

Decentralised Governance in Tribal India: Negotiating Space Between the State, Community and Civil Society

M. Aruna Kumar



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The potential of civil society in interfacing with government for ensuring good governance has gained currency in academic and policy debates in the recent times. This becomes particularly relevant in an old democracy like India where the State has not been able to meet the need for basic things. However, the State provides space and freedom to people to engage in collective action, to critically evaluate State's policies and demand a revision in policy for effective implementation of the laws that are elaborately codified in the Constitution and also to improve the functioning of its institutions. This book studies the level of participation of tribal communities in the new Panchayat Raj dispensation introduced in Andhra Pradesh since the PESA Act. It specifically analyses how much the community has achieved or benefited after the introduction of Panchayat Raj. The objective is to determine how the power structure of the tribal communities have been influenced by the socio-political changes and institutional innovations like the extension of representative democracy at the grassroots level; what kind of changes have taken place in the study area with the institutionalization of Panchayats; and the politicization of the tribal people by the different parties. This book also throws light on the role of civil society actors in influencing governance positively as well as the limitations that have inhibited the impact of their influence. The empirical research highlights that the institution of Gram Sabha has been instrumental in bringing transparency and accountability in the working of local bodies. The author has rightly emphasized on the need for an attitudinal change both in the political and administrative machinery at State, district and village level. The inter-relationship of three Ds, i.e. Democracy, decentralisation and development has been brought out beautifully with the support of field study. While the 73rd amendment and PESA Act of the Constitution has mandated the democratization of local self-governments, the process of decentralisation is yet to take concrete shape through real devolution from Lok Sabha to Gram Sabha.



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