

Local Government in Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. Dwarikanath Pandey

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1995

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The present book, Local Govt. in Arunachal Pradesh is an exquisite survey of various facets of Arunachal Pradesh in general and of local government in particular. It envisages to comprehend the local governments of Arunachal as a back-drop on which the Panchayati Raj System was introduced in India. The term 'local government' in place of 'local self-government' has been deliberately used by the author throughout the book as he contends, 'In an independent democracy like India, the word 'self' is superfluous. Of course, 'self' in Local Self government was pertinent and significant during the colonial period when India was ruled by His or Her Majesty's Government in England''

The book is extremely informative. Serious students scholars, field workers as well as general readers may derive maximum benefit from it

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Dr. D.N. Pandey has obtained his M.A. and Ph. D degrees in Political Science from Patna University. He has been serving in the Department of Education, Government of Arunachal Pradesh since last one and half decade. He has got many published research papers to his credit. The present book is the outcome of his intensive field-work among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and the neighbouring states.

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FOREWORD

Arunachal Pradesh is a wonderful land spread over a very vast area and inhabited by various tribes in the North East with its very rich cultural heritage. The people of this region have had their own traditional social, political and economic institutions functioning well for centuries. It is only heartening that the modern civilization has not broken their link with the past. They have adopted well to the modern systems of governance particularly at the grass root level. The Panchayati Raj institutions have mingled well with the traditional institutions and their cultural heritage in the countryside.

A comparative study of the old and new systems of local Government made by Dr. Dwarikanath Pandey in this book is indeed commendable. The author has done extensive field work to bring out his book. I congratulate him for the good work done.

April 20, 1995

Mata Prasad

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Science, Bhagalpur University deserve my sincere gratitude for their valuable suggestion and help.

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Some top civil servants like Shri I.P. Gupta, ~~Former~~ Chief ~~C.S. of A.P.~~ of Arunachal Pradesh; Shri T. Ringu, I.A.S., Commissioner; Shri Kuru Hasang, the first Pilot Officer, Shri Premanand, Director of Panchayat and others were helpful to me in allowing my access to the classified confidential records.

I acknowledge my debts to my uncle Shri B.B. Pandey, District Research Officer, Bomdila who has been my constant mentor and my sisters, Urmila and Dharmashila, for their help and encouragement.

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changes. Similarly I am grateful to Mr. B.N. Jha, Govt College, Bomdila, for his suggestion and help. I am indeed grateful to Shri Mata Prasad, Governor, A.P., who very kindly took the pain to go through my manuscript and has written the Foreword of the book.

I shall fail in my duty if I do not acknowledge the interest of the Himalayan Publishers, Patna, which took so much of interest in bringing out the book.

Finally, thanks are due to a number of Gaon Burhas, interpreters, village councillors and members of the tribes in Arunachal Pradesh whom I met during my visit to Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap districts, and many village and the tribal councils, Kebangs, Moshups and Abbalas etc., who remain unmentioned here for no other reason than sheer paucity of space.

September, 1994

Dwarika Nath Pandey

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INTRODUCTION

As our late Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru once observed:

"I am alarmed when I see — not only in this country but in other great countries too — how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living. We are to welcome our way of living, but why impose it on others? This applies equally to national and international fields. In fact, there would be more peace in the world if people were to desist from imposing their way of living on other people and countries.

I am not at all sure which is the better way of living, the tribal or our own. In some respects I am quite certain theirs is better. Therefore, it is grossly presumptuous on our part to approach them with an air of superiority; to tell them how to behave or what to do and what not to do. There is no point in trying to make of them a second-rate copy of ourselves."¹

The above remark of the late Prime Minister Nehru shows his concern for promoting the interests of tribal population within a mix of the old and the new, that is, shaping grassroot democracy by the merging of the old and the new social controls, adjusting the new pattern of administration to the local conditions of the tribal people, consistent with their separate urges and aspirations.

Arunachal Pradesh, the name with the new status given to the erstwhile "North-East-Frontier Agency", had long been regarded as a "Hidden Land", inhabited by a large number of

tribes with their own economy and cultural life, living here for centuries, isolated from each other and away from the preying eyes of the so-called civilized world, sandwiched between Chinese occupied Tibet along the snowline in the extreme North, Bhutan in the West, Burma in the South-East and Assam in the South.

In fact, some of the territories of this State remain "uninhabited" and even today, some of the areas are sparsely populated. The British did not seriously attempt to consolidate their administration over the region and broadly remained content with maintaining a loose control over the discrete tribal groups, inhabiting world's one of the most difficult terrains in India's North-East.

It was only after India's independence that the Government of India took over the administration of the tribal areas and initiated the policy characterised by a "protective aspect" and a "developmental aspect". The first aspect related to the protection of the rights of the tribal people in lands and forests and their culture. The latter aspect related to positive welfare schemes.

The local administration in Arunachal Pradesh exhibits the systematic concerns and traits of local tribal institutions (Gams, Buliang, Kebang, Gaon Burha, Abbala, etc.) and customs (bride-price etc.) and practices and traditions, combined with the modern three-tier system of Panchayati Raj and Community Development ensuring "participation" and "development" and yet not losing "identity."

How far this novel and great experiment has succeeded among the various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh is a matter of great politico-administrative significance to any research in social sciences, more so in Political Science.

It is obvious that as progress comes to Arunachal Pradesh its ancient model of village authority will need change and reconstruction. However, it would be well to remember that the change, inevitable as indeed it is, should be built on the sure roots of indigenous system and concept of democracy.

This means that the new and imported patterns of local government can stay, only when it is in harmony with the local tribal ethnic culture and ethos.

It was in 1967 that under the "North-East Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj Regulation", Gram Panchayats at the village level, Anchal Samities at the block level, Zilla Parishad at the district level and Agency Council at the top were constituted. This pattern was different from the pattern followed elsewhere in India. How it differed is a subject matter of the present study.

It was in 1975 that Arunachal Pradesh got its first Legislative Assembly (the Pradesh Council) to which elections were held in 1978.

Thus the years 1967 and 1975 constitute two important landmarks in the politico-administrative development of Arunachal Pradesh.

We have practically no material, written or unwritten, relating to the highly diverse patterns of indigenous and Panchayat Raj institutions in Arunachal Pradesh.

The present study will surely provide some stimulus to the serious students of local government to study in greater details the pattern of local government in India's North-East Frontier.

Because of the difficult terrains and hill tracts and the difficulty of knowing the local dialects, more than seventy in number, one may find few good studies on the history of Arunachal,² or the philosophy for Arunachal,³ or the Arunachal panorma⁴ etc., but no single study on the highly diverse patterns of Panchayat Raj and indigenous institutions of local government.

This study is a modest attempt to fill this gap.

The principal purpose of this study is exploration, explanation, examination and exposition of the pattern of local government in Arunachal Pradesh in the context of tribal ethnic background. The various facets and their performance is also discussed. The structural and functional details have been as

much focused as the important issues and problems highlighted. An effort has also been made to suggest remedial measures at relevant places. Some perspective thinking has also been made in the last chapter.

In case of a study of the local self-government in Arunachal Pradesh, the only possible methodology which could be, and has been used, is to lean upon the scattered government papers and documents, followed by "impressionistic field-study" and "interview method." This author, who is working under the Government of Arunachal Pradesh, arranged personal interviews with several Gaon Burhas, political leaders, and senior and junior civil servants, both old and new, who have been the principal participants in the local government system.

As a result, it was possible for this author to conduct the investigation and the study all by himself in much less time than this would have otherwise taken. Moreover, with his previous acquaintance with some of the Gaon Burhas and civil servants, it was possible for him to study the inner working of the local government institutions, about which they gave him informations, with frankness, which they would not have given to any other member of the outgroup.

Apart from introduction, which discusses the nature of the problem and scope and methods of inquiry, this study is divided into nine chapters dealing with the various facets of the issue.

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