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DECENTRALIZATION DURING RIPON'S PERIOD AND AFTER

Dr. Ashokkumar V. Paled
Assistant Professor, Political Science,
MA., M.Phil., Ph.D. Dip in Gandhian Studies.
Local self-Government & Public Administration.

ABSTRACT

The municipal administration here comprises of a number of departments which have been allocated specific functions. They are—

1. General Administration Wing
2. Engineering Department
3. Health Department
4. The Revenue Department

The Ripon Resolution of 1882 laid the foundation of modern local self-government institution in this country. It proposed the establishment of rural local boards for which non-official members would be elected. However, nominations in place of elections became the practice. Though the resolutions stated otherwise the district magistrate were made chairmen of these boards. The rural local boards started establishing elementary schools, dispensaries, constructing minor roads, etc. however, the work of these boards was not satisfactory in the final analysis. The Royal Commission on Decentralization (1909) pointed out the inadequacy of funds and excessive official control as the prime reason for the unsatisfactory functioning of the boards. This Commission recommended ways for increasing the revenue of the boards. It also proposed setting up of Taluk boards and village panchayats. The years preceding independence saw these boards being dogged by myriad problems of reduced grants, inadequate resources, official control and domination by elites. The boards functioned very badly in many states and were on the verge of closing down.

When India became free and a new Constitution was adopted in 1950, the directive principles of State Policy commented in detail on the position of the village panchayats in the new situation. Furthermore, the division of power and functions enshrined in Article 246 read with the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, made multi-level planning almost a necessity. Article 40 of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy) states that the state should take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government.

KEYWORDS: municipal administration, foundation of modern local, Health Department, village panchayats.

INTRODUCTION :

In accordance with the Directive Principles several states enacted legislation for

establishing village panchayats. The central government helped the state governments in their task of strengthening the local

self-government institutions. Conferences of state ministers dealing with local self government were convened



Lord Ripon

periodically by the Central Government for stock taking and new suggestions towards strengthening these institutions were made though our early economic thinkers understood the importance of decentralized or multi level planning set up they did not go into the details of operationalizing the same. During the First Five year Plan period experimental work on community development, in accordance with the ideas of decentralization, was started with the pilot project on rural development of Mahila Block in Etawah district. The result of this project brought about the establishment of community development blocks. An infrastructure was also established which would facilitate coordination of developmental and administrative machinery. The community development blocks were assigned the task of developing clusters of villages. During the mid-fifties the planners emphasized the importance of people's participation in the planning process. This, according to them, could be achieved through democratic decentralization with the district as the pivot of the planning structure. Hence came the urban governance in India.

The latter half of the twentieth century has witnessed a marked shift of population from rural areas to urban areas in India. This has created an unplanned and unbalanced process of urbanization. Because of this, there has been a haphazard growth and deplorable state of affairs in most of the urban areas. This presents a pathetic picture of slums, congestion, over crowding, lack of developed circulation system and absence of other essential services like the supply of potable water, sewerage, electricity etc. in consequence, the problems facing urban bodies have become formidable in size and complexity. The urban development is a complex process in a developing society like India. It needs sound organizational structure, adequate resources, sound management practices and competent personnel system. A great variety of skilled personnel like water supply and sewerage experts, high way engineers, factory designers, housing specialists, economists, public health experts and other municipal personnel are necessary for the efficient urban administration and management. A strong competent, skilled and incorruptible personnel system is yet to develop in several urban bodies in India. The Rural Urban Relationship Committee has rightly observed:

One of the main weaknesses of municipal administration in India has been the absence of well organized and effective system of personnel administration. Under the strains of rapid urbanization, there has been a growing imbalance between the people's aspirations and their civic needs, and the actual performance of municipal administration. The municipal service are hardly competent even to perform normal functions of local government. To meet the challenge of development task, they would need to acquire much higher degree of administrative and technical skills. The paucity of resources raised is to a considerable extent, due to inefficiency and inadequacy of administrative and technical personnel.

It is widely accepted that municipal administration today has larger functions than in the past and that most municipal governments are not strong enough to carry out these functions. One important reason for this failing of municipal governments has been the lack of an effective and scientific personnel system. In fact, there is a tendency to look upon municipal service as a common place, "a sort of a third estate in the field of administration requiring no particular training or expertise". The weakness of our municipal administration is one among other reasons to the fact that the administrative personnel of the municipal bodies in the country have not always been recruited by the system of merit or trained adequately in the technique of municipal administration. Nor are men of talent attracted to the municipal service because of low salaries paid to municipal employees in general.

The various state governments and the central government are aware of the problem and have been experimenting with new devices in the direction of improving the personnel of their local bodies. The creation of a state cadre of municipal executive officer in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in one such device. In some states, there is a proposal to set up Local bodies Services Commission to recruit municipal personnel.

Thus, it can be reargued that the municipal government, in addition to an active and intelligent participation of the people and their elected representatives, requires an honest, efficient, and well trained administrative personnel for its effective performance. An administrative organization has to be carefully designed in order to enable it to continue to discharge the functions in an efficient manner.

Within an administrative organization, functions have to be correctly spelled out and allocated to the various organs. The various organs are to be equipped with proper powers, and requisite sources to perform the assigned functions. Besides proper allocation of functions, powers and resources, steps have to be taken to ensure that all the organs, functions in co ordination with each other and that there is a proper supervision of the lower levels by the higher level in a continuous manner. This means that there should be inbuilt devices for institutionalized co ordination between the various organs. Besides, there is a need for a proper constructed hierarchy of positions from the top to the bottom, which would involve inter locking of controls by the higher levels and accountability of the lower ones in a chain fashion. Piffener has pointed out that hierarchy is established on the basis of duties, activities and tasks. As hierarchical system facilitates the flow of institutions regarding the implementation of decision, a policy, or programme from the top level of the descending levels, an administrative organization has to be hierarchically organized, adequately staffed with persons of high efficiency and integrity.

1. General Administration Wing

This branch comprises commissioner and certain specialists such as Accountants, Stenographers, etc. its role is very crucial and pivotal in municipal administration. It maintains the records of meetings of the deliberative council and the reaction of the state government to its resolutions. It serves as a communication channel between the departments of the corporation and between the corporation and the State government. this department also prepares annual reports about the performance and accomplishment of the corporation.

2. Engineering Department

The engineering department in the municipal corporation works under the direction and supervision of the superintendent engineer who is responsible to the commissioner for his commission and commission in the exercise of his duties and functions. The superintendent engineer is either appointed by the government of Karnataka or he is deputed by the Karnataka development, construction and supervision works. It also undertakes the work of street lighting, drainage, housing and many other developmental works.

3. Health Department

The health officer of the corporation is appointed by the government of Karnataka or deputed from the Directorate of Health and family welfare service. He has been delegated adequate authority to maintain public health and sanitation. He can require the owner or occupier of any building to repair or alter. He can authorize any person to destroy or confine any dog or animal suffering from rabies. He can issue orders for the destruction of stray dogs without collars or distinguishing marks. If he finds any building unfit for human habitation, for want of drainage or ventilation from using it. The health officer sanctions leave of all kinds of public health staff. However, he has not been vested with disciplinary authority over the employees of the department. This has resulted in indiscipline and insubordination and affected adversely the health standards of the city. The sweepers and scavengers have many a time defied the orders of the health officer and health inspector.

It is true that the health officer is given various functions, but in reality the health officer due to factionalism and party politics is not effectively using them. Lack of disciplinary powers over his staff has made him ineffective. His subordinates are aware of the fact the cannot take any action against delinquent, negligent or corrupt officials. Therefore, they often indulge in insubordinate in. This adversely affects the working of his department and also impairs the health and undermines the sanitation of the city.

4. The Revenue Department

The head of the revenue department is deputed by the state civil service. He has been delegated the power of fixing taxes, rates, and collect such taxes from the city dwellers. It always tries to enhance the revenue of the corporation with the help of his staff. He has the power to sanctions leave, give

direction and supervise the work of tax collectors and the staff. However, he has no power to initiate any disciplinary action against the erring officials in his department.

CONCLUSION:

A great variety of skilled personnel like water supply and sewerage experts, high way engineers, factory designers, housing specialists, economists, public health experts and other municipal personnel are necessary for the efficient urban administration and management.

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The weakness of our municipal administration is one among other reasons to the fact that the administrative personnel of the municipal bodies in the country have not always been recruited by the system of merit or trained adequately in the technique of municipal administration.

The engineering department in the municipal corporation works under the direction and supervision of the superintendent engineer who is responsible to the commissioner for his commission and commission in the exercise of his duties and functions.

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