



MAXFORD DYNAMIC SERIES OF TRIBAL STUDIES

The Tribes of ARUNACHAL PRADESH

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The Tribes of ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The book explores the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh with gratifying heritage of arts and crafts and entertaining folksongs. The state has many major tribes and a number of sub-tribes having their own lingo and cultural identities. The tribes form their institutes and also select leaders according to their age for distinct social functions, for better administration. Experienced leaders of the tribal groups are revered for their position in the community. Each tribe has its own lively folk songs and kaleidoscopic traditional dances that depict a unique outline of unity in diversity.

The tribes have their own dialect but Hindi and Assamese are also widely spoken and used in communication with non tribal people. The way that these tribes lead their lives were more or less the same and those they abided by the similar occupation; the societies are 'casteless'. Festivals are an integral part of all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh thereby reflecting the cultural exuberances and artistry. The book presents some of the selected pictures of the tribes of this state. The artic acumen of the tribes of The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are furthered by their musical and dance bonanza as well as the vistas of exquisite crafts that they are expert in.

Editors:



Dr. M.C. Arunkumar is not only known of his critical observation of the North East Societies but also of his creative works expressing his ideas of the people of this region. During his long career of anthropologist in Manipur University, he carried out many projects ranging from tribal studies to social problems relating with political culture and HIV/AIDS. His political plays are staged at state and national festivals by different theater groups. His doctoral work on Women's Crime in Manipur opens a new insight to the women's studies in the region. He is teaching Social Anthropology at present. To his credit, there are a number of academic papers as well as popular articles, number of books.



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VOLUME I
THE TRIBES OF ARUNACHAL
PRADESH



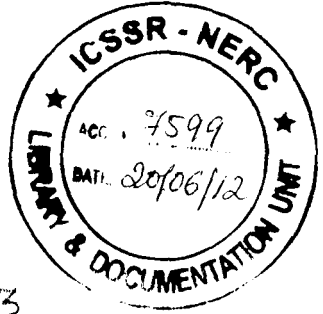
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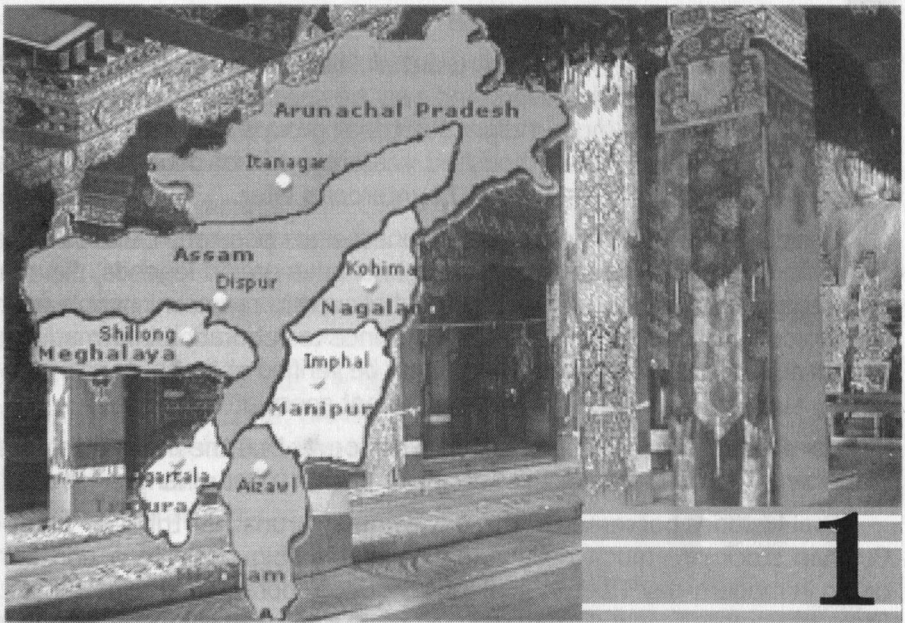
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INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh is a federated state of India, located in the far northeast. It borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south and southeast, and shares borders with Burma in the east, Bhutan in the northwest, and the People's Republic of China in the north. The majority of the territory is claimed by the People's Republic of China as part of South Tibet.

The northern border of Arunachal Pradesh reflects the McMahon Line, a controversial 1914 treaty between the United Kingdom and a Tibetan government, which was never accepted by the Chinese government, and not enforced by the Indian government until 1950. Itanagar is the capital of the state. Arunachal Pradesh means "land of the dawn lit mountains" in Sanskrit.

It is also known as "land of the rising sun" ("pradesh" means "state" or "region") in reference to its position as the easternmost state of India. Most of the people native to and/or living in Arunachal Pradesh are of Tibeto-Burman origin.

A large and increasing number of migrants have reached Arunachal Pradesh from many other parts of India, although no reliable population count of the migrant population has been conducted, and percentage estimates of total population accordingly vary widely. Part of the famous Ledo Burma Road, which was a lifeline to China during World War II, passes through the eastern part of the state.

The history of pre-modern Arunachal Pradesh remains shrouded in mystery. It is popularly believed, and may be speculatively assumed, that the first ancestors of most indigenous tribal groups migrated from pre-Buddhist Tibet two or three thousand years ago, if not before, and were joined by Tibetic and Thai-Burmese counterparts later.

The earliest written references to Arunachal are popularly believed to be found in the Mahabharata, Ramayana and other Vedic legends. Several characters, such as, King Bhismaka, are believed to represent people from the region in the Mahabharata; however, since corroborating information is unavailable, and since place-names cannot be verified at that historical time-depth, such associations are to a large extent speculative.

For example, there is no evidence whatsoever that the name Bhismaka plausibly associates with any indigenous Arunachali tribes or languages at all.

Oral histories possessed to this day by many Arunachali tribes of Tibeto-Burman stock are much richer, and point unambiguously to a northern origin in modern-day Tibet. Again, however, corroboration remains difficult. From the point of view of material culture, it is clear that most indigenous Arunachali groups align with Burma-area hill tribals, a fact that could either be explainable in terms of a northern Burmese origin or from westward cultural diffusion.

From the perspective of material culture, the most unusual Arunachali group by far is the Puroik/Sulung, whose traditional staple food is sago palm and whose primary traditional productive strategy is foraging. While speculatively considered to be a Tibeto-Burman population, the uniqueness of Puroik culture and language may well represent a tenuous reflection of a distant and all but unknown pre-Tibeto-Burman, Tai and Indo-Aryan past.

Recorded history from an outside perspective only became available in the Ahom chronicles of the 16th century. The Monpa and Sherdukpen do keep historical records of the existence of local chiefdoms in the northwest as well. Northwestern parts of this area came under the control of the Monpa kingdom of Monyul, which flourished between 500 B.C. and 600 A.D.

This region then came under the loose control of Tibet and Bhutan, especially in the Northern areas. The remaining parts of the state, especially those bordering Myanmar, came under the titular control of the Ahom and the Assamese until the annexation of India by the British in 1858. However, most Arunachali tribes remained in practice largely autonomous up until Indian independence and the formalization of indigenous administration in 1947.

Recent excavations of ruins of Hindu temples such as the 14th century Malinithan at the foot of the Siang hills in West Siang are somewhat automatically associated with the ancient history of Arunachal Pradesh,

inasmuch as they fall within its modern-day political borders. However, such temples are generally south-facing, never occur more than a few kilometers from the Assam plains area, and are perhaps more likely to have been associated with Assam plains-based rather than indigenous Arunachali populations.

Another notable heritage site, Bhismaknagar, has led to suggestions that the Idu (Mishmi) had an advanced culture and administration in pre-historical times. Again, however, no evidence directly associates Bhismaknagar with this or any other known culture.

The third heritage site, the 400-year-old Tawang Monastery in the extreme north-west of the state, provides some historical evidence of the Buddhist tribal peoples. Historically, the area had a close relationship with Tibetan people and Tibetan culture, for example the sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso was born in Tawang.

DRAWING OF MCMAHON LINE

In 1913-1914 representatives of China, Tibet and Britain negotiated a treaty in India: the Simla Accord. This treaty's objective was to define the borders between Inner and Outer Tibet as well as between Outer Tibet and British India. British administrator, Sir Henry McMahon, drew up the 550 miles (890 km) McMahon Line as the border between British India and Outer Tibet during the Simla Conference.

The Tibetan and British representatives at the conference agreed to the line, which ceded Tawang and other Tibetan areas to the British Empire. The Chinese representative had no problems with the border between British India and Outer Tibet, however on the issue of the border between Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet the talks broke down. Thus, the Chinese representative refused to accept the agreement and walked out.

The Tibetan Government and British Government went ahead with the Simla Agreement and declared that the benefits of other articles of this treaty would not be bestowed on China as long as it stays out of the purview. The Chinese position was that Tibet was not independent from China, so Tibet could not have independently signed treaties, and per the Anglo-Chinese (1906) and Anglo-Russian (1907) conventions, any such agreement was invalid without Chinese assent.

Simla was initially rejected by the Government of India as incompatible with the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention. However, this agreement (Anglo-Russian Convention) was renounced by Russia and Britain jointly in 1921, thus making the Simla Conference official.

However, with the collapse of Chinese power in Tibet the line had no serious challenges as Tibet had signed the convention, therefore it was

forgotten to the extent that no new maps were published until 1935, when interest was revived by civil service officer Olaf Caroe. The Survey of India published a map showing the McMahon Line as the official boundary in 1937.

In 1938, the British finally published the Simla Convention as a bilateral accord two decades after the Simla Conference; in 1938 the Survey of India published a detailed map showing Tawang as part of NEFA. In 1944 Britain established administrations in the area, from Dirang Dzong in the west to Walong in the east.

Tibet, however, altered its position on the McMahon Line in late 1947 when the Tibetan government wrote a note presented to the newly independent Indian Ministry of External Affairs laying claims to the Tibetan district (Tawang) south of the McMahon Line. The situation developed further as India became independent and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949.

With the PRC poised to take over Tibet, India unilaterally declared the McMahon Line to be the boundary in November 1950, and forced the last remnants of Tibetan administration out of the Tawang area in 1951. The PRC has never recognized the McMahon Line, and claims Tawang on behalf of Tibetans. The 14th Dalai Lama, who led the Tibetan government from 1950 to 1959, said as recently as 2003 that Tawang is "actually part of Tibet". He reversed his position in 2008, saying that it was part of India.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN CHINA AND INDIA

The NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) was created in 1954. The issue was quiet during the next decade or so of cordial Sino-Indian relations, but erupted again during the Sino-Indian War of 1962. The cause of the escalation into war is still disputed by both Chinese and Indian sources.

During the war in 1962, the PRC captured most area of Arunachal Pradesh. However, China soon declared victory, voluntarily withdrew back to the McMahon Line and returned Indian prisoners of war in 1963. The war has resulted in the termination of barter trade with Tibet, although in 2007 the state government has shown signs to resume barter trade with Tibet.

After the war

Arunachal Pradesh became a state of India in 1986. Of late, Arunachal Pradesh has come to face threats from certain insurgent groups, notably the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), who are believed to have base camps in the districts of Changlang and Tirap. There are occasional reports of these groups harassing local people and extracting protection money.

GEOGRAPHY

Much of Arunachal Pradesh is covered by the Himalayas. However, parts of Lohit, Changlang and Tirap are covered by the Patkai hills. Kangto, Nyegi Kangsang, the main Gorichen peak and the Eastern Gorichen peak are some of the highest peaks in this region of the Himalayas.

At the lowest elevations, essentially at Arunachal Pradesh's border with Assam, are Brahmaputra Valley semi-evergreen forests. Much of the state, including the Himalayan foothills and the Patkai hills, are home to Eastern Himalayan broadleaf forests. Toward the northern border with China, with increasing elevation, come a mixture of Eastern and Northeastern Himalayan subalpine conifer forests followed by Eastern Himalayan alpine shrub and meadows and ultimately rock and ice on the highest peaks.

In 2006 Bumla pass in Tawang was opened to traders for the first time in 44 years. Traders from both sides of the pass were permitted to enter each other's territories, in addition to postal workers from each country.

The Himalayan ranges that extend up to the eastern Arunachal separate it from Tibet. The ranges extend toward Nagaland, and form a boundary between India and Burma in Changlang and Tirap district, acting as a natural barrier called Patkai Bum Hills. They are low mountains compared to the Greater Himalayas.

CLIMATE

The climate of Arunachal Pradesh varies with elevation. Areas that are at a very high elevation in the Upper Himalayas close to the Tibetan border enjoy an alpine or Tundra climate. Below the Upper Himalayas are the Middle Himalayas, where people experience a temperate climate. Areas at the sub-Himalayan and sea-level elevation generally experience humid, sub-tropical climate with hot summers and mild winters.

Arunachal Pradesh receives heavy rainfall of 80 to 160 inches (2,000 to 4,100 mm) annually, most of it between May and September. The mountain slopes and hills are covered with alpine, temperate, and subtropical forests of dwarf rhododendron, oak, pine, maple, fir, and juniper; sal (*Shorea*) and teak are the main economically valuable species.

Sub-divisions

Arunachal Pradesh is divided into sixteen districts, each administered by a district collector, who sees to the needs of the local people. Especially along the Tibetan border, the Indian army has a considerable presence due to concerns about Chinese intentions in the region. Special permits called Inner Line Permits (ILP) are required to enter Arunachal Pradesh through any of its checkgates on the border with Assam.

Districts of Arunachal Pradesh:

- Anjaw District
- East Kameng
- Kurung Kumey
- Lower Dibang Valley
- Papum Pare
- Tirap District
- Upper Subansiri
- West Kameng
- Changlang District
- East Siang
- Lohit District
- Lower Subansiri
- Tawang District
- Upper Dibang Valley
- Upper Siang
- West Siang

ECONOMY

The chart below displays the trend of the gross state domestic product of Arunachal Pradesh at market prices estimated by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation with figures in millions of Indian Rupees.

Arunachal Pradesh's gross state domestic product for 2004 was estimated at \$706 million in current prices. Agriculture primarily drives the economy. *Jhum*, the local word for a shifting cultivation widely practiced among the tribal groups, is now less practiced. Arunachal Pradesh has close to 61,000 square kilometers of forests, and forest products are the next most significant sector of the economy.

Among the crops grown here are rice, maize, millet, wheat, pulses, sugarcane, ginger, and oilseeds. Arunachal is also ideal for horticulture and fruit orchards. Its major industries are rice mills, fruit preservation units, and handloom handicrafts. Sawmills and plywood trades are prohibited under law.

Arunachal Pradesh accounts for a large percentage of India's untapped hydroelectric power production potential. In 2008, the state government of Arunachal Pradesh signed deals with various Indian companies planning some 42 hydroelectric schemes that will produce electricity in excess of 27,000 MW. Construction of the Upper Siang Hydroelectric Project, which is expected to generate between 10,000 to 12,000 MW, began in April 2009.

Corruption in Arunachal Pradesh is endemic, and reputed to be among the worst in India. During 2009 elections, the Arunachal Times reported that virtually all of the leading candidates had reported personal fortunes to the equivalent of several million US dollars - in a state with no income tax and where the average per capita income is only a dollar or two per day. The failure of Arunachali people to hold their leaders accountable has led to tremendous drains on the economy and a crumbling infrastructure.

Another missed economic opportunity is that of tourism. Boasting a scenic natural beauty that equals and in some respects surpasses that of other Himalayan regions such as Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal, Arunachal Pradesh's strict and expensive "Restricted/Protected Area Permit" scheme ensures both that no more than a trickle of foreign tourists are able to visit the state each year, and that revenues so obtained go directly into the pockets of government officials and affiliated tour operators. Little if any benefit from tourism is able to reach the general population, which remains in general relatively impoverished.

LANGUAGES

Modern-day Arunachal Pradesh is one of the linguistically richest and most diverse regions in all of Asia, being home to at least thirty and possibly as many as fifty distinct languages in addition to innumerable dialects and subdialects thereof.

Boundaries between languages very often correlate with tribal divisions - for example, Apatani and Nyishi are both tribally and linguistically distinct - but shifts in tribal identity and alignment over time have also ensured that a certain amount of complication enters into the picture - for example, Galo is and has seemingly always been linguistically distinct from Adi, whereas the earlier tribal alignment of Galo with Adi (i.e., "Adi Gallong") has only recently been essentially dissolved.

The vast majority of languages indigenous to modern-day Arunachal Pradesh belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family. The majority of these in turn belong to a single branch of Tibeto-Burman, namely Tani.

Almost all Tani languages are indigenous to central Arunachal Pradesh, including (moving from west to east) Nyishi/Nishi, Apatani, Bangni, Tagin, Hills Miri, Galo, Bokar, Lower Adi (Padam, Pasi, Minyong, and Komkar), Upper Adi (Aashing, Shimong, Karko and Bori), and Milang; only Mising, among Tani languages, is primarily spoken outside Arunachal Pradesh in modern-day Assam, while a handful of northern Tani languages including Bangni and Bokar are also spoken in small numbers in Tibet.

Tani languages are noticeably characterized by an overall relative uniformity, suggesting relatively recent origin and dispersal within their present-day area of concentration. Most Tani languages are mutually intelligible with at least one other Tani language, meaning that the area constitutes a dialect chain, much as once found in much of Europe; only Apatani and Milang stand out as relatively unusual in the Tani context. Tani languages are among the better-studied languages of the region.

To the east of the Tani area lie three virtually undescribed and highly endangered languages of the "Mishmi" group of Tibeto-Burman, Idu, Digaru and Miju. A certain number of speakers of these languages are also found in

Tibet. The relationships of these languages, both amongst one another and to other area languages, are as yet uncertain.

Further south, one finds the Singpho (Kachin) language, which is primarily spoken by large populations in Burma, and the Nocte and Wancho languages, which show affiliations to certain "Naga" languages spoken to the south in modern-day Nagaland.

To the west and north of the Tani area are found at least one and possibly as many as four Bodic languages, including Dakpa and Tshangla; within modern-day India, these languages go by the cognate but, in usage, distinct designations Monpa and Memba. Most speakers of these languages or closely related Bodic languages are found in neighbouring Bhutan and Tibet, and Monpa and Memba populations remain closely adjacent to these border regions.

Between the Bodic and Tani areas lie a large number of almost completely undescribed and unclassified languages, which, speculatively considered to be Tibeto-Burman, exhibit many unique structural and lexical properties that probably reflect both a long history in the region and a complex history of language contact with neighbouring populations.

Among them are Sherdukpen, Bugun, Aka/Hruso, Miji, Bangru and Puroik/Sulung. The high linguistic significance of all of these languages is belied by the extreme paucity of documentation and description of them, even in view of their highly endangered status.

Puroik, in particular, is perhaps one of the most culturally and linguistically unique and significant populations in all of Asia from proto-historical and anthropological-linguistic perspectives, and yet virtually no information of any real reliability regarding their culture or language can be found in print even to this day.

Finally, there is an unknown number of Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal-area origin spoken in modern-day Arunachal Pradesh, including Gurung and Tamang; not classified as "tribal" in the Arunachali context, such languages generally go unrecognized, while their speakers are largely viewed as itinerant "Nepalis". An unknown number of Tibetan dialects are similarly spoken by recent migrants from Tibet, although they are not generally recognized or classified as tribal or indigenous.

Outside of Tibeto-Burman, one finds in Arunachal Pradesh a single representative of the Tai language family, namely the Khamti language, which is closely affiliated to the Shan dialects of northern Burma; seemingly, Khamti is a recent arrival in Arunachal Pradesh whose presence dates from 18th and/or early 19th-century migrations from northern Burma.

In addition to these non-Indo-European languages, the Indo-European languages Assamese, Bengali, English, Nepali and especially Hindi are making

strong inroads into Arunachal Pradesh. Primarily as a result of the primary education system - in which classes are generally taught by Hindi-speaking immigrant teachers from Bihar and other Hindi-speaking parts of northern India - a large and growing section of the population now speaks a semi-creolized variety of Hindi as its mother tongue.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Arunachal Pradesh can be roughly divided into a set of semi-distinct cultural spheres, on the basis of tribal identity, language, religion, and material culture: the Tibetic area bordering Bhutan in the west, the Tani area in the centre of the state, the Mishmi area to the east of the Tani area, the Tai/Singpho/Tangsa area bordering Burma, and the "Naga" area to the south, which also borders Burma.

In between there are transition zones, such as the Aka/Hruso/Miji/Sherdukpen area, which provides a "buffer" of sorts between the Tibetic Buddhist tribes and the animist Tani hill tribes. In addition, there are isolated peoples scattered throughout the state, such as the Sulung.

Within each of these cultural spheres, one finds populations of related tribes speaking related languages and sharing similar traditions. In the Tibetic area, one finds large numbers of Monpa tribespeople, with several subtribes speaking closely related but mutually incomprehensible languages, and also large numbers of Tibetan refugees.

Within the Tani area, major tribes include Nishi, which has recently come to be used by many people to encompass Bangni, Tagin and even Hills Miri. Apatani also live among the Nishi, but are distinct. In the centre, one finds predominantly Galo people, with the major sub-groups of Lare and Pugo among others, extending to the Ramo and Pailibo areas (which are close in many ways to Galo).

In the east, one finds the Adi, with many subtribes including Padam, Pasi, Minyong, and Bokar, among others. Milang, while also falling within the general "Adi" sphere, are in many ways quite distinct. Moving east, the Idu, Miju and Digaru make up the "Mishmi" cultural-linguistic area, which may or may not form a coherent historical grouping.

Moving southeast, the Tai Khamti are linguistically distinct from their neighbours and culturally distinct from the majority of other Arunachali tribes; They are religiously similar to the Chakmas who have migrated from Earswhile East Pakistan. They follow the same Theraveda sect of Buddhism.

The Chakmas consist of the majority of the tribal population. Districts of Lohit, Changlang, Dibang and Papumpare have a considerable number of Chakmas. They speak a linguistic variant derived from Assamese and Bengali.

Their language is more similar to Assamese. Assam also have a large population of Chakmas who reside in the district of Karbi Anglong, Nagaon and Kachar.

However, they also exhibit considerable convergence with the Singpho and Tangsa tribes of the same area; all of these groups are also found in Burma. Finally, the Nocte and Wancho exhibit cultural and possibly also linguistic affinities to the tribes of Nagaland, which they border.

In addition, there are large numbers of migrants from diverse areas of India and Bangladesh, who, while legally not entitled to settle permanently, in practice stay indefinitely, progressively altering the traditional demographic makeup of the state.

Finally, populations of "Nepalis" (in fact, usually Tibeto-Burman tribespeople whose tribes predominate in areas of Nepal, but who do not have tribal status in India) and Chakmas are distributed in different areas of the state (although reliable figures are hard to come by).

Literacy has risen in official figures to 54.74% from 41.59% in 1991. The literate population is said to number 487,796. An uncertain but relatively large percentage of Arunachal's population are animist, and follow shamanistic-animistic religious traditions such as Donyi-Polo (in the Tani area) and Rangfrah (further east).

A small number of Arunachali peoples have traditionally identified as Hindus, although the number is growing as animist traditions are merged with Hindu traditions. Tibetan Buddhism predominates in the districts of Tawang, West Kameng, and isolated regions adjacent to Tibet. Theravada Buddhism is practiced by groups living near the Burmese border.

Around 19% of the population are said to be followers of the Christian faith, and this percentage is probably growing due to Christian missionary activities in the area. A law has been enacted to protect the indigenous religions (e.g., Donyi-Poloism, Buddhism) in Arunachal Pradesh against the spread of other religions, though no comparable law exists to protect the other religions.

TRANSPORT

The state's airports are located at Daparjio, Ziro, Along, Tezu and Pasighat. However, owing to the rough terrain, these airports are mostly small and cannot handle many flights. Before being connected by road, they were originally used for the transportation of food.

Arunachal Pradesh has two highways: the 336 km (209 mi) National Highway 52, completed in 1998, which connects Jonai with Dirak, and another highway, which connects Tezpur in Assam with Tawang.

As of 2007, every village has been connected by road thanks to funding provided by the central government. Every small town has its own bus

station and daily bus services are available. All places are connected to Assam, which has increased trading activity. An additional National Highway is being constructed following the famous Stillwell Ledo Road, which connects Ledo in Assam to Jairampur in Arunachal.

EDUCATION

The current education system in Arunachal Pradesh is relatively underdeveloped. The state government is expanding the education system in concert with various NGOs like Vivekananda Kendra.

The state has several reputable schools, colleges, and institutions. There are also trust institutes like Pali Vidyapith run by Buddhists. They teach Pali and Khamti scripts in addition to typical educational subjects. Khamti is the only tribe in Arunachal Pradesh that has its own script. Libraries of scriptures are located in a number of places in Lohit district, the largest one in Chowkham.

Rajiv Gandhi University is the premier educational institution, the only university in the entire state. Additionally, there are 7 government colleges in different districts, providing students a higher education. NERIST (North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology) plays an important role in technical and management higher education.

The directorate of technical education conducts examinations yearly, so that students who qualify can continue on to higher studies in other states. Arunachal Pradesh attracts tourists from many parts of the world.

Tourist attractions include Tawang, a beautiful town famous for its Buddhist monastery, Ziro, famous for cultural festivals, the Namdapha tiger project in Changlang district and Sela lake near Bomdila with its bamboo bridges overhanging the river. Religious places of interest include Malinithan in Lekhabali, Rukhmininagar near Roing (the place where Rukmini, Lord Krishna's wife in Hindu mythology, is said to have lived), and Parshuram Kund in Lohit district (which is believed to be the lake where Parshuram washed away his sins).

Rafting and trekking are common activities. A visitor's permit from the tourism department is required. Places like Tuting have wonderful, undiscovered scenic beauty. Quite a number of tribal communities throng the region of Arunachal Pradesh. As many as twenty-five tribes ennoble the state with their own ethnic culture and tradition.

Still today these tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are maintaining their own originality in various cultural fetes. The state government too is doing their utmost to preserve them so that these cultures of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh must not go in to oblivion. Arunachal Pradesh is the abode of 26 different tribal communities which flaunt rich tribal cultures.

The way that these tribes lead their lives were more or less the same and those they abided by the similar occupation; the societies are 'casteless'. For better administration, they form their institutes and also select leaders according to their age for distinct social functions. The experienced leaders of the tribal groups are revered for their position in the community.

All the tribes follow 'endogamy' and strictly observe the rule of 'clan exogamy'. With the societies of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, polygamy is highly endorsed and practiced by all. Festivals are an integral part of all the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh thereby mirroring the cultural exuberances and artistry.

The artistic acumen of the tribes of The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are furthered by their musical and dance bonanza as well as the vistas of exquisite crafts that they are expert in. The tribal people of this region are adept in making baskets, smithy work, weaving, pottery, wood carving, painting etc. among the tribal communities, the Monpa tribal groups are reckoned for their artistic ability in painted wooden vessels, beautiful rugs and carpet weaving.

The weavings are marked for their extensive use of bright colours and patterns. Beautiful articles are also made from bamboo and cane by the Hills Miris, Adis and Apatani tribes. Apart from these, the Wancho tribes make attractive figurines from wood and bamboo. Artistic carvings on them give the articles a different look and luster. Various ornaments are made out of beads are the examples of their artistic bend of mind.

Among the several tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh, the Adi tribes have two chief groups, namely the Bogum and Bomis, and under each there are a number of sub-tribes including Minyongs, Karkos, Shimongs etc.

The Adi tribes by nature are democratic and organized village council called Kebang. Their traditional dance, Ponung is popular in the whole of Arunachal Pradesh. Adi villages are situated generally on the spurs of hills. Polygamy is socially accepted. Adi women are good weavers.

Another important tribe of Arunachal Pradesh is the Aka tribes. The Hrusso or Aka tribes have a rich history linkage. Their popular belief is that they were related with the Ahom Kings. They are mainly traders and also use black paints in their faces. Hinduism and Buddhism are the main religious practices of Aka tribes.

Mainly cultivators, the Apatani tribes produce paddy and fish in large numbers. Round 'nose plugs' and facial tattoos are the identifying traits of ornamentation especially amongst aged Apatani women. However, the younger generation is quite hesitant in adopting this style. Unlike other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the economy of Apatani tribes is stable.

The Singpho tribe has ardent belief on evil spirits. They are mainly farmers and black smiths. Khamba and Memba tribes reside in the northern province of 'West Siang' ardently following Buddhism. Polyandry is prevalent among them. They do farming activities. The Tagin tribes of Arunachal Pradesh reside in the Upper Sunansiri district.

Polygamy is prevalent amongst them. Their dress consists of only one piece of cloth. In addition to these tribal communities, the Khamti tribes are believed to have migrated from the Shan states of Burma. They are the only tribe in Arunachal who have a script of their own, They are Buddhist (Hinayana cult) by religion, and bury the dead in a coffin. They include Khamyang tribe.

Agriculture is one of the main occupations of Bugun or Howa tribes, just like any other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They are also cordial by nature. Moreover, the Mishmi tribes can be divided into three most important groups namely- Idus or Chulikatas, Digarus or Taroan and Mijus or Kaman. Their women are expert weavers.

Although agriculture is the main occupation of the people, some of them also carry on with the trade of various items like, wild medicinal plants etc. The Monpa tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are simple, gentle, having a robust cultural heritage. They dress in artistic clothes. They follow Buddhism and each house has a tiny 'chapel' close to it. The list of tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh includes the name of Nishing tribes.

The Nishing tribes are the biggest groups of people inhabiting the Lower Subansiri district. The men wear 'cane bands' just about the waist. They think that after death, his spirit goes to the 'village of the ancestors'. Amongst various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Sulung or Puroik are considered to be one of the ancient tribes in the area. Their apparel and dresses are simple, and they follow the 'spirit culture'.

In comparison to the other tribal groups, the Sherdukpen tribes are less in number and are good traders. Few people also take up agriculture as their occupation. Their religion is a fascinating mesh of Mahayana Buddhism and some tribal 'magico-religious' customs. The Wancho tribes inhabit the western part of Tirap district, bordering Nagaland.

'Head hunting' was usual practice with them in the primitive times. Their society is divided into four classes - the Wanghams (chiefs), the Wangpana, the Wangau and Wangas. They have a strict sense of the law and a village council protects the law and order of the society. The entire tribe is divided into about forty confederacies of villages.

Tattooing is a social custom among them. They believe in two local gods, namely, Rang and Baurang. The women are good weavers and only

the family members of the village headman carry out with it. They are proficient in wood carving also.

The Nocte tribes of Arunachal Pradesh profess Vaishnavism. They also ardently follow the Bareghar Satra of Nazira, Assam, Naga Narottam. Amongst various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Noctes are famous as salt producers. They are agriculturists, cultivating betel leaves on a commercial scale.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION SOME OF THESE TRIBES

The Adis have two main divisions, (the Bogum and Bomis) and under each there are a number of sub-tribes. The Minyongs, Karkos, Shimongs, Bomdo, Janbos, Paggis, Pailibos, Bogum, Padams, Milangs and so on from one group ; while the Gallong and seven other groups constitute another group of Adis.

The Adis by nature are democratic and organised village council called *Kebang*. Their traditional dance called *Ponung* is famous in the whole of Arunachal Pradesh. Dances are very popular among them. *Adi* villages are situated generally on the spurs of hills. Polyandry is unknown but polygyny is practised. *Adi* women are very good weavers and weave cloth with highly artistic designs.

The *Apatanis* are settled agriculturists inhabiting the valley around Ziro- the headquarters of Lower Subansiri district. The older men-folk tie the hair in top-knots and tattoo the faces. Wearing of circular nose plugs and tattooing of faces is the most characteristic aspect of ornamentation of older *Apatani* women.

However, new generation of *Apatani* men and women have stopped this practice of tying hair knot, nose plugs and face tattooing since early 1970s. The *Apatani* are good cultivators and practice both wet and terrace cultivation. Paddy cum fish culture is very popular among them. Unlike other tribes of Arunachal their economy is stable.

The **Buguns** or *Khowas* are gentle, hospitable and affectionate people. They are agriculturist and perform a number of rites and ceremonies for their welfare.

The **Hrusso** or *Akas* have a custom of painting their face with black marks. They figured frequently in old historical records. Their popular belief is that they were related with the *Ahom* Kings. They are keen traders and trade, mainly in cloth, blankets, swords etc. They have come to some extent under both Hindu and Buddhist influence.

The *Singphos* represent a section of the *Kachin* tribe of Burma. They live on the banks of *Tengapani* and *Noa Dehang* rivers. They are agriculturists and expert blacksmiths. The ladies are good weavers too. They follow Buddhism but at the same time believe in a host of spirit.

Khambas and **Membas** inhabiting northern part of West Siang are Buddhist by religion. Polyandry is prevalent among them. But it is more in vogue among the Membas. Agricultural activities are popular among them. Millet and Maize are their staple food. They grow cotton and barle also.

Mishmis form the bulk of the population of Lohit, Upper Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley districts. There are also the Khamtis, the Singphos and a few Adi settlement. The Mishmis are divided into three main groups namely- Idu or Chulikatas, Digarus or Taroan and Mijus or Kaman. Sections of the Idu Mishmi are also called Bebejia Mishmi.

Their women are expert weavers and make excellent coats and blouses. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. By nature they are traders. Since very early days the Mishmis had relations with the plains of Assam. The chief items of trade are deer –musk, wild medicinal plants, animal skins, Mishimi – tita etc.

The Monpas are simple, gentle and courteous people. They are friendly and possess a rich heritage of culture. They dress well in artistically designed clothes. Their communal life is rich and happy. They follow Buddhism and profess Mahayana Buddhism which centre round the Tawang Monastery. Each house has a small chapel attached to it.

The Nyishi are the largest groups of people inhabiting the major part of Lower Subansiri district. Their menfolk wear their hair long and tie it in a knot just above the forehead. They wear cane bands around the waist. They believe that after death the spirit of a dead travels to the 'village of the ancestors'. The Sulungs or Puroik are considered to be one of the oldest of the tribes in the area. Their dress and costumes are simple, and the religion is a form of the primitive 'spirit culture'.

The Sherdukpens are a small tribe. They are good agriculturist but their main interest is trade. Their religion is an interesting blend of Mahayana Buddhism and tribal magico-religious beliefs.

The Tagins are main inhabitant of Upper Sunansiri district. Their main occupation is agriculture. Polygamy is customary among them. Their dress is very simple consisting of only one piece of cloth.

The Khamtis are believed to have migrated from the Shan states of Burma. They are the only tribe in Arunachal who have a script of their own, They are Buddhist (Hinayana cult) by religion, and bury the dead in a coffin. They include Khamyang tribe.

The Wanchos inhabit the western part of Tirap district, bordering Nagaland. They are a carefree, cheerful and hard-working people. Head hunting was customary with them in the old days. It was connected with many of the social activities of the tribe. Their society is divided into four classes the Wanghams (chiefs), the Wangpana, the Wanggae and Wanggaas.

They have a strict sense of discipline and the law and order of the society is maintained by a village council. The entire tribe is divided into about forty confederacies of villages. Tattooing is a social custom among them. They believe in the existence of two powerful deities, Rang and Baurang. The women are good weavers but the art is restricted to the members of the chief's families only. They are expert in wood carving also.

The Noctes inhabit the central part of Tirap to the east of the Wanchos. They are organized under powerful chief-those of Namsang and Borduria, They profess Vaishnavism and are disciple of the Bareghar Satra of Nazira, Assam, Naga Narottam who was a close friend of Shri Ram Dev Ata, the founder- satradhikar of the Brehar satra, become his first disciple, Noctes are famous as salt producers which is their chief item of trade and barter. They are agriculturists. They also cultivate betel leaves on a commercial scale.

The **Yobin**, also called Lissu, are a small group of people inhabiting the remote easternmost corner of the Tirap district. They are simple and gentle people having their own culture, religion, faith and beliefs and dialect.

The population of Arunachal Pradesh is 10, 97.968 lakhs, according to 2001 provisional census, scattered over 17 towns and 3649 villages that are thronged by 26 major lively tribes co-existing with many sub-tribes. The density of the tribal populace is very less.

People are of mongoloid breeds and most of the tribes inhabiting the terrain are ethnically identical but the geographical seclusion from each other has endowed certain distinctive characteristics in language, dress and customs. They are famous for their preserved rich cultural heritage. The people are naive, amicable, and sociable. Their various vibrant festivals signify their faith and belief.

The tribal's society is based on patriarchal and primogeniture system thus the primary decree of bequeathing with distinction are not unusual. They practice endogamy and stringently observe the law of clan exogamy. Polygamy is socially legitimate in some of the tribes and is practiced by most of them. The tribals are extremely democratic, and each tribe has its own structured institutions that sustain law and order, settle on disputes and undertakes every activity for the welfare of the tribes and the villages. The villagers select the members to run the village councils.

The complete populace of the state can be divided into three cultural clusters based on the origin of their socio-politico-religious resemblance. The tribal societies are casteless and they are administrated by Chiefs and the Senior Members of the villages.

The Tirap District bordered by Nagaland in the South western faction is inhabited by the Wancho Tribes. The traditional hallmark of the tribes' is wood and bamboo carved figurines. They also make intricate necklaces of colourful beads, the width of which indicate the status of the person they adorn. The indigenous headgears, strings of precious beads on the neck, ears and elephant tusk on the arms are. They are believers of indigenous faiths.

To the north of the Wancho habitat, the central part of the Tirap District is dominated by the NOKTE tribe. The tribes are famous for being expert head hunters in ancient times. The traditional gears of the Noctes are alike to the Wancho tribes. They are also expert in wood carving. These are hardy people known for their strictly structured village society in which the hereditary village chief still plays a vital role. The Noctes also practice elementary form of Vaishnavism.

Changlang District is located in the vicinity of the Indo-Myanmar border. The combine of many sub-tribes namely, Longchang, Muklom, Jugli, Longri, Havi, Mossang, Tikhak, Ponthai, Kimsing and Longphi are known as TANGSAS. All the sub tribes are divided into number of exogamous clans. Religiously, the tribe is influenced by Christianity and Buddhism.

The Singpho Tribes occupies the banks of Teang and Nao Dehing rivers of Changlang District. The Singpho rulers had very cordial relation with the British Empire during the pre-independence era. The males are expert blacksmiths and the ladies good weavers. They are follower of Buddhism (Hinayana sect). They have migrated from Thailand and Myanmar and are still utilizing ancient scripts derived from their original native soil.

The Southern portion of Lohit District is dwelled by the Tai-Khamti tribe. The Tai Khamti group has social and traditional links with Thailand, Laos, China and Burma. According to history, the Tai Khamti community was also valiant soldiers who clashed with the powerful British empires but due to lack of sophisticated weapons, modern technologies and skilled men power their rigid resistances were trampled by the mighty British army.

The Tai- Khamti community is good craftsmen, enterprising traders and skilful agriculturists. Alike the Singpho's they are also follower of Buddhism. The Mishmis tribe is divided into three main groups namely, Idu, Mijis (Kaman) and Digaru (Taraon).

The distinct characteristic of the Idus are that the tribe is divided into sections and each sections is christened after the river, by which they resides. The exceptional hairstyle of the Idus distinguishes them from the other tribes.

The eastern part of Lohit District is dominated by approximately 18,000 populaces of Mijis (Kamans) tribes. The Kaman women possess venerable

sense of colours and patterns that makes their traditional dresses elegant and durable. The Digarus are identified as Tاراon. Like all the tribes of Arunachal their main occupation is also agriculture.

The Adi tribe inhabits in East, West and Upper Siang District. They are divided into three main groups namely Galos, Padams and Minyongs, each consisting of many sub-tribes. The Adis are famous for their many traditional dances. Ponung is a customary dance of the Adis with religious characteristic. The Galos weaves traditional dresses of innovative designs.

The Beautiful rugs are also woven by the Adi communities. Vivid colour and exquisite patterns are the hall mark of their weaving. Adis extensively practice wet-rice cultivation and have a considerable agricultural economy. The Kebang' or Village council which is a greatly organised political institution is the remarkable element of the Padam and Minyong Community. Beside this outstanding facet.

The Tuting province nearby the International Border of Indo-China is dominated by the KHAMBAS who are the follower of Buddhism and famous for their traditional dances. The Northern Border of Upper Siang District is dwelled by the MEMBAS who are also the follower of Buddhism.

The TAGINS territory extends from the North along the banks of the Sipi River. Their selection of shaded mountains for the settlement of villages confers them an additional name known as MOYAS. Agriculture is the main occupation of the tribe.

The Lower Kamla valley is occupied by the HILL MIRIS. Alike the Idus they can also be distinguished after their unique hairstyles, they knot the hairs just above the forehead. The woman wears the beautiful fabrics of cane rings as blouse. The APATANIS Inhabits the plateau between the Kamala, Khru and Panior ranges in the Eastern Himalayas, 5,000 feet above sea level. Their Village patterns are very congested.

They are famous for the facial tattoos of the women's. They are also proficient agriculturist and their agricultural paddy fields are well developed and irrigated. Apatanis are also famous for their paddy-cum-pisciculture. They harvest two species of fish along with each crop of paddy. Organic fertilizers are used to protect and feed the aqua life and enhance the soil fertility. The APATANIS uses indigenous salts and papers.

The NYISHIS are the highly populated tribe of Arunachal. They are also divided into many exogamous clans. Along with the traditional attire the male fraternity wears cane bands around the waist. They worship nature and make animal sacrifices and traditionally practice Jhuming or shifting cultivation.

Their religious rituals mostly coincide with the phases of agricultural cycles. Nyishis also craft stunning articles in cane and bamboo. Due to the extraordinary custom of painting the faces with black marks, the Hrussos are commonly referred as AKAS. The historical records often featured this tribe.

They are known to be good traders by professions. The Tawang and West Kameng District is the homeland of the MONPAS and SHERDUKPENS. The fascinating mingles of Mahayana Buddhism and sacred beliefs signify their faith. The villages of these societies have splendidly decorated Buddhist temples, locally called 'Gompas'.

Basically, practices terrace cultivation but scores of these people are also pastoral and breed herds of Yak and mountain sheep. Monpas are also well-known for their artistry in weaving carpet and making painted wooden vessels. The communities that co-exist in the high mountains along the northern borders who are ethnically similar to them are Membas and Khambas.

In the vicinity of the Sherdupens region, the seven villages in Teilga and Bichum valley is the settled territory of the KHOWAS (Bugun) who are the follower of Buddhism. The elevating altitudes of the Kameng District are occupied by the PUROIKS (Sullungs). Their traditional attires are identical to the Nyishis.

