CHAPTER XII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
Legislative development is necessarily a part of political development. In the peculiar circumstances of Arunachal Pradesh, political development was mainly a consequence of administrative development. For, what is now known by the poetic name of Arunachal Pradesh, a full-fledged state of the Indian Union was, even as late as 1950, referred to rather prosaically as 'North East Frontier Tracts', mostly unknown and scarcely administered. Indeed, for centuries, owing mainly to the difficult mountainous terrain of these frontier tracts, the numerous groups of tribes inhabiting them remained more or less isolated not only from one another but also from the civilisation in the plains below. And then the saga of discovery of one of the world's richest variety of human inhabitants in their pristine surroundings began partly through punitive expeditions by the British Raj but mostly through dedicated missions of study and understanding made by adventurous scholars and British civilians. The interest of the British administration was confined to containing the war-like tribals from their raids on the plains below but more significantly to extend their authority over the international boundaries beyond the frontier hills. They hardly ever entertained the idea of bringing the numerous groups of hillmen under any scheme of regular administration. To this end, therefore, they drew up the Inner Line which
had the effect of keeping the hills sealed off from the plains except for limited options as might be entertained by the government. This policy of non-interference had since proved to be a blessing in disguise for it paved the way for a smooth transfer of power unlike in a few other hill regions of the North East where extension of the British rule led directly or indirectly to the growth of the ideas of independence and sovereignty and a prolonged period of insurgency which began with the termination of the British connection and became one of the most formidable challenges to free India's political leadership. On the other hand, the hillmen of Arunachal Pradesh have had an opportunity to rediscover themselves and choose their destiny in a more peaceful and congenial atmosphere than could be done by some of their brethren. Naturally, the degree of socio-economic and political development which they have achieved in the last four decades, they could not even conceive of in the centuries before. This is not to suggest that all is well with them; or that they have attained a greater success than what their more civilised neighbours have achieved. The point to be noted is that after centuries of isolation, leading a life as hard and as still as the hills in which they lived, the inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh could step into modern civilisation, neither suddenly, nor forcibly but gradually
and without being totally uprooted from their native culture and customary ways of life.

Just as the British were wary and unwilling to consider the 'frontier tracts' fit for regular administration and thus pushed them aside as 'excluded areas' even as late as 1937, the Government of India too, after the transfer of power, did not consider it desirable to pass on the administration of the frontier tracts directly to the care of the Government of Assam. Constitutionally, the frontier tracts were a part of Assam. The Assamese leadership was keen on assimilating the hill peoples into a composite Assam state. The constituent Assembly was also generally activated by the spirit of integration between the hills and plains of Assam. The Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India was evolved as a compromise between the need for integration and the equally important consideration of preserving the autonomy of the hillmen in the matter of their social customs. But even the authors of the Sixth Schedule did not regard it opportune to extend the operation of the Sixth Schedule to the frontier tracts except in some distant future.

Thus the frontier tracts (regrouped as NEFA since 1954) were all along administered by the Government of India through the Governor of Assam acting as their Agent. Until 1965, the Ministry of External Affairs directed the details of policy
and administration. Thereafter, the Home Ministry took over the charge. In 1972, the NEFA administration was upgraded to that of a Union Territory with the name and style of Arunachal Pradesh. The personality of Arunachal Pradesh has acquired a new profile since the attainment of statehood in 1987.

The political and constitutional development of the frontier tracts into the state of Arunachal Pradesh to-day may appear to be a quick and impressive achievement. But it was not always a smooth sail. There were moments of doubt and gloom. In a land so remote, and people so diverse in their customs and ways of life, there could be no clear cut policy. Most of all, the government was anxious not to impose anything from above. And yet, when democracy and development are the proclaimed ideals elsewhere in the country, these cannot be denied to the people of a certain part of the country, whatever might be the special circumstances of their existence, for all time.

Verrier Elwin, generally acknowledged as the philosopher for NEFA advocated a policy of minimum government in order to protect the indigenous culture of the hillmen and thus provide them an opportunity to develop according to their own genius. But Sardar K.M. Panikkar, a celebrated geo-politician
and administrator did not agree with Elwin's 'museum specimen approach'. He advocated an active policy of administrative and political development to bring the hills closer to the plains and thus bridge the gap between tradition and modernity.

The Government of India have adopted a middle course, neither to leave the hillmen alone as anthropological specimens, nor to expose them to the razzle-dazzle of modern civilisation, all too suddenly or in a big way. Like all traditional societies, the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh too have depended on the village as both the nucleus and focal point of their socio-political organisation and activity. And from times immemorial, every village has had a village council to guide, direct and channelise the activities of the clan or tribe inhabiting the village. In the details of organisation, powers and functions, the village council might differ from one tribe or clan to another, but as a mode of social action for purposes of social cohesion and stability, it was a universal institution. Indeed, it inculcated, in varying degrees, the corporate character of the community, the need for participation, open debate and decision-making in common interest. In content, if not inform, therefore, the traditional village council comes close to the concept of representative government of the modern times. Government have rightly chosen to make
use of the village councils for gradual extension of
democratic reforms and welfare measures.

D. Ering, the first nominated M.P from NEFA might be regarded as the father of democratic decentralisation and administrative reforms in Arunachal Pradesh. He differed from the Bardoloi Committee submissions that the people of the frontier tracts had a low level of consciousness and hence they should not be given franchise rights to send representatives either to the Assam Assembly or the Central legislature. For the same reason, the scheme of District Councils envisaged in the Sixth Schedule should not also be extended to the North East Frontier Tracts for sometime to come. Ering, on the other hand, felt that the people were ready to accept both political and administrative reforms which benefitted them. As Chairman of the Committee constituted in 1964, Ering made certain bold recommendations. One important recommendation was to transfer the charge of NEFA from the Ministry of External Affairs to the Home Ministry. Consequently, the administration was to be reorganised into districts to be headed by the Deputy Commissioners. There could be sub-divisions and circles within each district to be headed by subordinate officials. This recommendation was accepted and implemented by the government with effect from August 1965.
The other and perhaps the most significant recommendation of the Ering Committee adopted by the government in December 1969 relates to the establishment of the Panchayati Raj institutions at all levels of administration, gram panchayat at the village level, Anchal Samiti at the circle level, Zilla Parishad at the district level and Agency Council to cover the entire territory. The membership of the various bodies above the village was elective. The Agency council, the apex body consisted of the Governor, Members of Parliament from NEFA, Vice-Presidents of the Zilla Parishads and the Advisor to the Governor, ex-officio. Although not a full-fledged legislative Assembly, the Agency council could be a forum for the ventilation of public grievances and could also pilot legislation for NEFA as a whole. Above all, it could be a symbol of unity of all people, of all tribes and clans equally. Elvin thought that the Panchayati Raj institutions would be a threat to the traditional village councils. But instead the latter grew in strength and influence, for they constituted the foundation of a four-tier system of grass roots democracy covering all NEFA.

In all other parts of the country, the aim of Panchayati Raj is to achieve a certain degree of political and administrative decentralisation. In Arunachal Pradesh, on the other hand, Panchayati Raj has been utilised not merely to inculcate
democratic decentralisation but also to generate conditions favourable to a uniform growth of political practice in place of the diversified patterns of political behaviour of different tribal groups. Thus the process of integration and of organic unity of all tribes towards a common identity of all Arunachal Pradesh has begun.

If the Agency council (1969) sounded the beginnings of a legislature, the Pradesh Council which was formed after the political upgradation of the land into a Union Territory in 1972 was a further step in the direction. Strictly speaking, neither the Agency Council, nor its successor had the power to legislate, for they were both established through the Panchayati Raj Regulation for limited ends. Parliament had the power to make regulations for the good government of the people with or without their recommendation. And yet, these 'Panchayat' councils had become invaluable as a training ground for parliamentary practices such as discussion and debate on important issues, initiation of legislation, control of the executive and so on. The Pradesh Council had a greater opportunity to assume the role of a legislature in that it was associated with the working of five counsellors who in turn could function like a council of ministers to the Chief Commissioner. Indeed, under the able leadership of K.A.A. Raja, the first Chief Commissioner, both the Pradesh Council and the Counsellors enjoyed ample
freedom so as to assume, in practice, the functions of a legislative Assembly and a ministry respectively.

Within a year of the working of the Pradesh Council, the counsellors from Arunachal Pradesh together with their M.Ps waited on the Home Minister to plead for the elevation of the Pradesh Council into a full-fledged legislative Assembly. The Home Minister agreed that Arunachal Pradesh would be entitled to a legislative Assembly of its own as a natural and logical corollary to its political development. If the Pradesh council and the counsellors could successfully steer the ship of the state through the storm of politics, the people of Arunachal Pradesh should then be entitled to a bigger share of the cake.

Indeed, they had their share of the cake in 1975 when they were granted a 33 Member legislative Assembly and a Council of ministers. As an interim measure, the Pradesh Council was converted into a provisional legislative Assembly and the five counsellors became members of a council of ministers. P.K. Thungan, then 29, a Buddhist, once an aspirant for an engineering degree was elected the leader of the House and he had thus the distinction of being the first Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, and also the youngest Chief Minister ever appointed in any state. The provisional
legislature was the first of its kind to have all the members elected on a non-party basis. There was, therefore, neither a ruling party nor opposition.

But it was not for long that the politics of Arunachal Pradesh be free from the play of political parties. With the announcement of the first general election to the Assembly in February 1978, the Janata, ruling party at the Centre, the Congress, the P.P.A., a regional party entered into the fray along with some Independents. Significantly, while the Janata secured an absolute majority of 17 seats, the P.P.A. got 8 seats, Congress I drew a blank. The Council of ministers headed by Thungan was back in saddle, this time, however, with the Janata banner to hold. But neither Thungan Ministry nor the Assembly could complete the normal term of five years. The politics of Arunachal Pradesh took a murkier turn with the political parties adopting almost all the trappings of national political parties and the local leaders imitating their national counterparts in the crafty ways of state-craft. A little over eighteen months in office, Thungan ministry fell when 12 out of 17 party MLAs defected. Tomo Riba, the P.P.A. leader who formed the Ministry with the help of the defectors from the Janata in September 1978 became a victim of defections himself. In less than seven weeks, his ministry fell and the
Assembly was also dissolved in less than two years after its constitution (3 November 1979) Arunachal Pradesh had since experienced President's Rule for nearly two months.

In the second general election to the Assembly held in January 1980, the Congress I and the PPA were evenly balanced winning 13 seats each. The horse-trading which ensued resulted in 4 PPA M.L.A's to defect and join the Congress. When a Congress I ministry headed by G. Apang was formed, many more MLA's of the P.P.A joined the Congress. The Apang ministry remained firmly in saddle for 5 years and thus the Second Legislative Assembly could complete its term. Interestingly, while the Apang ministry survived with the support of defectors from the P.P.A., the Riba ministry (P.P.A) of the First Legislative Assembly which was formed in similar circumstances could not last longer than 47 days in office. From this it follows, that in the politics of Arunachal Pradesh, the party in power at the centre pulls the strings and such a party has greater chances of success than either a regional party or other opposition party.

In the third general election to the Arunachal Assembly held in December 1984, the Congress I swept the polls wiping out all opposition. Apang Ministry was back in saddle and continues to be so with confidence to complete a second successive term.
In 1987, the strength of the Assembly was raised from 33 to 40. And there is a promise of raising the strength of the Assembly further to 60. Along with the growth of the legislature, there has been a steady growth in the Council of ministers too, not only in numerical strength but also in its representative and responsible character. In retrospect, it would appear that defections and similar acts of political immorality, reprehensible though these may be, are yet a part of the process of contradictions inherent in the growth of social institutions from traditionalism to modernity.

The legal and institutional aspects of political development of Arunachal Pradesh have reached a culmination with the elevation of the Union Territory into a full-fledged state of the Indian Union in 1987. The transformation has been smooth, peaceful and welcome to one and all. It is noteworthy that there was neither a strike, nor agitation, nor even a demonstration to mar the constitutional development of Arunachal Pradesh from the position of 'frontier tracts' in 1947 to that of a state of the Indian Union in 1987. The march has been glorious all along its course. In no other part of the country, such far reaching constitutional changes have taken place, so quickly and yet so peacefully.

With Arunachal Pradesh becoming a state its legislature has blossomed into a full grown flower. From the rudimentary
beginnings of an Agency and a Pradesh Council under the Panohayati Raj Regulation, a purely advisory body with no powers of legislation or control of administration, it has developed into a 40 member Assembly of the 25th state of the Indian Union in less than three decades. There have been doubts and difficulties right from the beginning and yet the people of Arunachal Pradesh have exhibited both courage and resilience in making rapid strides from traditionalism to modernity. It has been a bold experiment and a remarkable achievement.

The Arunachal Pradesh legislative Assembly has the unique distinction of being the most disciplined House of its kind in India. There was never an occasion when the proceedings of the House had been obstructed by unruly scenes or acrimonious behaviour. Neither individual members nor any group had been expelled for indulging in unseemly behaviour. And yet, the House cannot be described as an active or vibrant institution. Absence of negative behaviour does not imply a positive commitment. Members are yet to prove their faith in parliamentary practices. The debates, motions, call attention notices, Zero hour questions and supplementaries are yet to make an impact. In 13 years the House met in 36 sessions of 148 days but 134 effective sittings. Thus in 136 (13 X 12) months, the House has met for 134 days, that is one day in
a month on the average. The sessions are generally brief lasting for not more than 3 to 4 days. Attendance in the House is generally enough to keep the quorum. This is not an impressive record by any standard.

There is much to be desired in the matter of legislative output. Among 65 bills passed, 35 relate to annual and other appropriations. Members including ministers are keen on revising their salaries and allowances. The House is far behind in the quantum of socio-economic legislation. Interestingly, a record number of resolutions, 434 in all have been moved. Out of these 252 have been adopted and the remaining 182 are either withdrawn or negatived. There is hardly any feedback on the resolutions passed.

Want of strong opposition is another handicap of the House. There were more frequent defections in the ranks of opposition rather than those of the ruling party.

A unique feature of the debates in Arunachal Pradesh legislature refers to the use of three languages English, Hindi and Assamese by the members. While the use of Hindi and English is on the increase, the use of Assamese is on the decline.

The Committee system is yet to gain strength and momentum. Apart from standing financial committees, the P.A.C
and the Estimates Committees, there are two other committees. But these have not made any impact. There are no committees to deal with public undertakings and government assurances. The same members have to work on many committees as the total strength of the House was till recently 30. If ministers are excluded, as they should be, the number of ordinary members to work on committees is always less than twenty. From this point of view, it is desirable to raise the strength of the House to 60 as promised.

Politics based on tribe or clan has been slowly replaced by party based politics since 1972. But it is too early for traditional loyalties based mainly on ethnicity to give place to loyalties of class or ideology. Thus political parties are yet to make a clear and strong impact. There is generally a preference for the party in power at the centre. Thus Congress (I) has emerged strong. It is the ruling party in the state as well. The PPA is the only regional party. It was in power for a few weeks in 1979. In 1984, it gained as many seats as the Congress (I). But soon its ranks were depleted by defections. Since then it has never recovered to regain its former strength or influence. The fact, however, remains that given the resources of a national party like the Congress (I), it is almost impossible for any local or regional party to
dislodge it. The phenomena of the ruling party at the centre to rule the state as well is likely to persist so long as the state is dependent on large scale central funding and the political consciousness of the people is not subject to polarisation on important issues, if not ideologies.

Arunachal Pradesh has 2 Lok Sabha constituencies and 30 Assembly constituencies. The Arunachal East Parliamentary constituency has 13 Assembly segments, while Arunachal West Parliamentary constituency has 17 Assembly segments.

The first general election for a Lok Sabha seat was held in 1977. Assembly elections were held in the following year. Subsequent general elections (1980 and 1984) were conducted simultaneously for the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies.

It is noteworthy that the electorate in Arunachal Pradesh accounts for 30 percent of the population, as against the national average of 45 percent. The male-female ratio of the electorate is nearly equal whereas the male-female ratio of population is shown to be 1000 males for 870 females. This may mean that males outnumber the females below the age group of 21.

There is a steady increase in the percentage of the electorate. From 1977 to 1980 there is an increase of 11.16
percent, whereas from 1980 to 1984 the rate of growth in the electorate has gone up to 19.62 percent. Constituency-wise, the electorate varied from 3600 to 14000 in 1978, 4000 to 16000 in 1980 and 4000 to 19000 in 1984. The women voters outnumbered men voters in 13, 12 and 11 constituencies respectively in the general elections of 1978, 1980 and 1984. There is thus a declining trend in the strength of women voters. Despite a people predominantly illiterate and unused to modern elections, the poll percentages have been impressive.

At the first general election to the Assembly held in 1978, the percentage of polling was as high as 68.6. In 1980, there was a slight fall being 67.5. But in 1984 it rose to 74.5 percent. Thus political education appears to grow faster than formal education.

The number of contestants in all the three general elections put together (296) is a little over three times the number of candidates to be elected (90). A little over a third of the 90 members were old faces, being elected for a second or third time. The remaining 57 were new members elected for the first time. Thus on an average about two-third of the members were new faces in the second and the third legislative Assemblies. This is indeed a healthy trend.

There is a decline in uncontested returns (See p. 525) The electoral process is to that extent strengthened.
The bulk of the candidates contesting elections range from pre-Matric to the graduate group. Participation by post graduates on one extreme and the illiterates on the other extreme is on the decline. There are 5 constituencies at which not a single graduate has ever contested. Religion-wise, majority of the contestants belong to the indigenous faith. For less number of contestants belong to the Buddhist and Christian followers. However, the number of Christian contestants is growing.

Tribe-wise, Adis have the highest degree of participation, while Singhphos, Khambas, Sulungs, Khowas have not a single candidate contesting any election. Wanchos, Mishis, Noctes, Sherdupens, Mijis are seen gradually improving their participation. On the whole, there is a greater awareness of the need for electoral participation with the spread of education.

Despite the fact that women voters outnumber men in 40 percent of the constituencies, the stigma against women contesting the election persists. Political parties are also not enthusiastic about choosing women candidates. This suggests that among most tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, male domination has taken a strong root.

The highest percentage of votes polled in favour of any one candidate was 80 percent in 1978. It has declined
to 70 percent in 1980 and 66 percent in 1984. Since there is no steep increase in the number of candidates contesting the elections from one general election to another, the decline in the percentage of votes polled by the toppers among the winning candidates does not signify any unhealthy trend. On the contrary, it may as well prove to be a greater measure of polarisation and keener contest.

It is significant that candidates contest from the same constituency in every general election. In all the three general elections held so far, only one candidate has changed his constituency. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that a candidate contesting from a particular constituency must belong to the tribe or clan dominant in that constituency. Or else, he has no chance of being elected. Ethnic bonds, clan-tribe affiliations continue to play a part until education spreads and economy grows and gets diversified.

Another unhealthy feature of elections is that the number of MLA's elected with a small margin of 1 percent of votes is increasing. There was only one such candidate in 1978. The number rose to 3 in 1980 and 6 in 1984.

The percentage of votes rejected is also increasing. This may be explained partly by the increase in the percentage of votes polled. But with a faster growth rate in literacy and
greater experience with the electoral process, the percentage of invalid of votes should show a downward trend.

Leadership in Arunachal Pradesh bears the mark of tradition as well as modernity. Indeed, it is in the process of transformation from traditional patterns to the modern requirements. At the village level, the Chief of the tribe or clan continues to be regarded as the highest authority. The institution of Gam, that is political interpreter and also political Jamadar, as introduced by the British for communication with the village authorities, have also become part of the tradition now. Thus at the village level and at the lower levels of Panchayati Raj generally, traditional leadership continues to be strong. But even here, the leadership by the illiterates is slowly being challenged by the educated or semi educated young men.

With the introduction of elections based on adult franchise, the traditional non-competitive leadership must necessarily give place to modern competitive leadership. At the higher levels of representation such as representation to the Pradesh Council or Assembly or Parliament, there is an increasing number of leaders with higher education. They are also from a younger age group in comparison to the leaders at
the lower levels who invariably belong to an older age group with fewer opportunities for higher education.

Among the tribes, the Adis are not only the most numerous but the first to adapt to social change and hence their participation in the political process is the highest. They claim a lion's share of leadership too. This is due in part to the democratic nature of their social organisation and in yet another part to their closer proximity to the plains civilisation to which they have been constantly exposed. At the other extreme, there are tribes like Sulungs, Singhphos, Bagin etc. who would take many more years to adapt to change and hence their participation in the political process and leadership remains minimal. Khamptis are a typical example of a tribe that is rich both materially and spiritually (they treasure Buddhist culture) and yet their participation in the political process and legislative development is not very significant.

The Election commission of India is presently engaged in the task of delimiting constituencies for an enlarged Arunachal Pradesh Assembly of 60 members. The enhanced strength of the Assembly will most certainly contribute to its effective functioning. First, it provides for representation of the tribes on a larger scale than before. Second, the legislative
sessions are likely to be more impressive and the debates more lively. Third, more talent is likely to be available in ministry making. Fourth, the opposition will have a chance of being more effectively organised. Fifth, more legislative committees may be constituted and the strength of the committees may be made more respectable. Last but not least, legislative output is expected to grow both in quantity and quality.

The discussion on the future possibilities of development can not make us blind to the present limitations of the Arunachal legislative Assembly. First, the sessions of the legislature are invariably restricted to the statutory requirement of meeting twice a year. Second, the duration of a session is not more than 4 to 5 days on an average. Third, the attendance of the members is often thin. Fourth, debates and discussions are seldom lively. Fifth, representation of women is either nil or negligible. Sixth, the opposition is usually weak and unorganised. Seventh, motions and zero hour questions and answers are not made use of enthusiastically. Eighth, members are often reluctant to function on legislative committees. Last but not least, while the legislature has adopted a record number of resolutions, there is no feed-back as to the action taken by the government on these resolutions.
The quality of the legislation passed leaves much to be desired.

Some suggestions may be offered to get over these shortcomings. The legislature should meet at least thrice a year. The duration of each session should be not less than a week. The legislature should come to grips with the pressing socio-economic problems such as polyandry, child marriages, rural health, sanitation and education, land reform, promotion of indigenous arts and crafts, marketing of local products and so on.

The legislature should develop into a common platform for all tribes and clans together but not for each to promote its particular or sectarian interest. The success of Arunachal polity will ultimately depend on forging unity and integration among the various tribes and clans in order to achieve a common Arunachalee identity. The course may be long and tortuous and yet it is the only way by which Arunachal Pradesh can redeem its political destiny from a congeries of a people into a well-knit political community and thus an equal member of the Indian Union in fact as it is in law.

This task must be undertaken by the political leadership with courage and confidence and an equal measure of patience and perseverance. The leaders, particularly legislators must be exposed to healthy influences. They should be encouraged
to go on study tours and educational excursions to various state capitals and of course, the national capital and be guided to watch the working of the democratic institutions and the political process.

Within Arunachal Pradesh, there should be held conferences of legislators at every district headquarters by rotation for many years to come. This would bring the legislature to the door steps of the people of the district so to say.

It goes without saying that the Assembly library should be better equipped and the Secretariat staff should be enhanced. This would enable individual members to work more and thus augment their professional preparation.

The lacuna with regard to a feedback on the resolutions passed by the legislature can be removed by the appointment of a Committee on Government assurances. Such a Committee would constantly monitor the action taken by the government on the resolutions adopted by the legislature and thus report to the legislature.

Organisation of seminars, and short term courses in legislative procedures etc. would also be very helpful in the professional preparation of the legislators of Arunachal Pradesh.
While it is ideal to have a common language and a common script for official use, for use in educational institutions as well as in private conversation, the existing three language formula such as the use of English, Hindi and Assamese is no mean an achievement. Such a practice should be encouraged without prejudice to any single language.

Arunachal Pradesh, once dreaded for its fierce, warlike tribes, has the unique distinction of being the most peace-loving state in India to-day. It has achieved far reaching political reforms without violence of any sort. It is hoped that the people of the land would exhibit an equal measure of courage, patience and resilience in bringing about a socio-economic revolution and thus set an example for all in the country to learn.