place,_New_Delhi_12.jpg

The costumes used in *Gumrag* dance are visually appealing. Young boys and girls perform this dance wearing colourful costumes. There is no specific rule in wearing clothes or accessories for this dance. However, nowadays it is seen that some rules are followed to perform this dance on stage insofar as costumes for a stage performance are concerned (Figure 2). Women dancers usually wear a costume called *Ribi Gacheng* (*Mekhela Chador*), and the male dancers wear a kind of sleeveless shirt called *Mibu Galuk*. The Mising *Chang Ghar* (stilt house) is used as a motif on the back of this *Galuk* shirt. And the traditional accessories or ornaments worn by women dancers are *Dugpun* (worn on bun), *Lagpun* (worn on arms).

Gumrag dance is performed during the agricultural festival of the Mising community called *Parag* as well. Apart from *Gumrag* two other dances are also performed during the *Parag* festival, such as, *Mibu Dagnam*, and *Changman*. *Mibu* means priest in the Mising language. The *Mibu Dagnam* dance is related to religion. *Parag* festival is celebrated for three days, and on the first night of it the *Mibu Dagnam* dance is performed.

Moreover, Mising people enjoy the *Changnam* dance performed during *Parag* festival by beating dhol, and singing *Nitam*. This dance is performed during the entire *Parag* festival. There is no hard and fast rule regarding participation in this dance. Other agricultural festivals of Mising people are *Apin Dagad Ba-Maud*, *Arrig Dobur Aam Gaadgad*, etc. But unlike Ali Aye Ligang and *Parag* festivals no folk songs or folk dances are performed during other festivals. (Kagyung, 2018, p. 258)

3.02 Religious Folk Dance:

While discussing religious customs of the community, a dance called *Mibu Dagnaam* becomes very important. In the Mising language *Mibu* means a priest who has supernatural powers. Such priests are revered in Mising society. When this society or any person belonging to that suffers any problems due to evil spirits or suffers diseases, then a priest is invited, so that he drives away those problems or diseases. Moreover, Mising people believe that the priests who have supernatural powers can converse with God, and such priests are considered fortune tellers. It is said that *Mibu Dagnaam* is an ancient dance form of Mising society. This dance is primarily performed during a Mising religious festival called *Kungchag Uyut*. Mising people conduct this folk festival to remember their ancestors. Apart from religious folk festivals, the *Mibu Dagnaam* dance has a specific status in the agricultural festival called *Parag*. This dance is performed in the community house of Mising people called *Murungmor*. Here a temporary *Mairam* is erected. In Mising language *Mairam* means hearth, it is made with wood in square and rectangular shape. *Mibu* stands in front of that *Mairam*, and other villagers gather around him. But during the dance performance only a boy and a girl are present with the *Mibu*. They remain present with the *Mibu* during the entire dance performance. It is believed, “some invisible spirit presents a *Yakcha* (a weapon that looks like a long sword) to *Mibu*, and *Mibu* shakes that weapon and performs a dance by singing a song called *Aa:bang*. It should be mentioned that, *Mibu* sees in his dream where God placed the *Yakcha*, and according to that dream *Mibu* collects that *Yakcha*.” (Doley, 2019, p. 45) Apart from *Yakcha* no other musical

instruments are used during the dance. The song sung by *Mibu* during the dance is called *Aa:bang Nitam*. There are similarities between this dance and the *Oja Pali* of Assam. In *Oja Pali* the *Oja* starts song and dance, and the *Palis* also repeat those; similarly, in *Mibu* dance the *Mibu* starts dancing by singing *Aa:bang Nitam*, and then the young boys and the young girls accompanying him repeat that song and dance. *Aa:bang* songs are not easily understood. It is said that these songs are on par with classical music. These songs express deep sentiments regarding the essence of living beings, and the glory of God. It can be said that these songs have minimal relation with the real world. It is believed that after finishing the dance and the songs the *Mibu* gains divine power, and then he makes a prophecy that whether the village or any villager would suffer any omen or not.

An *Aa:bang* song sung by *Mibu* is mentioned below:

“*Dongko lebie...*

Lebi tumari nodane

Gordung birnio gorpong’

Bijume nodane

Gorpo yornino

Lebi pitana...

It means, Oh God, you are unembodied, and you are the Creator of the planets and the stars exist in the dark sky, you have created humans and the Mibu as well. I became Mibu by your grace. Now I want to know why I am suffering miseries and troubles here in this house.” (Doley, 2019, p. 47)

It is worth noting that *Mibu* dance has many dramatic elements. While performing this dance the *Mibu* sings the *Aang Bang* songs in the manner of a dramatic dialogue delivery. The *Mibu* asks some questions to the audience in a dialogue form, and he replies to those questions as well. During this time, he converses with some invisible spirit. The question he poses in a dialogue form is:

“*Lojin Jinkal Tonoya?*

Lagjin Jinkal Jinmur Tonoya?

It means, "I cannot say whether I made any mistake or not by tying a red thread around my hands and legs.” (Doley, 2019, p. 51)

“The Mibu wears a costume called Mibu Galug or Mibu shirt to perform Mibu dance. And he wears a knee-length dhoti, and wears a Tibetan necklace named Dagnai, and on head he ties a long cloth called gamosa or Dumlong, which is woven with the yarn of red and mustard yellow colors. A householder presents this Dumlong to Mibu.” (Padun, 1989, p. 205)

3.03 Recreational Dance:

Apart from *Ali Aye Ligang* and *Parag* festivals the Mising people conduct song and dance programs on several other occasions in a year. The young boys and the young girls generally participate in these songs and dances during their times of leisure during marriage ceremonies, and during many other ritualistic programs. Such recreational dances are divided into three categories:

- a) *Oinitam* based
- b) Agricultural
- c) *Bauna* Nritya

Traditional folk songs of Mising people called *Oinitam* have a significant place in the *Oinitam* based dance. As soon as the singers started singing *Oinitam* the *Dhuliya* (drummer) started keeping a rhythm by beating a stick on the Dhol. When *Oinitam*'s "first line is started then the female dancer places her left hand on her hip, and makes gestures with her right hand. And during the second line she does the opposite." (Bhuyan, 2011, p. 40) Eight to ten young girls perform this dance with various gestures and steps in the rhythms of Dhol. According to the rhythms the dancers show many gestures, such as, plucking paddy, sowing seeds, weaving, and fetching water. Everyday life of Mising people is reflected through these gestures.

Agricultural dances of Mising people are *Se'lloya So:man*, and *Léréli: So:man*. It is said that these are the oldest dance forms of the Mising tribe. Mising people had crossed many impassable areas while coming down to plains from hills. And during that journey they took a rest and had fun in many places. According to legend, during migration "they (Mising people) crossed risky paths through forests, and the women asked the men who were in the front about the path ahead, in this way they moved forward. Those conversations between men and women became the content of songs and dances. And later those developed into complete form and became popular as *Se'lloya So:man*." (Kagyung, 2018, p. 258)

Another oldest folk dance of the Mising tribe is *Léréli: So:man*. Young boys and young girls participate in this song and dance with fun and frolicking near a river and under open sky or in the rural environment near any hill. They mainly perform this dance during autumn. Married women also take part in this dance in some places. Dancers perform this dance by moving in a circular position with specific gestures. The tune of the song accompanying this dance is very soft. One of the performers starts singing the song, and then other performers start dancing by following that song. It is noteworthy that no musical instruments are used in both dances called *Se'lloya So:man* and *Léréli: So:man*.

On the other hand, the dance called *Bauna So:man* is performed without any song. This dance is performed only with the rhythm of Dhol. Female dancers perform it with several gestures with the rhythm created by expert *Dhuliya* (drummer). These gestures depict daily activities of Mising rural life. Such as, washing clothes, hunting, plucking cotton, sowing seeds, etc.

4.00 Conclusion:

Mising folk culture enjoys an exalted position in the field of agrarian culture of Assam. Mising folk dances are characterized by a distinct performing style, and the use of songs and music. These dances clearly depict the Mising agrarian society and the everyday life as well. Female dancers performing Mising folk dances do not usually sing any song, and they do not even move their eyes and neck as well. Due to their distinct characteristics and rich history, the Indian government has accorded them special respect and given them their due recognition. But in the course of time, their folk dances also have gone through many changes. In the turbulent times, many folk arts have bitten the dust of extinction. However, as a sheer example of resilience, Mising dance has persisted. The need of the hour is judicious development; we must take rapid strides towards modernity and preserve our cultural heritage as well. This is our prime responsibility.

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