

health insurance coverage with an insurance cover of ₹30,000 family of five members with cashless delivery. Some of the State Health Insurance Schemes include the Aarogyasri and Yashashvini. The National Health Agency established as an attached office of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been mandated to implement the PMJAY scheme. The NHA has collaborated with MeITY to build technology platforms. The chapter also covers the success story of Kerala in handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

The chapter 'Emotive Policy in a Political Democracy' by Pratip Chattopadhyay presents a case study of Kanyashree in West Bengal. The programme launched by the Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare of Government of West Bengal has received appreciation from the United Nations and is aimed at reducing under-age marriage and adolescent school dropout among girls. This was achieved by providing scholarship named 'Swami Vivekananda Merit cum Means Scholarship Scheme'. State-wide networks were formed using NGOs to improve scheme implementation.

The chapter 'Efficacy of MGNREGS in Achieving SDG's' by Moitri Dey explores the efficacy of the policy to achieve SDG targets using MGNREGS. The MGNREGS is the first ever law internationally to guarantee wage employment on an unprecedented scale. The MGNREGS has been identified as a core of the policy adopting technology/direct benefit transfer and geo-tagging, verification of job cards to ensure completed assets since the inception of the programme are placed in public domain. The MGNREGS represents an important instrument to end poverty.

The chapter 'The Indian State, Democracy and the Citizen' by Rumki Basu says that the pandemic has shaped public discourse on key issues of public policy, and India has seen and understood the centrality of State power in this time of the pandemic. Livelihoods, public health, jobs, social security benefits, income support to ordinary citizens in times of distress are key public policy challenges addressed by the State which need short- and long-term policy interventions.

The book is timely and is a thoroughly enjoyable read.

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A. Ravindra, *Governing an Indian State: Karnataka in Focus*. New Delhi: Siya Publishing House, 2018, xiv + 177 pp., ₹795.00.

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The 'Incredible India!' campaign by the UPA government of India some time ago held Karnataka as 'One state, many worlds'. That is indeed true: Karnataka has been a land of contrasts. This book is about governance, politics and development in Karnataka, which has myriad aspects that make it special among the 29 states of

India. The book discussed herein is by one of Karnataka's most distinguished retired bureaucrats, who served the state in many capacities over a long period. The book has nine chapters. The 'Foreword' to the book is written by Professor Sandeep Shastri. The attempt by the author of the book is to situate governance in Karnataka in a national perspective. Every chapter of the book that deals with a particular aspect of governance in Karnataka is preceded by a section dealing with the national backdrop. Thus, it is clear that the author has deliberately attempted to situate the state-level governance as a part and parcel of national-level governance.

The first chapter of the book deals with the very creation of Indian states in a nutshell. The chapter is titled 'The Making of States'. And the chapter deals in detail with the debates in the Constituent Assembly during the making of the Indian Constitution. The chapter has elaborate discussion on Indian federalism. There is a special emphasis in the chapter on the language question. This is significant as the South Indian states were initially organised on linguistic basis and each south Indian state has had a distinct language. Second, the chapter also deals with the unification movement of Karnataka and formation of the state of Karnataka. Karnataka was formed out of five different regions of Kannada (and other) language-speaking people who identified with the cause of the statehood of Karnataka. Thus, the author traces the making of the Karnataka state in this chapter. Karnataka was formed out of the entire Mysore state (minus a district, Bellary), areas from Bombay Presidency, areas from the Nizam's Hyderabad state, districts from Madras Presidency and the entire region of Coorg (Kodagu). Thus, the state had a 'plural' character, giving it a nature of, as the author puts it, 'mini India' or 'A Unique Amalgam'. And Karnataka evolved in the same manner over time. The author puts it well when he says:

Karnataka has some unique features making it distinct from other states. More than any other state, it may be said to represent a mini-India. It houses people from across all parts of the country, belonging to different castes, communities and tribes; most of the nation's languages are spoken here; cultural practices vary from region to region within the state; all religious groups—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains and Buddhists have their shrines and practice of their faith. Karnataka is one of the few states marked by cultural diversity. While Carnatic music flourishes in the southern region, the northern part has been the home of renowned Hindustani musicians like Kumar Gandharva, Mallikarjun Mansur, Bhimsen Joshi and Gangubai Hangal. People live in peace and harmony reflecting an eclectic spirit and the underlying principle of unity in diversity. (p. 12)

The second chapter of the book deals with the concept of governance and its various definitions. The author's contention is that while we often rely on the Western sources for the usage of the word 'governance', the Constitution of India itself uses the word in its Preamble. However, having defined and described the process of governance in the country, the author holds:

Governance is indeed a complex process but it all boils down to how power is exercised by those who govern—the politicians, the bureaucrats and the judges and how the stakeholders/citizens respond to public policies and actions on one hand and discharge their own responsibilities on the other. (p. 15)

Having adopted the above definition, the chapter proceeds to deal with the different institutions of governance in Karnataka: the legislature, executive and the judiciary. The chapter also deals with different levels of the institutions from state level to that of local government.

The third chapter of the book deals with 'Elections: Pride and Price of Indian Democracy'. Here the author deals particularly with the evolution of conducting elections in India also in Karnataka. He traces the nature of conducting elections from the first General Election in 1951 to the era of Electronic Voting Machines to VVPAT (Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails). The chapter gives the first-hand experience of the author in conducting elections at different levels of government. The chapter is rich with experiential anecdotes. While the author agrees with T. N. Seshan's point that elections in India mean 'the three Cs: Cash, Caste and Crime', he holds that it is the particular distinction of India that, even being a most populous democracy, the country has held more often than not most free and fair elections at all levels. The author expresses satisfaction to this effect for his own experience and that of the state of Karnataka.

The fourth chapter titled 'Dynamics of State Politics' provides a brief introduction to the evolution of party politics in India and then goes on to deal with party politics in Karnataka in details from the inception of the state till 2018. Here again, the rich experience of the author in working at the highest levels of the government comes to the fore. Comprehensively dealing with the Karnataka politics, the author delineates the caste quotient and the changing nature of Karnataka politics from one party (Congress) dominated state to coalition politics to the recent rise of BJP. The author summarises this at one place:

In the seven decades after Independence, Karnataka has witnessed Congress rule for about 50 years, continuously for the first 35 years and in three alternate spells from 1989. The Janata party, the Janata Dal (S) and the BJP wielded power for a period of 5 years each and about 4 years saw a coalition regime. The dominance of Congress in the initial years can be ascribed to historical reasons.

And the author goes on to say that in Karnataka, 'political parties are identified with certain castes and communities—BJP with *Lingayats* [predominantly from Northern Karnataka] JD(S) with *Vokkaligas* [predominantly from southern erstwhile Mysore region] and Congress with *Dalits* and Muslims [from all over Karnataka]'. The social bases of political parties are closely aligned to identify them with specific caste groupings. Finally, *inter alia*, the author points to a very specific and interesting feature of the society and politics of Karnataka when he notes the role of different religious *Mathas* (monasteries presided over by seers) of all the prominent castes in the state. *Lingayats*, *Vokkaligas*, *Brahmins*, *Kurubas* and all other castes have their religious *Mathas* and their pontiffs and seers. These pontiffs and seers play a major role in the political decision-making of their respective caste-parties. The author says:

Caste based religious institutions are common in Karnataka. They have emerged as power centres capable of swinging votes. This explains the enthusiasm behind the visit to what are called '*mathas*' (apart from temples) by party leaders, Amit Shah of 'communal' BJP and Rahul Gandhi of 'secular' Congress before the elections to the

Karnataka Assembly in 2018. The largest number of what are called '*mathas*' have been established by the *Lingayats* followed by *Vokkaligas* and other smaller communities. The *Brahmins* have *mathas* owing allegiance to different denominations such as Madhva, Srivaishnava, Raghavendra and Vyasaraya.

The author holds that this does not make political leaders of different castes in Karnataka intolerant to each other. According to the author, most of the political parties, members in Karnataka are 'moderates' who intermingle informally very well, whatever their differences are.

The fifth chapter deals with 'The Administrative Apparatus' of Karnataka. Here the author makes some valuable points regarding the recent mindless downsizing of the apparatus, non-filling of the posts, so much so, that the number of pensioners in Karnataka outstrips that of those employed in government! Also, the author deals with the corruption in the State Public Service Commission, particularly in the recruitment process. Finally, the author deals with Police Administration and Police reforms. Karnataka is one state which has implemented the Police reforms to some extent. And, in spite of the reforms, and related changes the Police force suffers from same problems as in Uttar Pradesh. The comparison with Uttar Pradesh is apt here: The vacant posts in the police force are up to 36% in Karnataka whereas they are up to 50% in UP. Second, the communal crimes in Karnataka too are second only to UP. According to the author,

The country witnessed 296 communal incidents between January and May 2017. The highest number of incidents occurred in Uttar Pradesh (60) followed by Karnataka (36). This trend of these two states topping the number of communal incidents has been observed continuously for the past two years. (p. 67)

The chapter brings forth the rich experience of the author in running the state administrative apparatus.

Chapter six titled 'Policy Perspectives' discusses the progressive public policies of Karnataka. These are (a) land reform policies in the 1960s and 1970s, (b) decentralisation policies in the 1980s, (c) and the development of IT (Information Technology) and ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) policies, since the 1990s onwards. The author also discusses in detail the very significant (d) social policy of empowerment of backward classes. These policies have transformed Karnataka radically and laid foundation for a new society and economy; the IT& ITES policies in particular are widely known. Karnataka and Bangalore in particular came to be known as the 'Silicon Valley of India'. The other progressive socio-economic policies of Karnataka are not much known. The policies towards decentralisation in Karnataka are second only to much famed policies of Kerala. The reputation of Bangalore as an IT capital of India, of late, has shrouded out Karnataka's achievements in other social, economic and political fields, for example, backward class empowerment, land reforms and decentralisation; the latter which in turn led to the empowerment of dalits and grassroots women.

The seventh chapter of the book deals with the nature of development process in Karnataka and is titled 'The Development Paradox'. The paradox is that Karnataka, and specially Bengaluru being the IT capital of the country, with the capital city Bengaluru contributing 60% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and the

agriculture sector of the state where nearly 63% of the people live producing only 14% of the GSDP. Besides, there are other paradoxes in Karnataka: developed southern, Mysore region and backward north and north-eastern Karnataka (Indeed, the Hyderabad–Karnataka sub-region is now governed under the special Constitutional provision of Article 371J, to address its backwardness.); a large private professional education sector, which runs on huge capitation fee monies, and dwindling government school education and deteriorating public higher education; a highly successful decentralisation reforms in the rural sector and a failure of decentralisation reforms in the urban sector. The agricultural sector is plagued by droughts. Deteriorating water availability, and an ongoing water dispute over Cauvery River with neighbouring Tamil Nadu. For some time now, the agriculture had seen indebtedness of farmers, distress caused by multiple factors, leading to suicides. This story is taking place amidst all the glitz and glamour of IT, with its glass and steel capital, Bangalore. The author writes this story with passion. ‘The Development Paradox’ is indeed an understatement. The author holds that the solutions to these problems are to be found in better implementation of policies and better governance of the backward sectors and sub-regions.

In chapter eight titled as ‘Challenges of Governance: Conflicts, Contradictions and Compromises’, the author returns to the problems of governance again. He addresses six problems: coming out of colonial legacy; rule of law versus rule of life; the question of conflicts between executive and judiciary; the question of federalism or Centre versus the states in terms of powers and finances; the question of corruption in administration; and finally, the elusive question of public accountability. The author analyses each of these with a number of examples and anecdotes.

The ninth and final chapter sets out a comprehensive agenda of governance reform in the country: electoral reform, parliamentary reform, administrative reform and judicial reform. The chapter emphasises collaborative governance, building of state capacity; more autonomy for states; and local government institutions. Finally the chapter stresses the need for ethics, behavioural change and accountability of the government, administrators and politicians avoiding corruption and malpractices. This chapter is followed by an appendix on political and human development statistics of Karnataka. Finally, there is a useful bibliography on Karnataka politics at the end.

This book is more than memoir of a retired civil servant. The major contribution of the book is towards understanding state-level politics in general and that of Karnataka in particular, bringing to light many lesser known dimensions of state politics. Karnataka has been a unique state in many ways in the country. As mentioned by the author, the state represents a ‘mini India’ with all its glaring contrasts and contradictions. And, therefore, the book is a significant contribution and deserves to be read widely by all those concerned with Indian administration and politics.

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