

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

(Land and People)

R. Gopalakrishanan

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is a contribution by a geographer, to the growing body of knowledge on the state of Arunachal Pradesh. This complexity of geographical conditions within this state, has for long been a considerable barrier to study. The state itself, largely mountains, offers substantial physical obstacles to movement. It's relatively large size (in the North-East India regional point of view), accessibility, population diversity and distance of many of its sub-regions, have further been restrictive factors. Much of its Central and northern parts remain largely unsurveyed yet, it has rich potential of natural resources; which when exploited and harnessed, can accelerate the economic development of the state (with corresponding contribution) to the development of adjacent states of the North-East India as well).

This book, then, has been designed to provide necessary background to comprehend the patterned and unpatterned forms of relations and activities that the state of Arunachal Pradesh has exhibited. The comparative study of the geographical phenomena has enabled the identification of similarities and differences between the various sub-regions of the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

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LAND AND PEOPLE**

R. Gopalskrishnan



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R. Gopalakrishnan



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who has been a source of
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2., *Statistical Abstracts of Arunachal
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- a) Census of India 1981, Series 25, Arunachal Pradesh, Part XII Census Atlas;
- b) V.S. Verma (Ed) Census of India, Regional Division of India — A Cartographic Analysis, Occasional Papers, Series I Vol XXV, Arunachal Pradesh, 1988;
- c) S.R. Sarkar, Census of India, Series 3, Arunachal Pradesh, Paper 1 of 1991, Provisional Population Totals, 1991.

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Introduction

This book deals with land and people in Arunachal Pradesh, earlier known as the North East Frontier Tract (pre-1954) and as the North East Frontier Agency (1954-1972). Till 1965, the administrative responsibility of the territory rested with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Post — 1965 period saw this responsibility pass on to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India till the territory attained the status of a Union Territory in 1972. It became a full-fledged state in 1987.

Arunachal Pradesh is located in the extreme North-Eastern corner of the country. It is situated between 26° 28'N to 29° 31'N latitude and between 91°31'E to 97°30'E longitude. It has international frontiers with Bhutan in the west, Tibet (China) in the north and northeast, and Burma in the east; while it borders the states of Nagaland and Assam in the south-east and south. It has 2.37% and 0.10% of the country's area and population respectively i.e., 83,743 km² and 858,398 person (Provisional 1991 Census), with an average density of 10 persons per square Kilometer. Correspondingly in the regional context, the state has about 32.83% and 2.7% of the North-East Region's area and population respectively. More than 62% of the state's area is under various forms of forest cover, of which nearly 14,390km² have been brought under the reserve forests category.

Arunachal Himalaya has relatively lofty mountain ridges, interspersed among deep valleys and narrow gorges. Mountain slopes are thickly forested and show an abundance of flora and fauna. The Himalayan chain takes a great syntaxial bend near Lohit in the eastern parts of the state; so that nearly 80% of the state's geographical area is above 600m contour. Moreover, the Tsang Po (the name of the

Brahmaputra in its Tibetan course) enters the state through a gorge in the northern section of the state; known as Siang and/or Dihang in the state, it traverses south-westwards to enter the plains, where it joins the Lohit river to form the Brahmaputra. In this stage of the river Brahmaputra is joined by numerous other rivers rising from the Great Himalayan Chain and the Ladakh range such as the Kameng, the Subansiri, etc. The essentially mountainous characteristics and the various distinct river regimes, have introduced a complex ecological relationship in the state affecting the inhabitants, who have displayed complex adaptations and of isolation features among the phenomena of the state. Communication systems and patterns have been significantly modified. Only river valleys and the southern plains (the southern plains merged with the upper Brahmaputra plains and included the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and parts of Sonitpur in the state of Assam), have notable connectivity pattern that led to a vertical development of communication. This had a far reaching impact on the state's economic activities.

As well noted, there are 20 major population groups and nearly 110 minor groups in the territory. Each of them had a distinct territorial base, such as :-

- Bangni, Monpa, Miji, Sulung, Aka, Sherdukpens, Khowas and Bangro of the composite Kameng section.
- Nissi, Tagin, Apatanis, Hill Miri, Sulung in the Subansiri section.
- Adi, Gallong, Tagin, Membas, Miri, Khamba in the Siang section.
- Mishmi — their cognate groups and Khampti in Lohit Section.
- Wancho, Nocte, Tangsa, Singpo in the Tirap section.

All these groups exhibited a horizontal pattern of cultural influences; the northern belt under predominant Tibetan influence, the central belt remaining more or less isolated and stagnant, and the southern belt under prominent Upper Brahmaputra influences. Arunachal Pradesh has

predominantly rural characteristics, with nearly 95% of its population dependent on primary activities (majority of this population is directly or indirectly dependent on shifting cultivation). Settlements are scattered with nearly 76% of the villages having less than 200 population. This varies to nearly 16% for the 200-499 population category, 4.5% for the 500—999 category, 1.93% for the 1000—1999 category and 0.56% for the category above 2000 population. Nearly 75% of the total workforce fall under the category of cultivators. Majority of the remaining work force is concentrated in the tertiary sectors in the newly emerging urban nodes in the state.

The processes of change and stagnation have left a lasting impressions on the state's cultural landscape. As the state occupies a backseat in regional and national level activities — in terms of participation, and representation — a study of this nature assumes significance. The state also manifests diversity of phenomena. An understanding of these diversities is important in the context of widespread prevalence of strong political, social and economic undercurrents as well as the continuous effort towards balancing and counter-balancing of relationships in the country, in general and the North-Eastern Region, in particular.

The state exhibited a sequential administrative-constitutional development. It began with the promulgation of the Inner Line Policy in 1875. The territory acquired an identity in 1914 when some of the tribal territories were separated from the then districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur of the province of Assam, to form the North Eastern Frontier Tract. This Tract was further sub-divided into (a) Balipara Frontier Tract (that was the western section), and (b) Sadiya Frontier Tract (that included the central and eastern sections). Subsequently in 1937, the North Eastern Frontier Tract came under the Government of India (Excluded and partially Excluded areas) Order of 1936 (it also came under excluded areas of Assam). In 1942, Tirap Frontier Division was carved out of the Sadiya section., Subansiri area and Se-La sub-agency were created in 1946 by dividing Balipara

Frontier Tract. In 1948, the Abor hills and the Mishmi Hill divisions were formed from the remaining parts of the Sadiya section. And in 1951, the Tuensang division was formed. The same period saw the plain areas of the Mishmi Hill district, the Abor Hill district, the Tirap Frontier Tract and the Balipara Frontier Tracts excluded from and included into administrative jurisdiction of Assam. After independence in 1947, North Eastern Frontier Tracts was redesignated as the North Eastern Frontier Agency (in January, 1954); This included Kameng Frontier Division, Subansiri Frontier Division, Tirap Frontier Division, Siang Frontier Division, Lohit Frontier Division and Tuensang Frontier Division. In 1957, Tuensang Frontier Division was merged with the Naga hills to form a separate district in the state of Assam. In 1965, the term Frontier Division was replaced by the term District so that the state had — Kameng district with its headquarters at Bomdila, Subansiri district with its headquarters at Ziro, Siang district with Along as its headquarters, Lohit district with Tezu as its headquarters and Tirap district with Khonsa as its headquarters. In 1969, the Agency Council was redesignated as Pradesh Council alongwith the introduction of the Local Self-Government. In January, 1972, the Agency was redesignated as Arunachal Pradesh with the status of a Union Territory. This was upgraded to full statehood in 1987.

The process of change affected in the administration of the territory clearly suggested the need felt by the government to introduce developmental activities in the state. In other words, the administrative reforms emphasised improvements and developments in conditions depicting social and economic dimensions of the inhabitants of the territory, aspects of infrastructural developments in the transportation and communication sectors, power and so on. These efforts were strengthened with the State/Union Territory becoming the North Eastern Council Member. In 1980, there was major administrative re-organisation that resulted in the formation of nine districts of East and West Kameng from the earlier Kameng district, Lower and Upper Subansiri from the earlier Subansiri district, West and East Siang from the earlier Siang district, Dibang Valley and

Lohit from the earlier Lohit and Tirap district. In 1984, West Kameng district was bifurcated to form the districts of Tawang and West Kameng. Later, Tirap district was divided to form the districts of Changlang and Tirap. There were, thus, 11 districts, 27 sub-divisions, 100 circles; 48 community development blocks and 50 anchal samities in the state. In October 1992 a new district of Itanagar was created. This brought total number of districts to 12.

The state displays a vertical development of communication. Pre-1947 period saw only 168 Km of roads that connected the main focal points of the state with the transport terminal points located in the Upper Brahmaputra valley. Since then, concerted efforts in improving and strengthening of the transport system have resulted today in the presence of nearly 9000km of road network. Yet, the state has lower road density than the national average, i.e., 10.5 Km per 100Km², as compared to 49 Km per 100 Km.² However, through the availability of satellite communications, the state has been effectively linked with the rest of the region and the country. These stations are located at Itanagar, Tawang, Pasighat and Tezu.

The primary character of the economy has largely been responsible for the thrusts in development of the state. Community development efforts were initiated in 1952 and were later, reinforced by Rural Development Programmes. There are nearly 48 Community Development Blocks in the state to oversee the development of the primary rural economy.

Effective drive towards development in the state coincided with the launching of the planned programme in the Fourth Five Year Plan. The basic thrust was towards strengthening the existing agricultural base through provisions of investment capital, inputs, surveys, etc., reinforcement of transport network and linkages, identification of resources and identification and allocation of priorities in the agro-industrial sectors. These were in addition to the measures aimed at strengthening the traditional social, and political relations in the state.

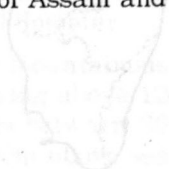
The multiplicity of phenomena and diversity in distribution has been significantly influenced by location. In order to overcome the development constraints, the state has to consider the following :-

- impact of geographical distribution on economic activities, particularly resources and agriculture;
- strengthening of accessibility factors within and between the sub-regions of the state;
- to seek a rational balance between tradition and change towards accelerated development;
- a conscious policy aimed at reducing regional imbalance by strengthening traditional setup in the absence of innovative tendencies in various parts of the state; and,
- to identify the full extent of resources, for better understanding of Man—Land relationship in the state.

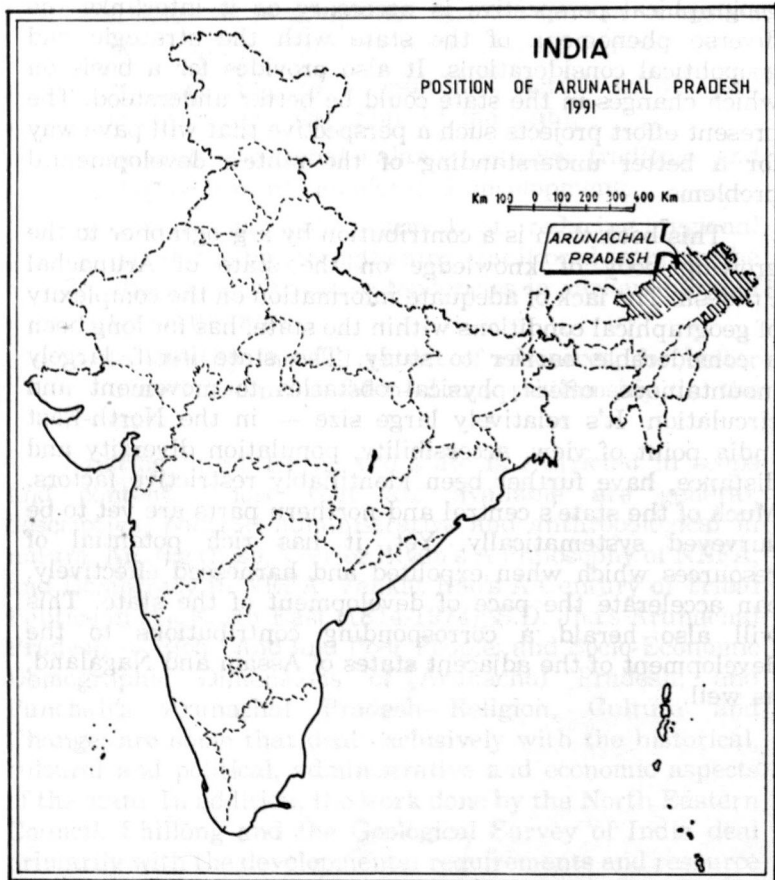
Existing literature on the state is restricted in scope and content. Those that are available are general, descriptive, political administrative and anthropological in nature. Among these, Verrier Elwin's *A Philosophy of NEFA*; and *Democracy in NEFA*; Venkat Rao's *A Century of Tribal Politics in the North East (1874-1974)*; S.D. Jha's *Arunachal Pradesh — Rich Land and Poor People*; and *Socio-Economic Demographic Dimensions of Arunachal Pradesh*; and Panchali's *Arunachal Pradesh—Religion, Culture and Change*; are some that deal exclusively with the historical, cultural and political, administrative and economic aspects of the state. In addition, the work done by the North Eastern Council, Shillong and the Geological Survey of India deal primarily with the developmental requirements and resource potentials of the state. What is significantly absent in these works, is the adequate treatment of the geographical perspective which is crucial to any study that attempts to weave the diverse aspects of the state into a comprehensive whole. A notable attempt has been made by B.K. Roy Burman and B.S. Sarkar in presenting a detailed account of the regional divisions of the state and is based on the work done

by V.L.S. Prakasa Rao and L.S. Bhatt on the old Mysore state. This lacuna has left other perspectives singularly separate and independent of each other. As a result many of the aspects of the state were dealt in isolation. A geographical perspective is necessary as it interlinks the diverse phenomena of the state with the strategic and geopolitical considerations. It also provides for a basis on which changes in the state could be better understood. The present effort projects such a perspective that will pave way for a better understanding of the state's developmental problems.

This book then is a contribution by a geographer to the growing body of knowledge on the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The lack of adequate information on the complexity of geographical conditions within the state, has for long been a considerable barrier to study. The state itself, largely mountainous, offers physical obstacles to movement and circulation. Its relatively large size — in the North-East India point of view, accessibility, population diversity and distance, have further been identifiably restrictive factors. Much of the state's central and northern parts are yet to be surveyed systematically. Yet, it has rich potential of resources which when exploited and harnessed effectively, can accelerate the pace of development of the state. This will also herald a corresponding contributions to the development of the adjacent states of Assam and Nagaland, as well.



Elevation in the Eastern Himalaya is relatively lower than that in the Himalaya. The decreasing elevation of the eastern Himalaya coincides with the southern end of the Himalaya — the eastern syntaxis. A. V. Krishna Rao, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, Yunnan of Western Burma. The geographical



MAP No 1

works in the pre-1956 treatment of the geographical perspective and it is crucial to any study that attempts to weave the diverse aspects of the state into a comprehensive whole. A notable attempt has been made by H.K. Roy Barman in 1973 in providing a detailed account of the regional divisions of the state and is based on the work of



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