

## **Ethnic Movement in North-East India with special reference to Mishing Unrest in Assam.**

**Dr. Budheswar Konch**

Assistant Professor Dept. of Assamese Dhemaji College  
Dhemaji, Assam, India

During the last few decades politics of North-East India has gained momentum due to politics of ethnic assertion. Ethnic movement implies as an organization and agitation either for self development or self governance. As a result of awareness among them they organized themselves to bargain with the government for legitimate share in the administration. The process of identity formation among different ethnic groups in India is not a new phenomenon. In some cases generic identities are paving the way for the emergence of specific identities. The fast growing awareness of the different ethnic groups has been a common phenomenon, throughout India in general and politics of North-East India in particular since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is fact that, there are full of diversity in respect of physical structure, social status, livelihood, traditional dresses etc. in North-East India. Among them, some of the ethnic groups of the people is comparatively low in respect of social, economic and cultural status.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a elite section of this groups who organized their respective groups in order to develop their divers problems. They have developed the ethnic movement for maintaining their identities, language, customs, tradition, cultures and their religious traits.

Various ethnic groups are became gradually conscious of their ethnic identity. They started articulating their socio-economic backwardness and oppression. The tribal ethnic groups have perpetually experienced of land alienation, poverty indebtedness, severe unemployment, economic exploitation and cultural and political oppression. In spite of certain constitutional safeguards the scheduled tribes of Assam have by and large, remained educationally backward. Various ethnic groups has remained socially, economically and politically exploited. Various ethnic groups demanding for autonomous land for them with territorial boundaries for safeguard of their land, language and cultural identity. This paper is attempted to highlights the Mishing movement which regarded as an unrest in Assam as well as in North-East India.

### **Objectives :-**

Following objectives are undertaken to uphold the findings.

1. To highlights the ethnic unrest in North-East India.
2. To examine the Mishing movement in Assam which manifested as an unrest in this region.

### **Methodology :-**

In this research exercise an analytical method is followed to uphold the findings. Data have been collected both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are based on interviewed with the respondent and visited field in the proposed area and secondary data are colleted from the books, journals, newspapers and official documents related with the topic of the study.

### **Content Analysis :-**

To better understanding of this problem it peeps into the historical background of this problem. North-East India made up by eight states of Indian Union namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. Sikkim functionally included in North-East region in 2003. This region surrounded by foreign countries such as Brahmadesh, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, China etc. The term of ethnicity has gained more popular due to development of composite culture of neighbouring countries. North-East India can be called India in miniature. Here more than three hundred heterogeneous ethno-cultural groups have been living for centuries together. These groups are different from each other in respects of language. Social customs and practices, religious and in other aspects of culture. Each group has its own socio-cultural system. Due to this diversity different ethnic groups are found and all of them have started movement for identity assertion. Among the states of North-East region highest population have been living in Assam. Assam is a land of diversity with the heterogeneous caste, creed, language and culture. There are more than two hundred ethnic groups has been living in Assam.<sup>2</sup>

All the ethnic groups except the Aryans belong to the great Mongoloid Race. Tribal's are the ethnic but all ethnic groups are not tribal. In Assam ethnic groups has found as tribal group and the indigenous Assamese ethnic groups. Major tribal ethnic groups of Assam are viz-Bodos, Sonowals, Rabhas, Mechs, Tiwas, Hajong, Barmans of Cachar, Dimajas, Mishings, Deouries, Garos, Hmars, Hojai, Khasi & Jaintia, any Kukitribes, Lakhars, Maans (Tai speaking) Karbis, any Mizu tribes, any Naga tribe, Pawi and Systeing etc. The indigenous

Assamese ethnic groups are viz-Ahoms, Konch, Chutia, Morans, Sauthals, Bhils, Gond Lodhas etc. Among these ethnic groups Mishings are the second largest ethnic group as well as their distinct identity.

The Mishings are one of the schedule tribes in Assam. They are second largest tribal community after Bodo-Kachari in Assam. According to 2010 census report total population of Mishings in Assam are 8,87,310. Among them males are 2,99,790 and females are 2,87,520. The Mishings are an Indo-Mongoloid tribe settles in the plains of Assam. Originally they were hill dweller and lived along with the Addis in Arunachal Pradesh. On the basis of the legends of the tribes an available historical record, they moved to the plains of Assam, around the 13<sup>th</sup> (thirteen) century A.D. still they retain their mythological linguistic and institutional affinity with the Addis and Nisis of Arunachal Pradesh. After their migration to the plain considerable changes have taken place in their ecology pattern of adaptation, cultivation, language, rituals, dress and house construction. In Assam Mishings are inhabited in the bank of the Brahmaputra river and some of its tributaries. Most of the Mishings are found in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Tinsukia, Darrang and Sonitpur District of Assam. Originally they lived North-West China of Howang-ho and Yangtze-kiang bank of the river. Mishings are belonging to China-Tibetan family. The Mishings previously known as Miris, their nomenclature means "go between". In spite of constitutional safeguard till today Mishings are economically, educationally, socially and even politically backward. They have been provided various facilities by the constitution and government but still they are downtrodden due to improper distribution of economy. That is why Mishings have organized themselves for demanding various rights and privileges from the government since late sixties of the country. They had been articulated and emerged as an ethnic group with their district identity. The emerging educated Mishingelite wanted to organize the community for all around development. They began to feel that they are markedly different from the rest of Assamese society, particularly the cast-Hindu who have been the dominant community in Assam.

That is why, the Mishingelite of Assam increasingly felt that they remained much more backward than other sections of the Assamese society. Indeed they had not only been experiencing the problems of land alienation, unemployment, economic and political oppression under the existing socio-economic system but also discrimination in achieving their rightful place in the society. That is why Mishingelite began to organize the community with a new vigour. In fact they realized that without organizing themselves, they cannot conserve and develop their language and cultural heritage which are considered as identity symbols. As a result the Mishings began to revitalize the ethnic consciousness on the basis of their distinct socio-cultural traits which culminated in the formation a number of socio-cultural organization among them such as Mishing Agom Kebang, 1972, Mishing Dirivi Kabang, 1980, Mishing Mimekebang, 1996, Mishing Bane Kebang, 1924, Takam Mishing Porim Kebang, 1971 etc. became active in mobilizing the community.<sup>3</sup>

A section of Mishingelite feel to need entire socio-economic development of this particular groups that can be possible only through organize the masses to bargain with the authority, hence they are capable to receive the facility ensured by Indian constitution and Government as well. In this way the Mishingelites make the sense of awareness among the Mishings with ethnic identity and gradually they become ethnic consciousness which led to the ethnic movement of Mishings in the region.

In spite of providing various constitutional safeguard and facility by government they had not been satisfied with this discontentment they are further mobilizing to greater political interest as a consequence the government announced to form the Mishing Autonomous Council (MAC) in 1995 under the six schedule of the Indian constitution. But it is infact that all the Mishings community were not adequately seceded due to misutilization of fund by a section of leaders. The Mishing Autonomous Council unable to fulfill the aspirations of the community. It becomes a political instrument only a few sections of the community such as politicization, intellectual, activist etc.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that the failure of MAC only because of not proper representation of entire community, that is why the political power is concentrated only with a certain leaders those are selected by self interest.

Of late, the present trend of ethnic movement has been changing in view of new political demands and situation. Likewise the demand of the Mishing leaders of the MAC was formed on the basis of direct election as a democratic system. It may be assumed that their demand can be realized by dint of these elected members. It happens only through the ethnic consciousness of this particular ethnic groups.

It is observed that the ethnic movement in Assam has gained an unrest which has made the turmoil situation in this region as well as unabated the problem. In this connection mentioned may be made that the Mishing movement or any other ethnic movement had been created such a violent situation where dismantle the economic development of this region. Moreover, road blockade, inter ethnic clashes, murder, peketing, strike, etc. have raised the burning problem in North-East India in general and particular in Assam.

### **Conclusion:-**

It appears that the ethnic unrest in North-East India has been a common phenomenon which emerged as a identity assertion of different ethnic groups. The Mishing movement in Assam has been created the Sub-

nationalism with the sensitization of the mind of the Mishing people in one hand and also has threaten for disintegration on the other.

For the upliftment this community it is better to do for welfare of entire society not for main stream of this section for which act to maintain proportionate distribution among all the population. The political, economic privileges should be equally distributed to all the masses without discrimination of poor and rich backward and forward, literate and illiterate etc. Finally it may be concluded that articulation of ethnic assertion should not go beyond the constitutional paradigm. Besides their movement should not be translated in to a violent and unrest.

#### **Notes and Reference :-**

1. L.K. Mahapatra, Social movement among Tribes of India, "New Delhi", 1969. Page – 57.
2. J. Mipun, "The Mishings of Assam", New Delhi, 1993, Page – 17.
3. G. Phukan, Ethnicisation of Politics in North East India, New Delhi, 2003, Page – 150
4. Ibid.