

✓ UNDERSTANDING TRIBAL RELIGION by Tamo Mirang and Sarit K. Chaudhuri, 2004. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp. 247, price Rs. 495.

Religion plays a pivotal role in the coherence of various aspects of the life of men more so in case of tribes. This book deals with the importance of understanding tribal religion in the context of Arunachal Pradesh. This book deals with 22 papers. Mirang and Chaudhury have made a commendable effort in the direction of contextualising the heterogeneity in religion.

Tako Davi throws light on the relevance of tribal religion particularly in the present context when the people of Arunachal Pradesh are passing through a phase of transition as a result of the influence of other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity and of the more educated and so called advanced non-tribal people. Being shrouded by the growing

sense of being inferior and of lagging behind in the pace of overall development, the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are moving towards the "no man's land" in their mindset. This gives rise to the necessity of restoring self respect and pride in their own beliefs and culture in order to promote emotional and psychological integration at the local, regional and national levels, a challenge yet to win as far as the whole of north-east is concerned.

A major section of the book is devoted to the religious concept of Dony-Poloism, the followers of which are mostly those tribes who consider themselves to be the descendents of Abotani such as Adi, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin and some other tribes. It is interesting to note that the land inhabited by these tribes is called 'Arunachal' as they are worshippers of the sun and moon, called Dony-Polo in local dialects. Reflecting in the philosophy of Donyi-Polo it is clear that it acts as a check on the "immoral and illegal activities" (p.45) of the people. Synonymous to the concept of 'swarg' among the Hindus and 'heaven' among the Christians, Donyi-Polo is the land of peace and beauty where its followers aspire to go after death. S. Manish in his paper attempts to trace the characteristic features of the indigenous healing traditions of the Adis by giving a few cases. The practitioner endowed with the healing power and blessed with the power of invoking the spirits cures fractured bones of people.

The different chapters of the book vividly describe the religious beliefs and rituals of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. However, it is imperative to remember that religion plays a major role in social construction rather than just being a supernatural phenomenon. How it is embedded in the social fabric needs to be analyzed in detail.

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