

## **THE WORKINGS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ IN ZIRO VALLEY OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

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### **“Abstract”**

As long as rural development is concerned, there is a need for decentralization of administration at the grassroots level where the villages form the basic social and economic unit. In order to formulate and to implement the rural development programmes, the administrative structures need to have one supervisory agency preferably an elected body such as panchayat under which the project could be executed. Panchayati Raj institution is, therefore, a recent innovation of Government of India. It has been entrusted to work with an efficacy for the rural upliftment. It was introduced to ensure socio-economic and political development at grassroots level. The Panchayati Raj system was introduced in Arunachal Pradesh in the form of first modern political institution for better governance under the regulation of North East Frontier Panchayati Raj regulation 1967. It has brought several changes in the administrative scenario of Arunachal Pradesh. In rebuilding the village society, Panchayati Raj has been entrusted the role to implement various governmental schemes for development of living standard and the social pattern of rural area. As such it is an interesting subject of study in the context of the contemporary local governance in order to examine the role of Panchayati Raj system and to understand people's perceptions towards the modern local governance. With these objectives, the present study reflects the importance of the Panchayati Raj system in rural area of Arunachal Pradesh.

*Keywords: Government schemes, local Governance, people's perception, panchayat, rural development.*

### **Introduction**

Ziro valley, the land of ApaTanii people is the Headquarter of Lower Subansiri District. It is situated in the central western part of Arunachal Pradesh, India between 26<sup>0</sup>55'-28<sup>0</sup>21'N and 92<sup>0</sup>40-94<sup>0</sup>21'E; at an altitude of 1564 meters above sea level. Prior to the introduction of the modern system of governance and administration, the traditional political institution of the Ziro valley was the only forum for decision making and to regulate the society. The traditional political institution of Ziro valley is known as Buliang. Buliangs in Ziro valley were working as some sort of village government. Introduction of Panchayati Raj institution became the first modern political bodies in Arunachal Pradesh. The indigenous tribal people got the opportunity to exercise their franchise for the first time in the panchayat election for electing their representative to panchayat bodies. Therefore, Panchayati Raj institution as the grass-root units of local self-government has been considered as an instrument of socio-economic transformation of rural areas. The growth in the Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh led to the development of village community. The major social

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changes have been also brought by the Panchayati Raj system in Arunachal Pradesh. It strengthened the corporative life among the village community and enhanced the rural sanitation and health by implementation of schemes. Further, the primary education as well as adult education is the important responsibilities of Panchayati Raj institution.

Panchayati Raj institution has been working to ensure socio-economic and political development at grassroots level. It has brought several changes in the administrative scenario of Arunachal Pradesh. The indigenous tribal people got the opportunity to exercise their franchise for the first time in the Panchayat election for electing their representative to Panchayat bodies. This institution provides reservation of one-third seats for women at different levels of Panchayat bodies. The Panchayat leaders take active role in implementing developmental projects and schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), PradhanMantri Gram SadakYojana (PMGSY), Swach Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) etc.,. Therefore, in rebuilding the village society, Panchayati Raj has been working for development of living standard and the social pattern of rural area to a great extent through promotion and development of agriculture, undertaking poverty alleviation programmes, educational schemes, promoting better sanitation, public health and family welfare, women and child development, Poverty is one of the ponderous problems of rural areas which led to the low rate of development of a country as a whole. The programmes of poverty alleviation are under the direct control of the Panchayati Raj bodies for preparation of plans, selection of beneficiaries, implementation and monitoring of schemes for achieving economic development and social justice for removal of rural poverty. As such the Panchayati Raj institutions are to serve as the key agencies for implementing different poverty alleviation programmes for the village people.

## Objectives of the study

The study was undertaken with a view to the following objectives:

- I. To examine the working of Panchayati Raj institution as a modern local governance.
- II. To understand people's perception towards Panchayati Raj institution.

## Methodology

The study is mainly empirical and based on participant and non-participant observations. Thus, it is partly empirical and partly reflective. The questionnaire-cum-interview schedule was designed in English. It was translated into local dialect at the time of administration to the respondents. The study was carried out by visiting all the villages of Ziro valley of Arunachal Pradesh.

As regards sampling, a sample size of 541 (261 panchayat leaders, 210 beneficiaries and 70 other respondents) has been drawn by using simple random sampling method. The study was carried out by interviewing beneficiaries, panchayat leaders and other respondents. Here, beneficiaries are the villagers who receive an advantage, Panchayat members are the modern political leaders and other respondents are the people expert in deliberation of village administration and having knowledge about traditional system of Apatani like traditional political leader (Buliang), GaoBura, Officers, teachers and senior citizens of Ziro Valley. Information was also gathered through informal discussions with the knowledgeable persons residing in Ziro Valley.

## Literature Review

Keeping in consideration of the importance of Panchayati Raj institution and rural development in India, several scholars have done important works focusing this in their writings. Mishra, S.N., (New Delhi 1986); *Panchayati Raj, Bureaucracy and Rural development*, has outlined the concept of Rural development and intended to investigate about the functioning of local level bureaucracy as to what extent they cooperated with Panchayati Raj representatives in the implementation of rural development programmes. It has tried to diagnose the maladies which effect the functioning of these two institutions of grassroots. It has also offered many suggestions regarding the better functioning of local level

bureaucracy and greater involvement of general masses in rural development<sup>1</sup>.

Danggen, B (Itanagar, 2009); in his book *Logical approach to local self-government in the light of independent councils and Panchayati Raj of Arunachal Pradesh*, has discussed about the Panchayati Raj system of Arunachal Pradesh from the report of Ering Committee 1965 and introduction of NEFA Panchayati Raj 1967 to the Arunachal Pradesh local authority Act 2006. Besides, a brief account of the village councils of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh has also been discussed<sup>2</sup>.

Dubey, S, (New Delhi, 2005) ; in his book *Dynamic of Tribal Local Polity and Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh* discusses about the origin and historical evolution of the Panchayati Raj institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. It also states that the Panchayati Raj institution has contributed a significant change in socio-economic and political development at grass-root level as well as in state in macro level perspective. It has viewed that there is a significant decline of the traditional village council system in Arunachal Pradesh due to influence of modern political institution<sup>3</sup>.

Verrier Elwin, (Shillong, 1965); in his book titled *Democracy in NEFA* gives a descriptive account of almost all the village councils of Arunachal Pradesh. He also brings out the main common features of these village councils. Elwin also gives a general over-view of the village councils in different parts of India. Although, Panchayati Raj system was not yet introduced in Arunachal Pradesh till then, Elwin discusses the possible impact of this modern democratic institution<sup>4</sup>.

## Working of Panchayati Raj

Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997 extends to the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, provided for the constitution of three-tier Panchayat Raj based on all India pattern- Gram Panchayats at the village, AnchalSamiti at intermediate level and ZilaParishad at district level. The Act also envisages the provision for Gram Sabha in each Gram Panchayat area. The Act defines that Gram Sabha is a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Gram Sabha.

Generally, the Gram Sabha exercises the following functions:

- (i) Providing assistance for the implementation of developmental schemes pertaining to the village.
- (ii) To help in identification of beneficiaries for the implementation of developmental schemes in the villages.
- (iii) Such other matters as may be prescribed from time to time<sup>5</sup>.

**Gram Panchayat at village level:** The Act provided that a village or group of villages having a population not less than three hundred is to have a Gram Panchayat or to be considered as Panchayat area. However, the Deputy Commissioner can declare any area as Panchayat area having even less than three hundred populations as a special case. The Gram Panchayat shall be constituted by direct election with the system of secret ballot. The term of the Gram Panchayats shall be for five years from the date of notification by the Deputy Commissioner. Precisely, a Gram Panchayat exercises the developmental activities such as development of agriculture, improvement of animal husbandry and providing drinking water and such other functions as may be assigned from time to time. Every Gram Panchayat at its first meeting having the prescribed quorum shall elect one of its members to be the chairperson in the prescribed manner, which convenes the meeting of the Gram Sabha and also presided over its meeting<sup>6</sup>. It exercises administrative supervision and control over the work of the members of Gram Panchayat. The reservation of seats for women both in the Gram Panchayat and chairperson should not be less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election.

**AnchalSamiti at Block level:** An AnchalSamiti is constituted by the government for the Anchal block. However, the government may include, exclude any village or part of a village within the limits of an Anchal block or

amalgamate two or more Anchal blocks into a single block, after consultation with an AnchalSamiti or Samities and the area included under municipality, town committee or cantonment shall be exempted from the Anchal block. Not less than one third of the total numbers of seats to be filled by direct election in every AnchalSamiti shall be reserved for women<sup>7</sup>. The term of the office of the members of AnchalSamiti shall be 5 years. The Act also made provision for chairperson in each AnchalSamiti. Generally, AnchalSamiti performs such functions and works as may be entrusted by the ZilaParishad or the state government from time to time.

**ZilaParishad at district level:** ZilaParishad is the apex body of the Panchayati Raj system at the district level. It is a supervisory and advisory body for the Gram Panchayats and the AnchalSamities, falling within its jurisdiction. In every ZilaParishad, not less than one third of its total number of seats to be filled by direct election shall be reserved for women. Such reserved seats may be allotted by rotation by the Deputy Commissioner to different ZilaParishad constituencies in the prescribed manner. There shall be chairperson of ZilaParishad selected by the elected members from among themselves. Both the chairperson and ZilaParishad will hold the office for a period of 5 years<sup>8</sup>. The ZilaParishad performs the functions of supervision, coordination and integration of the developmental scheme at AnchalSamiti and district levels. It prepares the plan for the development of the district. On the whole the Zilaparishad is the highest for each district is to be constituted by the notification of the government. As such the Zilaparishad is the supreme body in finalizing the plans and programmes of the district.

The Panchayats are expected to play an important role in planning and implementing various development programmes. They thus assume the role of a development institution<sup>9</sup>. Under Article 243G, the legislature of state may by law, endow the Panchayats with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to-

- 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<sup>10</sup>.

The 29 subjects entrusted to the Panchayats under eleventh schedule (Article-243G) are as below:

1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation.
3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development.
4. Animal husbandry, dairy and poultry.
5. Fisheries.
6. Social Forestry and farm forestry.
7. Minor forest produce.
8. Small scale industries, including food processing industries.
9. Khadi, village and cottage industries.
10. Rural housing.
11. Drinking water.

12. Fuel and Fodder.
13. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterway, and other means of communication.
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity.
15. Non-conventional energy sources.
16. Poverty alleviation programme.
17. Education, including primary and secondary schools.
18. Technical training and vocational education.
19. Adult and non-formal education.
20. Libraries.
21. Cultural activities.
22. Market and fairs.
23. Health and sanitation, including hospital, primary health centers and dispensaries.
24. Family welfare.
25. Women and child development.
26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded.
27. Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes.
28. Public distribution system.
29. Maintenance of community assets<sup>11</sup>.

In pursuance of Article 243G of the constitution of India, the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act 1997 has been enacted by the legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh to keep provisions of planning as an important and critical functions of three-tier Panchayati Raj institutions i.e. Gram Panchayat, AnchalSamiti and ZillaParishad to plan for the development of rural areas through Panchayati Raj institution. Under Section 70 (2) (b) and Section 70 (2) (c) of the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997, each Gram Panchayat is required to prepare their annual plans and submit them to the respective AnchalSamiti for being consolidated into the ZillaParishad Plan<sup>12</sup>.

The Government of India and the state government of Arunachal Pradesh is implementing a number of centrally sponsored schemes and state sponsored schemes with active role of Panchayat bodies related to rural development, health and family welfare, education, agriculture, sanitation, housing, women and child development, safe drinking water, irrigation, etc. throughout the villages. The main objectives of all these schemes are to generate employment, reduce poverty and economic inequality and improve the quality of life. The following categories of development programmes have been implemented in Ziro Valley:

### **Swach Bharat Mission (SBM)**

The Prime Minister of India launched the Swach Bharat Abhiyan on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 with the objective of making a “clean” India. The focus of this programme is to achieve Swach Bharat by 2019, which mean improving the

levels of cleanliness through solid and liquid waste management activities and stopping the problem of open defecation. It also includes cleaning of roads, pavements and drainage system, etc. The funding for this programme is shared by both center and state in the ratio of 75:25 respectively. However, for most of the North-Eastern states including Arunachal Pradesh the ratio of funding share for this programme is 90:10 respectively. The incentive amount provided under Swach Bharat Mission is Rs. 12,000 for construction of one unit of individual household latrine and provide for water availability, including for storing for hand-washing and cleaning of the toilet<sup>13</sup>.

As per the constitution 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, 1992, sanitation is included in the 11<sup>th</sup> schedule. Accordingly, Gram Panchayats have a pivotal role in the implementation of Swach Bharat Mission. The Gram Panchayats take part in the social mobilization for the triggering demand, construction of toilets and also maintenance of the clean environment by way of safe disposal of waste<sup>14</sup>.

### **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is the extension of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which was enacted by the Parliament as an Act in 2005. The Act ensures rural employment to every household whose adult members volunteers to do unskilled manual work not less than 100 days in every financial year according to the scheme made under the Act. The funding share of the scheme between the central and state Government is 90:10 proportions respectively. Permissible works under this scheme include irrigation works; water conservation and water harvesting; land development; construction of Anganwadi centers; improving livelihoods; flood control; rural connectivity; horticulture development; development of pond and such other works as may be notified by the Government<sup>15</sup>. Under the Act the Gram Panchayat has a pivotal role in the implementation of this programme. It is responsible for planning of works, issuing job cards, allocating employment, executing 50 per cent of the works and monitoring the implementation of the scheme at the village level. All these activities are to be done in consultation with the Gram Sabha<sup>16</sup>.

### **Indira AwaazYojana (IAY)**

Indira AwaazYojana (IAY) was launched in May 1985 as a sub-scheme of JawaharRozgarYojana to meet the housing needs of the rural poor. It is being implemented as an independent scheme since 1 January 1996. The Indira AwaazYojana aims at helping rural people below the poverty-line belonging to SCs/STs, freed bonded labourers and non-SC/ST categories in construction of dwelling units and up gradation of existing unserviceable kutch houses by providing grant-in-aid. Selection of beneficiaries under IAY is done from the permanent IAY waitlist prepared out of the BPL lists and approved by the Gram Sabha and the allotment of the house is done in the name of the female member of the households or in the joint names of husband and wife<sup>17</sup>.

IAY is a scheme channeled through Panchayati Raj and the Panchayati Raj Institutions are centric to implementation of IAY scheme. The role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in implementation of the scheme is timely selection of beneficiaries, display of BPL/IAY waitlist in a public place, Monitoring of progress of house construction. The ZillaParishad/ DRDAs on the basis of allocation made and targets fixed decide the number of houses to be constructed and upgraded Panchayat-wise and the same is intimated to Gram Panchayats.

**Table:** Village wise distribution of beneficiaries under IAY scheme in Ziro Valley.

S I. No	Name of village	Number of beneficiaries
1	Tajang	872
2	Reru-Kalung	1,255
3	Hari	852
4	Hong	1,302
5	Diibo	1,402
6	Hija	1,199
	Total	6,882

Source: DRDA, lower Subansiri district, 2016

#### **PradhanMantri Gram SadakYojana (PMGSY)**

The launching of PradhanMantri Gram SadakYojana (PMGSY) on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2000 lead to a new era of rural road connectivity in India. The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide connectivity, by way of an All-weather Road (with necessary culverts and cross- drainage structures, which is operable throughout the year), to the eligible unconnected Habitations in the rural areas having population of more than 500 people<sup>18</sup>. However, in respect of Arunachal Pradesh, the objective would be to connect Habitations with a population of 250 persons and above. The scheme envisages involving Panchayati Raj Institutions for effective planning and implementation of rural roads. The Gram Sabha is to consider proposed alignment, land availability and to moderate any adverse social and environmental impact, eliciting necessary community participation in the programme<sup>19</sup>. The completed roads in Ziro Valley under PMGSY scheme are:

- I. Road from Dilopoyang to Hong-III;
- II. Road from Keilya to Old Ziro;
- III. Road from Lagibogya to Salaya;
- IV. Road from Bamin to Nenchalya;
- V. Road from Hija to Kielya.

Panchayati Raj institutions have a significant role in the formulation and implementation of rural development

programmes. The introduction of Panchayati Raj came as an institutional innovation for planning from below. It is expected that active involvement of Panchayati Raj institution in the process of formulation and implementation of the plans will make possible maximum utilization of human and material resources in the rural areas. Besides this, with the advent of Panchayati Raj institution, a new dimension was added to the role of villagers in the developmental process. It has placed them in an important position to make decisions. Thus, the Panchayati Raj provided a power base for the people through statutory and elective bodies to take charge of all aspects of developmental work with authority and sources to discharge the assigned functions.

## Results and Discussions

In order to examine the working of Panchayati Raj institution and to understand people's perceptions towards the Panchayati Raj system, the sampled respondents were asked to give their opinion on various questions. The responses to the questions have been tabulated in the following tables-

Table: 4.1 Response Patterns of Respondents to the question- "Do you agree that Panchayati Raj has brought development in village?"

Sl.No.	Categories of Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
1.	Beneficiaries	160 (76.19%)	18 (8.57%)	32 (15.23%)	210 (100%)
2.	Panchayat members	261 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	261 (100%)
3.	Other respondents	44 (62.85%)	23 (32.83%)	3 (4.28%)	70 (100%)
	Total	465 (85.95%)	41 (7.57%)	35 (6.46%)	541 (100%)

Source: Field Survey by the researcher

The data presented in Table 4.1, reveals that out of total five hundred forty one (541) respondents, four hundred sixty five (465) that is (85.95) per cent of the respondents have agreed that Panchayats have brought development in Ziro valley. While (7.57) percent of the total respondents think that Panchayats have not brought development in Ziro valley and (6.46) percent of the total respondents are unable to give answer in either way.

Category wise analysis of the Table 4.1 shows that (76.19) percent of the respondents of beneficiaries think that Panchayati Raj has brought development in village. While (8.57) percent of the respondents of beneficiaries think that Panchayati Raj has not brought any development in village and (15.23) percent of the beneficiaries are unable to give answer in either way. The response of the respondents of Panchayat members shows that the cent per cent of the respondents think that Panchayati Raj has brought development in village, so there is not a single Panchayat member who says Panchayats have not brought any development in the village. In case of other respondents, (62.85) per cent of the total respondents have accepted that introduction of Panchayati Raj has brought certain development in the village. While (32.83) percent of the respondents have not accepted that Panchayati Raj has brought development and only (4.28) percent of the respondents are unable to give their views in either way.

Table: 4.2 Response Patterns of Respondents to the question- “Do you agree that implementation of rural development Schemes through Panchayati Raj institution has improved the village infrastructures?”

Sl.No.	Categories of Respondents	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
1.	Beneficiaries	154 (73.33%)	22 (10.47%)	34 (16.19%)	210 (100%)
2.	Panchayat members	261 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	261 (100%)
3.	Other respondents	41 (58.57%)	24 (34.28%)	5 (7.14%)	70 (100%)
	Total	456 (84.28%)	46 (8.50%)	39 (7.20%)	541 (100%)

Source: Field Survey by the researcher

It is seen from Table 4.2 that out of total five hundred forty one (541) respondents, majority of the respondents that is (84.28) percent have accepted that implementation of developmental schemes through Panchayati Raj institution has improved the village infrastructure. While (8.50) percent of the total respondents have not accepted that implementation of rural developmental schemes through Panchayati Raj institution has improved the village infrastructures and (7.20) percent of the total respondents have said that they don't know whether implementation of rural development schemes through Panchayati Raj institution has improved the village infrastructures. Thus, from the table it is clear that majority of the respondents have agreed that the village infrastructures have been improved with the implementation of various developmental schemes through Panchayati Raj institution.

In order to examine the improvement in village infrastructural facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, quality of roads, foot paths, education and electricity etc. The opinions are collected from the sampled beneficiaries. Table 4.3 shows the extent of Satisfaction and dissatisfaction of beneficiaries about the infrastructure facilities in the study area.

Table: 4.3 Number of Beneficiaries reporting improvements in village infrastructural facilities.

Infrastructure	Beneficiaries Reporting satisfaction	Beneficiaries Reporting dissatisfaction	Total
Quality of roads and foot paths	143 (68.09%)	67 (31.90%)	210 (100%)
Sanitation	110 (52.38%)	100 (47.61%)	210 (100%)
Drinking Water	116	94	210

	(55.23%)	(44.76%)	(100%)
Education	152 (72.38%)	58 (27.61%)	210 (100%)
Electricity	145 (69.04%)	65 (30.95%)	210 (100%)
Housing	140 (66.66%)	70 (33.33%)	210 (100%)

Source: Field survey by the researcher

The table 4.3 reveals that up to some extent Panchayati Raj has been effective in providing village infrastructural facilities to the beneficiaries. Some facilities like roads, foot paths, education, electricity and housing are found adequate to the beneficiaries. As the extent of their adequacy and accessibility varies from village to village, (68.09) percent of the total beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction over the adequacy and accessibility of the quality of roads as well as foot paths, while (31.90) percent of the total beneficiaries have expressed dissatisfaction on it. In the case of sanitation and drinking water facilities, (52.38) percent and (55.23) percent of the beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction respectively, while (47.61) percent and (44.76) percent of the total beneficiaries have expressed dissatisfaction over the facilities respectively. Similarly, it is found that people have accessed to the facilities like Education, Electricity and Housing etc. In education sector, (72.38) percent of the total beneficiaries are found to be satisfied, while (27.61) percent are dissatisfied. It is also found that (69.04) percent of beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction in electricity facility and (66.66) percent are found to be satisfied with housing facility, while (30.95) percent beneficiaries are not satisfied over the electricity facility and (33.33) percent beneficiaries are dissatisfied on the housing facility provided by the Panchayati Raj. Although more than half of the total beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction on the village infrastructural facilities, there is a need for improving the facilities in order to enrich the people with dissatisfaction. As such, there is still a need for improving the village infrastructural facilities.

## Conclusion

It has rightly said that Panchayati Raj as a modern political institution has been actively working as an instrument for rural Development and democratic decentralization. Initially, there were lack of political awareness and mass participation in decision making process among the tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. Gradually, the people of Arunachal Pradesh came in contact with a uniform political structure, and the democratic practices and ideas were inculcated even to those people, who are otherwise confined by the age old traditional social systems and hierarchical politics. However, there are still some important concerns as per as meaningful working of Panchayati Raj system is concerned. Basically, Panchayat elections are fought on party lines which led to the creation of political rivalries among the clan and the community; proper devolution of power is not given to the panchayats for discharging their duties towards the administration of the rural areas; it is yet to overcome bureaucratic hurdle; the political leaders of the high order have been controlling the financial powers and the women representations are also restricted to 33 per cent reservation seats.

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