

ABSTRACT

THE MANIPUR VILLAGE AUTHORITY ACT, 1956- A BRIEF OVERVIEW

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Discussions on the laws and customs of tribals in India has garnered the curiosity of scholars over time. A glance at their societal fabric reveals the peculiarity of every tribe, which may seem similar but are never the same. While their efforts to relentlessly hold on to their identity are in tune to the tribal yearning for identity in general. In the milieu of State laws, one notices that adherence to their customary laws is a way of life and not simply an identity. Especially in the context of justice adjudication, the State laws appears to be rather unpopular given the elaborate procedural underpinnings the courts have which are mostly alien to them In contra- distinction to the principle of isolating the accused, the crucial goal in tribal societies, it is said is, to eventually restore peace and harmony within the community which is an essential feature in securing the ethnic cohesion¹ preferably through the reconciliation of the victims and the accused persons or the perpetrators². The aim of the customary law is also to instill a sense of belongingness and participation of the victim by making the wrong doer reattribute for his actions that are unacceptable in the community³. The state of Manipur in the North Eastern region of India has a mixed population of tribals and non tribals, the former occupying the hill districts within the state. The region has witnessed turbulent times, conflicts between waring tribes, unresolved dispute of interests between the hill tribals and the valley habitants mostly of non tribals. While conflict between the tribes have mostly been settled amongst themselves and are not generally brought to the formal courts for adjudication, instances of invoking the State laws have been dismayed . Interestingly the presence of state laws provide a holistic picture that enables one to argue that administration of tribal areas have not been neglected contrary to the opinion of most tribal thinkers. In this context the author

aims to acquaint the readers through a theoretical study of the Manipur Village Authority Act, 1956 against the backdrop of the existence of traditional methods of settlements in the region.

Key words: Customary laws, governance, justice, state authority, adjudication.