



Decentralization And Local Government

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ABSTRACT

Decentralization has emerged as a prominent issue in the literature of public administration and is regarded as one of the most important political administrative innovations of this century. It has been and continues to be advocated as an important component of policy packages to improve governance in developing countries, especially in the context of disillusionment, which has set in on account of central planning. The centralist regimes find themselves overburdened with complex and widespread socio-economic problems for which they have no answers, as the governments have sought to create more socially equitable patterns of economic growth to meet the basic needs of the poor. In case of India, efforts in this direction have been made since independence. There have been strong voices in favour of decentralization and to have a third tier of governance where local decisions will be taken by the people. The term decentralization is understood differently by different individuals or groups. It is essentially a mechanism through which power is transferred from the central government to the lower levels of government or field organizations.

II.KEY WORDS: importance, Political. Administrative, Functional and Financial Decentralization

III.INTRODUCTION

Decentralization and local governance service delivery to solve their complex problems and achieve equitable and sustainable development. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi these themes constitute the sure bet for people to gain control over their own life and destiny and to lead themselves to swaraj (swa- "self", raj "rule"¹). It is widely agreed that a new wave of decentralization has emerged in the nineties globally, characterized by (i) local democracy with focus on devolution of powers and resources to elected local bodies enjoying relative autonomy (ii) local governance based on participation of the marginalized and downtrodden, transparency and downward accountability (iii) local economic development focusing on pro-poor decentralized delivery of basic social services (iv) administrative reforms for efficient and cost effective civil services to support decentralization. At the dawn of independence, Panchayati Raj became a subject of discussion and discourse as views expressed by M.K Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar were contradictory to each other. But both were realistic in their own perspective. Gandhi visualized a process to achieve a just society and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar projected the existing reality on the ground and hence local governance became a subject in the hands of the State Government under Article 40 of the constitution of India. India embraced this new wave of decentralization imbibing all its intrinsic characteristics with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, which introduced a Part IX in the Constitution making state legislatures responsible for devolving power and authority to Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). This was expected to enable them to carry out their responsibilities as mandated in the Schedule XI of the Constitution through effective implementation of plans for economic development and social justice. An important feature of outlining this devolution of powers between the state legislature and Panchayats in the Indian Constitution is the discretionary nature of the devolution, which left the aspect of implementation of the cardinal provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to a large extent dependent on the intention and strength of the state enactments

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To study The Decentralized and Local Self Governance
2. To know the dimensions of decentralization and local governance

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study has carried out by secondary data. The secondary data were collected by monthly journals of decentralization and local government also made to different issues of bulletins were also used for the purpose of collecting the information.

VI. IMPORTANCE OF THE PAPER

Local self governance with decentralized planning will work effectively only if the strong presence of middle class, larger presence of Non Governmental Organizations, high literacy rate, transparency in the activities and adequate powers and finances are with grassroots institutions. Capacity building measures are highly needed to be done as the newly elected representatives for local governance need inputs to develop their capacities in order to perform well. As stated in several books and reports, the state has to play an effective role to ensure the effective participation of marginalized sections. At the ground every Gram Panchayat should have administrative unit not only to administer the development but also manage the data and monitor the progress of activities undertaken as well. At present confusions is witnessed in administration in allocation and management due to the absence of data base at grassroots.

VII. DECENTRALIZED AND LOCAL SELF GOVERNANCE

Several academicians, scholars and researchers argued that the Local Self Governance is one of the essentials to establish democracy at Local, State and Union level since local government is very near to the people who can participate in governance. The 73rd and the 74th Amendment to the constitution of India have enabled the marginalized and the oppressed to move into the power structure in grassroots governance. These two amendments have a rich potential to transform and alter the nature, governance and social dynamics. In order to make these changes, the state has to play crucial role to ensure the inclusion of weaker and marginalized sections. All over the world, local bodies are being given due recognition through various means to establish them as institutions of governance legitimately and well within the framework of constitutional governments. India is not exception to it. The globalization has brought several opportunities and challenges in order to that the decentralized planning has both positive and negative concerns. One cannot find solutions to all the problems through decentralization and, in the centralization. Both centralization and decentralization will work in harmony at appropriate levels. There are many arguments being projected that participatory democracy was the finest instrument of governance humanity ever evolved. Later it was argued that participatory democracy would yield results only in small units of governance. However, Participatory democracy was hailed as one of the best forms in the context of globalization.

VIII. DIMENSIONS OF DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

1. Political Decentralization

Political decentralization refers to transfer of political powers and functions from the central levels of government to the lower levels of governments which are elected by the local citizens and which have some degree of local autonomy. It means that the powers and functions, which are concentrated in the hands of the higher level political organs be decentralized to the lower level political organs that have been democratically elected by their constituencies. In other words, it means devolution of powers and functions to the local bodies i.e., panchayats and municipalities. In India, the process of political decentralization which started in 1959, on the recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee, finally got implemented in 1993, by way of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. As a result, now there are governments at five levels viz., central, state, district, block and village, making the governance process more representative with locally elected representatives paving, the way for greater peoples' participation.

2. Administrative Decentralization

Administrative decentralization refers to the transferring of authority, resources and responsibilities to the lower officials in the administrative hierarchy of organisations. It may also mean decentralizing powers or functions to the subordinate units. It involves placing planning and implementation responsibilities to functionaries and elected members. It aims at providing better facilities and services to the people through the local authorities. In India, though the development process started way back in 1950 after the setting up of erstwhile Planning Commission, yet we could not achieve the developmental goals. The main reason for this was that the welfare policies and programmes, which were meant for the people top-down and the local

people could not get any benefits of these policies and programmes, as the local perspective was missing. Administrative decentralization makes local governance bottom up and responsive.

3. Functional Decentralization

Functional decentralization refers to transferring subject specific functions to local tiers in order to enable them to discharge their responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. It means that the sphere of activity of each tier should be clearly specified, and each tier should be allowed to function independently. Functional decentralization is an essential condition to strengthen the units of participatory development and decentralized governance. In India, there was absence of clear cut functional jurisdiction so far as the local tiers were concerned. With the passing of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1993, the issue of functional decentralization has been taken care of. However, still Local Governance 177 there is no clarity with regard to the functional jurisdiction of each local tier. In many states, the functions are delegated through executive orders rather than transferred through a piece of legislation.

4. Financial Decentralization

It involves devolving powers with regard to taxation, funds and expenditure upon local bodies in order to first improve the financial position and then giving them the financial autonomy for planning and implementation as per the local needs. Devolution of funds upon the local bodies by the State is important in order to augment financial capacity of the local bodies. In order to provide the local bodies' scope to prepare plans as per local needs, and then to incur expenditure, financial decentralization becomes important. The local bodies in India could not function properly because of lack of funds. They had to depend on the devolutions and the grants-in-aid from the state governments. This problem has also been taken care of to some extent after the passing of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. The Acts empower the local bodies to levy and collect the taxes.

IX.CONCLUSION

Decentralized planning shows that several milestones have been achieved through several amendments including the 73rd and 74th but it have a long way to go. There are many provisions like regularity of direct elections, reservations to the marginalized groups, functions etc. a reality. The 33% reservation to women has been achieved in all states. A few states have gone ahead and implemented 50% reservations for women at the local level. However, the local self governance structures still has to achieve much more in terms of getting rid with the problems it faces including the financial crunch, devolution of power etc. The time has come to review the experiences of the local self governance.

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