

In conclusion, it can be said that Stankov, despite his original contributions to the study of populism, seems to have deviated from his initial quest of formulating a general theory of populism. Although his postulation of the theory of populist cycles explains the recurring character of the phenomenon, it is far from laying the claim of a general theory of populism. Stankov therefore may want to revisit his original quest in his future endeavours.

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ANIL KUMAR VADDIRAJU, *Federalism and Local Government in India*. Delhi: Studium Press (India) Pvt Ltd., 2017, XVII + 232 pp., ₹1092. ISBN: 93-85046-10-1 (*Hardcover*).

ANIL KUMAR VADDIRAJU, SATYANARAYANA SANGITA AND KALA SEETHARAM SRIDHAR (Ed.), *Urban Governance in Karnataka and Bengaluru: Global Changes and Local Impacts*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, 240 pp., £61.99. ISBN-10: 1443801259; ISBN-13: 978-1443801256 (*Hardcover*).

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E. M. S. Namboodripad in his note of dissent to the Ashok Mehta Committee, 1978, put forth a remarkable observation that, ‘Democracy at the central and state levels, but bureaucracy at all lower levels—this is the essence of Indian polity...’ That observation stands true even today. The situation has not changed even after more than 25 years after the passing of the 73rd and 74th Amendment

Acts 1992 that accorded Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) a constitutional status and positioned them as the third tier of democracy in the Indian federal system. Nonetheless, it has remained a weak constitutional body whose strengthening is required for promoting democracy at the grassroot level. These two amendments were, in a way, a constitutional corrective measure to integrate institutions of local self-government—the third tier of democracy—into the federal system which forms a major concern of an important book, *Integrating the Third Tier in the Indian Federal System* by Atul Sarma and Debabani Chakravarty (2018). The issue raised by Namboodripad in 1978 and recently by Sarma in 2018 has been a familiar refrain, almost like a musical note in discussions on Indian democracy, decentralisation and federalism.

Both books under review deal with aspects of local government, reiterating the problem about the lack of effective devolution of power, functions and finances to the PRIs and urban local bodies (ULBs) drawing on the experiences of four southern states in the case of the PRIs and mainly from Karnataka in the case of the ULBs. *Federalism and Local Government in India* is a volume that indirectly advocates the integration of the third tier of democracy into the federal system, and implicitly explains the union and state governments as closer to state and PRIs and ULBs as close to civil society, though it is a problematic proposition. The book explains the role of local self-government, adopting a framework of state–society relations and thereby suggests the strengthening of interaction between the two, so that the institutions of local self-government can play an important role because of its proximity to civil society. It treats state/society as a binary, the former being ‘the prime mover of policies’ (p. 3) that dominantly influences social processes as well.

Chapter 1 of the book explains four approaches to decentralisation—Gandhian, liberal-constitutional, new-liberal and policy processes (p. 8) and upholds the policy process perspective as its preferred approach for explaining state-society relations. Chapter 2 argues, rather problematically, that ‘state level regional regimes may not lead to further decentralization’ (p. 9), drawing on the experiences of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu where regional political parties have remained indifferent to the devolution of power to local bodies. However, contrary to the argument placed by the author here, effective decentralisation has been pushed only by the regional satraps—Ram Krishna Hegde in Karnataka, Jyoti Basu in West Bengal and by the Left regime in Kerala. Chapter 3 tries to find a correlation between economic reforms and decentralisation by drawing a comparison between the two pairs of states. It argues that Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu were ahead in economic reforms, but were slow in decentralisation. In contrast, Kerala and Karnataka were ahead in decentralisation, but lagged in pushing economic reforms, specifically in Kerala. Chapter 4 examines the functioning of the School Education Committee in rural Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It argues that both states have weakened PRIs by creating a parallel body. Chapter 5 pleads for making PRIs accountable, especially in the context of Karnataka and Kerala where there is effective devolution of power and allotment of funds to these bodies. The final chapter, as a concluding section, sets a broad agenda for decentralisation and makes a specific plea to the regional regimes for coming forward.

In the second volume, *Urban Governance in Karnataka and Bengaluru*, there is a collection of empirical studies on the functioning of the ULBs in Karnataka at the level of the metropolitan city of Bengaluru, and then at the district and sub-district levels as well. This makes it a comprehensive study of ULBs whose functioning, unlike that of the PRIs, has not been given adequate attention by academia. In one way, it is a complete book on ULBs as it examines their functioning from the metropolitan to the sub-district levels. Another significance of this book is its vast canvas. It is not only the usual study of the power, functions and funds of the ULBs, but captures new dimensions regarding the role of ULBs and emerging challenges before them. For example, the problem of solid waste management, especially electronic waste, is an entirely new challenge for the Bengaluru Municipal Corporation. Similarly, air pollution, the water crisis, increasing pressure on civic amenities pose different types of challenges to the ULBs that require more dynamism in their functioning, compared to their existing and traditional role in terms of providing basic amenities. Most papers in this book are based on findings from the field that increases their value.

The first chapter of the book by C. M. Lakshmana raises the issue of sustainable urbanisation, particularly in the context of metropolises which have attracted a huge population following liberalisation, though the overall rate of urbanisation in India is still slow. For example, there was only a marginal increase in the urban population between 2001 and 2011 and even that has been lopsided. Metropolitan cities have grown disproportionately and urban planning lags behind the pace of the growth of cities. This has led to a situation of unsustainable urbanisation that needs serious attention to rectify it. Chapter 2 by M. Devendra Babu examines the performance of governance by the ULBs at the district and sub-district levels. He finds that the ULBs remain focussed on their traditional roles, that is, to provide basic amenities, but ignore the important issues of inclusiveness and equity, besides the emerging problems of air pollution, depleting water resources, pressure on land, and so on. He also looks into the finances of the ULBs and finds them reluctant to tap new sources. Insufficient funds have constrained their functioning. The bookkeeping of accounts is poor and lacks in terms of long-term planning and vision. The government by creating parallel bodies, for instance like slum development trusts and housing boards have encroached upon the role of the ULBs. Chapter 3 by D. R. Ravi makes a significant contribution by highlighting the problem of air pollution and its impact on the health of the population, causing considerable health hazards, especially an increase in the incidence of asthma and allergy patients, thereby increasing per capita expenditure on health. Since the economic cost for the prevention of hazards of air pollution becomes huge, it has generally been overlooked.

The next two chapters analyse the problem of management of solid and electronic waste in Bengaluru following its rise as a cyber city. The problem is urgent and needs systematic planning and its neglect poses a serious problem for the future. The next chapter is related to environmental issues. P. Thippaiah has highlighted the case of depleting water bodies, water pollution and encroachment upon the erstwhile water bodies, mainly lakes, which were present once in great numbers in Bengaluru. In another chapter, K. C. Smitha discusses the issue of

service delivery with respect to water, and raises important concerns related to policy and structural matters. This chapter highlights the inequitable distribution of water, especially to slums, which is an important concern of equitable governance. The last two chapters of this section engage with social security pensions and health conditions of unorganised women workers who are engaged in making *agarbattis* (incense sticks). Rajasekhar et al. find various loopholes in the delivery of social security pensions, notwithstanding the fact that Karnataka according to a study was ranked third among all states in this area. K. Asha in her contribution puts forth the observation about the working conditions of informal sector women workers and underlines various health-related issues, emanating from the nature of their job and the lack of health facilities. The final two chapters of the book make suggestions and outline measures for reforms in governance. Sivanna and Suresh suggest a change in the internal structure of the governance of Bengaluru Municipal Corporation and Kala Seetharam Sridhar goes on to suggest the trifurcation of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on the pattern of Delhi's Municipal Corporation.

These two books add to the existing literature on the institutions of local self-government in India and draw our attention to their weaknesses and the challenges before them. While the one on federalism and local governance in India fails to impress, the other on ULBs provides much needed empirical insights into the functioning of these bodies, an area that remains least examined when compared with studies on PRIs, their rural counterparts. This volume has raised important emerging concerns like water and waste management, air pollution and other environmental hazards which need urgent attention for sustainable urbanisation and are particularly important for policy implications.

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