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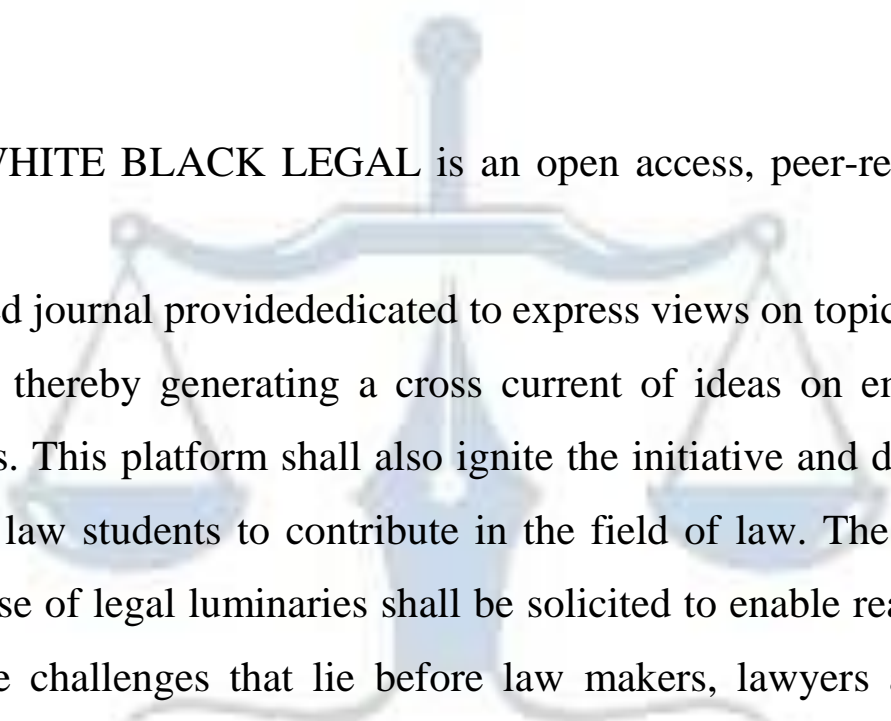


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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

# **TRIBAL LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE: A STUDY OF KUKI VILLAGE COUNCIL IN CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT, MANIPUR**

**- By M Varalakshmi**

## **ABSTRACT**

The oldest method of tribal governance currently in use among Manipur's Kuki tribes is "Housa," or chieftainship. In the Kuki villages of Manipur, chieftainship remains the form of local self-government, despite the fact that it was abolished and replaced by village councils in many tribal areas of the Northeast. From the viewpoint of the chiefs themselves, the current study aims to evaluate the contribution of the Kuki institution of chieftainship to progress. The current study investigates the chiefs' perceived and actual roles. It attempts to provide the chiefs' demographic, social, and economic foundations as an introduction. The current study also looks for the main institutional barriers to leadership in attaining development.

The study's design is exploratory and cross-sectional, and it is founded on the main information gathered using a standardised questionnaire. The study's participants are the village heads in the Kuki regions of Manipur's most and least developed blocks. The study's findings show how resilient the traditional Kuki institution of "Housa" is. In both the most and least developed blocks, the village head always saw both the traditional and developmental functions. The socio-economic foundations of the chiefs' society and their interactions with development officials have not affected how they view their roles. In order to successfully address issues, they recommend empowering and fortifying the chief system, increasing funding for Kuki region development, providing specific financial support to the chief, and incorporating state and district chiefs governance. Nonetheless, others contend that this system should be swapped out for more accountable and democratic local governing structure, akin to the panchayati raj establishments operating in rural India.

**KEYWORDS: Chieftainship, Panchayati Raj, Housa, Kuki Tribes, Local Self-Government**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) formulated a definition of "governance" that is generally suitable for the program: Using administrative, political, and financial authority to monitor a country's operations at all levels is referred to as



"governance." It consists of the procedures, institutions, and systems that enable individuals and groups to complete their responsibilities, exercise their legal rights, express their interests, and resolve conflicts through arbitration. Despite being a relatively recent concept, governance encompasses much more than just administration or plain rule.

Instead, it signifies a commitment to democratic processes, institutions, and principles to ensure social, political, and economic stability. Members of civic society are invited, and the public to work together with the government to promote the common good. Governance is currently evolving within the context of a continuously changing political and social environment (Nalbandian et al., 2013).

Around the world, municipal governments have seen tremendous change in the last 20 or 30 years. External factors including globalisation and economic interdependence, the changing technology geography, as well as the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe are to blame for these changes. Examples of changes occurring within the nation-state include privatisation of public services and local government reform structure, and the modification of inter-governmental relations. Partisanship characterises some changes as political, but other changes may be sociological, such the rise in drug-related crime or the growing social segregation in urban areas. Unavoidable consequences have developed for democratically elected administrations as a result of the constantly changing nature of the modern state and the society it serves (Andrew & Goldsmith, 1998).

Recent developments in effective governance have brought the importance of democratic institutions into closer light. Currently, democracy is viewed as both a means and an objective by itself for achieving social, political, and economic rights. This is a big change from earlier times. For the term to "Governance" to create sense in its broader sense—which comes from using a rights-oriented approach to growth, it needs to be tempered by the term "democratic." This has led to a wider view on how leaders exercise their authority and influence in a manner that is both inclusive and effective in an effort to advance human rights movement, replacing the more traditional and constrained idea of governance as effectiveness in economic management. This more comprehensive view focusses on how leaders utilise their position of authority and power to forward the cause of human rights.<sup>1</sup>

The involvement of a significant number of people is a minimum need for local self-governance. Among the privileges that is included in the more general kind of human rights

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<sup>1</sup> Guite, J. (2018). *The Anglo-Kuki War, 1917–1919: A Frontier Uprising against Imperialism during the First World War*. Routledge.

is the right to self-determination, which we can exercise when we participate in the matters pertaining to the public sector. However, participation must be restricted to wish lists or voting alone in order for it to be considered. This is a prerequisite for legitimacy. One of the most crucial things to think about when implementing An approach to local self-governance based on rights is the kind of participation needed. Fundamentally, decisions that affect a person's life and the elements that influence those decisions are the focus of rights-based participation. To put it another way, rights-based participation emphasises the choices that each person makes in life.

### **TRADITIONAL KUKI SELF-GOVERNMENT**

The valley, which makes up around 10% of the entire land area of the state, is home to most non-tribal individuals in Manipur, or nearly Two-thirds of the entire population of the state. With more than 40% of the people living in metropolitan areas, The hill regions are much less urbanised than the valley. On the other hand, the state is almost exclusively rural and has hilly terrain covering almost 90% of its total area. They live in scattered communities, and Rural populations are comparable to those in non-tribal areas. Panchayati Raj Institutions, or decentralised village-level governance, have existed in Manipur for an extended period of time period. These, but were restricted to the Jiribam Subdivision of the Tamenglong Hill District and valley districts. In the hill districts, local administrators looked a lot like rural panchayats.

Village councils in Manipur are completely distinct from district councils. The Manipur Hill Village Authority Act of 19561 governs this. Electing village councils democratically is made possible by this Act. It also sets quotas for female lawmakers, same like the Panchayati Raj law. But the customary village leaders of Kuki, who observe them as competitors and challengers to the old village governments, are quite hostile. In the tribal government of Manipur, especially in Kuki's case, law and order is upheld by the village council and tribal associations. 'Housa'2 (Chieftainship) is the oldest known form of tribal governance for the Kuki tribes of Manipur. Among the Kukis of Manipur, chieftainship is still the exclusive method of village governance, despite being outside the Sixth Schedule's and Panchayati Raj Institutions' purview. The Kuki Chieftainship has been extensively documented in several books (D. Haokip, 2020). It made clear how the chieftainship helped the weak, vulnerable, and impoverished members of the village grow, as well as how the chiefs upheld law and order, justice, peace, widows' security, women's respect, and the availability of land for farming, cattle grazing, and other uses (Chongloi, 2018). Villages among the Kuki can have as few as 20 families and are often much smaller than those among the Naga. Furthermore,

compared to the Naga villages, these communities have a more fluid aspect.

The Kukis possess a traditional form of governance that prioritises the "chief" position far more than the Nagas do. Village Chiefs typically inherit their position from their relatives (Kipgen & Roy Chowdhury, 2016). This person has the power to decide on matters of administration in addition to inheriting all of the community's territory. The Semang, the village administrator; the Pachong, the chief of defence, social organisation, and relief; the Lhangsam, the chief of data; and Thuching, the record-keeper and secretary, are in addition to the Haosa, the head of The village and the individual responsible for the village land. There isn't a single plot of land that has been "settled" through title assignments and land surveys in any of the Kuki communities.

The Chief divides up the land required for farming and homestead formation among the villagers (Guite, 2018). Some types of land are prohibited from being sold. The land returns to the Chief without further action if a household relocates to a different village. Unfortunately, the institution of chieftainship was perverted due to the British colonisation of the tribe areas. The state of law and order in Manipur's hill regions is at its worst at the moment; the water supply, the power grid, the healthcare system, and the educational system are all in poor condition. District Autonomous Councils are a system in the hilly areas of Manipur, however they are subject to state authority and have extremely limited natural rights and regulatory authority.

In terms of performing development-related tasks, they are entirely reliant on the State Government. Due to the volatility of their own financial circumstances, they are become more reliant on the State Government. Instilling a feeling of inclusion in people who reside in remote mountainous areas is essential. Implementing a accountable management and reviving municipal self-government entities, such Councils for Hill Autonomous Districts, can greatly aid in a complete and participatory type of development in the area. It will offer quality governance, which enables all funds and development initiatives to be directed straight to the recipients of the benefits. Furthermore, it would further curb red-tapism, which is pervasive in Manipur and a major contributor to the underdevelopment of the hill district's tribally inhabited areas.

It is crucial that the historic institution of chieftainship be restricted to ceremonial roles and that the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution be reinstated as soon as feasible (S. Haokip, n.d.). Gender issues and women's political participation might be seen as an additional crucial area to study how the new village government interacts and integrates with rural people' sociocultural backgrounds. This is due to the fact that these subjects are relevant

to women. According to the study that has been carried out up to this point, women engage in formal elections and other political activities on an equal footing with males, and the gender gaps are in line with historical examples from other nations. The situation is far more skewed regarding the way women are portrayed in organisations such as the Autonomous District Council, the Village Council, or the Party branch committee.<sup>2</sup>

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main goals of the study were to investigate the effectiveness of village councils as a unit of local self-governance, what Women's position in self-government at the local level in Kuki society, and how common people take part in the planning and development procedures of villages, and how effective the traditional village council is contrasted with the tribal government under the fifth and sixth amendments to the Indian Constitution and the Panchayati Raj Act (73rd Amendment).

### **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

#### **Research Design**

A social action research approach was used to conduct the study, and field interactions were used to collect data. This study's research design included exploratory and descriptive techniques. A descriptive approach was used to illustrate the operations of the organisations and the activities conducted in the communities. The exploratory component of the study was employed to collect data on a range of issues that the community faces with respect to its governance structure.

#### **The Study's Universe**

The field study was conducted in Manipur's Churachandpur District. Just four blocks were purposefully chosen from this district to conduct the study. The chosen blocks are Henglep Block, Tuibong, Lamka, and Samulamlan. Fourteen communities were chosen for the study from these four blocks. Village chiefs from each of the 14 villages make up the study universe, together with other interested parties such as Kuki Inpi Leaders, Kuki Women Human Rights Organisation, members of the Chief Association, student and youth organisations, members of the village council and church leaders.

#### **Sampling Design**

Purposive non-probability sampling was used to choose samples from each of the four divisions' key stakeholders. The overall quantity of participants chosen as stakeholders in this study could be separated into the subsequent groups:

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<sup>2</sup> Haokip, S. (n.d.). *Autonomy Demands in the Hill Areas of Manipur: Issues and Challenges*.

- Village Chiefs: There are fourteen (14) village chiefs in the fourteen villages that were randomly chosen from the four subdivisions. Purposively, the Village Chiefs were chosen because of their close proximity to the study bases, their readiness to take part in the initiatives, and their disparate organisational and demographic traits.
- Kuki Innpi Leaders: An interview was conducted with one Innpi leader from the district. Interviews were conducted with four members of the Kuki Student Organisation.
- Autonomous District Council Members: Two district council members, one from the Lamka block and one from the Khouabung block, were questioned.
- Village Youth Leader: It was possible to identify and interview two youth leaders.
- Church Leader: From the research communities, three respondents were church leaders.
- Social Activist: One social professional was found to be actively involved in social service endeavours.

### **Methods of Gathering Data**

The following research methods were employed to collect data for the study, both quantitative and qualitative:

- a) Comprehensive staff interview
- b) FGD, or concentrated conversation in the group

Thirteen stakeholders and fourteen village chiefs were interviewed for the study. In order to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency pertaining to the tribal government under the fifth and sixth schedules, the Panchayati Raj Act (73rd Amendment), or the traditional village council, 14 focus group discussions (FGDs) have also been held in the villages that were sampled. The following were the equipment or tools used to collect data for the study:

### **Timetable for the Interview**

A schedule of semi-structured interviews that comprised closed-ended questions and to assess the Kuki village's self-governance, administration, and inheritance practices, an open data survey on the characteristics of village leaders was conducted. In order to better understand the structure of hereditary chieftainship, the circumstances that led to its establishment, and the benefits and drawbacks of this type of village self-governance, numerous interested parties have been interviewed conducted. It was also expected that the stakeholders would suggest further measures to enhance local autonomy. The group of stakeholders includes elders from the sampling villages, representatives of the youth, church, and district council,

members of student organisations, and people from Kuki Innpi.<sup>3</sup>

### **Guidelines and Checklist for FGDs**

Understanding the involvement of common people in the process of village development and planning, as well as the part that women play in Kuki society's local self-governance was the primary goal of conducting focus groups. Four blocks and fourteen villages were covered by the fourteen FGDs that were held. To keep the debate focused on the study's goals, a checklist and guidelines were employed. Participants in these targeted group conversations include members of the village council, youth clubs, women's organisations, religious leaders, and village elders. Participants ranged from seven to fourteen in each focused group discussion.

### **Analysing and Processing Data**

With a focus on the iterations that took place between defining the difficulties, coming up with solutions, and evaluating, a methodology that employed a variety of data collection techniques was employed. The information, which comprised reflective journals, field notes and transcripts of interviews, were analysed using a constant comparative technique. The research team was able to pinpoint recurrent themes in the participant conversations that represented their viewpoints on Traditional Governance and the District Council's Function. The project participants engaged in participatory discussions and interpretations of the subjects. The topics were then triangulated across the several sites and stakeholder groups.

### **Ethical Consideration**

All respondents received an explanation of the study's objectives. Throughout the research study, the respondents had the option to leave the study whenever they wanted. Every respondent gave their oral consent, and volunteers for allowing the study to use their identities and data. Care was taken throughout the investigation to avoid offending respondents' or community members' religious and cultural feelings.

### **Limitations in the Research**

Throughout its progress, research necessitates frequent examination and reflection. It is difficult to include every aspect of a certain investigation in one paper. Even the current study has a number of shortcomings, therefore it is not unique. The study must focus on just one hill district (Churachandpur District) with one tribe (the Kuki Tribe), even though the term "tribal governance" in Manipur is vast. There are about 29 significant hill tribes in Manipur,

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<sup>3</sup> Kipgen, N., & Roy Chowdhury, A. (2016). 'Contested State-craft' on the Frontiers of the Indian Nation: 'Hills- Valley Divide'.

which are divided into two primary ethnic groups: the Nagas and the Kuki Chins. The state contains five hill districts practices and traditions of local self-governance that are similar but distinct. Thus, a number of these microstudies that don't concentrate on just one tribe should be able to adequately address the current investigation. As a result of inadequate communication and infrastructure, the study's target region of Manipur is one where doing research is challenging. Therefore, the researcher would not be able to meet the requirements of the study even if they wished to reach the furthest rural regions to accomplish the research goals. The participatory decision-making process will be adequately represented in a study that takes into account both urban and rural bases and, more generally, a rights-based approach to development.<sup>4</sup>

## **RESULTS AND CONVERSATIONS**

### **A. The Study's Socio-economic Profile Village Leaders**

The average age among the local leaders that took part in the study was 45 years old; the oldest chief was sixty-seven, and the youngest was twenty-seven. The Chiefs were between the ages of 27 and 67. The Chieftainship institution must be inherited in order to accomplish the Chief position at the young age of 27. The youngest Chief was not given the responsibility of managing the institution until his father died, at which time he was compelled to take over. The majority of the village leaders involved in the research are undergraduate students; only of the village chiefs who took part in the poll, three (or 21%) are graduates. According to their income and present financial situation, the village chief responder typically earns around 1.5 lakh each year. The land they hold is the most valuable possession in their possession, and the chiefs of the entire community are among the wealthiest individuals there. The land alone provides certain chiefs with a sizable amount of their income. Of the Chief responses in the community, 31% are employed by the government (three of them are retired), whereas 46% of the Chief respondents are cultivators. 15% of those surveyed said they were social workers, which essentially means they provided community-based social services, as opposed to a professional social worker with a degree. The autonomous district council has representatives from 8% of the total population.

The Chief's profession demonstrated that they have an active lifestyle and can support

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<sup>4</sup> Majumdar, D. N., & Madan, T. N. (1980). *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House (P) Limited.

themselves through their employment. The Chieftainship is an institution dominated by men, as only one female Chieftain out of fourteen Chieftains was found throughout this investigation. In addition, this Chieftain is a widow. Thus, gender equality becomes a significant issue in an institution of this size, which raises the even more significant issue of women's participation in decision-making inside these Kuki society power structures.

### **B. The Public's Participation In The Governance Process**

The State government's engagement in the hamlet's development has been incredibly little. The peasants faced many obstacles in their existence and had to struggle to obtain even the most basic of needs. Road development requires a lot of work on the part of the village chief and the government, and sometimes the villagers must contribute money to buy an electric transformer. The biggest obstacle to actively engage in self-governance by serving on the village council entity is the corrupt structure within the state administration. They are not being granted their basic the right to advance since they lack access to essential services like health centres and schools, which exacerbates poverty and ill health.

Approximately 72% of the stakeholders believe that the chieftainship system's traditional hereditary structure is the biggest barrier to an open governance. They also believed that there was a weak communication system between the village council and the people, which made the issue of transparency a major worry. Despite this, over 28% of the stakeholders still believe that the governance system is transparent because regular agendas are addressed, decisions are voted on, and decisions are pondered about during meetings. The monologue system, which is frequently called In the Kuki governance system, the listening system serves as the main tool used for decision-making. In his role as Chairman, the village chief is in charge of the village council and is the one who summons and conducts VA meetings as needed. Many stakeholders believe that in order to guarantee that people may fully engage inside the governing system, a democratically elected chief is required rather than one who is inherited. Additionally, everyone should be allowed to participate in the meetings that are organised for that reason, and democracy should be practiced at the local level.

### **C. The Function of Women in Kuki Society's Local Self-Government**

Women do not participate in the village's the process of determining decisions because it is illegal and against village governance custom, according to the study's the women's self-help groups (SHGs) participated in focus group discussions (FGDs). and women welfare committee. This is the main cause of women's lack of participation in village decision-making. They stated that they wanted to live in a society where everyone was treated equally and where duties and labour were distributed fairly to all community members. They contend



that women bear a disproportionate share of the maintenance of the home, in addition to agricultural pursuits and animal care. Therefore, it is not advised to take advantage of the opportunity to actively participate as an official village council member if given the choice. Despite this, they all shared the belief that women ought to receive the respect they are due and have equal representation when it comes to matters pertaining to the well-being of the community. In the village administrations, a considerable amount of the decision-making process is conducted without the involvement of any women.<sup>5</sup>

The male-dominated village council makes the majority of important decisions involving women, and it subsequently forces these decisions on the women. This is a result of men predominating on the local council. Not even the faintest indication of women's participation in the village council's discussions and decision-making is present. Even the youth organisations in the area are not allowed to influence the village council's decision-making. This is really regrettable. On the other hand, they participate in the annual general body meeting where decisions are made about the village's one-year action plan. Most of the time, the village's women's welfare group is asked to participate in discussions on issues like the prohibition on the selling of gambling, alcohol and drug use, and keeping the village community peaceful and orderly.

Women should be permitted to hold the office of Chief of the Chieftainship institution, according to roughly 64% of respondents in order to promote gender equality. Nevertheless, over one-third of respondents think it would be inappropriate want the local council to be headed by a woman. They contend that since only men are eligible to inherit land, women shouldn't be allowed to hold the position of chief of the village council. Sixty-four percent of respondents support giving women more opportunities to participate in decision-making. According to their argument, there need to be democratic involvement in the political process and that all people ought to have equal rights. The traditional system of government is seen favourably by slightly less than one-third of those surveyed. They think that, in most situations, men are more responsible than women.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Soppitt, C. A. (1893). *A Short Account of Kuki-Lushai Tribes in the North-East Frontiers* (Districts Cachar, Sylhet, Naga Hills etc, and the North Cachar Hills). Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Government of Mizoram.

<sup>6</sup> Majumdar, D. N., & Madan, T. N. (1980). *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House (P) Limited.

#### **D. Traditional Village Council Effectiveness Compared to Panchayati Raj Institutions**

In terms of the village council's composition, custom requires that towns with 600 or more residents have 12 members, or even more if the chief decides to increase the number of council members. Five to six village inhabitants may serve on the council if there are fewer than fifty households in the community. Although there is no upper limit on the maximum number of candidates for a village council, seven members are usually on the council. The maximum number of candidates for a village council seat is not restricted in any manner. The Village Chief and the additional Village Council members are in charge of making choices and handling all village matters. The Village Council was advised by the Chief regarding issues that were either made known to him or that he learnt about on his own. Through the village messenger, word-of-mouth is used to inform the village council members about impending meetings. This form of communication is gradually being replaced by mobile phone communication. The person or organisation in question must be appealed to in order to get in touch with the Village Council. The local council is going to next determine the proper penalty according to both the legislation and regional traditions. For example, if a family member disagrees regarding anything similar divorce or remarriage, the individual in question must offer a pig as a sacrifice four-legged animal to end the battle. Such a situation prevents further disputes because the issue has been resolved.

The main duty of the Chief and the other Village Council members is to maintain harmony and peace among the populace and to prevent future disagreements. The village council reached a decision that is final. In compliance with the laws and traditions that had been passed down, The tribe or ancestral group's members got together and discussed the matter. The flesh was consumed or provided as a sign, but it was never given to anyone else of agreement or resolution during village council meetings when significant issues like murder, divorce, or family disputes were being considered. Even if something is buried far below, left over. the earth's surface.

Road construction, school oversight, health and education awareness campaigns, and involvement in the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Generation Projects are among the village council's main duties. A village council sub-committee is occasionally established to examine matters pertaining to the improvement of certain villages' infrastructure, including the supply of roads, water, and power, as well as the use of different government initiatives, employment cards, and other comparable issues.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Baveja, J. D. (1982). *New Horizons of North East India*. Guwahati: Western Book Depot.

The Village Chief and the additional Village Council members are in charge of keeping an eye on the village's infrastructure and general condition. Before reaching a final decision, the village chief consults with the other council members and must authorise any new construction. These kinds of activities were not conducted by most of the local town governments. The council is always consulted on any initiatives including the self-help groups (SHGs) for women in the village in the fields of agricultural and conservation. The council's decisions are definitive on all issues relating to land preservation and upholding law and order. Actions that directly those that promote the well-being and development of the village's residents have an impact on the council. It could involve providing a steady source of revenue for the local populace, maintaining the environment, and constructing infrastructure.

It is possible for the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) to have a major impact on the organisation and execution of local initiatives. Only in theory is this possibility real. Actually, though, a number of things have served as barriers to people's political engagement at different points in time. Similar obstacles might exist in other states. Among the many fundamental social and economic factors, discrimination is the most significant on factors like wealth and social status, illiteracy, job, race, locality, and—above all—sex. Additionally, there are other fundamental social and economic factors, the most significant of which are income and social status discrimination. These factors all play a part in the practice of discrimination and gender bias. Furthermore, the vast majority of Panchayat members do not always strive to achieve social objectives, which makes them insensitive to the needs of the majority. To put it mildly, the study makes an interesting discovery: Especially in the state of Manipur, the Public Distribution System (PRI) is still not operating at the desired rate and scale.

This is particularly true given the dearth of active participation from people from diverse backgrounds and the narrowly channelled political currents and crosscurrents. In particular, this is the case.

#### **E. The Comparative Effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Tribal Governance under the Sixth Schedule**

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act of 1971 granted the state's local council the power to carry out up to seventeen distinct duties. These duties were carried out by the Autonomous District Council (ADC), which began operations after May 1973 saw its first election, and it lasted until 1988, when it was suspended and superseded. Manipur's District Councils all joined forces to create the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee due to their

dissatisfaction with the functions being carried out. The Manipur All-Tribal Students Union and the Sixth Schedule Demand Committee pressed extending the Sixth Schedule by the government. The Manipur government expanded the Act's potential functions to 26 in 2008 with the passage of the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act's Third Amendment. In response to some of the expressed wishes, this action was performed.

The PRIs are in charge of covering up to 29 distinct topics within the parameters of their power. Better are the Panchayat bodies equipped to handle developmental difficulties in terms of both the scope of their operations and the monetary front than ADCs, which are often at the whim of the state government for funding. Both the federal government and the state governments are able to offer them financial aid through a number of programs. To ensure that there is no problem with the Panchayat bodies shortage of funding, a finance commission has also been established.

To avoid financial hunger, this was done. The representation is among the most notable distinctions between the two statutes of females. Due to the tribal customs' rejection of women's participation in social politics, the Sixth Schedule areas' autonomous councils and local bodies are controlled by men. Instead of being the norm, female representatives are viewed as the exception. In this sense, the PRI system is much more progressive and gets excellent reviews. The institutions' continuous operation is another element that contrasts. No later than six months following the day of their dissolution, the Panchayat bodies must be re-established. It might take anywhere from six months to a year to hold new district council elections, subject to state government clearance.<sup>8</sup>

Most autonomous councils have not encouraged the growth of they have decided to keep all the power in their own hands rather than through formalised intermediary bodies that encompass groups of villages or village-level institutions. Only a small number of people are eligible to serve as officers due to the councils' monopoly on authority. The idea at the local level of democracy has been distorted as the dictatorship of several high-ranking council members, and the democratic representation of the ordinary, less wealthy as a result, tribe members have been silenced. It is obvious that this has led to widespread corruption and ineptitude among the councils. As a result, the regions covered by the Sixth Schedule do not have an inclusive or participatory democracy.

Once more, because the PRI is made up of three institutionalised strata, its structure is vastly

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<sup>8</sup> Das, R, K., & Basu, D. (2005). North East India in Perspective (Biology, Social Formation and Contemporary) Problems. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House.

larger. As a result, The land was successfully preserved under the Sixth Schedule and the distinctive traditions of the tribes, although it was unable to formalise participatory or grassroots democracy. It posed a serious obstacle to development, particularly when paired with financial reliance and unethical behaviour. One of the elements thought to be a hindrance to the implementation of decentralisation plans is a lack of institutional and competent staff capacity. According to the study's conclusions, the vertical plane of decentralization—which entails the delegation of authority from the central—does not align with the current situation. Another significant limitation that must be addressed is the horizontal plane of decentralisation, which entails giving grassroots communities the authority to choose, organise, oversee, and carry out certain programs. One significant restriction that must be addressed is the misalignment of the vertical and horizontal axes of decentralisation. The third constraint is that people-centered governance, with its associated implications for empowerment and participation, has not been implemented formally through rules and regulations; yet, this has led to a wider scope for decentralised decision-making.<sup>9</sup> According to the report, one of the things impeding the decentralisation process is the absence of responsibility and transparency from the centre to the outskirts and the other way around. In the past, this hierarchical approach to accountability was envisioned, starting at the local level and working its way up to the federal government. Among the organisations that make up civil society, there is a growing demand that accountability work from civil society and communities to subnational authorities in the other direction.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study's conclusions indicate that more coordinated efforts are needed to improve the democratic village council operations, encourage public participation, and develop grassroots capacity in Kuki villages. In order to enable the village council to carry out its responsibilities as a body of increased local self-government effectively, the Manipur Hill Areas Act of 1956 must first be amended. Determining the Village Council's functional domain allows them to focus their efforts on raising the standard of services rendered, meeting residents' requests for a variety of service areas, and expanding the Council's capabilities, which may include offering more support to the workforce. At the level of the organised mechanism for the creation and execution developing strategies for participation, as well as for incorporating

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<sup>9</sup> Momin, M., & Mawlong, C. A. (2004). *Society and Economy in Northeast India*. Vol. I. New Delhi: Regency Publication.

these plans with council-prepared plans, must be developed immediately. the relationship between the Civil Society and the Village Council.

The money, functions, and personnel listed must be devolved in the Sixth Schedule, and the village council must be granted total authority. Undoubtedly, the establishment of training programs at all levels and appropriate administrative and legislative measures are crucial in this respect, but far more crucial are the political will and coordinated the ruling party's political initiatives or leadership. Additionally, a robust government and active civil society are necessary to guarantee that decentralisation initiatives and broad public participation are not undermined by local elites.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to understand, though, that if the prerequisites for local government performance are not fulfilled, the aforementioned favourable aspects might not provide the intended outcomes. The inclusive growth that Gandhiji envisions for people's empowerment can only be realised via inclusive governance. To do this, a functioning village council system is necessary. The functioning of village government thus depends on the transfer of subjects, transfer of resources, and transfer of public administrative authority personnel. Another significant element in the evolution of municipal government is the presence of elected officials. There is an urgent need to increase capacity in areas like monitoring, budgeting, and accounting. Without more comprehensive local governance, it will remain a pipe dream. Elected officials are not trained, and resources and authority are delegated. Village Councils must be established is a local government level operating within the parameters of the constitution directives in order to give democracy in the state any real meaning. The results of the analysis indicate that pursuing District Council accreditation in accordance with the Sixth Schedule is the best course of action going ahead.

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<sup>10</sup> Gangte, T.S. (2003). *The Kukis of Manipur – A Historical Analysis*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.