

Original Research Article

Role and Functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh: An Analytical Study

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Abstract: Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), established under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, are the backbone of decentralized governance and grassroots democracy in rural India. This research will analyse the structure, the roles and the functions, and the challenges faced by Panchayati Raj Institutions in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, which is characterised by diversity in tribal identity, geographical isolation and socio-cultural heterogeneity. The methodology used for this study is descriptive, analytical, and exploratory, and is based on secondary data sources. This study has illustrated how PRIs are being used as tools of participatory governance, rural development, and social transformation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The study has also shown that PRIs were established as a three-tier structure Gram Panchayat, Anchal Samiti and Zilla Parishad yet are frequently functioning as a two-tier system because of functionalities at the intermediate level. PRIs contribute to the implementation of development programmes, facilitate inclusive participation by members of their communities, ensure the delivery of services to their constituents, and promote accountability. At the same time, PRIs are constrained from realising their true potential as a result of barriers such as insufficient financial autonomy; the lack of basic infrastructure; limited administrative capacity; geographical isolation; and the co-existence of traditional tribal institutions. To maximise the effectiveness of PRIs in achieving sustainable, inclusive rural development in Arunachal Pradesh, strengthening PRIs through increased devolution of powers, capacity building, and improved institutional co-ordination will be imperative.

Keywords: Decentralization, Rural Development, Grassroots Governance, Tribal Society, Local Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are the locus of the decentralized governance in rural India, which aims at encouraging the democratic participation, local self-governance, and inclusive development at the grassroots level. The introduction of PRIs in the Constitution by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was a major step towards democratic decentralization as it gave local bodies in the rural areas administrative, fiscal and functional autonomy. The PRIs have a critical role to play in participatory governance and sustainable rural development in a place such as Arunachal Pradesh that is characterized by tribal diversity, geographical isolation and social cultural heterogeneity. PRIs are legal elected entities in the village, intermediate, and district levels in Arunachal Pradesh that enables the local communities to participate in the decision-making processes. These institutions are not just administrative units but are important tools of socio-economic change particularly in tribal areas where old systems of governance coexist with the new ones of democracy. According to Ramya (2014), PRIs at the state level are significant in enhancing the democratic framework of the society by making people participate and ensure that development projects are in tandem with the local needs and ambitions.

The main aim of PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh is to facilitate holistic development of rural areas through infrastructure development, livelihood development and ensuring proper provision of public services in the form of education, health and sanitation. The preparation and implementation of development plans, management of local resources, and implementation of different government schemes are entrusted to these institutions. Moreover, PRIs serve

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as a mediator between the government and the rural people hence promoting accountability and transparency in governance. The process of decentralisation, according to different views of development, allows the active involvement of local communities in planning and implementation and results in more efficient and context-related developmental results (Chauhan, 2014; Kadam, 2012, as cited in Ramya, 2014). The other important aspect of PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh is that it contributes to social empowerment and inclusion. The system has ensured increased involvement of the marginalized communities such as women and tribal communities in local governance. Reservation has enabled women to participate in and influence politics and decision making at the grassroots level much more effectively, which has led to gender empowerment and social equity. PRIs can offer a formalized way of inclusive governance and democratic representation, in a socio-cultural context that is commonly characterized by the dominance of traditional institutions. In addition, PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh are vital in the execution of rural development programmes including Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act (MGNREGA), national rural livelihood mission (NRLM) and other welfare programmes. Their duty is to determine beneficiaries, track implementation, and provide transparency by such mechanisms as social audits. This operational position empowers local governance and improves the efficiency of delivering the public policy. To sum up, Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh are dynamic agents of grassroots democracy, rural development and social transformation. Through the combination of the traditional community and the modern governance systems, PRIs play a great role in participatory development, institutional accountability and inclusive growth in the state.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has tried:

1. To find out the structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. To explore the roles played by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh.
3. To assess the functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh.
4. To examine the challenges faced by PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Nature of the Study: This research is descriptive, analytical and exploratory. The purpose of the research is to investigate the structure, roles, functions and challenges of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh, as part of the larger context of democratic decentralisation and rural governance. **2. Research Approach:** The research will be conducted in a qualitative manner because it focuses on the institutional processes, governance mechanisms, socio-political realities and development functions of PRIs rather than on numerical measurement alone. **3. Research Design:** The research uses a case study approach with Arunachal Pradesh as the unit of analysis, with particular attention to the unique tribal, geographical and administrative aspects of the state. **4. Sources of Data:** The research is based entirely on secondary sources of data that have been gathered from sources such as books, peer-reviewed journals, government reports, census data, policy documents, research dissertations and constitutional/legal documents. **5. Legal and Policy Analysis:** Important constitutional and legal provisions such as the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution (1992), the 11th Schedule of the Constitution and the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act (1997) will be closely examined to review the legal basis for PRI functioning in the state.

2. Data Analysis Methodology: Data collected has been reviewed using content analysis and thematic interpretation and is compared to establish themes of governance, development, participation, empowerment and the challenges faced by institutions.

3. Study Area: The geographical area of study is Arunachal Pradesh and the focus of this study is the performance of PRIs in rural and tribal areas of Arunachal Pradesh where formal democratic institutions and traditional governance systems co-exist.

4. Aim of Analysis: The methodology has been created to measure the efficacy of PRIs in terms of their contribution to implement grassroots democracy and inclusive governance, rural development and socio-economic changes in Arunachal Pradesh.

5. Theoretical Framework: This study is based on the principles of democratic decentralisation and participatory governance which focuses on the participation of citizens in the planning of rural administration, the provision of local autonomy for citizens, holding citizens accountable through their political leaders, and promoting bottom up planning at the local level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh are established by the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997 that operationalises the decentralised governance contained in the 73 rd Amendment of the Constitution. But, because of the tribal makeup of the state, geographical isolation, and administrative factors, the PRI system is both constitutionally designed and regionally modified. It is a broadly three-tier system, with Gram Panchayat, Anchal Samiti, and Zilla Parishad, anchored by the Gram Sabha, but in actuality tends to be a two-tier system (Ramya, 2014; Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997).

The PRIs have included:

1. Gram Sabha: Foundation of the PRI Structure: The Gram Sabha is the foundation of grassroots democracy and is located at the bottom of the Panchayati Raj system. It comprises all the registered voters in a village or collection of villages under a Gram Panchayat. The Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997 defines Gram Sabha as a group of persons that are registered in the electoral roll of a village area. It is a deliberative, participative institution, and decision making on development planning, identification of beneficiaries and social audits are done. Researchers point out that in tribal governments such as Arunachal Pradesh, the Gram Sabha is very instrumental in merging the traditional practice with formal politics, which enhances participatory democracy (Lollen, 2017; Ramya, 2014).

2. Gram Panchayat at Village Level: The Gram Panchayat is the lowest level of the PRI structure and an executive body of Gram Sabha. It is constituted on a village or a group of villages and has the authority of executing development programmes and running local affairs.

The Act clearly stipulates the constitution of Gram Panchayats by statutory provisions. The Gram Panchayat members are directly elected and the body has a chairperson who leads the body. The Gram Panchayat is composed of:

- a) Elected members, directly elected by the territorial constituency.
- b) A Chairperson who is elected out of the members.
- c) Representation on the basis of population and territorial divisions.

The Gram Panchayat is the main administrative body, in charge of rural infrastructure, sanitation, drinking water, local roads, and the execution of programs like MGNREGA. It also ensures the financial accounts and local records, as required by the Act.

3. Intermediate Level: Anchal Samiti (Block Level): The middle level in Arunachal Pradesh is called Anchal Samiti, equivalent to Panchayat Samiti in other states (block-level).

The Act offers the following: The government can declare an area to be an Anchal Block. Each block has an Anchal Samiti which is a corporate body with administrative and developmental functions. Organisationally, the Anchal Samiti:

- a) Refers to a group of Gram Panchayats.
- b) Playing the role of a connection between village and district level governance.
- c) Brings together development plans that Gram Panchayats had prepared.
- d) Makes block-level budgets and development programmes.

The Act also designates roles like development of agriculture, disaster relief and coordination of the rural development schemes to the Anchal Samiti. But the existing empirical evidence has shown that in Arunachal Pradesh, the intermediate level tends to be administratively weaker or less effective and results in a two-tier system de facto (Ramya, 2014).

4. Zilla Parishad: District Level: The top of the PRI organization is Zilla Parishad, the organization that works on the district level and is the main planning and coordinating organization. The Act requires that Zilla Parishad be established in every district. Its composition includes:

- a) Directly elected territorial members.
- b) Anchal Samitis chairpersons (ex-officio members).
- c) Parliament members (MPs) and legislative assembly members (MLAs), representing the district (ex-officio).
- d) At least one-third of seats to be reserved to women.

Zilla Parishad is in charge of:

- a) Planning and integration of development schemes at the district level.
- b) Oversight and organization of Anchal Samitis and Gram Panchayats.
- c) Preparation of district development plans.
- d) Adoption of sectoral programmes like agriculture, irrigation and rural infrastructure.

It, therefore, becomes the ultimate decision-making body on PRI framework at the district level.

5. Composition, Representation, and Eligibility: Democratic representation and inclusiveness characterise PRIs structure in Arunachal Pradesh. All the levels are directly elected and the eligibility rules are spelt out in the Act. An example is that one has to be 21 years and other requirements before one can be regarded as a member. The following are important structural features:

- a) Scheduling Tribes (based on the demographic makeup of the state)
- b) At least one-third of seats to be reserved by the women.
- c) Higher levels inclusion of elected representatives and ex-officio members.

These are provisions that provide inclusive governance and political participation (Mishra, 2018).

6. Continuity, Dissolution, and Tenure: The tenure of all PRI bodies in Arunachal Pradesh is fixed at five years and this has provided a sense of stability in their governance. There are, however, instances of incompetence or power abuse by a Gram Panchayat, Anchal Samiti, or Zilla Parishad that may result in the state government dissolving it. The Act clearly states that upon dissolution:

If members vacate office:

- a) The body should be reconstituted in six months.
- b) Interim government may appoint interim administration.

The provision guarantees accountability as well as continuity in local governance.

7. Versatility of Functionality: Binary Reality-Based Functionality: Despite the framework established under statute for a three-tiered structure, studies indicate that, in practice, Arunachal Pradesh operates as a two-tiered system (Gram Panchayat and Zilla Parishad), which is primarily due to the Anchal Samiti's limited functional responsibilities. The structural adaptation indicators are as follows:

- a) Difficult terrain and sparse population
- b) Strong influence of customary tribal institutions
- c) Constraints and limitations for administrative functioning within blocks

Ramya (2014) argues that this evolution of the structure does not devalue decentralization but instead complements it by accommodating the unique sociocultural realities of local populations.

8. Integration of Traditional Institutions: Panchayati Raj institutions in Arunachal Pradesh are notable and unique because of their integration with traditional tribal councils and customary institutions. Both institutions function in a complementary manner and continue to be critical to dispute resolution and social governance. As noted by Lollen (2017): This hybrid governance system that has resulted from this dual structure enhances community participation and legitimacy because formal Panchayati Raj institutions co-exist with customary practices. Thus, panchayati raj institutions in Arunachal Pradesh are an amalgam of constitutional provisions and local variations. Although legally established as three-tiered Gram Panchayat, Anchal Samiti, Zilla Parishad in reality, they predominantly operate as two-tiered. Rural development and grassroots governance work best in Arunachal Pradesh when using the Gram Sabha as a basis for the structure of Panchayati Raj institutions since it is both contextually and functionally significant.

Roles of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh perform a wide range of roles that extend beyond mere administrative functions to encompass democratic participation, rural development, social transformation, and local governance. Rooted in the framework of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, PRIs in the state function as instruments of decentralized governance, adapted to the tribal socio-cultural context. Their roles are multidimensional and are critical for achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development (Ramya, 2014).

1. Promotion of Democratic Decentralization and Grassroots Governance: One of the primary roles of PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh is to strengthen democratic decentralization by transferring decision-making power from the state to local bodies. PRIs enable rural populations to participate directly in governance through elected representatives and Gram Sabha deliberations. As observed by Ramya (2014), PRIs act as institutions of local self-government that "strengthen the democratic structure of society" by ensuring people's participation in planning and decision-making processes. This participatory framework is particularly significant in Arunachal Pradesh, where decentralization helps bridge administrative gaps caused by difficult terrain and dispersed settlements.

2. Role in Rural Development and Infrastructure Creation: PRIs play a central role in planning and implementing rural development programmes, including infrastructure development such as roads, drinking water supply, sanitation, housing, and electrification. Rural development is conceptualized as a multi-sectoral activity involving improvements in

agriculture, education, health, and communication systems, all of which are facilitated by PRIs (Ramya, 2014). The Department of Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh coordinates with PRIs to implement various flagship schemes and civil works at the grassroots level, ensuring last-mile delivery of services.

3. Implementation of Government Schemes and Welfare Programmes: Another crucial role of PRIs is the execution of central and state-sponsored schemes such as MGNREGA, NRLM, PMAY-G, and other welfare initiatives. PRIs are responsible for:

- a) Identification of beneficiaries
- b) Monitoring implementation
- c) Ensuring transparency and accountability
- d) Conducting social audits

Through these functions, PRIs act as a link between the government and rural citizens, facilitating efficient policy implementation and reducing administrative delays (Ramya, 2014).

4. Economic Development and Livelihood Promotion: PRIs contribute significantly to local economic development by promoting agriculture, allied activities, rural industries, and employment generation. They support initiatives aimed at improving income levels and reducing rural poverty. The literature highlights that PRIs are entrusted with responsibilities related to land management, agricultural development, and rural employment, thereby enhancing livelihood opportunities in tribal regions (Kadam, 2012; Chauhan, 2014, as cited in Ramya, 2014).

5. Social Justice, Inclusion, and Empowerment: PRIs play a vital role in promoting social justice and inclusive governance, particularly in a tribal-dominated state like Arunachal Pradesh. They ensure representation and participation of marginalized groups, including Scheduled Tribes and women. The reservation of seats for women (at least one-third) has significantly increased their participation in grassroots politics, contributing to gender empowerment and decision-making capacity. Thus, PRIs function as platforms for social transformation and empowerment, addressing inequalities and promoting equitable development.

6. Planning and Local Resource Management: PRIs are actively involved in decentralized planning and management of local resources. They prepare village-level development plans based on local needs and priorities, which are then integrated into higher-level plans. This bottom-up planning approach ensures that development interventions are context-specific and sustainable, particularly in ecologically sensitive and tribal areas (Ramya, 2014).

7. Delivery of Basic Services: PRIs are responsible for ensuring the provision of basic public services, including:

- a) Primary education
- b) Healthcare facilities
- c) Drinking water supply
- d) Sanitation and hygiene
- e) Nutrition and welfare services

Studies indicate that PRIs facilitate the establishment of schools, health sub-centres, and other social infrastructure in rural areas, thereby improving the quality of life of rural populations (Ramya, 2014).

8. Strengthening Accountability and Transparency: PRIs enhance accountability in governance by introducing mechanisms such as Gram Sabha meetings, social audits, and community monitoring. These mechanisms ensure that public funds are utilized effectively and that corruption is minimized. The participatory nature of PRIs enables citizens to hold elected representatives accountable, thereby improving governance outcomes and institutional transparency (Ramya, 2014).

9. Integration with Traditional Tribal Institutions: A distinctive role of PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh is their ability to coexist and interact with traditional tribal institutions. This integration helps in maintaining cultural continuity while promoting modern democratic governance. PRIs complement customary institutions by formalizing governance processes and extending development initiatives without undermining traditional authority structures (Lollen, 2017).

10. Conflict Resolution and Local Governance Support: Although traditional institutions dominate dispute resolution in many tribal areas, PRIs also contribute to local governance and minor dispute resolution, particularly in matters related to development, land use, and welfare schemes.

Therefore, Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh play a vital role in democratic decentralization, rural development, and social justice. Their presence strengthens institutional governance and reduces dependence on external administrative mechanisms.

FUNCTIONS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS (PRIs)

The roles of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Arunachal Pradesh are elaborated within largely the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997, and more specifically its Schedules that assign to various levels of local government a broad scope of developmental, administrative, and welfare functions. These roles are correlated to the larger system of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment that enables PRIs to be self-government institutions in 29 subjects enumerated in the Eleventh Schedule. PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh have both general and sector specific functions, which are based on the socio-economic requirements of a tribal and geographically diverse state (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997).

A. General Administrative and Developmental Functions.

PRIs also carry out the main administrative tasks which are fundamental to the local government and planning. These include:

- a) Planning of annual development and budgets.
- b) Village level statistics and records.
- c) Development schemes coordination and supervision.
- d) Ejection of encroachments of public property.

Mobilization of voluntary labour (shramdaan), working on community works.

1. Relief in case of natural disasters: These functions, make sure that PRIs are the local planning and governance units, which are in a position to meet the needs of the grassroots (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997). PRIs (Zilla Parishads) at the district level also play the role of integrating and coordinating development programmes, which makes the difference of coherence in the district planning.

2. Agriculture and related activities: (a) PRIs have a wide range of responsibilities in agriculture since it is the main source of rural livelihoods in Arunachal Pradesh. Their functions include:

- a) Modern agricultural practices and technologies should be promoted.
- b) Setting up and running of farmlands and training centres.
- c) Arrangement of farm fairs and shows.
- d) Development of wastelands and grazing lands.

(b) Capacity-building and training of farmers: Allied activities supported by PRIs include animal husbandry, dairy farming, poultry and piggery consequently serving to diversify livelihoods (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997).

3. Soil Conservation, Natural Resource Management and Land Improvement: (a) The PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh are also used to manage the environment, and use of resources in a sustainable manner, especially in ecologically sensitive tribal regions. Their functions include:

- a) Introduction of land improvement and soil conservation programmes.
- b) Land degradation and erosion will be prevented.
- c) Grazing lands and community resources.

(b) Promotion of social forestry and afforestation: These functions play an important role in ensuring a balance in the ecology and a sustainable agricultural productivity.

4. Minor Irrigation and Water Management and Watershed Development.

PRIs oversee the local water resources, which are also critical to the livelihoods of rural populations and agriculture. Their functions include:

- a) Building, repairing and maintenance of small irrigation systems.
- b) Providing a fair allocation of water.
- c) Development of watershed projects
- d) Encouragement of effective water management activities.

The activities also contribute to the enhancement of agriculture productivity and climate variability resilience (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997).

5. Rural Infrastructure Development: PRIs are very important in the development and upkeep of simple rural infrastructure such as:

- a) Building and repair of village roads, bridges and government buildings.
- b) Provisions: Drinking water and sanitation facilities.
- c) Development of rural housing and electrification
- d) The upkeep of community facilities like markets and storage facilities.

These roles are similar to the overall role of PRIs to enhance living standards and rural development.

6. Social Welfare and Human Development Functions: PRIs are also actively engaged in fostering social justice and human development especially among the tribal communities. Their functions include:

- a) Introduction of education, health and nutrition programmes.
- b) Child welfare and development of women.
- c) Support to weaker groups such as Scheduled Tribes.
- d) Facilitation of primary education and adult literacy.

These areas are also the focus of the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution as the important spheres of PRI intervention.

7. Alleviation of the Poverty and Job Creation: The PRIs undertake to carry out poverty alleviation and employment schemes like MGNREGA and rural livelihood schemes. Their functions include:

- a) Identification of beneficiaries
- b) Implementation and supervision of employment schemes.
- c) Encouragement of rural self-employment and rural ventures.

These services help to generate and alleviate poverty in the rural regions (YourArticleLibrary, 2014).

8. Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Functions: Since Arunachal Pradesh is rich in forests, PRIs have responsibilities that pertain to:

- a) Social forestry and minor forest produce development and management.
- b) Promotion of fisheries in rural areas.
- c) Simple: saving of fuel and fodder.
- d) Protection of local biodiversity.

These roles bring out the balancing between development and environmental sustainability by PRIs (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997).

9. Financial and Revenue Functions: PRIs also conduct critical financial services, which include:

- a) Preparation and management of budgets
- b) Using central and state government grants.
- c) Keeping of books and records of finances.
- d) Mobilization of the local resources where possible.

Financial management is the key in ensuring that development programmes are well implemented and that there is accountability in the governance (Government of Arunachal Pradesh, 1997).

10. Coordination, Monitoring and Supervisory Functions: At the higher levels (Anchal Samiti and Zilla Parishad) PRIs conduct the coordination and supervisory functions including:

- a) Checking the operation of Gram Panchayats.
- b) Organizing inter-village development schemes.
- c) Assuring a good implementation of government schemes.
- d) Incorporation of local plans in the development strategies at the district level.

These roles make sure that there are administrative coherence and efficiency at various levels of governance.

11. Community Mobilisation, Participatory Governance: As a primary vehicle for community mobilisation, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) facilitate community involvement through a variety of channels. Some key channels through which PRIs facilitate community involvement include:

- a. The Gram Sabha.
- b. The social audit and public accountability processes.
- c. Awareness-building campaigns to improve access to development programmes.

The contribution of PRIs in mobilising community participation enhances participatory democracy and encourages transparency at the local level.

The functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh bridge the spectrum of administrative, developmental, economic, social and environmental responsibilities, hence have a broad and multi-faceted approach to public service delivery.

The functions of PRIs are also influenced by the 1997 Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act and the Constitution, whereby they act as crucial instruments of decentralised governance and rural transformation. The scope of PRIs' function encompasses national priorities but also meets the needs of local populations, making PRIs indispensable to achieving sustainable and inclusive development in Arunachal Pradesh.

CHALLENGES FACED BY PRIs

Although Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are constitutionally mandated and important in terms of development, there are significant structural, administrative, socio-cultural and geographical challenges to the institution. All these challenges hamper their efficiency in providing grassroots governance and inclusive rural development. The limitations are state-specific (contextual) and systemic (common in the whole of India), yet they are more pronounced in Arunachal Pradesh because of its specifics of the terrain and tribal socio-political processes (Ramya, 2014).

1. Geographical and Physical limitations: The poor geographical terrain of Arunachal Pradesh, which is mountainous, full of forests, and with decentralised settlements, is one of the most significant challenges of the region. Such circumstances impose severe obstacles to the governance and service provision. In regional studies, the distance between villages and the inability to be connected make PRIs work efficiently and to hold meetings, track development activities, and provide administrative coverage. Geographical isolation also makes development undertakings more expensive and decreases the rate of institutional relations and strengthens the weakened governance at the grassroots.

2. Inadequate Infrastructure: Tightly connected with the problem of geographical difficulties is the problem of inadequate infrastructure, such as absence of roads, communications, electricity and digital connections. Lack of proper infrastructure does not only suppress economic development but also limits the functioning of PRIs on schemes and provision of basic services. In addition, a lack of digital infrastructure is a problem in the implementation of e-governance systems, which are becoming more and more essential to the administrative operation.

3. Lack of Financial Autonomy (Funds Constraint): One of the key structural problems of PRIs is a lack of financial independence which is sometimes referred to as the three Fs problem- funds, functions and functionaries. Arunachal Pradesh PRIs are majorly relying on state and central government grants, having low ability to raise their own income. The unpredictable funds flows, bureaucracy, and poor local tax base further limit their financial operations. This economic dependence limits their chances of undertaking their own development projects and to respond to local demands well.

4. Minimal Devolution of functions and powers: There is lack of devolution of functions and authority despite the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution giving 29 subjects to PRIs. Research has shown that most of the critical sectors like education, health and agriculture are still controlled by state departments and the PRIs are left to the implementing agencies instead of independent decision making organs. This brings about confusion of roles and reduced institutional power of PRIs.

5. Skilled Human Resources (Functionaries Constraint) shortage: There is also a shortage of trained staff and technical know-how in PRIs in Arunachal Pradesh. A lot of elected officials are not well educated, have no experience in administration and lack understanding of how the government works. It is seen that lack of technical capacity results in ineffective planning, implementation and financial mismanagement of projects as seen in governance studies. Also, the lack of support personnel like secretaries, engineers and data operators also undermines the efficiency of the administration.

6. Capacity and Training Shortages: The problem of poor capacity building and training is closely connected with the lack of qualified staff. Most of the representatives of the PRIs lack proper training in governance, financial management, or development planning. This inability to capacity restricts their capability to use the resources available in an effective manner and to interact with complicated administrative procedures.

This issue is magnified in Arunachal Pradesh, where literacy levels and administrative exposure is quite diverse.

7. Lack of Transparency and Corruption: The high level of corruption and poor accountability systems is a major challenge to the proper operation of PRIs. Wasting of funds, transparency in the choice of beneficiaries, and political favours destroy the trust of people. Regional findings indicate that corruption and absence of transparency diminishes the credibility of PRIs and undermines their developmental influence. The lack of effective monitoring mechanisms and a lack of awareness among the population further exacerbates this problem.

8. Constraints of Socio-Cultural and Traditional Institutions: The traditional tribal institutions are very extensive in Arunachal Pradesh, and usually coexist with PRIs. Though this dual system may be complete, in some cases, it results in

conflicts and overlaps in authority. The presence of traditional power structures and popular practices can restrict the involvement of the marginalised groups, especially women, in the PRI operations (Lollen, 2017). The decision making process can also be affected by the socio-cultural norms and thus influence democratic functioning.

9. Low participation and awareness: The other significant issue is that there is low civic participation in Gram Sabha meetings and processes of local governance. The decreasing turnout undermines accountability and enhances top-down decision-making, decreasing the quality of decentralised governance. In most instances, ignorance regarding rights, schemes and institutional roles constrain community participation.

10. Interference with Administration and Political Intervention: Higher administrative and political authorities tend to interfere with the work of PRIs, restricting their independence. The existence of parallel bodies and state-controlled agencies limits the functional area of PRIs and they rely on outside decision-making frameworks. This compromises the concept of decentralisation, and weakens the democracy of the grassroots.

11. Weak Institutional Coordination: The coordination between various levels of PRIs (Gram Panchayat, Anchal Samiti and Zilla Parishad) and PRIs and line departments is usually lacking. This contributes to duplication of effort, inefficiencies in programme implementation and sluggish development activities.

12. Digital and Technological issues: As more and more focus is placed on digital governance, PRIs are challenged by:

- a) Absence of digital infrastructure.
- b) Poor internet connectivity
- c) Insufficient digital literacy of the functionaries.

These limitations impair the implementation of e-governance solutions and limit the efficiency of the administration.

Thus, Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh are confronted with a complicated system of problems based on geographical issues, infrastructural inadequacies, less financial and administrative independence, and social-cultural forces. Although the constitutional framework offers a solid basis of decentralised governance, decentralisation of the powers, capacity building, financial empowerment and institutional coordination are needed to have the PRIs to work effectively. These challenges need to be addressed in order to achieve full potential of PRIs as an instrument of grassroots democracy and sustainable rural development.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Secondary source material constitutes the bulk of the research for this study and thus comprehensive data were not possible to collect in the field from original sources.
2. Limitations around both time and resources mean that not all districts in Arunachal Pradesh were able to be analysed in depth.
3. The study's findings may differ among tribal communities due to the cultural diversity present throughout the state.
4. As a result of limited access to timely databases, there are no current statistical records including those specific to local government body (PRI) data available from remote areas which limit the depth of the analysis conducted.
5. The study focuses primarily on institutional aspects, thereby not adequately capturing the grassroots level political dynamics.
6. Analysis of governmental policy changes and administrative reforms after the timeframe of this study may alter its future applicability.
7. Comparative analyses between the PRI systems of Arunachal Pradesh and other Indian states were not included.
8. As the scope of this study encompassed multiple levels of issues, there exist many localised issues/cases that this study did not address.

CONCLUSION

Panchayati Raj Institutions act as multi-functional institutions of grassroots democracy and play a vital role in terms of democratic decentralisation, rural development, social empowerment, and service delivery. They combine the formal system of governance with traditional tribal systems, making them ideally suited to the socio-economic context of Arunachal Pradesh. Furthermore, by facilitating participation, accountability and inclusion in the development process, the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been instrumental in shaping the direction of rural transformation in Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, the Panchayati Raj Institutions are key instruments of grassroots democracy and rural transformation in the state. Through establishing a link between the government and rural communities, ensuring the participation of the rural population, and promoting inclusive development, it will be possible to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh so that they can provide more effective and sustainable governance for rural areas through increased autonomy, capacity building and financial support.

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