Preface

Among all the indigenous and traditional village councils which exist in Arunachal Pradesh and govern and administer the life of the people in the State, Kebang of the Padams (major group of the Adis tribe) is considered highly participatory and democratic, when we analyse its structure and the methods of adjudication and conflict resolution. Even before the advent of the Panchayati Raj institution in India in 1957, the three tier system of Kebang was in existence in the tribal, indigenous society of the state, located in the most north-eastern part of India. This age old institution i.e. Kebang, is very powerful. It controls all the activities of the Adis from cradle to grave. The British, though they followed the policy of isolation and indirect rule, administered the territory through this traditional tribal village council, and in the process affected some changes in it through the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945. After independence, the Government of India also followed the similar policy. But after the 1962 Chinese aggression, the situation changed and the Government of India also changed its policy towards Arunachal Pradesh. Efforts were made to bring the frontier State into the mainstream of national political life. From NEFA (North East Frontier Agency), to Union Territory and finally its evolution as a state of the Union of India on February 20 1987, Arunachal Pradesh witnessed many changes, namely, the introduction of the Panchayati Raj, the creation of State Assembly, emergence of political parties, the introduction of electoral politics, to mention a few. All the changes have had profound impact on the polity of the state. It substantially affected the system of governance and the Kebang of the Adis had been no exception to it. And it is in this context that the selection of Kebang as an indigenous, traditional democratic
institution of the Adis with particular reference to the Padams as the topic of research, assumes significance.

In the present study, attempt has been made to have an indepth analysis of how this highly participatory Kebang system originated in this tribal world and how far Kebang has been effective as a dispute settlement mechanism. Also, the special emphasis is given to analyse the impact of the changes brought by the British and the Government of India, particularly in the light of introduction of Panchayati Raj and party system, on the working of Kebang, its structure and the leadership pattern. The study is also significant as it assesses the present position of Kebang and the people’s perception, particularly those of the educated and young generation of the society about its status, relevance and effectiveness in the contemporary period. Some suggestions have also been incorporated to strengthen and make it adaptive to the changes which have taken place and are taking place in the tribal society and politics.

Objective:

The study on Kebang has been done with the following objectives;

1. To trace the origin or evolution of Kebang as a socio-political institution.

2. To study and analyse the position, power and function of Kebang as a dispute settlement mechanism.

3. To explore and analyse the area of conflict and compatibility between the two i.e. the Kebang and Panchayati Raj institutions.
4. To find out the impact of the advent of Panchayati Raj and party politics on this traditional political system i.e. Kebang.

5. To evaluate the status of Kebang in the contemporary period, particularly in the context of the people’s perception about the relevance and requirement of this age-old traditional system of governance.

6. To explore and suggest measures for strengthening and streamlining the age-old Kebang system and to make it more viable to cope up with the changing world.

**Relevance:**

The relevance of the study lies due to the fact that it makes an attempt to show that the indigenous village councils, still, inspite of various changes and challenges, govern and administer the life of the people of the state. Therefore, attempt should be made to strengthen the village councils, like Kebang, to supplement the system and the institution of governance introduced in the state in the post independence period.

**Research Questions:**

In order to carry out the present work, certain research question were generated, such as:

1. How did Kebang as an indigenous village council of the Adis emerge?
2. What roles and functions has it played and does it play in the Adi society, particularly in the context of the Padams?

3. In which way and to what extent 'modern' institutions have affected Kebang?

4. Is Kebang still relevant and does it continue to enjoy the legitimacy and the confidence of the people?

**Methodology:**

The methods of study adopted and used to answer and address the above mentioned research questions and to carry out the research have included the investigation of both the primary as well as the secondary sources available on the subject. However, the significant aspect of the research is that it has been conducted on the basis of the questionnaire, and the personal as well as the group interview. To understand the relevance of Kebang in the present days, the technique of attitudinal tests has been used to analyse the views of the respondents. Since the researcher belongs to the community on which the study has been conducted, his participant observation has provided valuable and authentic inputs to the present research work.

**Survey of Literature:**

The survey and review of literature is the significant aspect of the research work. Accordingly, an attempt has been made to review and investigate the available literature related to the present research work. A
concise account of some of the measure works produced here indicate that no exclusive and comprehensive work has been done on Kebang.

Verrier Elwin's "Democracy in NEFA" (1965), is an attempt to highlight the role and importance of the indigenous institutions of the tribes of the Arunachal Pradesh and their relevance in tribal administration. However, the work is more anthropological in nature.

Sachin Ray's "Aspect of Padam-Minyong culture" (1960), has described the Adis' society from a social anthropological point of view. He has devoted a chapter to the political life of the people, but he has not dealt with the procedural aspects of the administration of justice, adequately.

A. C. Talukder's "Political Transition in the Grassroots in Tribal India" (1987), is an attempt to analyse the introduction of Panchayati Raj and its impact on the Kebang. He has devoted few pages on system and evolution of Kebang. But his work does not, to my knowledge, incorporate the administration and dispute settlement aspects of the Kebang.

Usha K. Singh's "Legal aspect of Kebang of Adis" (1991), is an attempt to analyse the legal aspect of the Kebang. However, she did not deal with the changes and present position of Kebang.

Manjushree Pathak, in her book, "Crimes, Customs and Justice in Tribal India. A Theological Study of Adis" (1991) has described the administration of justice of Kebang. However, she did not touch the origin, impact of modern democratic institution and present position of Kebang.

The review of these works indicates that the study on Kebang has not been done in a systematic and comprehensive manner by
the scholars, particularly by the indigenous scholars. Accordingly, the present researcher has undertaken to work on Kebang because in his view indigenous scholar belonging to the same community, experiencing the changes taking place in the society, can provide a better insight into and also an insider view of the functioning of Kebang. Also because his life and activities are conditioned by this age old institution. The study has been conducted primarily in the context of the Padams because they are the largest group among the Adis and also because the researcher belongs to this group.

Chapterisation: The work is divided into five chapters.

Chapter-I deals with society and culture of Arunachal Pradesh in general and the Adis, in particular. The social institutions like youth dormitory (Mushup and Rasheng) and slavery have also been discussed.

Chapter-II aims to look at the origin and evolution of Kebang phase-wise i.e. in the Pre-British, during the British and in the post-independence period. The leadership pattern, the power, position and functions of the head of the Kebang and the status of women in Kebang have been discussed.

Chapter-III seeks to explain Kebang as an indigenous dispute settlement mechanism. An attempt has also been made to discuss the procedures of the dispute settlement in civil and criminal cases, practice of oath and ordeal and the system of penalty and compensation.

Chapter-IV deals with the study of the emergence of “modern” politico-administrative institutions, particularly the Panchayati Raj and the Party System in the state and their impact on Kebang.
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Chapter-V i.e. concluding chapter, is the summing up of the research findings. Suggestions have been made to strengthen and reinvigorate the functioning of Kebang.

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Itanagar

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