CHAPTER-1

Introduction

1.1 The Mishings of Assam: An introduction

Assam is one of the most cheerful among the states of North-Eastern region in India. It is a melting pot of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. The Mishing, also identified as Miri in earlier times, is one among those numerous ethnic tribes of Assam that contributed a lot to the socio-cultural tapestry of this region. To go with the census report of 2011\(^1\), the Mishings hold the privilege of being the second largest group amongst the plain scheduled tribes of Assam with a population of 6,80,424. The Mishings are both, thickly and sparsely populated in certain areas of the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district of upper Assam. Ethnically, the Mishings belong to the Tibeto-Burman language speaking group of the great Mongoloid stock. Originally they are the inhabitants of the neighbouring hill state of Arunachal Pradesh, and lived along with the Adi tribe. The Mishings “moved to the plains of Assam around the 13\(^{th}\) Century A.D”\(^2\). Prevalent legends of the Mishings and dearth of references found in Assam history indicate the speculative ‘13\(^{th}\) Century AD’ as a period of migration. But in absence of the practice amongst the Mishings of keeping historical documentation, nothing can be established with absolute certainty. Since their migration the Mishings have been living in the plains of upper Assam, marking off the banks of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries as their abode, under different ruling clans of Assam for which they are also signified as riverine people. Although, the Mishings have been living amidst the non-tribal people for
the last several centuries, they have been able to maintain their distinguished knowledge as well as faith in different societies. They are freedom loving people and have developed faith over people’s equality. These people are not fully assimilated with Hinduism of plains of Assam and the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. Songs, dances, music, games and sports, practices of different arts and handicrafts with religious consciousness are inseparable parts of the Mishing tribal folks. They are known to have a very rich cultural heritage to which the world did not notice, as it should be. With no exception, religion exerts the same place of dominance in the Mishing society as noticeable in any other primitive society. The Mishing tribe of Assam and the Adi tribe of Arunachal have some perceptible similarities. Fundamentally both the tribes share a common line of descent and parentage. Both are Animists in faith. The beliefs and practices of the Mishings are based on supernaturalism too. Supernaturalism is the foundation which shape their religious acceptance. They believe in the existence of a Supreme God, the creator who controls each and everything and rewards human life to them. They believe in the existence of smaller or inferior gods or spirits. The Mishing people consider some of them are malevolent while others are benevolent in nature. They believe in the immortality of the soul but once a man dies they have a belief that the soul of the dead person goes and lives in the world of the death called ‘Among ago’ (under the earth surface). They also believe that the God or gods or various spirits are living in the midst of the people in the world; they strongly believe that gods are always with them in all forms of activities, even though they may not be seen. They also accept the practices of Neo-Vaisnavism and side by side they follow some of their traditional rites and rituals. The Neo-Vaisnavite faith brought remarkable changes in the socio-cultural life of the Mishings. Absorption, assimilation and acculturation processes are the main causes
behind the influence of Hinduism in a tribal society. They celebrate two important
traditional festivals viz, *Ali-Aye-Ligang* and *Po:rag* to keep alive their own cultural
identities. The main purpose of celebrating these festivals is to seek the blessings of
*Do:nyi-Po:lo, Sedi-Melo, Gumín Soyin* and their forefathers for a successful harvesting
season.

Oral tradition is one of the major sources of culture and religion. Though, it is
said that, once upon a time, the Mishings had a script of their own that cannot be traced
now to supply information about them. Hence they use Roman script in modified form
for their own language, but they have accepted the Assamese language to some extent.4
Learning Assamese language helps the Mishings to understand new ideas, beliefs and
practices. Thus, religious practices also help in spreading Assamese language and the
Hindu way of life among them. Like other tribes, amongst the Mishings too, we have
seen the conscious political behaviour. They democratically participate in politics to
assert their own rights, justice and identity.

Material culture occupies an important place in the socio-cultural life of the
Mishings. They present very attractive varieties of material cultures, such as spinning,
weaving, basketry, cane and wood works etc. which have been known to the tribe for
quite a long time. The Mishing people of the region have an excellent taste in colour and
remarkable skill in diverging patterns. Their handy works show high standard of
technical perfection. They are self sufficient for centuries with their own products. It
seems that the Mishing folk are gradually assimilating themselves with other indigenous
people of the plains of Assam and their culture.5 In order to understand and represent
them before the whole world, one should study their cultural life and religious practices
philosophically.
1.2 The meaning of Culture

Culture is an all inclusive term that covers almost all affairs of man. But it is a tough work to choose a comprehensive and satisfactory definition of the word ‘culture’. Since the mankind started living within societal framework, the concept of culture grows. Mindset, ideas, beliefs, practices and all other concrete as well as abstract matters find their existence within the realm of culture.

From the Greek tradition, in the hands of Aristotle the concept of society as well as culture flourished. He says that as a social, rational animal, from morning till night man follows certain principles of behaviour. Behaviours such as co-operation, mutual-understanding, adjustment, sympathy etc. shape individual way of life and living considering the instincts and social necessities of the people. Edward Tylor developed the idea that culture includes the combination of psychological items with external factors. In his preview “culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

Besides, those who consider culture from material perspective, developed that “culture is the man-made part of the environment” as said by Herskovits. But these two aspects are not enough to explain the concept of culture. Rather culture is a very wide ranging approach to define sum total of physical as well as psychological behaviour of a social group. Thus, Malinowski formulated that “culture is a well organised unity divided into two fundamental aspects---a body of artifacts and a system of customs.”

Clifford Geertz, a contemporary American anthropologist observes that culture denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embedded in symbols, a system of
inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life. Here, culture consists of all the symbols exercised by human beings to carry on their daily life activities. Again, the activities are significant to shape their knowledge about the way to conduct life as social animals. One can therefore consider culture as those practices, which are transmitted from generation to generations since time immemorial and new experiments are also added to the field of culture so that the community can assimilate with the changing environment both physical and psychological.

In the definition given by Paul G. Hiebert, we find culture as a characteristic of a particular society reflected in the learned patterns of behaviour, ideas and products. William A. Haviland explains culture as a composition of abstract values, beliefs and perceptions about the world of a social group. The behaviour as well as action of the group carry those abstract considerations and that are accepted within the social whole. Therefore, culture is such a significant concept which includes all the aspects of day to day life of a social group found reflected in their activities, dress-code, language, food-habits, housing and living patterns, their psycho-religious beliefs etc. and so forth. The realm of culture binds the issues that men ‘have’, ‘do’ and ‘think’ as members of a society. Whatever people learn starting from his life till his end and practise accordingly in their ways of live in all aspects is none other than culture. According to Devaraja, “culture is the sum total of the activities whereby a person relates himself to the significant though useless aspects of reality, actual or imagined.”

All the above discussed aspects are somewhat integrated in the meanings attached to culture. Definition provided by the Encyclopaedia of philosophy can be analysed as follows:-
(i) A general state or habit of the mind with close relations to the idea of human perfection.

(ii) A general state of intellectual and moral development in a society as a whole.

(iii) The general body of arts and intellectual works.

(iv) The whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual, of a given society.\(^{11}\)

Culture is a way of life pertained by a social group through individual inter-relationships, interaction and social integration. Thus, how the people live, work, pursue friendship and also family structure, social inter responsibilities are the reflections of culture.

Culture has material, non-material, psychological, emotional, religious, moral, genetic etc. features developed in the living patterns of human beings of a definite geographical area. Marxian viewpoint explains economic life area as infrastructure, which changes the overall social structure. Here, culture has been considered as the historically determined level of social and human development. For Marxists, culture is a class phenomenon as the economic standard determines people’s way of living i.e. lifestyle, which can be defined as culture as a whole combining their material cultural products with ideological issues.

By simplifying the above discussed aspects one can denote culture as a composite way of artifacts, emotions, matters, institutions, systems, exercises, psychological feelings, customs, language, conception of values and all other material and non-material practices of a given society.
1.3 Culture and Society

Culture is a vital part of a particular society. A society can be considered as rich and developed if its culture is rich and developed. So, we may consider culture and society to be the two sides of a single coin. Two prospects are interrelated. No culture can be studied outside the realm of society. Every society inherits its unique blend of culture. Culture is intimately related to social ends. A cultured man faithfully pursues his social obligations. While performing his/her social obligations he/she communicates with the cultural life of the community. Accordingly, the cultural life of the community influences the individual’s life and shapes his behaviour and life style. Hence, social solidarity can be enhanced through culture and cultural activities. It upholds social well being. Practically, culture in its initial stage is more a social than an individual phenomenon. The valuable social assets are not in but the finest creation of eminent literatures, musicians, painters, sculptors, and philosophers. All social beings have the right to share them. Culture develops man’s mind, refines his tastes and manners and thereby moulds and shapes the life of the society. Culture by imbuing a sense of values in the minds of the members of society regulates their social behaviour. Any culture which is divorced from human values has pernicious influence upon the larger life of society. Culture by fostering a sense of “We-feelings” among the members of a group binds all the members into one common bond of unity and friendship. So it can act as a cohesive force for bringing about social solidarity.

1.4 Socio-Philosophical Outlook of the Mishing Culture

Philosophy is an attempt at comprehending the problems of the universe aiming at enquiry about the knowledge of truth. It deals with the general laws of being and
human thinking and the process of cognition. It studies about the expressions of the way of life. Pythagoras was the first to use the term 'Philosophy'. It comes from the Greek words ‘philos’ (love) and ‘sophia’ (wisdom) which etymologically means ‘love of wisdom’. This term is used in a variety of senses. Here, in this study attempt is made to comprehend the Mishing culture from the socio-philosophical standpoint.

So, if we approach the socio-philosophical perspective of the Mishing culture, we can develop that the Mishing culture also has a broader outlook encompassing all intellectual, material, spiritual, social accomplishments of its tribal identity. Perhaps, it can be analysed as one amongst the rich and developed cultures of this world. Hence, a careful description of customs, folklore, religious rites, cooking styles, dress-code, social and family ceremonies, art and music, and so on are to be considered as inevitable elements of culture. It is the most valuable, potent and dynamic aspect of the Mishing society. This variegated features of culture needs socio-philosophical analysis and value judgment for its progress.

Now, in the changing phase of globalization, due to the tremendous pressure of big culture, many small cultures have lost their identities. The Mishing Culture is not an exception here. Under the continuous influences from neighbouring big cultures like Assamese culture, the Mishing culture has been undergoing extinction. Hence, the preservation of cultural identity of this diversified small culture is a very difficult task. To answer the same, the philosophers have to explore some way out and show some new techniques to make poise between individuality and universality of culture. Therefore, we will have to show respect and judge the value, importance and the requisite of each and every culture. There are many customs in the tribal culture which the people thought to be immutable and inevitable part of their cultural sustenance. Again, they have some
sort of unreasonable practices, which violate the basic human rights. The superstitions and related unreasonable beliefs are parts of the Mishing culture too. Thus, it needs scientific reasoning for eradication of such beliefs. But this very delicate and sensitive issue is needed careful renovation. If we comprehend the Mishing culture in a constructive and dispassionate way, we can perceive its specific and distinctive values. Hence, it is the challenging task of philosophy to pay respect towards all cultures of the world, so that we can construct new global culture where everybody has equal sharing and that will be much more efficacious for the global society. But it is not an easy task, which needs mutual tolerance, some sort of sacrifice and respect to one another’s culture. Philosophy stresses upon cultural progress that are keenly related to the needs of the society, because it directly affects the thinking of the individual and society as well. Philosophers have a greater responsibility to tackle this issue reasonably and systematically. Philosophy, however discredited as an abstract speculation, actually is an analysis for correct and rationalistic understanding and decision making for the solution of world problems. Now, it is not mere love for knowledge rather it takes care for eradication or solution of global problems.14

1.5 Review of Literature

Review of literature is a significant aspect of pertaining research activities. It is the first and foremost duty of the researcher to study properly the available literature of the field, where he/she aims to carry on the research. It shows the available areas of work that has already been completed regarding the research aspect and opens up new horizon for the researcher to conduct his/her study. Considering this vital fact, we have gone through a number of literatures. Some of those are reviewed below:-
Mipun. Jatin (2000) carried out a study on “The Mishings (Miris) of Assam: Development of a New Lifestyle” that mainly emphasised on socio-cultural changes among the tribes of India, more particularly the Mishing tribe of Assam. The book studies the process and impact of contact amongst the primitive organizations of the Mishings, their social system, their clan and kinship organizations, religion, festivals, marriage, political and social life, social structure, etc. Again, all the said processes and development of the tribe are overviewed in the book. The processes of acculturation and growing communication have linked Mishings with other regional cultures and the national main stream and leads towards their overall development. But all these issues lead to loss of some of their basic features too.

Pegu. I (2003) in his book “Mising Samaj Aru Sanskriti” briefly discusses about the historical background, origin, physical structure and nature of the Mishing people of Assam. The author focuses on the religious beliefs and practices, settlement of village, traditional housing pattern, social organizations, social life such as marriage system, birth, death, cremation, etc. and also rituals related with these are explained briefly. The book also deals with the livelihood based on agriculture, food habits, festivals, dance, dress code, traditional instruments, art of weaving, etc. of the Mishing society. Thus, the book can be considered as one of the significant works to understand a sketch about the society and culture of the Mishing tribe.

Sarma, Ashok (2004) conducted a study on “Folk Culture of the Misings of Assam: Traditional and Change”. By studying their oral narratives, the book deals with the factors that influence the material culture of the tribe. It broadly focuses into their folk art, craft, architecture, customs, ornaments and food. It examines their traditional life pattern and legends, myths and tales etc. that are inter-woven in aspects of their
artistic and cultural life. He significantly tries to analyse the process of modernisation, acculturation and urbanisation of the Mishing society.

Pegu, Nomal. C (2005) carried out a study on “The Mishings of the Brahmaputra Valley”. It is a descriptive study about the history and culture of the Mishings. The study provides a lot of information the origin, migration, and socio-cultural life of the Mishing people in Assam.

“Glimpses” (2007), is a collection of literary works of Tabu Ram Taid published by the General Secretary, Mising Agom Kebang, Dhemaji. It is an attempt to explore the contributions of T.R. Taid towards the society, culture and educational life of Assam in general and more particularly towards the Mishing society. The book contains three parts and nineteen articles. Here, three articles purely deal with the Mishing culture, Oi-ni:tom, the Mishing language and a few other articles too overview about the tribal life of Assam. It is none other than a pioneering work of a Mishing man towards the society and culture of tribal attire. This collection of articles will be regarded as significant resource in the development and enrichment of Mishing Language as well as culture.

Doley, B.K. (2008) contributed one of the important academic works about the Mishing society entitled “Mishing Samaj Sanskritir Samiksha”. Here the author introduces the colourful Mishing tribe, its etymological origin, migration towards plains, relationship of the Mishings with Ahoms as well as Chutiya people, geographical inhabitation, population pattern, housing pattern, food habits, physical structure, popular games, agricultural process, traditional and non-traditional festivals, mythological beliefs, weaving and textile industry, ornaments, etc. The social and familial positions of the Mishing women are also pictured in the book. Therefore, the work can be
considered as one of the milestone in the field of research about the Mishing socio-cultural domain.

The book “Culture and Religion” (2009) authored by Basil Pohlong is a descriptive and conceptual analysis of culture and religion. The book denotes a number of definitions about culture and religion, and their significance and inherent meanings. Besides, the traditional way of defining culture and religion, here the author studies the interrelationship between religion and culture, and secularly criticises the concept of religion. Besides, discussing about the justification of the sacred aspect, which the society describes as religion and culture as well as value judgment, the issue of normative essence related with culture also have been significantly discussed in the book.

Baruah, P.C. (2010) developed a detailed study titled “Cultural Traditions and Customary Laws of the Mishings of Assam”. Through anthropological approach he attempted to know the rich socio-legal behaviour of the Mishing tribe of Assam. The book examines the Mishing mores, folkways, customs and tradition. In micro level the work undertakes an intensive field study on the Santipur village of the Sadiya sub-division, in the Tinsukia district of Assam. The work undergoes through demographic study of the people of the said village and comprehends religious, economic and a political behaviour of the Mishing group of the people at Santipur. Therefore, the study developed by P. Baruah is a way to investigate the prevailing socio-legal system of the Mishing people of Assam to secure social control in their society.

Payeng Sadananda (2011) in the book “Mishing Janajati: Samaj aru Sanskriti”, comprehensively describes about the Mishing folk-culture, hunting tradition of the Mishings, their folk songs and folk games, their agricultural practices and their acceptance of Bihu trends etc. Again, the beliefs of birth, marriage, Oi-ni:tom, clans,
po:rag festivals are also properly analysed in the book. Importantly, the book emphasises on the role of Sri Sri Sankaradeva’s Vaishnavism in the religious life of the Mishing people.

Kuli, Jawahar (2012) in his compiled and edited book titled “The Misings: their History and Culture”, depicts comprehensive study about the origin, socio-political, economic life and available language and literature about the Mishing people of Assam. Kuli here incorporates a total of 31 articles authored by a number of noted persons, who developed an extensive study about the origin, present status and future possibilities about the Mishings, the second largest plain tribe of Assam. The rich Mishing weaving and textile tradition, its popular art and craft designs are well addressed in the book. In addition, the religious life of the Mishing people, their socio-political organisations, autonomy movement of the tribe, sixth schedule statuses, etc. are also properly discussed in the book. The family, clans, marriage system are beautifully studied. It also deals with historical and socio-cultural relations of the Mishing tribe with other Sino-Mongoloid tribes of North East India. Thus, the book is a detailed attempt to understand the lifestyle, origin, linguistic and cultural trends of the Mishing people of Assam.

Das, Angshuman (2013) in his edited work “Asamar Janagosthiya Utsav-Parban” is a collection of 24 articles about the festivals of different tribes of Assam. Here, two popular articles by Jitu Bora & Mrinal kumar Bora and Tarun Loying—particularly express about festivals and agro-based folk trend of the Mishing tribe. These two articles comprehensively discuss the practices of the tribe from initiation till the present time and depict the new trends with the changing time frame. The book explains the folk culture of the Mishing tribe and its concrete form in the Ali-Aye-Ligang and Po:rag festival.
Mazumdar, Labanya (2013) in the book “Textile Tradition of Assam- an empirical study” discusses different textile traditions of Assam i.e., Eri, Muga and Pat silk. Brindavani Bastra and other used textiles are also studied in the book. Different tribal textiles such as textiles of Bodos, Kacharies, Rabhas, Deoris, Mishings, Tai-phakes, Karbis and other non-tribal plains of Assamese community are well explained and picturized in the book. Besides, mode of production of textiles and equipments of looms, production of dyes, raw-materials and other accessories are also described in the book. Motifs and Designs used by different tribes are also studied in the book.

Hazarika, Lohit (2014) carries out a study on “Identity and Democracy: Autonomy Movement in Assam”. The author tries to discuss about the ethnic assertions that have become important characteristics of a number of Indian tribes particularly in the post-independence period. Growing expansion of educational facilities offers new dimension to identity formation and further leads to exclusiveness of the ethnic groups. Some tribes have taken language and culture as easy tools for demanding separate identity. This book closely studies about the course of the Mishing tribe and tries to find out the nature and characteristics of identity formation and movement behind the scene of the Mishings. Besides, the Mishings, their problems of identity formation with some other ethnic groups in Assam as well as North East India are also focussed in the book.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

The Mishing is one of the indigenous ethnic plains tribe of Assam. Considering their population, they are the second largest plains scheduled tribe in Assam and accordingly contribute a lot to the socio-cultural tapestry of the north east region of India. Significantly, they are the riverain people and settled mostly in the banks of the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Currently, it is a global phenomenon that people now increasingly develop consciousness about their ethnic identity. Culture, history,
traditions, folk tales and legends are also studied in new light and approach. As a hot bed of identity crisis, Assam too is not an exception to it. Hence, we endeavour to comprehend the way of their life and to acquaint the Mishing people living in Assam from socio-philosophical perspective. Again, the Mishing people living in the plains of Assam keep alive their traditions, customs, culture and religion through the myths, legends, folk songs and folk tales that are found in their oral traditional form. The authenticity regarding the information derived from these oral forms about the origin of the tribe, their culture and practices cannot be verified. But these age-old oral traditions are very important for the present as well as future generations to keep alive their own cultural identity. This study is an attempt to reasonably understand these oral verses and compare them with available scientific ground. Being like a living laboratory of absorption, assimilation and acculturation, the tribe still maintains many of its tribal beliefs and practices. But with the change of time, they have added a number of other beliefs and practices too with that of the traditional. So, our research will attempt to analyse the changing phenomenon of Mishing culture along with their respective parameters. Further, our research has anticipated close attention of the academics and policy makers to understand the particular ethnic tribe, their sentiments, grievances and as a whole the issue of their identity. Undertaking the descriptive and analytical method in the study, the historical background of the tribe, their traditional religious beliefs and practices, agro-based traditional and non-traditional festivals, socio-political life, language and literature and their material culture etc. are to be highlighted in the proposed research work.

1.7 Objectives

The research work entitled “The Mishing Culture of Assam: A Socio-Philosophical Study” is an attempt to comprehend the way of life and living of the
Mishing people in Assam from societal as well as philosophical perspective. The main objective of the study is to focus on the Mishing culture of Assam in general.

The broad objectives of the study can be considered as follows:-

(i) To study the origin and historical background of the Mishings of Assam.

(ii) To analyse religion, the traditional religious beliefs and practices of the Mishings and the impact of other religions upon the Mishing religious life.

(iii) To study the traditional and non-traditional festivals of the Mishings of Assam.

(iv) To study the socio-political life, language and literature of the Mishings.

(v) To examine the material culture of the Mishing society.

1.8 Methodology

To make a Socio-Philosophical study of the Mishing culture of Assam, the data collected from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are based on archaeological monuments, field investigation, interviews, photography etc. The secondary data related to the study are collected from some important historical books, articles, magazines, newspapers, journals, periodicals, oral narratives etc., and also official records like census reports, administrative records on socio-cultural life of the Mishings. To authenticate the data collected from the secondary sources, the researcher visited the field selected for the study and observed the socio-cultural life of the Mishings. To analyse the data that we have collected, the study chooses the descriptive as well as analytical method.

1.9 Significance of the study

The present society develops very much curiosity about ethnic studies. Currently, it is a global phenomenon that people now increasingly develop consciousness about their ethnic identities. Folk tales, culture, history and traditions, legends are being studied in new light and approach. In this context, it is an endeavour to focus on the
culture of the Mishing tribe of Assam from socio-philosophical perspective. The most significant fact to consider is that even being like a living laboratory of absorption, assimilation and acculturation, the tribe still maintains many of their tribal beliefs and practices. Moreover, Assam at present is a hot bed of identity crisis. It can be anticipated that this kind of research may help to understand the people of different ethnic groups, their feelings, thoughts and sentiments, grievances, injustices etc which might pave the way to the solution of their so-called problem of identity crisis. As no study has been made so far about the Mishing culture of Assam from socio-philosophical perspective, the present work would be a pioneering one. Thus, it is reasonably meaningful for the benefit of the community as well as for the interest of the academic significance and practical utility.

1.10 Organization of the chapters

To have a systematic study the research work has been divided into seven chapters including introduction.

The first chapter ‘Introduction’ deals with the brief introduction of the body of thesis, review of literature, statement of the problem, the objectives, methodology and significance of the study. It explains the comprehensive outline of the whole study.

The second chapter ‘Historical Background of the Mishings of Assam’. Here discusses about their origin, migration from hills to the plains and relationship established with Chutiya and Ahom kingdom in Assam are also expressed in the chapter.

The third chapter ‘Religion: the religious beliefs and practices of the Mishings’ examines the religious beliefs and practices of the Mishing people in Assam. Here emphasize is also given to the transition or conversion of Hinduism and Christianity amongst the Mishing religion.
The fourth chapter ‘Agro-based festivals of the Mishing Society’ deals with various agro-based traditional and non-traditional festivals viz. *Ali aye ligang*, *Po: rag*, *Bohag Bihu*, *Kati Bihu* and *Magh Bihu*, etc. The folk song, folk dance, tune of musical instruments and also colourful dresses are broadly studied.

The fifth chapter ‘Socio-political life, language and literature of the Mishings’ explains the Mishing family as well as marriage system, clan, kinship, social groups, organisations, rituals of birth and death, food habit, and language and literature of the Mishings. Their political consciousness, new political organisations are also discussed here.

The sixth chapter ‘An overview of Material Culture of the Mishings’ examines various aspects of material culture of the Mishings, such as handloom textile, weaving materials, artistic motifs and designs, housing pattern, cane and bamboo works, and musical instrument, etc are briefly studied.

The last chapter is conclusion. This chapter summarizes the major aspects of the thesis and synthesis of the findings of the study.

Thus, in the first chapter, we have introduced an overview of the whole research work about the socio-philosophical life of the Mishing people in Assam. To understand properly the composite structure of the tribe, we tend to examine the origin and historical background of the Mishing people in the next chapter.
References

10. Ibid., p.5

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