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Role of District Magistrate Move with the Changing Times

Introduction

District Administration the legacy of British Raj is the principal unit of territorial administration and has been the nodal point of the administrative system in India . District is considered as the as the principal position of administration for purpose of revenue administration and maintenance of the law and order. The district as the primary unit of administration or as the foundation the administrative set up has for long been a “Pivotal Point of Contact” between the citizens and the administration. The success of district administration, therefore builds the success of state administration.

District Magistrate

IAS officers (Known as Collectors) were generally held in high regard as incorruptible and good administrators in colonial era. Upon independence, the new Republic of India accepted the then serving Indian civil service officers who choose to stay on rather than leave for the UK and renamed the service the Indian Administrative Service.

The Basic territorial unit of administration in India is the district and district administration is the total management of public affairs within this unit. District Collector was the pivot of district administration and represents the state government in its totality. The involvement of the Collector in development administration would not only make his role more meaningful and satisfying but also the district level coordination more effective. The supervisory role of District Collector in development process in the district must be maintained as he is supreme authority and his role provided by Constitution can not be undermined by any other agency.

The very presence of District Collector in the meeting of local self government makes the environment cordial and effective. There is thus a strong case for actively involving the Collector in development matters, which form the main thrust of today’s administration. It is largely at the district level that two agencies of government coverage and the policies and programmes for a concrete shape and the Collector has been the changing agent.

The Collector is still the linchpin in the district administration whether it is development administration or general administration. It is also germane to quote here Rajeev Gandhi: “The District Magistrate or Collector is the government as far as the people are concerned with a capital ‘G’. The face they represent to the millions that you come into contact with, is the face of the government, your behaviour is the behaviour of government, your attitude is the attitude of the government, your concern for the poor and deprived is the concern of the government and again, it is your achievement of the targets that are set which is the achievement of the government.”

This statement indicates that District Collector has been the foundation store of development administration and will remain fulcrum of grassroots democracy at the district level. The main

part of contact between the citizen and the Administration lie in the District and usefulness of the Administration is considerably determined by the degree of its efficient functioning at the district level.

The office of District Collector who also functions as Magistrate has been a source of faith and belief for millions of Indian. He is the highest functionary of the district administration in the country. His constitutional authority, sagacity and acumen make him indispensable in the district administration. It has been tried to explain the importance of the office of Collector in district administration since the incorporation of this prestigious institution by the British in its present structure. Before Independence the role of Collector was regulatory in nature and they were very successful in their mission because they had absolute power to deal with any rising situations.

In these sixty-two and half years the bureaucracy has really held the country together, helped develop the country and given its stability. Several epithets are used to describe this institution, but the contribution of the bureaucracy in national building, and capacity building is a analytical study and national debate discussion.

The District Collector has a dual capacity: as Collector he is head of the revenue organization and as Magistrate, he reviews the law and order situation in the district. This institution in the first place serves its peculiar purpose of collecting the revenue and of keeping the place. But because it is so close knit, so well established and so thoroughly understood by the people, it simultaneously discharges easily and efficiently an immense number of other duties. It deals with the land registration, settlement of disputes, primary education, loans to agriculturists, devolution of power to the people, implementation of various social and welfare schemes and above all, relief work.

The wide range of a Collector's duties has been noted by every writer on Indian administration and all of them agree to some extent that Collector is overburdened and the role of Collector has got a sea change after the implementation of 73rd Amendment 1992. In a bid to provide Constitutional protection to the local self government, parliament has passed the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. The basic objective of this amendment is to bring decentralization in the administration and devolution of power to the rural people through Panchayats Raj (Local Self Government)

The more emphasis has been given in this amendment on the functioning of Zila Panchayat after the Implementation of 73rd Amendment and subsequent bill of Bihar Panchayat Raj Act 2006 which ensures fifty percent reservation for women in Panchayat election.

The paradigm shift in the role of District Collector after the 73rd Amendment and the segregation of development work from the purview of District Collector makes this prestigious office a typical case study. The constraints of District Collector vis-a vis Panchayat Raj Institution in proper functioning further undermine the authority and prestige of this office which was once eyes and ears of the state government. Development and Good Governance are two sides of the same coin and the combination of both the District Magistrate make the things warder.

Development in the Context of Administration

Development is an organic immanent directional, cumulative and irreversible process. It is a widely participatory process of directed social change in a society interested to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining control over their environment. Development in any particular nation consists of a synergy of such development goals as promoting literacy improving nutrition and health, implementing the policy of good governance, an increasing productivity. The precise nature of particular development problems vary from country to another depending on their unique economic, social, political and cultural characteristics.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a multidisciplinary concept. This encompasses economic, social, psychological health and related disciplines. It is protecting the environmental wealth, the human and capital stock land, water and air. Sustainable human development is defined as the process by which the range of opportunities and choices for people can increase and be expended, while protecting those same opportunities and choices for future generation as well as the natural systems upon which all life depend the expansion of people's choices is empowering when it increases their abilities to participate in the political, social and economic functions of the society to free from hunger, want and deprivation. In this context the participation means there is mutual cooperation and people work, interact and collaborate for development.

Meaning of Development in Present Scenario

An economic component dealing with the creation of wealth and improved conditions of material life, equitably distributed.

A social ingredient measured as well being in health, education, housing and employment.

A political dimension including such values as human rights, political freedom, enfranchisement and some form of democracy.

A cultural dimension in recognition of the fact that cultures confer identity and self worth to people.

The full life paradigm, which refers to meaning systems, symbols and beliefs concerting the ultimate meaning of life and history, and a commitment to ecologically sound and sustainable development so that the present generation does not undermine the position of future generation.

Development Administration

Development Administration represented the practical application of modernization theory. The function of Development Administration is to assure that an appropriately congenial environment and effective administration support are provided for delivery of capital materials and services where needed in the productive process- whether in public private or mixed economics.

Development Administration is more innovative since it is concerned with the social changes involved in achieving developmental objectives. The three areas of concern:

- How purposefully to guide government action towards development objectives?
- How actually to take account of many and complex interdependencies of social change
- How to ensure that governmental administration is dynamic and innovative

Administrative Development includes restructuring many of the strategies and techniques, eliminating red tape, downsizing, decentralizing authority and improving organizational responsiveness to clients. Drawing from organization theory, the rationale of restructuring is that the structure of organizations can be designed to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Political Development could be assessed in terms of the stabilization and consolidation of participatory political institutions. When such development takes place, the political authority is responsive to the people and conversely people have faith in the political authority and indeed have opportunities to participate in the political process.

Crisis Administration

Crisis Administration is entirely a new approach in the field of public administration. Every developing country faces different kinds of crisis which depends upon the socio, economic, political environmental conditions of that vary area. Crisis Administration in a manner of speaking comprehends the total gamut of administration its structure, procedures, staffing, accountability, financial management, style of leadership, public participation and public relations.

In district anything and everything that can possibly happen happens and his (District Collector) strength, leadership and performance assure crucial significance. The role of District Collector as a crisis administrator is very important which is goal oriented imaginative, resident, innovative, adaptive and responsive to the changing requirements of the situations.

Good Governance

The term governance as good governance are increasingly being used in development literature. Governance describes the process by which decisions are implemented. Hereby, public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights. Good Governance accomplishes this in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption and with due regard for the rule of law. Good Governance defines an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality. However, to ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal.

Six Core Principles of Good Governance: -

- Focusing on the organization's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users
- Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles
- Promoting values for the whole organizations and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour
- Taking informed transparent decision and managing risk
- Developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective
- Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real

In the context of administrative and political development some of the major features of good governance are consensus orientation, participation, accountability, responsiveness effectiveness, transparency, efficiency, equitability and inclusiveness and the rule of law. These characteristics ensure that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision making and implementation. Good governance therefore depends on public participation to ensure that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad societal consensus and that the poorest and most vulnerable populations are directly influenced by political administrative decision making, particularly with respect to the allocation of development resources.

So good governance is about providing an efficient and effective administration that is committed to improving the quality of life of the people. It is about what people expect from the administration, and the willingness and capacity of the administration to fulfill their expectations.

Changing Role of District Magistrate

It is now widely accepted that self governing institutions at the local level are essential for national growth and for effective people's participation and that they are an integral and indispensable part of the democratic process.

The most significant experiment in reforming governance in independent India from a participatory democratic decentralization point of view has been the introduction of constitutionally mandated Panchayat system through the 73rd constitutional Amendment in the year of 1992.

The 73rd constitutional Amendment was a milestone for the establishment of Panchayati Raj and proved a harbinger in the way of good governance for the local populace. It was a democratic decentralization of the power at the village level. The Panchayat Raj system drawing strength from the constitutional provisions has emerged as an effective tool of local self governance and would strongly further the primary objectives of economic growth and social justice. The long-cherished dream of local self government has come to the ground through panchayat Raj system. Panchayat Raj is the new vertical of local self government and of development in the district. The Panchayat Raj concept comprehends an administrative structure which covers the whole ground from the village, with its Gram Sabha, Nyaya Panchayat and other groups through the block level Panchayat Samiti, with the Zila Parishad at the district apex. This is an experiment in thorough going local self government with its main orientation towards the economic development, and social well being of the people of the district.

There has been an increasing sense of the need of the people's participations in the administration of the district. This participation involves a real participation in the process of making decisions in the field. The new relationships which thus pervade the whole of the district administration involve also new modes of communication and lines of control and guidance. They also involve rather new concepts of accountability and methods of rendering account. No simple organizations chart can truly demonstrate these relationships and administrative linkages.

At the same time, with the rapid expansion of government activities, the functions and responsibilities of the Collector have increased enormously. Not only have his traditional functions multiplied, he has also been entrusted with new responsibilities in the field of development. The discharge of new functions involving development and welfare activities required a different approach as compared to that involved in the exercise of regulatory functions. Consequently, it had led to a change in the style of functioning of the District Collector. He is increasingly called upon to explain, to convince and persuade the people and their representatives and seek their active cooperation and participation in the implementation of programme relating to development and welfare. Notwithstanding these changes and reduction in the status and prestige of his office, his Collector has continued to be the principal officer of the State Government at the district level.

Right from the beginning of eighties of this century, with the introduction of various rural development and employment generation programmes, various new agencies have become part of the district administration with Panchayati Raj getting a constitutional status in 1992, not in legal terms but of course in practical sense, we find a three tier structure of government which will give a new shape and direction to the district administration in coming year. Accordingly, the role of District Collector in District Administration will also be changing very fast.

At the district level, the revenue and the development have been combined in one office. When the community development programme (CDP) was launched, the District Collector was made the head of the community development Administration in the district. The Collector coordinated district plans and presided over the District Planning Committee. Significant changes were introduced at the district level during the fourth five year plan (1969-74) when the Small Farmers Development Agencies (SFDAS) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Laborers Development Agency (MFALS) were set up on the recommendation of All India Rural Credit Review Committee appointed by the Reserve Bank of India in 1969 to provide credit support and technical guidance to the small farmers. To coordinate the activities of all departments, a coordination committee was created in each district under the chairmanship of the District Collector.

Magisterial Functions

Irrespective of its genesis and practices prevailing during pre independence era, the office of District Collector has now become a uniform institution throughout the country. The contents of the functions may vary to an extent, but by and large the functions of a Collector are similar in all states except of course, with regard to development functions in which the pattern varies significantly. The District Collector continues to remain to this date the pivot of district administration, shouldering direct responsibilities in both traditional and emerging fields. His principal duty today is as it has always been to maintain law and order in his district, which is the basis of orderly civilized life. Prompt and fair collection of land revenue and other taxes in his second important duty. The third one is the direction and fulfillment of developmental plans with which the country's destiny is interlinked. Fourth one is miscellaneous. He is an agent of the government and his all functions are co- related and interlinked, so ignorance of one will have chain reaction on other. In absence of better law and order, no development work can take place.

The Collector's job is magisterial in nature. In the capacity of a District Magistrate, he is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in his district. His position in this context, assumes greater significance looking to the social, political and communal tension that threaten the law and order situation so frequently. Terrorism, Naxalism, Communalism, Smuggling, and other economic offences have added to his burdens. Essentially, no development can take place unless peace and tranquility is maintained.

After the separation of Judiciary from the executive, the Collector is concerned with the preventive sections of the criminal procedure code. As District Magistrate, he is the Head of the Police Administration of the district. In his function, Superintendent of Police who is the Head of police force in the district helps the Collector in discharge of his police functions. In all important matters, the Superintendent of Police takes orders from the Collector. However, several controversies have arisen with regard to his role in the maintenance of law and order and his relations with Superintendent of Police. The Superintendent of Police is expected to keep the District Magistrate fully informed both by personal conference and special reports on the matters of importance concerning the peace of the district and the state of crime. He can inspect police stations, police staffs and police diaries. The District Magistrate also remains in touch with the activities of the police department through a series of periodical reports received from the Superintendent of Police. The Superintendent of Police forwards the annual report on public administration to the District Magistrate who reviews it and sends to the higher authorities. The district jail is also under the general control of the District Magistrate. He can visit the jail from time to time to see that all is well and ensure the expeditious disposal of cases of under trial prisoners' premature release of prisoners, release of prisoners on parole, mercy petitions of prisoners etc.

Revenue Functions

As the head of the revenue administration of the district, his primary task is the assessment and collection of land revenue. The revenue work is a colossal task in itself and therefore, the Collector has a whole hierarchy of staff to assist him. In Bihar, the hierarchy is Collector, Additional Collector, Sub Divisional Officer, Circle Officer, Circle Inspector, Revenue Karmchari and Amins. In this context Khera point out two principles. The first is that revenue which is assessed, like all taxes which are assessed, must be collected in full and the second principle predicates timely collection of the dues. Assessment and collection of other public dues and taxes like sales tax, maintenance of land records, adjudication of land disputes between private individuals and government, implementation of land reforms, consolidation of agricultural holding etc, constitute revenue functions at the district level. District Collector is basically responsible for all these functions and to support him there is an elaborate network of revenue and other departmental officials.

Land Acquisition Functions

Another important function of District Collector is land acquisition. He enjoys this power under the Land Acquisition Act 1894. Although this is the old function, the magnitude of land acquisition has expanded considerably after independence with the progress of developmental plans and programmes, land acquisition proceedings are being taken for a variety of schemes such as development of industries, irrigation, resettlement of displaced persons, slum clearance

etc. The Collector is generally responsible for ensuring satisfactory implementation of these measures, which are designed to give effect to economic and social objectives in the constitution.

Development Functions

After independence and with the adoption of planning strategy, the Collector has become a pivotal figure in implementing the development programmes. He continues to play a significant role in the development administration. Rural development was an essential precondition for the establishment of a welfare state and several programmes for the benefit of the downtrodden, beginning with the community development programme in 1952, were introduced. In 1960s, several schemes of rural development were started. These related to health, education, employment, and improvement of housing conditions and some special programmes for rural women, children and the youth. These programmes aimed at eradicating poverty and improving the living standards of the poor.

The direction and fulfillment of developmental plans is now the emerging duty of the Collector. Several types of schemes are implemented by the DRDA under the broad framework of the integrated Rural Development Programme. The Collector with the assistance of the district level staff, is responsible for the implementation of various schemes viz, TRYSEM, NREP, DWCRA, etc. He also performs developmental roles in his formal capacity as the head of the District Industries Centre, Chairman of the District level Bankers Coordination Committee, and Chairman of the City Monitoring Committee etc. In the changed circumstances, in states like Bihar, Maharashtra and Gujarat all development activities have been transferred to the District Development Officer who also belongs to the IAS, and the Collector's role in development administration there is only peripheral.

District Collector performs his duty as an agent of the Government at the district level. Collector is the principal representative of State Government in district. He has several protocol functions like meeting the ministers and other important dignitaries. The visit of VIPs to the district takes a great deal of his time, particularly in bigger places of religion or national highways. Being the official representative of the government, the Collector is supposed to make arrangements regarding these visits.

During emergencies, such as those caused by food famines, natural calamities cyclones etc, or man-made crises such as riots, fires or internal aggression because it is he who holds an umbrella over the district. He can call upon any branch of the district administration to undertake any specific work to provide assistance. The Collector has a special role in an emergency and as the chief relief officer in the district in times of stress and difficulties his duties and responsibilities have increased ten-fold. In the case of floods i.e. it is his job to take adequate precautionary measures for giving necessary relief to the victims and arrange their evacuation to safer areas. The Collector has to take all steps in consultation with the concerned authorities to ensure that essential services keep going. It is the stature to which the Collector can rise in such situation that determines in the public eye the success or failure of his term of office.

There is other function also with which the Collector is intimately associated like social security, pension, excise, grant the registration, alteration and partition of holdings; the settlement of

disputes; the management of indebted estates, loans to agriculturists, and above all famine relief. Because he controls revenue which depends on agriculture, the supreme interests of the people, he naturally serves also general administration staff. The District Collector discharges regulatory distributive function also Census operations and conduct of elections to various democratic bodies from the parliament to the Gram Panchayat is another important function. As the district census officer, the Collector is responsible for conduct of census operations once in ten years. This work entails a more elaborate arrangement in the election. He appoints enumerators, provides for their training and arranges timely supply of forms etc.

District Collector is directly responsible for the distribution and control of all essential commodities and goods. He issues licenses for trading in food-grains and other commodities. The Collector by virtue of his official position also acts as the Chief grievances' officers in the district. He is the representative of the government in the large area under his charge, in the eyes of the people, he embodies the power of the state a Sarkar and is to him that they primarily look redress their grievances and to promote their welfare.

One of the important duties of the Collector is regarding training of junior IAS and state civil service officers posted under him. After the separation of judiciary from the executive the judicial functions of District Magistrate has been considerably reduced, but he still hears appeals against the order of SDO, Deputy Collector, Land Reforms and subordinate offices in respect of revenue, supply arms and other matters under different special enactments. The urgency with which these cases are disposed off indicates the District Collectors keenness to resolve disputes. These are several other areas like supervising local government institutions, educations, entertainment etc. Wherein the Collector has an important role to play. It is fact that in district administration there is no area where he is not associated.

The key factors behind the changing role – There is an unparalleled uniqueness about the post of Collector. He can by virtue of his position act as a leader, a motivator and a people's developer. In this changing scenario, the role of District Magistrate becomes very critical as he has to safe guard the interest of his officers and at the same moment he has to ensure the establishment of democratic decentralization.

Earlier, the Collector was in charge of land revenue, maintenance of law and order and other regulatory functions. In the changed scenario with the adoption of socialistic pattern of society and focus on development, the Collectors in most of the states become development functionaries and change agents.

It mid of 70s, new development strategies were launched emphasizing basic human needs, growth with equity and the beauty of small. How greater emphasis was on efficiency. The affair become more development oriented, stressing the instrumental character of decentralization, local autonomy, and local government for national development. Development of below was recognized as development from within. This meant utilization of local human capital and local resources self-reliant-development relying on the basic needs approach and promotion of human dignity.

In most of the countries, the search is on to debureaucratize the public organizations and bring these as close as possible to the people. Democratic decentralization, in this context is more than mere philosophy, it is a design for expeditious, people centric and people managed human development.

Decentralization has its own value in political and administrative term. Politically, local participation in development activities, besides being resources intensive, paves the way for meaningful articulation of local demands. Planning become much more realistic and receives ready political support.

From the administrative point of view, local capability to govern local areas increases through sustained participation in local decision making. Decentralization has been more used to more institutionalization of local government for unburdening the central government, facilitating local decision making for local problem solving and encouraging popular participation as a democracy enriching device. With the emergence of the third world after decolonization, the concept of decentralization has proved to be ideologically indispensable, it can be a unifying force to the centralized bureaucracies, soften resistance to the inevitable and potentially destabilizing social changes.

The central theme of development administration is socio economic and political change brought about through a series of programmes designed specifically to attain certain clear cut and specified objectives and goals expressed in operational terms. This implies that the kind of administrative organization necessary to meet these objectives may require to shift its base from the traditional structure and executive orientation to a definitely integrated managerially oriented programmes organization. The development role of the Collector became a focal point after the initiation of development planning in India. Rural development was an essential precondition for the establishment of a Welfare State and in this context several programmes for the benefit of the downtrodden were introduced since last sixty-two years. Though the Collector's role in the development process has been overemphasized, in recent years, we see that due to the frequent break down in the law and order situation in the districts the Collector has less and less time for developing administration. Besides, his role in this sphere is being reduced in a number of states and the Chief Executive Officer of Zila Parishad is emerging as prominent functionary in developing administration.

The Panchayat Raj Act of 1993 and 1994 of various states are clearly indicative of the diminishing role of Collector in development of administration. In some states like Bihar, his revenue functions are being transferred to Panchayats. From Balvantrai Mehta Committee to the two historic constitutional amendments 73rd and 74th Indian development experiment has been a long search for decentralized local democratic development.

Impact of 73rd Constitutional Amendment on Bureaucratic Setup

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India not only gives a constitutional mandate to the panchayats, it also provides the uniformity and formal structural to these traditional institutions of self governance necessary for effective functioning. The 73rd Amendment indicates a fundamental restructuring of the governance and administrative system of the country, passed on

the philosophy of decentralization and power to the people. The new Panchayati Raj Institutions have the potential to usher in a new era of change and development in accordance with people's needs and priorities, and to democracy a deeply troubled system of democracy.

It is also germane to quote here Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India, on Saturday, April 25, 2010 in New Delhi he said that Panchayats are key to fighting Maoists. Development through Panchayati Raj Institution or rural councils, could be an antidote to the Maoist insurgency. We should pay special attention to ensure that PRIs function effectively in remote and backward areas, which include tribal areas. This will help us the Maoist menace. Panchayats not only make direct participation possible for the marginalized section of society in governance, but also play an important role in ensuring transparency and accountability in the functioning of government institutions and officials.

The critical analysis of existing delivery mechanisms that is being carried at the district, block and the village level and administrative set up at district level reveal that the core idea of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 is slowly but steadily taking a concrete shape through transferring powers and resources to all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and assigning them with the responsibility of planning and implementation of the poverty alleviation programmes.

In view of 73rd constitutional Amendment, the district administration has undergone a subtle transformation. A number of steps have been taken by the Ministry of Rural Development to devolve administrative and financial powers to the PRIs. An officer equivalent to the District Collector in seniority and status may have to be posted as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Zila Parishad for horizontal coordination.

Despite the recent measures to reduce the responsibilities of the District Collector, this key-actor of Indian Administration, continues to suffer from role overload and the attendant inter role conflict. His sagacity and acumen, however, help him in striking a balance among his multifarious responsibilities. In addition to performing its basic administrative functions, the office of District Magistrate has become an important tool for achieving the developmental goals set by elected representatives. Though the process of devolution has improved in the recent past, it continues to suffer from bureaucratic resistance and lack of political will at the state level. The role of district administration, however, is gradually changing into that of facilitation, quite different from the earlier roles of administration and implementation. But there is still a long way to go.

Role of Collector in Panchayati Raj Setup

The concept of Panchayati Raj has brought a drastic change in the power and position of District Magistrate. But 73rd constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 are not applicable to the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Panchayati Raj in India is a system of local Self government under which the people of rural areas have taken on themselves the responsibilities for the socio-economic and cultural development. Basically, it is an arrangement for popular participation in the administration of local affairs.

Democratic decentralization with its three-tier pattern of popular administration was the result of the recommendations made by Balvantrai Mehta Committee (1957). The varying forms of decentralization efforts in various states resulted in a change in the fundamental character of district administration. The most noticeable change was in the approach and style of his office from the position of authority to a people friendly and development oriented top official functionary at the district level.

The 73rd Constitution Amendment gave enough scope to the state Government to reformulate the equation between the Collector and the PRIs. In the wake of the constitutionalization of PRIs in December 1992, the relationship between PRIs and the Collector was expected to alter substantially. Panchayati Raj is one limb of administration and is a means of decentralization of the authority of implementation of development programmes in the field. As the area of the operation of a Collector coincided with the area of the Zila Parishad, he has automatically come into the picture as the ears and eyes of the government. It is argued that district administration would be better served if the Collector was left free to look after regulatory aspects of administration and a separate officer of the same rank is made available to attend to development function exclusively. Like other states in India, Bihar also can not march on the path of progress and prosperity unless rural area are developed. The present structure of PRIs is the outcome of suggestions of various committees viz B.R. Meha Committee, Ashok Mehta Committee, Hanumantha Rao Committee, G.V.K. Rao Committee, L.M. Singhvi Committee, P.K. Thungan Sub Committee etc. The committee also went through the functioning of CDP and NES and suggested measures for achieving economy and efficiency in their implementation.

Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006: Changing Scenario

In the respect of Bihar Panchayati Raj Act 2006, the following broad pattern emerged:

- An officer rank of District Magistrate or such Additional District Magistrate as may be specified by the state government shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Zila Parishad and who shall be appointed by the government. The government may appoint an Additional Chief Executive Officer for Zila Parishad on such terms and conditions as may be prescribed
- The Government shall from time to time post or depute in every Zila Parishad such number of officers and staff, as the government considers necessary
- Subject to such rules as may be made by the state government in this behalf, a Zila Parishad may from time to time engage such number of paid or honorary functionaries or professionals as may be required by it for carrying out its functions
- There shall be a District Planning Committee in every district of the State. The Chief Executive officer shall be the secretary of the committee. The Adhyaksha of the Zila Parishad shall be the Chairman of the District Planning Committee. District Magistrate and the Chairman of the District Co-operative Bank/Land Development Bank shall be permanent invitees of the committee
- The role of District Magistrate in PRIs in Bihar is of advisory and coordinator in nature, his importance cannot be ruled out as he is the authority to implement and execute the plans as per the directives of the state government

The Collector is an important link between the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the State Government. The Collector has been given certain power with regard to Panchayati Raj Institutions. But the role of Collector vis-à-vis Panchayati Raj Institution is not yet fully clear and remains to be precisely defined. Over the year's development administration has acquired deep roots, as opposed to the traditional administration. As this was happening all along, even the role of Collector and the District Magistrate had also under-gone a metamorphosis. Although strong arguments were advanced for delinking him from development department was never in doubt. A possible solution could be to have a strong separate development wing at the district level and the Collector could still be a part of it, if only to implement the policies the government of the day rather than assuming an arbitrary role.

Despite the aforementioned reality, there can never be denial that office of D.M. is an organic integral part of our democratic process. The District Magistrate plays an important role in the social transformation and implementation of development programmes at village and district level. There is always an intimate relationship between the people and the District Magistrate. The district administration is the sole and genuine effective implementing agency of the government policies. The office of District Magistrate is the instrument that links the village with the state and provides a sense of integrity.

We come to the conclusion that the essence and intent of the Constitution has been fully protected and maintained till date by the sheer persistent determination of the office of the District Magistrate. The District Magistrate is indispensable in the district and his constitutional authority sagacity and acumen help him in striking a balance among his multifarious responsibilities. The office of District Magistrate is the last resort for any common people. He is still considered the panacea of all diseases. The elected representative occupies the seats of power take oath to protect and preserve the spirit of the Constitution, but it is the District Magistrate and his efforts that help to realize it. It is the office of District Magistrate that maintains the basic directive of the Constitution in respect of self governance, people's representation, realization of self dignity, universalization of basic elementary education, abolition of untouchability, creating conditions for the fulfillment of the right to work, right of livelihood, sense of equity among men and women.

The office of District Magistrate is an impregnable fortress that can sustain any attack and would provide security and safe guard to the interest of local self-government.

In final analysis, one may find a good lot of wisdom in the words of S.S. Khera "Administrative leadership is more necessary in the new field of economic development than in the more routine, traditional of vital tasks of law and order and collection of revenues". Thus, the changing contours of district administration in the field of development has assumed greater significance in the recent times. A realistic view on his role in the PRIs theatre is the need of the hour. For the good governance both the elected representatives of PRIs and the District Collector will have to move in the same direction with the same rhythm.