

# Paradox of Autonomy: Analyzing the Challenges and Dynamics of the Autonomous District Councils in Manipur

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**Abstract:** *The Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) of Manipur serve as pivotal governance structures designed to provide self-governance to the tribal populations of the state's hill districts. Established under the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971, these councils aim to facilitate tribal autonomy by allowing local management of cultural, economic, and environmental resources. However, this study reveals a fundamental paradox: while ADCs are intended to promote autonomy, they remain significantly dependent on the state government for financial and administrative support. This dependency severely limits their effectiveness and autonomy, aligning their operations more with state interests than the local tribal needs they are meant to address. Through an extensive review of legislative texts, government reports, and firsthand accounts, this analysis delves into the complexities of ADC governance, highlighting the constraints posed by financial reliance and political oversight. The findings underscore the need for structural reforms to empower ADCs genuinely, suggesting a model that enhances financial autonomy and minimizes state interference. This study proposes that realizing the full potential of ADCs involves a critical reevaluation of their operational frameworks to better serve the tribal communities of Manipur.*

**Key Words:** *Autonomous District Councils, tribal autonomy, decentralization, financial dependency, Manipur governance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Manipur, in northeastern India, is a rich tapestry of ethnic groups with extraordinary natural characteristics. Tribal people primarily inhabit the hilly regions, making up the vast majority of the population. The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971 established autonomous district councils (ADCs) to exercise local authority. The goal is to let indigenous tribes manage their resources, culture, and local administration without state interference. This study is heavily influenced by local government autonomy and decentralization. Decentralisation theory states that local institutions can better govern by responding to local concerns and involving locals in decision-making (Litvack, Ahmad, and Bird, 1998). However, Manipur's ADCs must balance autonomy with financial support and state government political oversight. This contradicts autonomy in that it both offers and restricts it. Manipur created Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) to foster development and bolster administrative control over tribal groups. Singh (2018) claims that this could result in more efficient government operations and greater local applicability. Regardless of their objectives, ADCs often encounter difficulties as a result of their dependence on state government funding and administration. According to Kumar (2020), interdependence hinders their ability to propose and implement community-level decisions. Because of this paradox, they are unable to completely exercise their independence as state-run organisations. The issues extend beyond administrative and financial concerns to state politics, where state and national politics can undermine local ambitions. People frequently view the impact as an attempt to undermine decentralization. According to Devi (2021), this situation enables state politics to take precedence over local interests. This introduction provides a framework for evaluating the conflicting issues confronting Manipur's autonomous district councils. This study examines the operational framework tensions of the councils to gain a better understanding of the relationship between local autonomy and state dependency in Northeast India's tribal territories. The study investigates how these dynamics affect the functioning of decentralized governments.

**1.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT:** The Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur's hill districts face a paradoxical situation that hinders their success, despite their creation to promote local self-governance and empower tribal communities. According to the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971, tribal communities can

manage their resources, cultural heritage, and local administrative issues without state interference. The Manipur state government provides significant financial and administrative support to these councils. This dependency limits their autonomy, as state agendas often override the needs of tribal communities. In this paper, we explore how the theoretical autonomy of decentralisation policies and the practical reliance on state mechanisms can impede the ability of ADCs to govern and develop their regions. The purpose of this study is to explore how this paradox impacts council governance and find ways to address it in order to enhance local governance in tribal areas of northeast India.

**1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:** The aim is to assess the autonomy and dependency of Manipur's ADCs. This goal is to critically evaluate the ADCs' autonomy versus their state government dependence on financial and administrative support. The research will examine how this dependency affects ADCs' ability to govern and meet tribal communities' local needs. In order to evaluate the impact of state politics on ADC governance, this objective delves into the influence of state and national politics on ADC operations. I will be researching the effects of state political control and intervention on the ability of ADCs to implement policies and initiatives that align with tribal aspirations and needs. To increase ADCs' governance effectiveness, The final goal is to identify answers and tactics to help ADCs overcome their paradoxical issues and improve their governance. This would involve evaluating successful decentralised governance models from other regions, applying them to Manipur, and suggesting tailored measures to empower the ADCs to perform their tasks more autonomously.

**1.3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** Manipur's Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) are deeply rooted in its political, ethnic, and geographical identity. The creation of these councils aimed to enhance local governance in tribal-dominated hill areas and cater to the needs and aspirations of indigenous communities. History and Legislation: Following India's independence, Manipur established ADCs in response to the need for greater political and administrative autonomy in tribal areas. A key decentralisation initiative, the Manipur (Hill Areas) Area Councils Act of 1971, aimed to empower tribal residents in hill areas. Manipur, a Union Territory, passed this Act before becoming a state in 1972. The 1971 Act established district councils, autonomous bodies empowered to govern themselves according to their traditional laws and customs. The ADCs regulated land use, forestry, agriculture, public health, and local infrastructure to foster socioeconomic growth that aligned with each district's culture.

Evolution and Challenges: ADCs have undergone several adjustments and reforms to increase functionality and autonomy. Initially, the councils had advisory powers but limited administrative, legislative, or judicial power. Over the years, tribal leaders and activists have sought more autonomy for true self-governance, strengthening their authority and operational capacity. Despite these reforms, ADCs continue to struggle. The state government and district councils have clashed over autonomy, particularly financial and legislative powers. Financial constraints have been a problem for ADCs, which often rely on state allocations rather than revenue-generating mechanisms. Financial dependence has limited their effectiveness, making them vulnerable to state political and fiscal whims. The latest political developments: Manipur's ethnic diversity and volatile politics complicate the ADCs' political environment. Ethnic tensions, particularly between tribal groups and non-tribals, have frequently affected ADCs. These tensions have sometimes turned violent, threatening regional stability and governance.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW:** Scholarly interest has focused on Manipur's Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) governance and autonomy, notably the unusual interaction between decentralisation policies and administrative autonomy. Based on theoretical frameworks and practical studies, this literature overview synthesises significant perspectives and findings.

Decentralisation, which transfers power from central to local governments to improve administrative efficiency and responsiveness to local demands (Litvack, Ahmad, & Bird, 1998). Local institutions like ADCs should benefit from decentralisation by having more freedom to rule according to local needs. However, financial and administrative dependence on the state government severely limits Manipur ADC autonomy (Singh, 2018; Kumar, 2020). Their dependency hinders their performance and aligns their operations with governmental goals rather than local demands (Gupta, R. 2018). If we were to analyse Manipur's ADC governance structure using the principal-agent theory, it would indicate that the state government serves as the principal and the ADCs act as the agents. According to Eisenhardt (1989), disputes can arise when there is a lack of information and incompatible objectives, and the principal has extensive control over important resources. ADCs in Manipur are inefficient and have the wrong objectives, as the state government regulates administrative and financial authorizations so strictly (Devi, 2021). Manipur's ADCs are unable to act freely due to the state government's strict control over financial and administrative authorizations, resulting in inefficiency and misguided aims. According to Devi (2021), the operational freedom of Manipur's ADCs is constrained by the state government's supervision of financial and administrative permits, and the Institutional Theory (North, 1990)

says that the operational dynamics of an organisation, such as an ADC, are influenced by the social, economic, and political environments in which it operates. The governance of Manipur ADCs is influenced by ethnic diversity and political challenges. ADCs face daily challenges in managing ethnic tensions and integrating traditional governing methods with modern administrative systems (Chanu, 2020). According to Hooghe and Marks (2003), the Multilevel Governance Theory explains that ADCs function in jurisdictions that overlap and are interconnected. This comprises state, national, and international donor and agency relations in Manipur that affect local governance. These interactions cause misalignments and coordination issues, affecting governance and limiting ADC efficacy (Pegu, 2020). Resource Dependency Theory states that external resources greatly impact an organisation's autonomy (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Financial dependence on the state government renders Manipur ADCs vulnerable to external pressures and control, limiting their ability to govern autonomously and fulfil local development needs (Kipgen, 2016). Finally, conflict theory illuminates how power and resource distribution disputes affect governance (Marx & Engels, 1848). ADC governance in Manipur is sometimes influenced by ethnic rivalries and political struggles, which may harm indigenous tribal groups (Haokip, 2018).

Manipur's Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) balance development with indigenous culture and environment. This literature review examines the conflicts and synergies between these two goals in Manipur's unique socio-political and ecological milieu.

ADCs typically promote tribal socioeconomic development. This includes enhancing indigenous infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic possibilities. These programmes improve hill district quality of life; however, Singh (2018) and Kumar (2020) emphasise that resource allocation, implementation, and alignment with state and national development policies are typically difficult. Extensive infrastructure initiatives have the potential to engender environmental and societal changes, thereby endangering indigenous communities' customs and local ecosystems.

ADCs must safeguard the autonomy and culture of tribes. Preventing the deterioration of indigenous governance systems, tribal languages, customs, and land rights through development (North, 1990). The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971 authorises ADCs to carry out local affairs in accordance with traditional laws and traditions, hence contributing to preservation efforts. According to Devi (2021), external political factors and state-led development plans often undercut these preservation efforts.

Research indicates that development and preservation must be balanced. According to Eisenhardt's (1989) principal-agent theory, state governments (principals) and ADCs (agents) may have competing development and cultural preservation goals. ADCs must seek development funds and combat threats to cultural integrity.

To preserve balance, environmental sustainability is required. According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), the Resource Dependency Theory implies that ADCs' reliance on state subsidies may result in projects that violate environmental norms. Because of their close ties to tribal identity and culture, preserving biodiversity and natural heritage in these locations has major benefits. Disputes between progress and preservation are laid bare in the 1848 Conflict Theory by Marx and Engels. Outside tribes may rebel against federal or state control, while within tribes they may argue over the future. Indigenous governance models throughout the world demonstrate, however, that cooperative systems are capable of incorporating cultural preservation and development into a comprehensive model of government (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). The Autonomous District Councils of Manipur play a vital role in comprehending the political mechanisms of the state, including tribal self-governance, state administration, and ethnic conflicts. This literature study analyses the intricate connections between political actors and forces in Manipur by using theoretical frameworks and providing practical examples, specifically focusing on the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). According to decentralisation theory, such approaches should improve local administration by meeting local requirements (Litvack, Ahmad, & Bird, 1998). In fact, the ADCs' financial and administrative dependency on the state government limits their autonomy, which has political repercussions as it often centralises authority instead of decentralising it (Kumar, 2020).

An instance of a principal-agent dilemma arises between the Manipur state government and ADCs as a result of divergent interests and an information asymmetry (Eisenhardt, 1989). The state government, being the principal, exercises authority over financial and administrative matters, which restricts the ability of the ADCs to advocate for governance that aligns with the interests of local tribal groups. ADCs' independence is undermined by political manoeuvres that steer their operations towards state goals (Devi, 2021).

The widespread ethnic conflicts in Manipur must be considered when understanding ADC politics. Political tensions often affect elections, government, and development projects. Conflicts between tribal groups and tribal and non-tribal communities can influence ADC governance because they become battlefields for ethnic and political disputes (Haokip, 2018).

The ADC elections demonstrate how ethnic identities and affiliations profoundly influence electoral processes. State and national politics exert influence on these elections as parties seek to manipulate the results to coincide with

their governing goals. As a result, ADCs may give more importance to the political objectives of powerful parties than to the needs and wishes of the local population (Singh, 2018).

Manipur's ADCs demonstrate the challenges of multilevel government, where local, state, and national policies intersect. The multilevel governance hypothesis explains how local tribal traditions and national Indian laws and regulations impact ADC policies. This theory describes how policy misalignments at different levels of government might make ADCs harder to run and manage, resulting in ineffective or non-existent policy implementation (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

**3. METHODOLOGY:** This research examines Manipur's Autonomous District Councils' issues and dynamics, utilising several methodologies. Research starts with a comprehensive literature examination of academic papers, books, and government publications. This study examines theoretical frameworks and research on autonomous decentralised systems (ADCs), autonomy, and governance. This review summarises existing research and identifies gaps that this study will fill. Furthermore, the research compares Manipur's ADCs to those in Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, all of which fall under the sixth schedule. This approach focuses on autonomy, financial self-sufficiency, and governance effectiveness, which helps to understand how legislative circumstances impact councils.

Case studies were employed to conduct an exhaustive examination of practical concerns, such as the reliance of ADCs on administrative and financial resources and the subsequent impact on operational effectiveness. Combining literature, documents, and source data yields recurring themes and patterns. This synthesis helps determine the efficacy and challenges of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur by revealing the contradictory nature of autonomy.

#### 4. CASE STUDIES:

**An Overview of the Manipur Incident on May 3, 2023:** On May 3, 2023, tribal communities in Manipur held a 'Tribal Solidarity March' to protest the Meitei Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, sparking unrest and highlighting the Autonomous District Councils' complex administration. The aftermath showed the region's fragile peace and the Kuki-Zo community's dissatisfaction and desire for autonomy, even as a Union Territory. This event exposed the inadequacy of the ADCs to handle disputes and worsened ethnic tensions, both of which were related to the fact that the ADCs are dependent on state money and legality. As a result of the economic upheavals that were caused by the battle, particularly disadvantaged tribal people were excluded, and development programmes that were sponsored by the government continued to be ineffective. In response to disturbances, the government implemented security forces and curfews; autonomy and ethnic tensions were not addressed. Thus, amendments to the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act were suggested in order to expand the legislative and financial authority of ADCs. Similar to other states, Manipur has started discussions about implementing the Sixth Schedule to enhance the authority of ADCs in tribal development and dispute resolution. The case study highlights the challenges faced by ADCs in achieving autonomy and local governance. Political interference and institutional constraints hinder progress, highlighting the need for significant legislative reforms in areas such as resource management, administration, and conflict resolution.

**Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in Assam:** As a consequence of the Bodo Accord, which was reached between India, Assam, and the Bodo Liberation Tigers in 2003, the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was established in accordance with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. When the Bodo Tribe Council (BTC) was established, its primary mission was to address the socio-economic and political goals of the Bodo people. Its primary focus was to enhance self-governance and administration in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), encompassing Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, and Udalguri.

The BTC has legislative, executive, and financial power, unlike other regional councils. The BTC can legislate on 40 issues, including land management, agriculture, health, and education. This lets it efficiently meet local needs. Under the direction of the Chief Executive Member (CEM) and Executive Members (EMs), who oversee several departments, the council independently implements policies and development programmes. BTC finances are supported by central government grants. This reduces state dependence and improves development programmes. The ability of the council to collect local taxes and fees boosts its financial independence.

The BTC oversees over 40 departments, enabling specialised and localised governance. BTC's comprehensive administrative framework ensures BTR's special requirements are met efficiently. The BTC has built schools, hospitals, and administrative offices and improved road links. The council looks after over 800 elementary, secondary, and college schools that focus on preserving Bodo language and culture through education.

The BTC has built and improved over 50 healthcare facilities to provide local residents with high-quality care. Economic development programmes provide seeds, fertilisers, and modern farming methods to over 100,000 farmers. There is

strong support for promoting organic farming and agro-based industries. Over 20,000 young individuals have received vocational training and skill development, resulting in enhanced job opportunities for them.

Despite these achievements, the BTC faces difficulties concerning ethnic conflict, financial constraints, and administrative efficiency. A multicultural BTC might sometimes cause difficulties, but it successfully resolves these concerns by actively engaging the community and initiating problem-solving programmes. Presently, Bitcoin is having problems because of financing delays from the central government. At the moment, BTC is trying to increase its revenue-generating capacity. Enhancing capacity and applying digital governance enhance administrative efficiency and increase the quality of services. By emulating BTC, Manipur Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) may enhance their autonomy and efficacy. The inclusion of the Sixth Schedule in the legislative authority of ADCs might enhance the effectiveness of local governance. Government subsidies may greatly decrease ADCs' dependence on the state and expedite the progress of development initiatives. The effective fulfilment of local needs can be achieved through the implementation of comprehensive education, healthcare, and infrastructure development initiatives that place a high priority on cultural heritage. The implementation of efficient conflict resolution strategies and active community engagement can effectively mitigate ethnic tensions and foster social cohesion.

## 5. DISCUSSION:

**Findings on autonomy and dependency:** The paradoxical relationship between autonomy and dependency in Manipur's Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) is examined using secondary sources, legislative documents, and comparative studies. Findings show that ADCs struggle to self-govern. The 1971 Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act granted tribal areas self-governance, but ADCs' financial and administrative dependence on the state government has prevented them from meeting expectations. ADCs have theoretical power to govern local affairs, but state budgets limit their operational independence (Kumar, 2020). The state controls budget allocations, so ADCs prioritise state-driven programmes over tribal community needs, creating a gap between community needs and council actions (Devi, 2021). ADC autonomy is complicated by the tendency of state-level politics and ethnic strife to eclipse local government (Singh, 2018). Political interests from the state sway elections and, by controlling council operations, erode local government. ADCs are under state supervision despite laws to give them more authority; structural restrictions prevent them from having administrative decentralisation and budgetary autonomy (Litvack, Ahmad, & Bird, 1998). Compared to the Sixth Schedule states like Meghalaya and Mizoram, these councils have less financial and judicial authority, but they have improved governance and development (Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

**Challenges in balancing development and preservation:** Manipur's Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) face the challenge of finding a harmonious balance between modern development, tribal cultural heritage, and environmental conservation. In Manipur's hill districts, ADCs oversee the management of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic development. Large-scale infrastructure projects can have negative consequences such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and cultural disruption (Kumar, 2020). State interests were prioritised over the interests and needs of tribal communities, which simply make things more difficult (Singh, 2018).

The Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971 empowers ADCs to manage their affairs according to traditional laws and customs, but political pressures and state-led development often undermine these efforts (Devi, 2021). Although ADCs try to preserve traditional farming methods, external pressures may push commercial farming into tribal areas. Respecting tribal autonomy and integrating sustainable development practices balances development and preservation. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution would help ADCs manage this balance, according to supporters (Haokip, 2018). Higher government limits ADCs' growth and preservation aims and local decision-making (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Political disputes may drain resources from sustainable development, escalating ethnic tensions, and ignoring tribal heritage (Marx & Engels, 1848).

**Political manipulation:** Political manipulation has undermined Manipur's Autonomous District Councils' autonomy and efficiency. This analysis explores the impact of state politics on ADC governance and functionality. Because of the state's influence over administration and funding, ADCs are more state-oriented than tribal-focused. According to Kumar (2020), this reliance has diminished the decision-making authority of ADCs, transforming them into instruments of state politics rather than local development organisations.

State-level parties frequently manipulate ADC elections to exert control over tribal areas, prioritising dominant parties over the interests of local residents and consequently impacting policy implementation and governance (Singh, 2018). Political groups exploit the ethnic diversity in Manipur to fuel conflict and create instability in ADC regions (Haokip, 2018). State-controlled resources and approval processes limit ADCs' operational autonomy and ability to represent tribal communities (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This political manipulation misaligns ADC development goals with state

government priorities, benefiting state politicians rather than local communities, causing policy inconsistencies and governance inefficiencies (Devi, 2021; Hooghe & Marks, 2003).

**Comparative Analysis of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur and Those Under the Sixth Schedule**

Comparing the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur with those in states under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution offers a compelling view into how varying legislative environments impact governance, autonomy, and local development. Below is a detailed table contrasting these aspects:

**Table 1: Comparison between ADC in Manipur and ADCs under the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India**

Comparison Aspect	District Councils in Manipur	ADCs Under Sixth Schedule ( Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura)
<b>Legislative Framework</b>	Operate under the Manipur Hill Areas District Council Act of 1971, not included in the Sixth Schedule.	Governed by the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
<b>Power Source</b>	Dependent on the state assembly due to provisions of the act.	Derive power directly from Article 244 of the Constitution.
<b>Legislative Powers</b>	Limited to personal matters such as marriage, divorce, and social customs.	Extensive legislative powers over land, forest, water, agriculture, and more.
<b>Financial Autonomy</b>	Dependent on the state government for financial devolution.	Receive central grants through the state, with enhanced ability to levy taxes and manage funds.
<b>Administrative Control</b>	Deputy Commissioner, appointed by the state government, has significant control. The DC's decision is final unless overruled by the Governor and can dissolve ADCs with Governor's assent.	More autonomous; not dependent on Deputy Commissioners.
<b>Judicial Powers</b>	Limited; mainly adjudicate minor local disputes under customary law.	Have powers to form courts to hear cases involving members of Scheduled Tribes, with sentences less than 5 years.
<b>Role of Deputy Commissioner</b>	Plays a crucial role in almost all matters; decisions are final unless overruled by the Governor. The DC can even dissolve the ADCs with the assent of the Governor.	ADCs under the Sixth Schedule are not dependent on the Deputy Commissioner.
<b>Developmental Role</b>	Often aligned with state-driven agendas; less alignment with local tribal needs due to limited autonomy.	Local needs more frequently addressed; development projects tend to align closely with community priorities due to greater local control.
<b>Cultural Preservation</b>	Efforts can be overridden by state-driven development agendas.	Enhanced powers to manage and preserve cultural heritage, aligning development with traditional laws and practices.
<b>Conflict Management</b>	Ethnic tensions and conflicts heavily influenced by state politics, affecting governance stability.	Better mechanisms to handle local conflicts effectively due to a greater understanding of local tribal norms and issues.
<b>Governance Effectiveness</b>	Often hindered by financial and administrative dependency, leading to challenges in implementing effective local governance.	Typically exhibit more effective governance due to autonomy, direct governance capabilities, and alignment with local community needs.

Source: IAS Parliament

**6. RESULT:** ADC governance is inconsistent, according to the analysis. Due to financial and administrative dependence on the Manipur state government, these councils have failed to promote local self-governance and empower tribal groups.

**Result interpretation:** The Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur are designed to have a certain level of autonomy, but in practice, they heavily depend on state funding for their day-to-day operations and development. ADCs are unable to make decisions that align with the needs of local indigenous groups due to their financial dependence, which in turn compels them to adopt programmes dictated by the state.

Political manipulation undermines the ADC's autonomy. ADC policies often clash with local community demands since councils prioritize state political ambitions over local development. Constant political manoeuvring and disregard for local problems undermine ADC policy and administration, leading to state-centred policies.

Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram's Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) have more financial and legal freedom, which makes government and growth better. These governments have a lot of legal and financial freedom to carry out community-focused development projects and settle local disagreements (Borkotoky, 2020).

Manipur ADCs fight to protect tribal lands and customs despite growing. State and national development ambitions can harm local ecosystems and traditional lifestyles, necessitating the need for a governance model that strikes a balance between development and cultural preservation. The Manipur ADC analysis suggests several policy and governance reforms to improve their effectiveness and independence. Legislative reforms are necessary to grant ADCs the same level of autonomy as Sixth Schedule councils, encompassing legislative, judicial, and administrative powers. Reforms would empower ADCs to make decisions based on local needs, with limited state intervention. Legislation needs to restrict the extent of state government control over ADC activities in order to avoid any kind of political manipulation. This may make the government's ability to oversee the ADC's finances and operations more difficult. The increase in financial independence through making money at the local level is also very important. ADCs should be able to make money through taxes, fees, and managing resources so that they don't have to rely on state funding as much and can follow their own growth plans. Financial management and reporting must be transparent to ensure funds are used efficiently and meet local needs. Tribal traditions and environments should be protected by thorough cultural and environmental impact assessments for ADC development projects. Tribal languages, customs, and traditions should be preserved and promoted through dedicated funds or initiatives. The ADC needs to enhance governance and skill development, improve financial management and project implementation training, and enhance community engagement in decision-making through public consultations and participatory planning to effectively manage complex issues. It's also clear that conflict settlement needs to be tailored to each area. Tribal conflict settlement systems that respect cultural and social differences could help communities solve their own problems without the need for outside help. Furthermore, creating a separate organisation whose job it is to keep an eye on and evaluate ADC's governance, financial management, and legal compliance would lead to fair assessments and ideas for improvement, ensuring both responsibility and progress.

## **6. FINDINGS:**

The research investigates the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the hilly areas of Manipur and presents several significant discoveries. The ADCs, founded with the aim of fostering self-governance among indigenous communities, encounter constraints since they depend on the state government for both financial and administrative assistance. This relationship undermines their independence and leads to their objectives aligning more with government agendas than the specific needs of the indigenous population. The ADCs function within the framework of the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act of 1971, which limits their independence in legislative and financial matters, leaving them susceptible to being overruled by the state government. Because of the harmful effects of outside political and developmental influences on native cultures and ecosystems, ADCs face major obstacles in finding a balance between progress and the protection of tribal cultural resources. The administration of the ADC succumbs to the influence of both state and national politics, thereby engendering political manipulation and fostering ethnic tensions. The Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur exhibit a relatively diminished degree of autonomy, particularly in matters pertaining to finance and the judiciary. As such, as compared to the councils operating under the Sixth Schedule in other Northeast Indian states, this leads to less effective governance and development results. The study results imply that one of the main obstacles to ADCs' ability to effectively handle local concerns and carry out their assigned roles as self-governing organisations is their reliance on the state government for both financial and administrative support.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The ongoing investigation pertaining to Manipur's Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) posits the subsequent prospective inquiries aimed at tackling the prevailing concerns and intricacies: The Evolution of Legal Modifications and Their Ramifications The investigation may delve into the ramifications of legal changes on the autonomy and efficacy of ADCs. This procedure would encompass the assessment of proposed amendments that would bestow upon councils heightened authority over fiscal matters and legislative enactments. Longitudinal studies pertaining to governance outcomes A comprehensive comprehension of the enduring ramifications of autonomy versus reliance necessitates the acquisition of longitudinal studies that meticulously monitor the efficacy of ADC governance. This study provides the opportunity to assess the overall welfare of the community, safeguard cultural resources, and stimulate local development. Additional scholarly investigation is needed to evaluate the efficacy of ADC methods in safeguarding indigenous history and culture. Another possibility is to examine specific initiatives that focus on safeguarding indigenous languages, traditions, and ancestral territories. Future research should focus on the various

conflict resolution strategies used by ADCs to resolve ethnic conflicts. This might help build tactics for negotiating the complex social dynamics of these locations. A Study of Policy Execution To understand the complexities of local government effectiveness, it is necessary to study the time needed for the establishment and implementation of ADC policies. This research will mainly focus on administrative challenges and the impact of state politics on policy implementation. Social and economic impact evaluations are necessary to examine the community benefits and socioeconomic consequences of ADC development initiatives for tribal people.

**8. CONCLUSION:** An analysis of the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Manipur reveals a contradiction where the supposed independence of the states is compromised by their reliance on the state government for both financial and administrative affairs. The dependence on state-driven programming hampers the efficiency of ADCs since it compels them to emphasise the needs of local tribal populations above other projects. The manipulation of politics exacerbates the erosion of the integrity of ADCs, since political objectives at the state level sometimes supersede those of local administration. By contrast, Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) that are categorised under the Sixth Schedule in other northeastern states have a greater degree of self-governance, leading to improved administration and progress. The report emphasises the need for legal changes that would provide ADCs (Autonomous District Councils) with more autonomy, financial independence, and the opportunity to find a middle ground between development and cultural preservation in order to maintain the successful governance of tribal communities.

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