



# Role Of Traditional Institutions In Change And Development Of Rural-Tribal Society

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## Abstract:

In recent time tribals who have been living the plains have become a part and parcel of rural communities of our country. They are no longer living in isolation from rural or urban or industrial areas. Hitherto isolated tribal land or habitats have been connected with the other developed areas of the country by modern communication systems. As such tribal villages have become an integral part of the villages of the other communities of the country. They have more or less the same problems of development with these or the other communities in general. However the tribals have their own traditional institutions of self-rule like village council, regional council, community or national council etc. known by different names. All problems of the communities were solved by these councils.

**Keywords:** Development, Rural, Communities, Tribal, & Traditional

## Introduction:

The Misings are one of the scheduled tribe communities of Assam. They have been living in the Brahmaputra valley together with different ethnic groups for more than five hundred years now without losing their language and cultural traits. Like many other tribal communities, the Misings have traditional institution of self-rule that is, ruled by the community itself. It is known as kébang, which literally means public meeting for discussing and resolving a problem, whenever there arises a problem affecting the community life a kébang is held and the problem whatever it may be is resolved through discussion and decision by consensus of view of the individuals attending kébang.

Kébang is two-level organization – one at village level designated as do:lung (village) kébang and the other Ba:né kébang (kébang for the entire Mising community). Each village has a kébang but not by any selected and elected members. As stated earlier it is a public gathering where a community problem is discussed. When a problem arises some individuals of the village community calls for a kébang and any individuals – men or women, young or old can attend and participate in its deliberation. As such,

kébang is a community meeting which is free for all the village people to attend and participate in the discussion. The do:lung (village) kébang is invariably is presided by the Gam, who is selected by the village people as their headman. An elderly man who is knowledgeable about the customs, beliefs and practices of the community, and known for his character, integrity, and articulate expression is unanimously selected as Gam and once he is conferred Gamship he remains in the status so long he enjoys the confidence and good will of the village community, while presiding the kébang, the Gam after having listened to the views of the participants summarizes the view and gives his own view on the issue; and with the approval of the participants the Gam finally declares the decision of the kébang which is abide by the members of the village community without any question.

The Ba:né kébang (All Mising Conference) is a formal and representative body with its own constitution and defined functions. It works for the general welfare and development of the entire Mising community. It is the over authorities of the Mising community in matters of social customs and practices.

Thus Mising kébangs are grass-root level of democratic organizations which are most effective in controlling the social matters of the community. Therefore, in the present situation the kébangs can also play very important role in the development of the Mising community. It is a known fact that development of a community depends on scientific thinking and behavior of its members. The individuals must have scientific frame of mind and tendency to look at the things or problem, objectively. But tribals because of their superstitious believe lack of scientific thinking on social and natural events. So, they remain fatalist leaving everything to the grace of deities or spirits. So, they perform various wrathful rites and rituals which have adverse effects on development particularly in economic sphere.

Therefore, apart from other things what are we need to-day is reform movement against the social evils that have been prevalent among the tribes – particularly, the Misings. It may be pointed out here that Misings are only the tribal community of the Brahmaputra valley which perform various rites and rituals which cost considerable amounts of money, materials, labour and time. In some cases the costs go up to lakhs of rupees.

It is viewed by the enlightened section of the community that the religious beliefs and practices now prevalent among the Misings are quite inimical to socio-economic development.

Thus there are some community specific problems in rural population which need special attention to deal with them; and it is traditional institution like the kébangs of the Mising community that can be alternative to statutory agencies for such problem. Do:lung or Ba:né kébang may reform the inhibitive social customs, beliefs and practices and introduce some progressive measures for educational and economic development in particular and improvement of health. The village youth organizations called ya:me-mímbír may organize some cooperative activities for protection and improvement of natural environment like small forestry, water ponds and stream, horticulture, pisciculture, centre for handy crafts etc. such activities are quite productive and at the same time manageable by the village community through the traditional self-rule institutions. As already stated the Mising kébangs are people's organizations at grass-root level and therefore, quite effective in implementing the decisions.

It is historically proved that development as we generally understand it to-day is not possible without change of the traditional values. To achieve the type of development we desire to-day some of the traditional beliefs and practices much be changed either totally or partially. But this is a problem which can be solved by the people's own voluntary organizations than some external agencies people respect traditional institutions in changed than the institutions which the community feels as imposition by the ruling power. The tribals – particularly the hill tribes consider Panchayat as alien institution which less representatives than their own councils. This is fact that Mising do:lung kébang (village council) is much more democratic in nature than the Panchayat. Therefore, kébang's decision is more transparent than that of any elective body and for that reason kébang is more quite effective in carrying out its decision. As such traditional self-ruled institution can play vital role in change and development of the rural communities.

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