

History Culture and Traditions of

North East India



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Introduction

North East India is the only region in the country where development is directly done under the aegis of central government. The region has long been neglected and been away from the eyes of rest of india. In the recent past a special emphasis has been made by the government to bridge the gap in development of this region both industrially as well as economically. The Asian car rally was one such event which drew the attention of the country. This has now been considered as the gateway to South East Asia in consonance with the India's 'Look East Policy'.

As envisaged by External Ministry, North East region is not only the periphery but the centre of the thriving economic link between India and the East Asia. However, considering the security situation in the region and the government's non existent long term policy to deal with the deteriorating situation, the region has not shown any signs of improvement.

North-East India was one political entity named Assam before the rest of the states were carved out of it. The entire North-East India has been a pot of amalgamation of different cultures and ethnic groups coming and settling here. Earliest mention of this region was by the Chinese explorer, Chang Kien, in 100 B.C. The Australoids or the pre-Dravidians were the earliest inhabitants of this state. Huen Tsang, the great Chinese traveler, visited this region in the 7th century. Assam was a founding state of the Union of India in 1947. At that time, the state comprised the whole of the

North-East region. Subsequently, a number of other north eastern states were carved out of Assam, starting with Nagaland in 1963.

North-East of India is the land of Blue Mountains, Green Valleys and Red River. Nestled in the Eastern Himalayas this region is abundant in Natural Beauty, Wild life, Flora & Fauna and its Colorful people. A blend of all these makes it the most beautiful Eco-Tourism destination in South Asia.

From times immemorial, India's North East has been the meeting point of many communities, faiths and cultures. A place renowned for its magical beauty and bewildering diversity, North East India is the home for more than 166 separate tribes speaking a wide range of languages. Some groups have migrated over the centuries from places as far as South East Asia; they retain their cultural traditions and values but are beginning to adapt to contemporary lifestyles. Its jungles are dense, its rivers powerful and rain, and thunderstorms sweep across the hills, valleys and plains during the annual monsoons.

The lushness of its landscape, the range of communities and geographical and ecological diversity makes the North East quite different from other parts of the subcontinent. In winters, mist carpets the valleys but swirls around the traveller in hills during summer rains, thus creating an enchanting and romantic atmosphere. The region has borders with Myanmar, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The festivals and celebrations in the North-eastern states of India are a colourful reflection of the people and their lives.

Throughout the year, different people celebrate festivals with lot of fanfare in different ways, most of them centering around their modes of living and livelihood.

This book has been written with the aim of bringing out the history, culture and traditions of the North East India which are so diverse and entirely different from the rest of India. This book will provide useful information to all those planning to visit the region. The book covers each of the states separately in different chapters and gives detailed account of various aspects of this beautiful part of India. It is certainly going to make an interesting reading for those intending to visit there for the first time.

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Arunachal Pradesh

INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, one of the most sparsely populated states of India, with an area of 83743 sq. Kms is the largest among the north-eastern states of India. The state occupies the north-easternmost part of India and because of its location the state is called 'land of sunrise'. The state shares border with the states of Assam to the south and Nagaland to the southeast. The state is bounded by Bhutan to the west, Myanmar to the east, China to the north and north-east and the plains of Assam to the south.

Itanagar is the capital of the state. It was a Union Territory until the State of Arunachal Pradesh Bill was passed by the Indian Parliament in 1986 and accordingly declared a full-fledged state of the Union on 20 February 1987. The land is acknowledged to be one of the most splendid, variegated and multilingual tribal areas of the world.

The entire region had remained isolated since 1873 when the British stopped free movement. After 1947, Arunachal became part of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Its strategic significance was demonstrated by the Chinese invasion in 1962, and the Indian government

subsequently broke up the agency giving statehood to all the territories surrounding Assam.

Arunachal Pradesh finds mention in the literature such as the Kalika Puran and in the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana. Myth holds that the Sage Vyasa meditated here and the people believe that the remains of the brick structure lying scattered around two villages in the hills north of Roing were once the resplendent palace of Rukmini, the consort of Lord Krishna. The sixth Dalai Lama was also born in Arunachal Pradesh.

This land, encompassing wide alpine geographical diversity and corresponding climatic conditions varying from tropical to temperate, to alpine, and a wide variety of wild life flora and fauna, has now started gaining acclaim as one of the world's biodiversity heritage spots. Arunachal Pradesh is endowed with thick evergreen forests with numerous streams, rivers and gorges and hundreds and thousands of species of flora and fauna covering more than 60% of the total area.

The upper reaches offering an ideal landscape for promoting adventure tourism of all sorts are best suited for tourists looking for such opportunities. The state provides home for more than 500 recorded species of birds many of which are restricted to this land and are highly endangered including white-winged duck, Sclater, Monal bangal floriam among others. Trees of great size, plentiful climbers and abundance of cane and bamboo make Arunachal evergreen. Out of about a thousand species of orchids in India, over 500 are to be found in Arunachal alone. The wildlife is equally rich and varied, which includes elephants, tigers, leopards, jungle cats, white gibbon, red pandas, musk and the "Mithun" (*Bos Forntails*) exists both in wild and semi domesticated form).

The land is mostly mountainous with the Himalayan range along the northern borders criss-crossed with ranges spanning north to south. These divide the state into five river valleys: the Kameng, the Subansiri, the Siang, the Lohit and the Tirap. All these are snow fed from the Himalayas and so are countless rivers and rivulets. The mightiest of these rivers is the Siang, called the Tsangpo in Tibet, which becomes the Brahmaputra after the Dibang and the Lohit in the plains of Assam joins it. The people of the land are endowed with a deep aesthetic sense that finds ample expression in their songs, dances and crafts.

Sixteen per cent of its population is immigrants including thirty thousand of them from Bangladesh, and from contiguous parts of the country notably Assam and Nagaland. The state also gives refuge to significant numbers of Chakma expatriates. The famous Ledo Burma Road which was a lifeline to China during World War II passes through the state. The second group of people of Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Bungnis, Nishis, Mishmis, Mijis, Thangsos etc. who worship the Sun and the Moon God, namely, Donyi-Polo and Abo-Tani, the original ancestor for most of these tribes.

Their religious rituals largely coincide with the phases of agricultural cycles. They traditionally practice Jhuming or shifting cultivation. The third group comprises Noctes and Wanchos in the Tirap district. These are hardy people known for their structured village society in which the hereditary village chief still plays a vital role. The Noctes also practice elementary form of Vaishnavism. Arunachal Pradesh, a mysterious, magical and mystical land tucked away in the north eastern tip of India is one of the most compelling holiday destinations in India.

GEOGRAPHY

Lying on the north eastern ridge of the great Himalayan system, between 26°N - 30°N latitudes, and 91°E - 93°E longitudes, Arunachal Pradesh is the largest of the north eastern states of India. The state stretches from the snow-capped eastern Himalayas, at an altitude of 6,000 meters, to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley. Arunachal Pradesh is surrounded by Bhutan, China and Burma. Assam lies to its south. The major rivers that flow through the state are Kameng, Subansiri, Siang (later Brahmaputra in Assam), Lohit and Tirap. The climate varies with elevation. The state receives abundant rainfall during the months from May to September.

Parts of Lohit, Changlang and Tirap are by the forests of the Patkai. Kangto, Nyegi Kangsang, the main Gorichen peak and the Eastern Gorichen peak are some of the highest peaks in this region of the Himalayas. The Himalayan range that extends up to the eastern Arunachal separates it from China. The ranges extend towards the Nagaland, and form a boundary between India and Burma in Changlang and Tirap district, it acts as a natural barrier it is called Patkai Bum Hills.

Sub-divisions

Arunachal Pradesh is divided into sixteen districts, each administered by a district collector. They are Anjaw District, Changlang District, East Kameng, East Siang, Kurung Kumey, Lohit District, Lower Dibang Valley, Lower Subansiri, Papumpare, Tawang District, Tirap District, Upper Dibang Valley, Upper Subansiri, Upper Siang, West Kameng and West Siang. Any entry to the state through any of the check posts on the border between it and

Assam is done through a special permit called Inner Line Permits (ILP).

Main Rivers

Kameng River

The Kameng River in the eastern Himalayan mountains, originates in Tawang district from the glacial lake below snow capped Gori Chen mountain on the India-Tibet border in South Tibet and flows through Bhalukpong circle of West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh and Sonitpur District of Assam. The Kameng forms the boundary between East Kameng District and West Kameng Districts and is also the boundary between the Sessa and Eaglenest sanctuaries to its west and the Pakke tiger reserve to the east. The Dafla Hills are east and the Aka Hills (home of Aka tribe) are west of the Kameng River.

The eastern half of Eaglenest-Sessa Wildlife sanctuaries is drained by the Tippi Naala (Tippi River) which joins Kameng River at the village of Tippi on the Bhalukpong-Bomdila highway. The other major rivers flowing through West Kameng District, the Tenga, Bichom and Dirang Chu, are also tributaries of the Kameng.

Lohit River

Lohit River is a river in Arunachal Pradesh in India. It is a tributary to the Brahmaputra River.

Dibang River

The river originates in the mountains of China and flows through the length of the Dibang Valley named after it.

HISTORY

The mythological strands of the state of Arunachal Pradesh are interwoven far into the distant past with that of the rest of India. It is believed that sage Vyasa meditated here and also that the remains of the brick structure scattered around two villages in the hills north of Roing was the palace of Rukmini, the consort of Lord Krishna. The sixth Dalai Lama was born on the soil of Arunachal Pradesh. There are practically no records relating to the earlier history of this area except some oral literature and the number of historical ruins found mainly in the foot hills dating approximately from the early Common Era.

The state represents the eastern most part of the mighty Himalayan extension in India, with the highest mountain peak in the region, Namcha Barwa, in its immediate northern border in Tibet. At least its foothills were occasionally incorporated in various kingdoms of the Brahmaputra valley.

The Ahom (the 13th century to the 19th century) rulers certainly had some incorporation of the various ethnic groups from the state in their kingdom, which they managed through the institutions of the "kakotis" (traditional go-between and negotiators on behalf of the Ahom kingdom with the hill tribes) and "posa" (tributes paid in kind). Since then, the territory had a variety of nomenclatures and different shades of administrative arrangements. At long last, it was accorded with state hood in 1987 with full administrative and legislative structures.

The first ancestors of the tribal groups migrated from Tibet during the prehistoric period, and were joined by

Thai-Burmese counterparts later. Except for the northwestern parts of the state, little is known about the history of Arunachal Pradesh, although the Adi tribe had legendary knowledge of the history.

Recorded history was only available in the Ahom chronicles during the 16th century. The tribal 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 control of the Ahom and the Assamese until the annexation of India by the British in 1858. In the 16th century the Ahom Kings influenced this region inhabited by tribal groups of Tibeto-Burmese origin. The tribe consisted of the Daflas, Bangnis, the Monpas and they were influenced by Buddhist ideals. The Miri along with the Daflas and Tagin lived in the hills.

The Apatanis were believed to be more advanced. They were agriculturists. Besides this the Abor who called themselves as Adi lived in the valley of Arunachal Pradesh. Besides them, the Membas, Ramos and Boris formed minor groups. The Mishmis exists as Idus, Taraons, and Kamans. They excelled in handicrafts. Today tourism forms an important source of revenue for the state economy.

Modern history of Arunachal Pradesh begins with the inception of British rule in Assam after the treaty of Yandaboo, concluded on 24 February 1826. In 1826, the British exercised their control in Assam after the treaty of Yandaboo concluded on 24th February 1826. Before

1962, Arunachal was popularly called North Eastern Frontier Agency and was constitutionally a part of Assam.

It was administered by the Ministry of External Affairs until 1965 and subsequently by the Ministry of Home Affairs through the Governor of Assam. In 1972, it was constituted as a Union Territory and renamed Arunachal Pradesh. On 20th February in 1987, it became the 24th state of the Indian Union. It is worth being mentioned that the 555 miles long northern boundary of the state marking the international boundary of India which is known as the McMohan continues to be disputed as Indian Territory by China and both the countries have been negotiating for a final settlement.

CULTURE AND CUSTOM

This mountainous tract, located between $26^{\circ}.28'N$ to $29^{\circ}.28'N$ latitude and $91^{\circ}30'E$ to $97^{\circ}.30'E$ longitude, has 110 scheduled tribal communities out of the total 219 scheduled tribal communities listed in the North East region. Most of these communities are ethnically similar, having derived from an original common stock but their geographical isolation from each other has brought amongst them certain distinctive characteristics in language, dress and customs.

Each tribe has its own dialect classified under the Tibeto-Burman group. Due to difficulty of communicating among the A number of dialects are spoken by various tribes, but Assamese is chosen as the means of communication among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The languages of the tribal groups are classified under the Tibeto-Burman group.

Three Cultural Groups

Broadly the people may be divided into three cultural groups on the basis of their socio-religious affinities. Each tribe has its own tradition, ways of life, myths, dialects, costumes, dance and art forms.

The Monpas and Sherdukpens of Tawang and West Kameng districts follow the lamaistic tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. Noted for their religious fervor, the villages of these communities have richly decorated Buddhist temples, locally called 'Gompas'. Though largely agriculturists practicing terrace cultivation, many of these people are also pastoral and breed herds of yak and mountains sheep.

Culturally similar to them are Membas and Khambas who live in the high mountains along the northern borders. Khamptis and Singphos inhabiting the eastern part of the State are Buddhists of Hinayana sect. They are said to have migrated from Thailand and Burma long ago and still using ancient scripts derived from their original homeland.

The second group of the people includes Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Bangnis, Nishis, Mishmis, Mijis, Thongsas etc., who worship Sun and Moon God namely, Donyi-Polo and Abo-Tani, the original ancestors for most of these tribes. Their religious rituals largely coincide with phases of agricultural cycles. They invoke nature deities and make animal sacrifices. They traditionally practice jhumming or shifting cultivation. Adis and Apatanis extensively practice wet rice cultivation and have a considerable agricultural economy.

Art and Culture

The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have a rich tradition of craftsmanship, which manifests itself in various arts and crafts produced by these tribes. The Buddhist

including Monpas, Sherdukpen, Aka, Bugun make beautiful masks, carpets and painted wooden vessels. The Bangis and Apatani make bag, hat, jewellery etc. Khamtis and Wanchos are well known for their wood carving. Pottery of Dafla women is well-known.

Festivals and Fairs

Festivals form an essential aspect of Socio-Cultural life of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. As a matter of fact festivals are the mirrors of the people's culture. Every society of the people of Arunachal Pradesh celebrates number of festivals-agricultural, religious and socio-cultural, which give them ample opportunity to enjoy freely. These are the occasions for people to relax, to enjoy, dancing and eating and drinking.

Agriculture being the basic means of livelihood, festivals associated with agriculture are celebrated in bigger scale either to thank the God for the providence or pray for bumper harvest. While the ritual part of each festival is performed by the priest other arrangements of the festivals are done by the people in a community basis. Throughout the twelve months of the year festivals are celebrated by one or the other tribes.

Not a single month passed off without a festival. From this point of view Arunachal may also be called the land of festivals. Animal sacrifice is a common ritual in most of the festivals.

Dance and music

The people of Arunachal Pradesh are patrons of dances and music. Dance and music is part of their life. They dance on important rituals, during festivals, marriages and also for recreation occasionally. Dances are different for different tribal groups. They vary from highly stylized

religious dance dramas of the Buddhists to the martial steps and colorful performances of the Noctes and Wanchos. Most of the dances are performed in groups – where both males and females take part. However, in some dances females are not allowed to dance with the male dancers. These dances are Igu dance of the Mishmi priests, war dances of the Adis, Noctes and Wanchos, ritualistic dance of the Buddhist tribes etc.

There are some popular folk dances performed by the people which include Aji Lamu (Monpa Tribe), Roppi (Nishing Tribe), Hiirii Khaniing (Apatani Tribe), Popir (Adi Tribe), Pasi Kongki (Adi), Chalo (Nocte Tribe), Ponung (Adi Tribe), Rekham Pada (Nishing Tribe), Lion and Peacock dance (Monpa) and so on.

Among the Adis dance had evolved almost into an art form mainly for entertainment and recreation. The 'Phoning' dance of Adis is performed by teams of young girls in perfect rhythmic unison. Similar group dance in colorful costumes are performed by Nishis and Tagins of Upper and Lower Subansiri Districts. Most of the dances are accompanied by songs sung generally in chorus. The folksongs of Pailibos relate more to their folk history, mythology and description of their known past. Themes of songs are like fables involving creatures or the animal and urgent words signifying moral deduction. Following are their chief folksong, sung on different occasion.

Ja-Jin-Ja: On occasion of feasts and merriment, during marriages or other social meets, this song is sung. Both men and women sing it in chorus or individually. But once the song starts, all those who are present join them in singing.

Baryi: It is a song which narrates their history, their religious lore and mythology. Its whole cycle takes hours

to complete. It is also a feature of festivals or of occasion of important social or religious gatherings. Both Ja-Jin-Ja and Baryi produce a nostalgic feeling in Pailibos as the glories of the past ancestors are narrated through them.

Nyoga: It is sung when a marriage ceremony is concluded and the bridal party returns leaving the bride in her home. The theme is that of the joy. It contains pieces of advice to the bride for her future life. Arunachal Pradesh abounds with different forms of mask dances peculiar to each of the tribes. Arunachali mask dances are characteristically religious.

ECONOMY

Agriculture is the major income source of the state. About 61,000 square kilometers of Arunachal Pradesh are covered with forests. Forest-products are the next most significant economy of the state. The place has an ideal climate for horticulture and fruit orchards. Crops such as rice, maize, millet, wheat, pulses and other agricultural products like sugarcane, ginger and oilseeds are the major contributors to the state economy. Rice mills, fruit preservation units and handloom handicrafts are the major industries of the state. Tourism also forms an important mode of economy to the state. The per capita income of Arunachal Pradesh has been the highest among the North Eastern states in the recent years and it has been above all India average. The main constraint faced by the state is the lack of communication. CMIE index for infrastructure development for Arunachal is 44; the reference point is 100, the national average. It is basically a hilly state that interspersed among deep valleys and narrow gorges.

The Arunachalis depend for their livelihood on forest products and industries based on them which provide employment to a large portion of them. The state is rural based with nearly 75% of its total workforce is engaged in agriculture (mainly shifting cultivation). The remaining workforce is basically concentrated in the gradually emerging tertiary sectors. The secondary sector employment is mainly in the forest-based industries and also carpet making. The tertiary sector jobs are mainly created by the state government.

The annual compounded growth rate of NSDP has been worked out at 15.78% at current prices and 7.82% at constant prices. Similarly, manufacturing sector showed a growth of 10.70% at current prices and 8.8% at constant prices over the same period. In the recent years, per capita income of Arunachal Pradesh has been the highest among the north eastern states of the country and it has been above all India average.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Arunachal Pradesh is a state with a big vision. The state's educational scenario is slowly improving with the plans and projects initiated by the state as well as the central government. The state with a population density of 13 per sq km has a literacy rate of 60 per cent as per National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO) data.

The education department of the state government has adopted a uniform structure of school education viz., the 10+2 system. The primary stage consists of classes I-V, the middle stage from classes VI-VIII and the Secondary Stage consists of Classes IX-X. The higher

secondary stage consists of classes XI-XII. There are 12 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas in the state.

The state also provides free education to students up to the age of 14 to universalize elementary education in the state. There are several projects run by local NGOs to make people aware of the importance of education in remote areas. The average literacy rate of the state according to 2001 census report was 54.74%.

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Arunachal Pradesh, home of more than one hundred tribes having their own cultures and traditions, is the home of many indigenous religions. Broadly, there are three cultural groups known for their distinct socio-religious practices. The first group includes the Monpas and Sherdukpens of Tawang and West Kameng districts. They follow the lamaistic tradition of Mahayana Buddhism.

The second group forms with the people of Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Bangnis, Nishis, Mishmis, Mijis, Thongsas etc., who worship Sun and Moon God as their gods. The third group comprises of people of the Noctes and Wanchos tribal communities. They are mostly found in the Tirap district. The people have their strict village society headed by a hereditary chief who plays significant role in varied situations. The Noctes are followers of an elementary form of Vaishnavism.

Forty per cent of the state population follow the Donyi-Polo and Rangraha religions while the majority of the remainder is Buddhist. Some of the tribes such as Nocte and Miri follow Hinduism. Before 1800s, the tribes

following different faiths, especially followers of Hinduism and Buddhism coexisted harmoniously.

The Aka tribe follows their indigenous Donyi-Polo religion in which they worship the sun, the moon, and the ancestral god Abu-Tani. In olden days, the practice of Donyi-Polo religion was limited to miri (shamans). Other deities traditionally worshipped by the Adi include Kine Nane, Doying Bote, Gumin Soyin and Pedong Nane. Each deity is associated with certain tasks and act as protector and guardian of various topics related to nature which revolves around their daily life. This included the food crops, home, rain, etc.

Centuries of Buddhist and Hindu influences have greatly shaped the religious rites of their religion. A growing number have converted to Christianity, in part out of dissatisfaction with traditional healing. But in recent few years there was a revival in the faith and the search for indigenosity on the part of the people made it popular with the youth again. Efforts are now underway to give a properly organized form to the traditional beliefs and values of the Arunachal Pradesh state, and to protect and preserve the local religions. As a result the Adi Galo people have started organizing systematic practice of Donyi-Polo religion now known as Gamgi.

Superstitions and magic play an important role in their belief system. The most popular magic ritual among the tribe is Shizhou which is used by one who is angry to destroy one's foe. The rituals of Shizhou involve slaughtering a dog, draining the blood from its head, and either sprinkling a few drops of the blood onto the enemy, throwing them into his house, or burning them in his hearth. This must be done without the enemy knowing it and then the latter is supposed to lose his life.

The Apatani tribe follows the Danyi-Piilo faith, in which they worship to the Sun (Ayo Danyii) and the Moon (Atoh Piilo). Abotani is revered as the sole ancestor of all Apatani and other tribes in the surrounding regions. When a misfortune occurs, they believe that it is caused by certain evil spirits, and thus they make appeasement by sacrificing chickens, cows and other domestic animals.

The heads of sacrificed animals hanging over the grave (Biyu) of an Apatani man in Ziro. Sacrifice of the animals and special rites are performed on death of near ones. Apatani also believes in praying the ancestors. Myoko, the festival of friendship and prosperity, is celebrated in a grand manner lasting an entire month in March each year. The tribe celebrates the Dree in the month of July. This is an agricultural festival.

Generally the Monpas follow Tibetan Buddhism of the Gelugpa sect. At the same time, some members of the Bhut Monpa follow Bön and animism. In every household, small Buddhist altars placed with statues of Buddha are given water offerings in little cups and burning butter lamps. The belief in transmigration of the soul and reincarnation is widespread, as their life is largely centered on the Tawang monastery in Tawang district, where many of the young Monpa boys would join the monastery and grow up as Buddhist Lamas.

In early times, the Bhut Monpa tribe led a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. They believed the spirit of the tiger to be their main totem or clan idol because they believed it would protect them while they slept. It is also believed that the spirit of the tiger is the manifestation of the ancestral forest spirit, who took a young shaman into the jungle to be initiated.

Donyi-Poloism

In this religion, the sun and the moon are worshipped. As the overseer of the gods we cannot see BO BOMONG. Donyi-Poloism is followed by major tribe groups like Adis, Apatanis, hill Miris and Nishis who all claim their origin from a single common ancestor –Abo Tani.

This nature worshipping religion is the oldest religion followed by all Abo Tani descendants. The religion has received a massive revival in the decade of 1990 to 2000 under the guidance of Late Talom Rukbo. The religion is based on maintaining and following harmony with the natural world. It believes that every man has a role to play in his life and a purpose for living. How it is etched out is up to the man. Some of the main deities followed by the donyi Polians are KINE NANE, DOYING BOTE, GUMIN SOYIN, DADI BOTE, and PEDONG NANE. These mythical deities are the protectors of the Harvests, Home, Life and natural resources. One of the basic teachings in Donyi-Poloism is based on the common belief that everything evolved out of nothingness.

Most Nishi are loyal followers of the Donyi-Polo faith. The religious festival of Longte Yullo is celebrated in April. Nyokum Yullo is celebrated on 26th February each year since 1967-68 at Joram village in the Lower Subansiri district.

AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

Agriculture And Irrigation

The agricultural scene of Arunachal Pradesh is dominated by shifting cultivation which has come to be known as Jhuming which locally means collective farming. This is the form of cultivation that sustains majority of

the people in the area which is been practiced from earlier days. Jhuming involves clearing and burning a patch of jungle, dribbling seed using a poker into the patch thus cleared, leaving it for another areas going through the same process to return to the first one after a some years. This cycle is termed as Jhum cycle. Weeding at least four times, watching and protecting the growing plants from the wild animals and birds and finally harvesting a meager mixed crop, normally just enough to feed the workers - men, woman and children who had put in about 5 to 6 months of hard labor into the patch.

The major agricultural products of the state include paddy, millet and maize. The vegetables are sweet potatoes, brinjal, ginger, chillies, pumpkin, cucumber, and local cowpea. Horticultural products include pineapple, oranges, lemon, lichi, papaya, banana and peach walnut, almond.

Foraging

The Sulung is the primary hunter-gatherer community. Living in Subansiri District in very small numbers, they may be the most aboriginal inhabitants of the area. Many Sulung are described by Fuchs (1973) as living as virtual slaves to the Nishi.

All tribal communities in Arunachal Pradesh do some foraging in varying degrees. Swidden agriculturalists, in particular, do a great deal of hunting and gathering of wild plants—especially during times of hardship such as the monsoon season. These plants, animals and insects are an important source of protein and calories.

In Arunachal Pradesh nearly 300 species of plants are foraged—including 50 kinds of green leaf vegetables, 25 types of tubers and rhizomes, 10 kinds of flowering plants, and 15 types of seeds and grains. Arunachal Pradesh is

exceptionally rich in medicinal plants, especially in its easternmost extension. Foraging depends on the ability to anticipate the always changing distribution of edible species and therefore the people practicing this production system need extensive knowledge of the environment.

Terraced agriculture

The tribal communities who practice high altitude, dry terraced agriculture generally follow a socioeconomic complex derived from their origins in the Tibetan plateau. To survive in the arid, cold high mountain crests these people combine (in various degrees) and practice sedentary agriculture producing primarily millet, barley and potatoes, and practice high-mountain pasturing of cattle, yak and sheep and long distance trade.

Agricultural Policy

Though slow, Arunachal Pradesh is taking up measures to develop its economy with the objective of improving the quality of life of its people. This is an up-hill task. At the same time, though the resources available are plenty, the ways and means to achieve the objectives through gainful resource utilization are not well defined.

The relegation of technology to the back resulted in the stagnation of economic growth. However, the state has gained much over the years, it is now necessary to consolidate the gains in order to make it sustainable and add new dimension during the coming years, so as to increase household income generation.

Considering the above situation, and looking forward to meet the respond constructively to the need for achieving faster and higher economic growth and crating job opportunities for the unemployed rural people through agriculture and allied sector, the state should have a well

defined agricultural policy. The policy should govern the entire gamut of agriculture scenario of the state. Any state policy on agriculture that has an objective to achieve the above goals should deal with the multifaceted problems and devise ways and means to redress them.

The major challenges the agricultural advancement of the state is confronted with include low level of productivity, capital inadequacy, lack of infrastructural support, unfavorable terrain, high cost of production and other demand side constraints. The non availability of basic preservation, storage and processing facilities, low value addition and unfavorable price of agricultural commodities are severely affecting as a whole which directly encourages migration from rural areas to urban centers.

Industrial Advancement

The state has several medium industries based on its forest products. Plants to produce cement and fruit processing units have also come up in the state. There are a number of craft training centres and the states handloom industry has made good progress. The people are experts in cane and bamboo basketry work. Wood carving and black smithy are found in certain villages. Iron scrapers, spear head, and Daos required for day-to-day use are made in several villages.

Prospects of Industry

As there is no urban-industrial outlet from the State, it is difficult to effectively assess the volume of out-going trade. However, State sponsored imports in the important commodities such as cereals, salt, edible oil, cement, C I sheets etc. can be obtained. But this will provide a partial view of the picture. It is essential that the State develops its own dry enra-port as a hub of ever increasing

commercial activities. Similarly, it is of prime importance for the State to get itself linked with the Indian railway network for a reliable and inexpensive supply of the essential commodities.

Arunachal should plead for speedy implementation of the 'National Highway System' so that all the state capitals of the region are linked effectively with the national metropolis, which control the commercial nerve of the country. The state will be ready to take advantage of the future 'Trans-Asian Highway' and 'Asian Railway Link' passing from west to the East Asian Countries in the near future.

Art and Crafts

Arunachal Pradesh is a land of beautiful handicrafts comprising wide range in variety. All the people have a tradition of artistic craftsmanship. A wide variety of crafts such as weaving painting, pottery, smithy work, basketry, woodcarving etc. are found among the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

From the point of view of art and culture the area may very conveniently be divided into three zones. The first zone includes the Buddhist tribes i.e. the Sherdukpens and Monpas and also to some extent the Khowa, Aka and Miji group; the Membas, Khambas, the Khamtis and Singphos. The people of the first one make beautiful masks. They also periodically stage pantomimes and mask dances.

Weaving

Weaving is the occupation of the womenfolk throughout, the territory. They are very particular about colors and have a beautiful sense of colour combination. The favourite colours are black, yellow dark blue, green, scarlet and maddr.

Originally they used natural dye but now-a-days they switch over to synthetic dyes available in the market. The designs are basically geometrical type varying from a formal arrangement of lines and bands to elaborate patterns of diamonds and lozenges. These designs are sometimes enhanced by internal repetition and other decorations.

Cane and Bamboo work

Cane and bamboo industry of Arunachal Pradesh is of very high standard. Most of the domestic requirements are made of cane and bamboo. Hats of different sizes and shapes, various kinds of baskets, cane vessels, a wide variety of cane belts, woven and plains, elaborately woven brassier of cane and fibre, bamboo mugs with carvings, a variety of ornaments and neckless are some of the products that deserve special mention. The technique of basketry is same throughout. The two basic techniques are twill and hexagon both open and closed.

Carpet Making

Carpet making is the speciality of the Monpas. They weave lovely colourful carpets with dragon, geometric and floral designs. The choice of colour and the colour combination is unique. Though originally they weave carpet for domestic use, it has now become an item of trade and a major occupation for some ladies. Alongwith increase in demand, production has also been made in large scale.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND TOURISM

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is well known as a provider of home to innumerable varieties of orchids, medicinal plants, ferns, bamboos, canes, wild saprophytes,

rhododendrons, hedychiums and oaks. There are more than 600 species of orchids, fifty-two species of rhododendron, eighteen species of hedychium, sixteen species of oak, eighteen species of canes, forty-five species of bamboo in addition to large number of medicinal and aromatic plants. The state is also clad with varieties of forests including tropical forests, sub-tropical forests, pine forests, temperate forests and alpine forests.

The state also abounds with about eighty-five species terrestrial mammals, over five-hundred species of birds and a large number of species of butterflies, insects and reptiles. The animals found here are mithun, elephant, tiger, leopard, white browed gibbon, red panthers, musk deer and the birds are hornbill, white winged duck, green pigeon, Sclater Monal, Bengal florican, Temminick's tragopan.

Forest

The uses and functions of forests often compete with each other. Forests are scarce and are becoming increasingly scarce due to pressure on it. It can be attributed to increase in population and demand for forest resources. The increasing demands of human beings and livestock give tremendous pressure upon Arunachali forest resources. Too much exploitation of the forests has amounted to deforestation resulting in degradation of the same, breakage of ecological balance. The danger is to such a great degree that the Supreme Court made a verdict on 12 December 1996 exercising some restriction over the exploitation of forest resources especially industrial wood in Arunachal Pradesh and other states.

Wildlife

The east Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh, rising from 100m to 6000m altitude across a distance of just

100-150 km, hosts one of the finest wildlife assemblages that Asia can offer to world wildlife diversity. Most parts of the state are justly famed for their biodiversity – Namdapha, Mehao, Dibang Valley to name a few – but none can match Western Arunachal in the ease with which a tourist or a scientist can observe wildlife across 4500m of altitude.

From the lush lowland evergreen forests of Pakke Tiger Reserve (alt. 100-300m), adjacent to the grasslands and riverine woodland of the Brahmaputra valley, through the sub-tropical and temperate forests of Eaglenest (alt. 500-3500m), to the breathtaking views of permanent snow above the alpine meadows of Sela ridge at 4500m – nowhere else in this state can one stroll or motor along roads covering the entire altitudinal stretch.

Therefore it can be safely said that access to these areas is for the time being something very difficult if not impossible. Lest than just a dozen birders have reportedly visited Eaglenest during the last decade. Ditto with Pakke and other areas. Only last year a new macaque – the first in 100 years – was described from Tawang. In just a few short visits over the course of a year our Eaglenest Biodiversity Project has yielded many range extensions of birds and snakes which are stubbornly resisting efforts at identifying them; perhaps new species as well.

Tourism

Eco and Adventure Tourism

Eco-tourism has a great potential for development. There are a large number of tourists on pilgrimage, who would like to visit Tawang monastery along with similar places of interests in Eastern Bhutan, which may be ideal for pilgrim tourism for the Buddhists. For that a massive

investment in infrastructure and manpower planning will be required. Arunachal possesses fantastically breadth taking natural beauty and scenery within its limits, which very few States in India command.

Tawang in particular and former Kameng district in general commands famous Buddhist sites, which have an instant international attraction to the potential tourists. It may be an ideal location winter games and sports in India. Once the relations with China are normalized, the Tawang and Bomdila, located on the shortest possible route from the Indian plains to Lhasa will open up a new possibility of prosperity.

Similarly, the Tsango- Brahmaputra river system does not only have the possibility of generating only electricity and providing irrigation water to the parched agricultural fields, but also will lead to adventure tourism across the boundary in the region. Incidentally, this is also the region, where bird and wild life sanctuaries are located. in which gibbons, "spectacle" monkeys, rare breeds of squirrels and a number of birds, not found any where in the world are located.

Arunachal has great potential for tourism but to convert this into a reality, inexpensive, clean, lodge and boarding arrangements at various locations and training the local entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry is required. The great treasures of Arunachal Pradesh are hidden from the outside world; they have to be packaged in an attractive, efficient and inexpensive manner so that local entrepreneurs may develop it into an unspoiled international tourist site, which environmental checks and balances.

As forest cover is shrinking and human population increasing, meat and fish are being imported from distant

places at considerable cost to meet an ever increasing local demand. Keeping this scenario in mind, there is a potential for ranching, canning and meat processing. This may go along with horticultural activities such as orchid and rhododendron cultivation and bee keeping for commercial purposes. It will also support the tourism industry.

Arunachal has rich natural resources, a small population base and a relatively young leadership. Agriculture, the main livelihood, has limitations in this topographically rugged and undulating land. Its natural beauty, snow capped mountains, virgin forests, unique wild life and the life style of the people lend themselves to tourism. Similarly, its snow-fed perennial rivers are ideal not just for adventure games and sports, but also a rich source of hydro electricity, the "domestic" energy from which huge revenue may come and improve per capita income as well.

Instead of looking westward to the Indian plains to develop agriculture, Arunachal should join Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar, Nagaland to explore the possibility of mountain-related style of resource appropriation and development. In this way, Arunachal could contribute immensely to a novel way of environment-related development for such mountain regions. The state is proud of having more than 500 rare species of Orchids. Its mysterious, powerful and beautiful rivers with faces and moods that change dramatically ever so often form the colourful lifelines.

POLITICAL SITUATION AND CONFLICTS

Political Progression

The modern political history of Arunachal Pradesh dates back to 1875 when the then British-India

Government started to define the administrative jurisdiction by drawing the Inner Line in relation to the frontier tribes inhabiting the North Frontier Tract. But the area was kept beyond the purview of regular laws governing the country. Thereafter, the British followed the policy of gradual penetration to bring more areas under normal administration.

By the year 1946, the North East Frontier Tracts were reorganized into four Frontier Tracts namely Sadiya, Lakhimpur, Tirap and Sela Sub Agency and Subansiri area and administered by the Governor of Assam in his discretion. By virtue of the Indian Independence Act 1947, the Government of Assam assumed administrative jurisdiction over North East Frontier Tracts and the Governor of Assam was divested of his discretionary powers. From 15 August 1947 to 26 January 1950, the Government of Assam administered the North East Frontier Tracts.

After India attained independence, a sub-committee headed by Gopinath Bordoloi was formed by the Constituent Assembly of India to recommend the future patterns of administration of the area. The Bordoloi Committee recommended that since the administration has been satisfactorily established over a sufficiently wide area, the Government of Assam should take over that area by the strength of a notification.

However, due to several factors, particularly the problem of communication and the defiance of some tribal communities, the Government of India decided to administer the area as an 'Excluded Area' through the Governor of Assam as an agent to the president of India. In the year 1950, the plain portions of these tracts namely, Balipara Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, Abor

Hill District and Mishimi Hills Districts were transferred to the Government of Assam. In 1951, the units of the tracts were reconstituted again and Tuensang Frontier Division was created which later merged with Nagaland.

The remaining portion of the Tracts after the introduction of the North East Frontier (Administration) Regulation, 1954 was designated as the North East Frontier Agency, the NEFA. Thereafter, the administration was brought under the Ministry of External Affairs and in August 1965, it was brought under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The political status of the region remained so until 1972 when it attained Union Territory status.

In 1975 by virtue of the enactment of the 37th Constitutional Amendment Act 1975, the Pradesh Council was constituted as a separate Legislative Assembly. Lt. Governor was the head of the then Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. The Pradesh Council became provisional Legislative Assembly having 23 members during 1975 to 1978. The first elected Legislative Assembly consisting of 33 members (30 elected members and 3 nominated members) was formed on 4 March 1978, which lasted only for about 20 months. The assembly was dissolved in November 1979 and President's Rule came to the land till January 1980.

Then with the passing of the State of Arunachal Pradesh Bill 1986, the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh became full fledged State with effect from 20th February, 1987. On the persistent demand of the people of the State, the total membership in the Legislative Assembly was raised to sixty during the General Election in 1990 and thus, the First Legislative assembly of State of Arunachal Pradesh was constituted.

Arunachal Pradesh is unparalleled in the world, at present, for the concentration, isolation and diversity of tribal cultures it contains. Arunachal Pradesh is an unrivalled place in the world so far as the diversity of tribal communities inhabiting it. Tribal communities account for seventy per cent of its population. Thus, nowhere else can one find such a patchwork of discrete types of pre-industrial political economies in such a small area – including semi-nomadic swidden horticulture, terraced wet agriculture, high mountain pastoralism and traditional trade and barter.

Before mainstream political system was known to them, these tribes had various forms of traditional political organizations such as aristocratic ranking or stratified chiefdom, egalitarian clan or lineage-based societies. They also had also corporate villages run by traditional democratic councils.

The present political moment of the state is both of crisis and hope. The crisis arises as this predominately tribal and long isolated area rapidly enters national and international economies. It is a moral crisis as people struggle to create new visions of the good life as they respond to the sudden inflow of outside capital, migrants, consumer goods, market logic and new notions of status. It is a spiritual crisis as the past becomes problematic and valuable in new ways as people struggle to redefine cultural identity and heritage under bewilderingly new circumstances. Instead of blurring or erasing ethnic differences among the various tribes of the state, a rapid socio-historical and political change can intensify the symbolic power of their cultural past, because social dislocation, new inequalities, lost securities create among the tribes a keen hunger for 'roots'.

Political conditions have changed greatly from what the ancestors knew long ago, however the vital roles that cultural and traditional values play in the new situation are strongly felt. More than anything else, these tribal ways of life can be credited with preserving this unusual environment. Complexly adapted to these ecosystems in a variety of ways, these cultures fostered material practices and social institutions which have had minimal ecological effect.

For millenia, these cultures maintained low population growth and density, the sustainable use of resources (i.e., timber, soil, meat-providing fauna and their predators, medicinal plants, etc.), healthy soil conditions along the headwaters of the Brahmaputra River, the great diversity of these often fragile habitats, as well as enough stability in territorial holdings to prevent the terrible dislocations caused elsewhere in northeast India by migration and other demographic displacements.

Most tribal peoples have entered the world economy from a position of weakness, too often being articulated into larger societies through direct oppression—whether economic exploitation or military conquest. However, the 'Inner Line' has largely protected Arunachal Pradesh from such inequalities.

This legacy of relative freedom fosters self-confidence, ethnic pride and hope for the future. Political isolation has not only protected the environment and traditional cultures, it has also allowed an indigenous tribal elite to emerge with the education and modernizing drive to transform Arunachal Pradesh into a respected player on the national and international stage. The north eastern states of the country are a place of endemic ethnic conflict and militant sub-nationalist separatism. However,

Arunachal Pradesh, despite its ethnical complexity, has been blessed with relatively considerably stable governments, which has meant conducive to the commitment to a rapid democratic social development in all of its dimensions.

Frontier Conflict

India and the neighboring country China have a territorial dispute over some part of Arunachal Pradesh. The tension between the two countries became very tense and thus the Sino-Indian War broke out in late 1962. Though the two countries do not meet in a battlefield very frequently, the underlying tension is seen very easily.

International law never supports a country or a state which attempts to plunder the territory from other countries or states by threatening or warfare. Article 2 of the UN Charter clearly reads:

"all Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state".

It is so-called a territorial dispute, which is "a disagreement over the possession or control of land between two or more countries" ("Territorial Dispute."). What leads the territorial dispute is not only relevant to the possession or control of natural resources such as oil, coals, fertile land or rivers, but also culture and religion. In addition, it has been said that "in many cases territorial disputes result from vague and unclear language in a treaty that set up the original boundary". Thus, territorial disputes give rise to conflicts between countries and if the conflict is tense, it may even lead to war or terrorism.

The major cause of China-India territorial dispute is a piece of land in Arunachal Pradesh and the conflict started just after the Chinese Revolution of 1911. At that

time, Qing Dynasty, the last Chinese Dynasty, fell and the Emperor of Qing Dynasty resigned. As a result, China, Tibet and Mongolia became equal and separate countries.

In these three countries, Tibet and Mongol tried to be approved internationally as independent states, and undertook to international society. However, on the other hand, Han Chinese Republicans started small war to subjugate reins of government of Tibet and Mongol. Therefore the kingdoms of Tibet and Mongol were not independent at those times. When British appeared in the scene in 1913-14, they tried to arbitrate the conflict by drawing up the 555-mile McMahon Line as the border between India and China in Shimla, during a conference which also discussed the Tibetan and Chinese borders ("McMahon Line.")

This conference is called Shimla Conference. Regardless of this reconciliation, the McMahon Line was rejected by the Chinese government in 1947. Following this dispute, the Chinese troops crossed the McMahon Line on 26 August 1959 and abandoned the same in 1961. But in October 1962 crossed the line once again with force ("McMahon Line.") and the Sino-Indian War broke out. The Chinese extended their frontier as they intruded deeper and deeper. However, this war did not go on for a long time. The following year, the Chinese agreed to retreat beyond the McMahon Line. They also returned Indian prisoners of war. The war took more than one thousand civilian lives.

Visa Fracas

China's assertiveness over its perceived territory came to the fore in early May 2007, when a couple of lawmakers from Arunachal Pradesh raised the issue of Chinese incursions in the state. The incursion story - though downplayed by the administration as political gimmick on the part of opposition parties - the subsequent denial of

travel permission to an Indian bureaucrat by Chinese authority on grounds that "being from Arunachal Pradesh he was [already] a Chinese citizen," awoke the slumbering political elites. Beijing refuses visas to people from Arunachal Pradesh under the pretext of considering all inhabitants of the region as Chinese; hence, they do not require visas to travel to China.

So far, India's defense and interior ministries have taken a soft stance on the Chinese gambit, with the only strong statements coming from the Foreign Ministry, under pressure from rising domestic criticism, mostly from Arunachal Pradesh. After substantial groveling, New Delhi rejected Chinese claims on Arunachal Pradesh at the highest level, but cautiously.

Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh

Thirty-seven years after Chakmas and Hajongs arrived in India from then-East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) – some displaced by the Kaptai hydroelectric project, others hounded out by the growing incidents of communal violence – the Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh have yet to settle down and find a level of basic security. The highest court in India has upheld their right to citizenship and its attendant benefits. The Chakma and Hajong communities remain stateless, disenfranchised and the target of attacks by xenophobic groups in the state. Over the course of the past few years, the State Government of Arunachal Pradesh has denied the Chakmas and Hajongs access to the most basic infrastructure and opportunities.

These conditions persist despite intervention on behalf of the communities by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Rajya Sabha (upper house of Parliament) and clear judgements in their favour by the courts.