



The Problems of Local Governance in Tribal India: An Analytical Study of Arunachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT:

The local government is considered as an implementing machinery of the state development and welfare programmes and as a unit of government at the local levels. The Panchayati Raj system serves as the most effective form of local government available where people can participate meaningfully and directly in the developmental process in rural areas. The Panchayati Raj Institution is the simplest form of institution which ensures developmental participation at the lowest level. It provides a mechanism for the participation of people in the developmental activities in their locality.

The full benefit of democracy can be realized only when there is true devolution of both power and resources down to the grassroots. For the success of democracy at the grassroot level, grassroot people should be able to fully participate in the Panchayat system. Against this backdrop, an attempt has been made systematically to understand the involvement of Panchayat leaders, Panchayat officials, and common villagers in the formulation and implementation of rural development programmes initiated by Panchayati Raj Institutions. The study is an attempt to understand the actual participation and awareness of the people and the obstacles associated with local governance in implementing various rural development programmes in the tribal area of Arunachal Pradesh in India.

Keywords: Local Self-Government, Panchayati Raj, Democracy, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

Introduction:

Governance has been defined as referring to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Governance is also defined as the way rules, norms, and actions are structured, sustained, regulated, and held accountable (Dabhi, Bharati, Vartha, & Jyoti, 2023, p. 1).

Local self-government is an age-old institution in India and has been part of Indian culture. The local self-government in India owes its existence to the customs and traditions and derives its authority from the dharma. While writing about the oldness of the local self-government, R.C. Dutt observed, "the institutions of local self-government was developed earliest and preserved longest in India among all the countries of earth" (Dutt, 1968, p. 42). Sir Metcalfe also observed, "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they can within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts, dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolutions succeed to revolutions, but the village communities remain the same (William & Christopher, 2018, p. 158.). Decentralized local governance is often portrayed as a more participatory and direct form of governance (Mishra & Mishra, 2016, p. 149). In particular, local governance is considered to be an appropriate forum for women to raise their voices, participate in and make decisions, which in turn may facilitate gender solidarity and collective empowerment, at least as a first step towards gender-just governance (Mukhopadhyay, 2005).

Today, local self-government is important in a democratic set-up, which is based on the concept of "Grassroot Democracy" (Dubey, 2005). It operates at the lowest level of society and enables them to undertake the responsibilities of their socio-economic and cultural development. It is a system of governance at the rural level and an integral part of the national and state government. The local self-government in India, by the Indians in their own terms became possible with the enforcement of the Constitution of India in 1950 (Dubey, 2005). Article 40 incorporated in Part IV of the constitution i.e., directive principles of state policies, making it a state-subject. Article 40 calls upon the state to organise village Panchayats and endow them with such power and authority, as may be necessary, to enable them to function as units of self-government (Maddick, 1970, p. 29). Further, with the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992, Panchayati Raj Institution got Constitutional status, which is incorporated in Part IX and Articles 243 to 243G of the Constitution (Maheswari, 2000, p. 180). The adoption of this democratic political system in India was based on grassroots democracy and people's participation, as the majority of its population is in rural areas (villages).

The concept behind the Panchayati Raj Institution is that the villagers should actively participate in the decision making, developmental activities and undertake the responsibility of governing themselves. Panchayati Raj Institutions that work as grassroot units of decentralized democratic self-government have been considered an instrument of socio-economic transformation in rural India (Siga, 2015, p. 50). The objective of Panchayati Raj is to foster the democratic participation of the villagers, to involve them in developmental activities and to assist them in making decisions in matters of their needs and necessities. Initially, the main thrust of rural development was laid on agriculture, industry, communication, education, health and allied

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sectors but later on, it was realized that accelerated development can be provided only if governmental supports are adequately supplemented by direct and indirect involvement of people at the grassroot level. Keeping in view the needs and aspirations of the local people, Panchayat Institutions have been involved in the programme implementation and these institutions constitute the core of decentralized development of planning and its implementations. In this regard, the central government also pursue with the state governments for expeditious devolution of requisite administrative and financial powers to these grassroot institutions as envisaged under the 73rd Amendment Act of the constitution of India.

Hence, for a proper understanding of the organisational constraints and obstacles of local government, various aspects such as the flow of funds, devolution of power, monitoring and implementation of schemes need to be evaluated. The Panchayats also play a role in running government programmes in India that are meant to improve the welfare of society, especially the poor. Hence, the Panchayats can play an essential role in improving the people's economic and social well-being and political participation in the rural parts of India (Kumar, 2022, P. 2).

Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh:

The role of Panchayat Raj Institutions as instruments of rural construction and development needs no emphasis. They have been reorganized with powers and financial resources not merely as institutions of political participation but as institutions of social and economic development. The introduction of rationalized administration, improved means of communication, education, democratic institutions and development have been interacting with the traditional, social and political institutions of Arunachal Pradesh (Seema, 2021, p. c131).

Arunachal Pradesh, by keeping pace with the national idea of democratic decentralization and community empowerment, introduced the Panchayati Raj Institutions in 1969. The introduction of Panchayat Institutions heralded a new era in the development of Arunachal Pradesh by introducing popularly elected bodies and democratic values through uniform political practice throughout the state. The Panchayat Institutions have been responsible for the initiation of party politics and instrumental in mass participation leading to greater political awareness such as the electoral process, concept of representation, and majority vote system and led to socio-political and economic development in the state. In compliance with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, the state conducted elections for the Panchayati Raj Institutions on 2nd April 2003 under the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997 through a secret ballot system. However, it has fulfilled the constitutional requirements of institutional arrangement for democratic decentralization. Still, people suffer from socio-economic backwardness due to reasons like partial devolution of powers by the state, bureaucratic interferences, lack of funds and lack of awareness among the Panchayat members and local peoples regarding the policies and programmes of the state as well as of the central government.

Since the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in decentralized planning has gained paramount importance, it is quite imperative to conduct an in-depth study to understand whether this arrangement for grassroot development has achieved the goals of rural development. Hence, the study is an attempt to enquire into the performance, achievements and working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions concerning rural development in Arunachal Pradesh. However, the intensity of developmental participation may vary from individual to individual and from place to place. The intensity of developmental participation depends on several factors, but in rural areas, it is solely dependent on the Panchayat Institutions. The Panchayati Raj Institution is the simplest form of institution which ensures developmental participation at the lowest level. It provides a mechanism for the participation of people in the developmental activities in their locality.

Successes of the programmes are directly related to the panchayat institutions which execute the plan and those who are to benefit, for this several strategies are being made to alleviate rural poverty by the government (Maheswari, 2000, p. 223). But among all the rural development strategies in India, today more focus is given to increasing the efficiency of workers to tackle rural poverty and encourage the active participation of the rural poor communities (Maheswari, 2000, p. 129). Hence, local governance to be pragmatic and effective needs the devolution of power to local bodies and the participation of people at the grassroot level.

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the extent of participation and cooperation of the people at different levels of Panchayat Bodies;
2. To identify the problems in the implementation of Panchayati raj provisions; and
3. To understand the organisational constraints of Panchayati Raj Institutions as instruments of rural development.

Research Methodology:

The data for the study have been drawn both from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through a field survey by visiting the study area using an interview schedule-cum-questionnaire. For the secondary sources, the study depends on various documents - official and non-official. The acts, reports, records, etc were collected from various offices including, the Panchayat office, State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Block Development Office (BDO), District Census Handbook (DCH), and the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) cells of various blocks in East Siang district. Besides, electronic instruments such as electronic recorders and digital cameras were employed for the documentation of visual data and gathering of information.

Moreover, statistical and sampling method is employed for authentic research work. Further manual and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) techniques were applied for formulating data analysis through tables and charts. Both published and unpublished works are also used as secondary sources of data wherever possible. The data were analysed using a simple percentage computation.

The interview schedule cum questionnaire has been designed in English for the sake of convenience and translated into local language wherever needed. The extensive field notes of the discussions with Panchayat members, local intellectuals and beneficiaries of different rural development schemes have been used to supplement the primary data.

The information was gathered by employing open ended Questionnaire-cum-Interview Schedule. The study has a sample size of 90 elected Panchayat member respondents.

Area of the Study:

The area of the study is the East Siang district in the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. The district has a total area of 4,005 sq.km with a population of 99,214. Till recently, the district was comprised of four administrative divisions namely, Pasighat, Mebo, Ruksin and Nari Sub-Division. In the year 2018, the Nari Sub-Division was curved out from East Siang District and placed under the administrative jurisdiction of Lower Siang District. At present East Siang district is comprised of three administrative divisions namely, Pasighat Division, Mebo Division, and Ruksin Division, as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1: Administrative District Sub-Division in East Siang District

Sub-Division	Circle	Year of Creation	Ranks of Officer
Pasighat Sub-Division	Pasighat	1911	Deputy Commissioner
	Yagrun	2013	Circle Officer
Mebo Sub-Division	Mebo	1952	Additional Deputy Commissioner
	Namsing	2009	Circle Officer
Ruksin Sub-Division	Ruksin	1952	Additional Deputy Commissioner
	Billat	1990	Circle Officer
	Sille-Oyan	1990	Circle Officer

Source: Statistical Handbook, East Siang District, 2016-17.

The study area has a total of 443 elected Panchayat members. There are 9 Zilla Parishad Members (ZPMs), 85 Anchal Samiti Members (ASMs) and 349 Gram Panchayat Members (GPMs).

Analysis of the Study:

The study basically is an attempt to understand the awareness, perception and performance with regard to the developmental schemes initiated by the panchayat members and the institution itself. Evaluation is done to understand the participation of the people and the obstacles associated with the Panchayati Raj institution in the implementation of various rural development programmes in the study area. Analysis has been done by setting various parameters like devolution of power to panchayats, influence in the decision-making process, training to local bodies, party politics and devolution of funds.

Devolution of Power

To fulfil developmental aspirations and expectations, people must be empowered to participate in the governance of the state, and as a step forward legislative framework for the Panchayati Raj system was initiated. At the central level, the 73rd Amendment Act provided a legislative framework for the states to legislate to make Institutions of Self-Government (ISG) as envisaged in Article 243G of the constitution. The role of Panchayats depends upon the devolution of power to them, keeping in view participatory culture and traditions of working together by villagers, the decentralised democracy in the form of the Panchayats is essential for this hilly state of the country. If development is to undergo truly at the grassroot level, it is pertinent to know whether there is devolution of powers to the Panchayats. In this regard, certain questions were asked to the Panchayat member respondents.

Table 2: Perception of the Respondents on the Devolution of Power

Panchayat Block	Do you think there has been a devolution of power to Panchayats after the 73 rd Amendment Act?		Total
	Yes	No	
Mebo	21 (70.0%)	9 (30.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	24 (80.0%)	6 (20.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	27 (90.0%)	3 (10.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	72 (80.0%)	18 (20.0%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

On being asked whether there has been a devolution of power to Panchayat members after the 73rd Amendment Act, 20.0 per cent of the Panchayat members responded that there has not been a devolution of power to the Panchayats in a real sense. They opined that power meant for the institutions should be completely transferred to Panchayat bodies as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment Act. Without power, Panchayats will not be able to work independently. While 80 per cent of the respondents considered that devolution of power to some extent has taken place after the 73rd Amendment Act. The analysis of the data reveals that the devolution of power as envisaged in the 73rd Amendment Act is yet to be achieved fully. So, the state government needs to relook into its approach to rural empowerment, as it's not just the formal duty of the state to hold elections to these bodies but to empower them in letter and spirit as well. Holding elections to Panchayati Raj bodies is no doubt important, but the more important issue is that of making them effective instruments of change and development. On being enquired, the respondents revealed the problems they faced such as

interference from state-level Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), ministers, district-level bureaucracy, district-level politicians, block-level functionaries like Block Development Officers (BDOs) and other village-level government agencies. They not only considered Panchayat members, particularly of the lower rung as illiterate but also incompetent in their day-to-day working. Owing to these reasons Panchayats need to be endowed with clearly defined functions, adequate funds to perform assigned functions and sufficient functionaries to carry out responsibilities effectively.

Table 3: Perception of the Respondents on Decision-Making in Local Development Meeting

Panchayat Division	Who do you think is the most influential in the decision-making process?					Total
	Villagers' Opinions	Panchayat Members	Local Party Leaders	Govt. Officials	Don't Know	
Mebo	9 (30.0%)	5 (16.7%)	11 (36.7%)	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	6 (20.0%)	5 (16.7%)	15 (50.0%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	5 (16.7%)	9 (30.0%)	13 (43.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	20 (22.2%)	19 (21.1%)	39 (43.3%)	5 (5.6%)	7 (7.8%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

With regards to the query about who they consider is the most influential in the decision-making process, 22.2 per cent of the respondents think villagers' opinions as the most influential in decision-making with regard to issues concerning the village, while 21.1 per cent hold Panchayat members as the most influential in decision making in rural development of village, 43.3 per cent opined local party leaders as the most influential in decision making, 5.6 per cent hold government officials as the most influential in decision making and 7.8 per cent are not aware of who is the most influential in decision making in village issues.

The overall analysis shows that local party leaders have the highest influence on decision-making. Reason can be attributed to the party politics, as everybody is involved directly or indirectly in party politics, also, it's not possible to sideline the party politics as every household gives the top priority to the party they support or belong to. As party politics has a strong root, even grassroots leaders identify themselves with the party they belong to and work at the behest of their party leaders, and it's difficult for them to function outside the party ideology and party leaders.

Training

The training of Panchayat bodies is an essential topic of discussion, as without getting well trained the very existence of Panchayat institutions is doubtful in the rural development process. The training and supervision of Panchayat members and officials involved in rural development activities is one of the objective and tested tools for the improvement of rural areas. Further, the implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes are very challenging tasks that call for effective government machinery as well as non-governmental machinery. The elected local representatives, at all levels, are to be armed with skills and knowledge to perform their obligations. Keeping in view these objectives, the central government sponsored three-tier training institutions like the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) at the national level, the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) at the state level and the Extension Training Centre (ETC) at district level needs to be activated.

Many central and state-level committees that reviewed the functioning of local institutions of self-government, by and large, expressed that the working of these institutions generally suffers due to the fact that a large number of its members are illiterate. However, almost all these committees opined that they did not consider it necessary to lay down any educational qualifications for the elected representatives. A number of committees, both at the state and central levels strongly advocated that training is the best measure for making these grassroots institutions successful. Hence, taking this into account a query was forwarded to the Panchayat members to understand whether they have undergone any training.

Table 4: Perception of the Respondents on the Training Programme

Panchayat Division	Have you undergone any training programme?		Total
	Yes	No	
Mebo	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	45 (50.0%)	45 (50.0%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

Training of Panchayat bodies is very essential so as to make them enough competent to work out and empower themselves to know their actual power and usages. However, the training of Panchayat bodies is not satisfactory as per the table with regards to the training of Panchayat members, 50 per cent of the respondents opined that they have undergone a training programme while 50 per cent opined that they have not undergone any training programme. To make democratic decentralisation a success, the elected Panchayati members must be well-trained and made conscious of their responsibilities. Training of elected Panchayat representatives may be understood as the process by which rural leadership talent is developed and energised to meet the present and future needs of the participatory system of development. It encompasses a continuing process of learning so as to induce effective performance of self-governing institutions.

Problems in Execution

The provision of basic infrastructure facilities is a pre-condition for the success of rural development programmes. For this District Planning Committee and Development Boards are being endorsed to efficiently implement the district-level schemes and also identify the areas and groups of people at the grassroots level, which need special attention for equitable socio-economic growth. The District Planning Committee and Development Boards are the competent authority to select executing agencies for executing the works with decentralised funds and administrative approval is accorded by these boards. In consonance with the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, efforts are being made to transfer the fund, function and functionary to the Panchayati Raj Institutions through these district planning committees. An integrated approach is important in this regard because the process involves a sharing of power between national and local levels. Understanding of socio-agronomic situations to which policies have to be adapted and the development of participatory arrangements at the field level needs the involvement of Panchayat Institutions so as to make development policy effective.

In view of the above discussion, certain queries were asked of the Panchayat respondents to understand their opinions about infrastructure facilities and problems in the execution of rural development schemes in the study area.

Table 5: Perception of Respondents on Party Affiliation of Panchayat Members

Panchayat Division	Do you think party affiliation is a barrier to fulfilling responsibilities?			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Mebo	18 (60.0%)	4 (13.3%)	8 (26.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	15 (50.0%)	4 (13.3%)	11 (36.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	19 (63.3%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (36.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	52 (57.8%)	8 (8.9%)	30 (33.3%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

With regard to the query, “Do you think party affiliation is a barrier in fulfilling responsibilities as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act”, 57.8 per cent of respondents opined that party affiliation is a barrier in fulfilling responsibilities, while 8.9 per cent held that party affiliation is not a barrier and 33.3 per cent respondents do not have any idea about party affiliation as a barrier in fulfilling responsibilities in the Panchayat system as given in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The analysis of the table indicates party affiliation as a barrier to fulfilling responsibilities. Reason can be attributed to party politics, as it has strong roots in democratic political institutions. Grassroot Panchayat leaders are parts of a political party and work at the behest of their party leaders, the local bodies are not powerful enough in many areas to accelerate the process of decentralization, as there is a vote nexus between local level leadership with that of political leaders at the state and national level. In elections, the top leaders increasingly rely upon the local leaders who happen to be in close association with the economically and socially powerful rural rich, which gives the upper hand to the local party leaders in having control over the development issues. Due to these reasons, it becomes difficult for the Panchayat leaders to work independently, as they need the contestant support of party leaders for their next election.

The Panchayat bodies are regarded as an institution of popular control over administration and make administrative machinery relatively more responsive to the local people. They are considered to be a medium of implementation and development in the rural areas. But, Panchayat bodies are handicapped most of the time because of problems such as lack of exposure, half-hearted attitudes of panchayat officials, party politics, lack of information, etc.

Table 6: Perception of Respondents on Implementation of Developmental Schemes

Panchayat Division	Difficulties Faced in Implementing Developmental Schemes					Total
	Party Leaders Determine the agenda of PRIs	work as per the Govt guidelines	Social elites Influence the working	No unity among the members	Interference from district administration	
Mebo	12 (40.0%)	3 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)	7 (23.3%)	6 (20.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	9 (30.0%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (16.7%)	6 (20.0%)	6 (20.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	10 (33.3%)	3 (10.0%)	6 (20.0%)	8 (26.7%)	3 (10.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	31 (34.4%)	10 (11.1%)	13 (14.4%)	21 (23.3%)	15 (16.7%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

With regards to the difficulties in implementation of rural development schemes, 34.4 per cent respondents opined that the party leaders determine the agenda of Panchayati Raj Institutions in implementation of rural development schemes, while 11.1 per cent replied they have to work as per the guidelines of the government, 14.4 per cent thinks social elites influence the working, 23.3 expressed there is no unity among the members and 16.7 per cent attributes to interference from district administration regarding the difficulties faced while implementing developmental schemes.

The close analysis of their response reveals that implementation of developmental schemes is a difficult task, not because of the inefficiency of executing agencies but due to the involvement of various stakeholders. As it has been analyzed, from the announcement of a scheme to completion, it undergoes several procedures. Most of the time problems arise due to non-consensus in decision making and approach among the participants involved. Even, local grassroot bodies are not exceptional; they too face the interferences from various angles in carrying forward a plan or scheme.

The Panchayat bodies are meant for grassroot level development and there should not be any interference from any politicians or political parties on the working of these institutions. The interference in the working will disturb the institutions from achieving their objectives leading to a politicisation of the selection of both beneficiaries and location or sites. The political interference will also lead to the selection of near and dear ones as beneficiaries on the basis of party lines. Accordingly, a query was asked to Panchayat representatives regarding the interference of political parties in the matter of Panchayati Raj Institutions and influence in the decision-making process by the political parties.

Table 7: Perceptions of Respondents on the Role of Political Parties at the Time of Implementation

Panchayat Division	Do political parties have the upper hand in the RD programme?		Total
	Yes	No	
Mebo	25 (83.3%)	5 (16.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	81 (90.0%)	9 (10.0%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

In response to the above query, 90.0 per cent of the respondents hold the view that political parties have the upper hand in rural development programmes while 10.0 per cent think that political parties don't have the upper hand. This indicates that the political party leaders have the upper hand in the implementation of rural development programmes in rural areas and the local institutions merely become the contact point of interaction between the government and the grassroot people without much power. The reality of unequal distribution of power and uneven political representation in decision-making processes at the local level is reflected in the study.

Further, to understand whether the politician or any other portfolio holders of political parties interfere in the process of implementation of rural development schemes and their influence on Panchayat members in the study area, a query was put forward to the Panchayat representatives.

Table 8: Perception of the Respondents on the Influence of Party Leaders

Panchayat Division	Do MPs and MLAs of the district influence the PRIs		Total
	Yes	No	
Mebo	27 (90.0%)	3 (10.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	28 (93.3%)	2 (6.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	30 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	85 (94.4%)	5 (5.6%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

The data above reveals that 94.4 per cent of respondents are of the view that the preparations of the district plan are controlled and influenced by the politicians (MPs and MLAs of the area) and local party leaders. They hold the view that politicians and party leaders always try to get the work done in their favour. Since most of the representatives of the Panchayats are not well versed and not well aware of guidelines, the politicians take advantage of that and influence the preparation and implementation of developmental plans. On the other hand, 5.6 per cent of respondents considered that there is no influence at all from the party and leaders of the party.

Overall picture of the table indicates that preparations for the district plan are controlled and influenced by the politicians (MPs and MLAs of the area) and local leaders. Hence, the study suggests that the Panchayat bodies should be given autonomy with indispensable political and administrative support from all corners to attain the objectives of rural development in the state. It is expected that the political and administrative wisdom of the state with the cooperation of civil society interpret the Central legislation in its letter and spirit and create a vibrant and sustained decentralised democracy to fulfil the expectations and aspirations of the people of the state.

Consultation with state leaders is important as Article 243G of the constitution says subject to the provision of the constitution, the state legislature may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain a provision for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayat at the appropriate level, such conditions as may be specified therein concerning: (a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; (b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the eleventh schedule.

Table 9: Opinions of the Respondents About Consultation to Leaders

Panchayat block	Should PRI members consult the political leaders in their function?		Total
	Yes	No	
Mebo	10 (33.3%)	20 (66.7%)	30 (100.0%)

Pasighat	12 (40%)	18 (60.00%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	10 (33.3%)	20 (66.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	32 (35.6%)	58 (64.4%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

In response to the query regarding consultation, 35.6 per cent of respondents opines that Panchayat members should consult the political leaders in their function and 64.4 per cent think that Panchayat members should not consult the political leaders in their function.

Financial Sources

Financial powers and financial autonomy are the most important aspects of local institutions, without which the role of Panchayats with regard to rural development is meaningless. Although the Panchayat guideline gives the provision of financial powers and financial autonomy as per the constitution, at ground level, it is absent, even levying local tax is impractical in states like Arunachal Pradesh. Instead, they are dependent on time to time financial aid from the state government. And the state government instead of making them units of self-government treated them as its agency. So, an attempt has been made here to understand the financial sources of Panchayats in the study area.

Table 10: Perception of the Respondents on the Source of Finance

Panchayat Division	What are the main sources of finance for Panchayats?				Total
	Govt Funds	Local Taxes	Public Contribution	Others	
Mebo	18 (60.0%)	8 (26.7%)	3 (10.0%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	20 (66.7%)	8 (26.7%)	2 (6.7%)	0	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	21 (70.0%)	8 (26.7%)	0	1 (3.3%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	59 (65.6%)	24 (26.7%)	5 (5.6%)	2 (2.2%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

With regard to the financial sources of Panchayats, the data above reveals that 65.6 per cent of the respondents considered government funds as the main source of the Panchayat fund and only 26.7 per cent considered that fund of the Panchayat comes from local taxes, while 5.6 per cent considered public contribution as source of finance and 2.2 per cent attribute to others. Finance is a sine qua non for any economic activity. Devolving functions to Panchayat without any corresponding devolution of financial power is meaningless. One of the important factors for the dismal performance of the Panchayats in the past has been that they do not have their own resources. They have to look always towards the state government.

Table 11: Perceptions of the Respondents on Sources of Taxes

Panchayat Division	What are the taxes levied and collected by your panchayat in the area?			Total
	House and structures within the local limits	Trades and calling carried on or within the locality	Supply of water for drinking, irrigation or any other	
Mebo	2 (6.7%)	27 (90.0%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	2 (6.7%)	28 (93.3%)	0	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	1 (3.3%)	28 (93.3%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	5 (5.6%)	83 (92.2%)	2 (2.2%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

With regard to the type of taxes levied and collected by the Panchayats in the area as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 5.6 per cent of respondents attribute to taxes collected from houses and structures within the local limits, while 92.2 per cent think taxes are collected through trades and calling carried on or held within the local limits and 2.2 per cent rely on supply of water for drinking, irrigation or any other for collection of taxes (Table 11).

Table 12: Perception of the respondents on government grants

Panchayat Division	Do PRIs receive government grants?			Total
	Yes	No	No Response	
Mebo	10 (33.3%)	6 (20.0%)	14 (46.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Pasighat	9 (30.0%)	4 (13.3%)	17 (56.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Ruksin	9 (30.0%)	4 (13.3%)	17 (56.7%)	30 (100.0%)
Total	28 (31.1%)	14 (15.6%)	48 (53.3%)	90 (100.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

With regard to their perception of government grants from central and state governments, table 3.19 shows that 31.1 per cent of the respondents think they receive government grants, 15.6 per cent think they do not receive government grants, 53.3 per cent do not have any say on receiving of government grants.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions, as a unit of local self-government for rural development, render service to the local people and facilitate the mechanism of democratic decentralisation essential for strengthening democracy in this nascent state. However, the study reveals the necessity of complete devolution of power to Panchayati Raj Institutions as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The study found difficulty in exercising their power. Most of the respondents hold the opinion that a true or actual devolution of powers to the Panchayat is yet to be realised. Thus, it can be viewed that in the absence of complete decentralisation of powers, Panchayati Raj Institutions cannot discharge their duties effectively and efficiently.

It was also observed from the study that, due to political interference in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the majority of the respondents feel that Panchayati Raj Institutions in their districts are not functioning independently and in the right direction and Panchayat schemes are not being successfully implemented in their locality. The main reason they attribute is the involvement of politicians and party leaders and the consideration of party affiliation in the selection of beneficiaries. This creates problems not only in the selection of the beneficiaries but also affects policy formulation and implementation of the project plans.

The study also reveals a lack of training for the majority of Panchayat members about rural development programmes and the poor coordination between the Panchayat members and government officials or local-level bureaucracy with regard to the implementation of plan projects. There is a lot of indifferent attitude and reluctance towards Panchayat members by local level bureaucracy, politicians and state government in the devolution of power and funds to the local bodies. In brief, it can be concluded from the study that most of the works performed by the Panchayati Raj Institutions are largely dependent on the will of political parties, politicians and administrators in the power set-up of the state. Hence, there is a need to look into the lacuna or drawbacks to make Panchayats effective and efficient as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

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