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**REPORT ON THE VISIT TO FESTIVAL OF MISING TRIBE - ALI-AYE-LIGANG:
TRADITION, CULTURE AND VISUALS**

The interns of the DPIIT-IPR Chair of the National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam – Ms. Snigdha Mili and Ms. Darshana Chetry, both students from BA. LL.B. (IPR Hons.) Xth Semester conducted a day long field visit on 18th February, 2026 to witness the festival - Ali-Aye-Ligang of the Mising Tribe of Assam, the second-largest tribe of Assam held at Shilpagram, Panjabari, Guwahati.

During the visit, they had the opportunity to engage with the rich cultural expressions of the Mising community. The visit offered the interns a glimpse into diverse traditional textiles such as the *gero* and *mekhela sador*, adorned with distinctive Mising motifs, reflecting elements that were distinct from Assamese weaving



traditions. This experience also included witnessing the traditional rice wine brewing (locally known as Apong) within the sang ghor (a traditional bamboo house). This practice reflects indigenous knowledge systems that have been preserved and passed down through generations. They observed cultural expressions which carried significant intellectual property potential, highlighting the importance of the process of documentation, awareness, and legal protection to preserve and promote the unique culture and traditional heritage of the community.

When looked from the perspective of Intellectual Property, Ali-Aye-Ligang becomes significant because it brings together multiple forms of intangible cultural expressions, the traditional textiles, folk songs, dances, culinary practices, and ritual performances, which are unique to the tribe. The cultural elements associated with the festival are collectively owned by the community, transmitted orally by the elders of the community, and preserved through community practice.



It was observed that the festival started with paying respect to Sedi-Melo (Father and Mother), Donyi-Polo (Sun-Moon), which was accompanied by ritual songs appealing to the mother earth to make the soil fertile and for a good harvest.

Following this, the traditional performances like the 'gumrag', 'oinitom' (mising songs), accompanied by dhol, pepa, siphung etc. were displayed. Through the dance, the performers acted by showing different movements of hunting, fishing, weaving, etc. Along with this, the community gathered together for a feast where they are served with pork dishes, Apong (traditional rice wine), namsing, purang apin (sticky rice) etc.

Thus, Ali-aye-ligang festival serves not only as a cultural celebration but also as a living testament to indigenous traditions that continue to thrive across Assam. Participation in such cultural spaces highlights the importance of documenting and appreciating the culture and traditional practices, particularly in the context of cultural heritage and intellectual property awareness.

IP LANDSCAPE

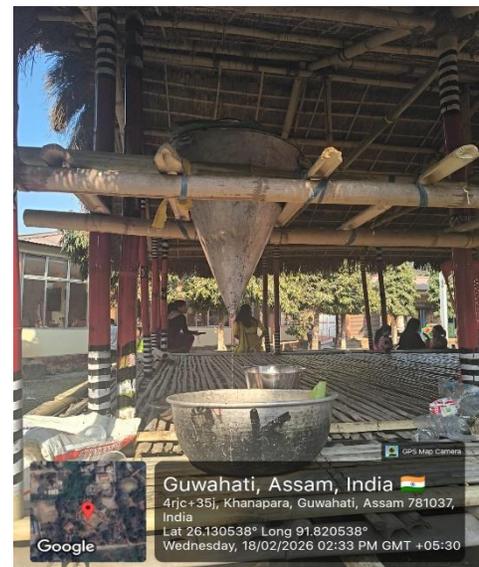
One can understand the intellectual property (IP) landscape surrounding Ali-Aye-Ligang by exploring its traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, artisanal practices, and community heritage. Documenting and protecting these cultural assets through frameworks such as geographical indications, copyright, and traditional knowledge protection can help safeguard indigenous heritage while enabling sustainable socio-economic development.

Traditional Knowledge Systems

One major component of the IP landscape of Ali-Aye-Ligang is traditional agricultural knowledge. The festival encodes indigenous practices such as seasonal calendars, seed selection, soil preparation, and ritual offerings associated with farming. These practices represent knowledge systems developed over generations through close interaction with local ecosystems.

Traditional knowledge embedded in the festival included:

- Indigenous methods of paddy cultivation
- Knowledge of seasonal cycles and lunar calendars



- Ritual practices invoking natural deities such as Donyi-Polo
- Seed conservation and local crop varieties

This knowledge is collectively owned by the community, making it difficult to protect through conventional intellectual property regimes. Nevertheless, documentation and community protocols can help safeguard these practices from misappropriation or commercial exploitation.

Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs)

Ali-Aye-Ligang is also rich in traditional cultural expressions (TCEs), which include music, dance, oral traditions, and visual aesthetics.

Key cultural expressions include:

- Gumrag Soman dance performed in groups during the festival
- Folk songs such as *Oi Nitom* that narrate themes of agriculture and community life
- Ritual chants and storytelling traditions
- Traditional attire and ornamentation worn during celebrations

These cultural forms are valuable intangible heritage assets. Under emerging international frameworks for indigenous cultural rights, they can be recognized as community intellectual property requiring consent and benefit-sharing when used commercially.



The festival also highlights the distinctive craft traditions of the Mising community, particularly handloom weaving and textile design. Women play a central role in weaving traditional garments used during the celebrations which include handwoven textiles such as *ege*, *gaseng*, and other traditional garments

As several elements associated with the festival possess strong geographical identity linked to Assam and the Mising community they have potential for geographical indication (GI) protection, which could help preserve authenticity while supporting local artisans. GI registration can provide:

- Legal recognition of cultural origin
- Protection against imitation or misappropriation
- Increased economic value for community products
- Opportunities for cultural tourism and heritage branding

Therefore, such measures can transform cultural heritage into a sustainable livelihood resource for indigenous communities. It is also true that recognizing and protecting these cultural assets through appropriate IP frameworks such as traditional knowledge protection, and geographical indications, can contribute to preserving indigenous heritage while promoting inclusive cultural and economic development.

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