

Socio-Cultural Factors Of Low Educational Status Of Tribal Women With Special Reference To The Mising Tribe Of Assam

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to see the educational status of the Misings tribe of Boloma Mising village in Sivasagar district, Assam. The Mising tribe have their own culture and tradition which is related with their daily life. After the post independence time women have been getting education and able to earn income independently. Number of tribal girls getting education from primary to post graduate level has been gradually increasing. Quite a number of them are getting employment in various organization, including govt. departments. But question is still arise why the Mising women has not able to get higher education despite the government offered facilities. So, through this study try to understand the causes behind the low educational status of the Mising tribe of Assam.

Keywords : Socio-cultural, Educational, Mising Tribe, Women, Practices.=

1. INTRODUCTION:

Out of the indigenous communities of the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys nine have been scheduled tribes and one of them is the Mising who were formerly called Miris by the non-Misings. According to 2001 census the population of the Mising is just over six lakhs which is the largest (Plains) tribal population next to the Bodos but so far literacy rate is concerned the former are in the last position by having only 43.12 per cent while all other have more the 50 per cent. Again among the Misings females have only 39.43 per cent which is the lowest all their counterparts other tribal valley. This fact begs questions why the Misings women have so low literacy rate not only among their counterpart men but also of other tribal groups, despite the fact that they are all exposed to the same educational system and facilities available in the state. The question is not only concerned with the Misings women only but also those of other castes and communities in which women are lagging far behind their counterpart men particularly in higher education.

Objectives:

Objectives of the present paper is to find out the underlying facts which are responsible for educational status of the Misings women in particular and of the tribal in general. For the purpose it is assumed that cultural perception of women's role in the social system is responsible for low educational status of Mising women. It is culture that determines male-female role in any society be in tribal or modern. In Harlambos' word-"Many sociologists begin from the assumption that human behaviors is largely directed and members of society. Thus norms, values and role are culturally directed by members of society transmitted. From this perspective gender roles are a product of culture rather than biology".

One another sociologists and stench supporter of Women's Liberation Movement also argues in support of culture as the determinant of gender roles in the society. On the basis of data from divers cultural systems we draws a conclusion that gender roles are culturally rather than biologically determined. "Through the process of Socialization" as sociologist Anthony Giddens writes "Individual learn about social role - socially defined exceptions that a person in a given social position follows. Individuals learn the expectation that surround social position in their particular culture and perform those roles largely, they have been defined".

METHOD OF THE STUDY:

Present paper is prepared on the basis of data collected from both secondary and primary source – the latter being by conduction field observation and interview schedules at Mising village named Dishangmukh Boloma, Sivasagar district, Assam which is one of the old and large Mising have high concentration of population. Main focus of observation was on activities that women perform in day to day life and also the works in connections with socio-religious functions that are held from time by the individual families and the community as a whole. To obtain information on perception of women's role in the society, socio-religious, attitude to girls education, marriage, practices and customary celebrations etc. Fifty male and fifty female respondents belonging to age group between 40-60 were randomly selected was prepared for the village under study .An interview schedule was prepared for the purpose and administered them to each of the respondents .The field study has revealed the following facts:

Findings:

1. The main source of livelihood of the Mising of the village is cultivation growing both summer and winter varieties of paddy crops, mustard oil seeds, black pulse, potato and varieties of vegetables and spice in which the women also remained equally engaged with men throughout the year.
2. In addition to domestic chores every married women of every family was found to have been performing some job of cultivation like removing garbages from the field, transplanting, weeding and harvesting as her regular duty.

- Jeoti Pangging, Assistant Professor, Dept. of History, Moran Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Moranhat, Assam It is therefore, proposed to enquire the problem of low educational status of the Mising tribe in the light of their cultural system.

3. Apart from normal household chores the women of the individual families need to prepare their national beverage apong (rice beer) more or less every evening for family consumption and also for socio-religious functions in which the indispensable item. Apong is prepared out of rice which is cooked and mixed with some herbal medicines and kept it in jars for a couple of weeks for fermentation. There are done only by women and not by men at all. Thus apong preparation is another regular traditional job of Mising women.
4. The Mising are by and large the followers of what they call Keoliya dharma which is admixture of both Hinduism and animism in which various deities are worshipped by sacrificial offerings. All the families of the villages under reference are Keoliyas by religious faith and as such a family performs about a dozen of rites and rituals per annum.
5. Meat, fish and rice beer are indispensable items of Mising socio-religious functions for which every Misings family keeps pigs and fowls. There are also sources of individual incomes of the women for which they rear pigs, fowls and other domestic birds regularly. The families of village Bolama are no exception to this tradition rearing these birds and animals for which the women have to perform the additional jobs every day.
6. The Mising have also long tradition of weaving clothes for their own use and the tradition is maintained by the families of the village Boloma despite adopting modern dress pattern. It is necessary because according to their custom a Mising women after becoming a mother needs to wear a typical traditional clothes called nisek and gero age, for which every women needs to weave these clothes by herself for her own use. Apart from it all Mising irrespective of age and sex on certain socio-religious occasions are required wear their traditional clothes. As such weaving has become an unavoidable job of Mising women in their cultural system.
7. In Keoliya religious functions foods and apog are indispensable and there are prepared by women only. They also need to perform all the chores of the functions. Thus women's participation in socio-religious functions, become unavoidable works besides their normal daily household works.

All the works mentioned above are regarded as women's works. They are not to be touched by the men. Men also neither prepared apong from raw to liquid stage, nor feeding and taking care of pigs and fowls nor nursing sick members of the family.

Analyses:

Thus from the work system of the families observed, it is clear that Misings women's share of works in maintaining a family in much more than that of the man. She needs to perform all kinds of jobs ranging from the usual household chores to outdoor works form lively-hood for the family. She is responsible for maintaining the home in order by performing the day to day activities required for the family. She needs help from someone in completing these work properly in time for which she would take help from her daughter, not from her son because the jobs are for female and are not for male according to traditional principle of division of labour. The boy

would not fetch water from river nor sweep rooms and yard nor wash clothes nor weed etc. because he knows that these are not for boys. On the other hand the daughter readily accepts them as she understands that these jobs are traditionally meant for women. As such mother asks her daughter to perform some of the chores—even preparing meals and serving them when she is unable to perform for one or other reason. The daughter accepts the mother's job not only as normal duty but also a part of learning her role in future. She needs to learn the process of preparing apong, cooking food, rearing pigs and fowls, art of weaving, keeping the house in order etc. These are the qualities on which choice of bride insisted upon in Mising society. As such the Mising parents emphasise on domestic works than on education of their daughters. Moreover, being agriculturists by occupation and therefore, depends on vagaries of mature the parents are more worried about raising crops in time, feedings birds and animal in time, meeting the needs of socio-religious functions are rather frequently held than for education of their daughter. The mother knows that her daughter would also be in the same role of her own in future because that is their traditional social expectation. For house wife no education is necessary. This is what the respondents of both men and women opined in the interview conducted with them. Therefore, there is no point of getting girls education at the cost of hard money and materials. According to the respondents, interviewed the boy's education is more important than that of girl in present time because as per traditional value the boys stay with the parents and support them till the last day of life. On the other hand girl leave their parents for good after marriage without any obligation to support them. So, the parents are least interested in girl's education. These findings are reflected by the findings of H.K. Pegu and others.

CONCLUSION:

Thus it has been found that cultural norms and values coupled with low economic status have negative role impact on development of women's education of the Mising in particular and of the tribals in general. The traditional attitude of men to women's role in the society has not changed much among the Mising so far. Dependence on underdeveloped agricultural economy as well as animistic religious beliefs and practices compel the Mising to depend more on women than on men in meeting the basic needs for living. Neither cultivation nor socio-religious functions which are as important as economic function for the tribals can be completed without women's jobs. In such a socio-cultural system women are bound to forego education for house wife role in life. So, to bring change to the perception of women must role which stands in the way of their educational development the women must be adequately empowered to assert their right to education and to improve their socio-economic status. Ignorance about their legitimate rights and privileges should be means of awareness programme among them.

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