

Introduction of Panchayat Raj and Socio-Political changes in Arunachal Pradesh

Mr.TABA SORANG

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science

Government College Doimukh, papum pare ,791120, Khula Camp,

Arunachal Pradesh 791112

Introduction:

Panchayat Raj a rural local government is an important institution for establishment of grass root democracy in India. It owes its roots from the ancient Indian tradition of village panchayat which exist prior to the arrival of the British colonial rule in India. It is in fact oldest political institution of ancient India which has functioned almost like 'Little Republic'. However, in spite of its ancient roots it is undeniable fact that the present structure and style of functioning of the Panchayat Raj in India is the contribution of British rule especially the initiative of Lord Ripon who is regarded as the father of local self government in India. And it was included in Indian Constitution in part IV, Article 40 under Directive principles of state policy. It says that the state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them to function as units of self-government. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee of 1956 is the stepping stone in the organisation of three tier panchayat raj system in India. As a consequence of its recommendation in 1959 the first panchayat raj system was inaugurated at Nagaur in Rajasthan, subsequently it was started in other states in India. Latter on in various intervals different committees and commission were setup to revitalize this institution of local government. And finally in 1992 through 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Panchayat Raj was accorded the Constitutional status which brought revolutionary changes like direct election, compulsory reservation for ST's & SC's and one third seat for women, more taxation and financial power etc. to the local bodies.

In Arunachal Pradesh the Panchayat raj was introduced through the Dyiang Ering committee report 1965 and NEFA Panchayat raj Regulation Act, 1967. Prior to, introduction of this modern participatory political institution in 1969. It was only the age old traditional political institution in the form of distinct village council exists among the various tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. And this village council regulates the day-to-day affairs of their respective tribe in term

of socio- political and economic nature etc. and is generally based on traditional pattern of leadership where the womenfolk were not allowed to participate as its member. However, with the introduction of Panchayat raj tremendous changes were manifested in social and political life among the various tribes. It has benefited both in terms of qualitative and quantitative to the tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh. It also modernized the political tradition of the area and developed it as the same pattern prevalent in the rest of the country.

The primitive and traditional society of Arunachal Pradesh was static for the centuries and the Panchayat raj acted as an agency of social transformation to change the value system of society and to activate national objective and started democratic process in Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, the introduction of panchayat raj initiated a revolutionary change in socio-political life in Arunachal Pradesh.

Political change:

The introduction of panchayat raj institution brought tremendous political change in Arunachal Pradesh. It is infact first modern political institution which introduces franchise for the first time in Arunachal Pradesh and provides opportunities to the tribal people to participate in the democratic political process. And help them to learn democratic norms and values.

One of the important political changes brought by the introduction of panchayat raj in the heterogeneous tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh is the establishment of political uniformity in the entire area. Or in other words, it setup a homogeneous political practice throughout the state. It also brought changes in the working and functions of age-old traditional village council system of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, and brought significant changes in pattern of political leaderships in the state i.e. from traditional leaderships to new emerging modern political leaders in Arunachal Pradesh.

The landmark political development of introduction of panchayat raj in Arunachal Pradesh was the enactment of Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997 which provides one third or in other words 33% reservation of seats for women at different level of bodies in order to empower the woman folk in male dominated tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh where women were considered to be disadvantage, deprived and have little political space earlier.

Above all the panchayat raj system served as an ideal linkage between the tribal politics with the national mainstream politics in India. And laying down the foundation of state of Arunachal Pradesh and result in providing separate political entity to the Arunachal Pradesh in 1987 as full-fledge state of Indian union.

Social Change:

The introduction of panchayat brings social transformation in Arunachal Pradesh. As panchayat bodies became the sole agencies for rebuilding the village society in Arunachal Pradesh. It functions as watch dogs to ensure proper implementation of different employment generation, poverty alleviation and other developmental programmes. Thus, panchayat bodies created a kind of regeneration of village social life.

The panchayat raj in Arunachal Pradesh strengthened a kind of corporate life among the village community. It strengthened the sense of fellow feeling and mutual help among the people and play leading role in preserving and promoting the delicate indigenous culture of the tribal village.

The introduction of panchayat raj in Arunachal Pradesh, encourage the people towards modern education which widening the outlook of the traditional bound indigenous people. This help in cultivating a progressive mind among the people and help people overcome the long-established social evils prevalent in Arunachal Pradesh like slavery, child marriage, bride price etc. It also liberates the individual from traditional restrains and restructuring human relations in place of hereditary and traditional authority.

As a consequence of such social changes the backward tribal groups have began to imitating the life style of their higher tribesmen. Besides, the panchayat Raj served as key agencies to established social stability and uplifts the economic standard of the village people by implementing various schemes of poverty alleviation programme and also ensure to provide better civic life in the rural society of Arunachal Pradesh through different scheme of sanitation and health etc.

Conclusion:

Hence in conclusion the panchayat raj system developed a congenial atmosphere conducive for the social and political development of village life in Arunachal Pradesh. The new act i.e. Act of 1997 has revitalized the panchayat raj institution with large scale developmental functions. This would create a qualitatively better social life with more political awareness along with active political participation among the people of the villages in Arunachal Pradesh.

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