



ROLE OF DISTRICT COLLECTOR OF ODISHA & DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF MEGHALAYA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY.

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ABSTRACT

District Collector is the head of district administration and the official agent of the state government in the district. Since the range and scope of activities and responsibilities of the district Collector have increased many fold and become more complex and challenging than ever before. The head of the district Administration in both the states face many challenges and the researcher wants to know how do they face the challenges fulfil the expectation of people and sustain their position. The main objectives are to find out the similarity and difference between the two heads of the district administration in two different states. To know the role of Collector and Deputy Commissioner to carry out their traditional functions as well as developmental Administration in Odisha and Meghalaya. The researcher adopted both historical and analytical methods of studying the research problem. The study is based on both primary and secondary source of data. There is certain structural and functional similarity between the two offices so also certain visible differences between the District collector of Odisha and Deputy Commissioner in Meghalaya in their work load, accessibility to the common man, political interference, influence of pressure groups etc. Since the office of district Collector and Deputy Commissioner is indispensable for the people of the district as well as the state authority, instead of creating hindrances it is better to facilitate the District Collector and create a congenial atmosphere for him /her so that he/she can render his/her best service as the head of the district.

KEYWORDS : Administration, Collector, Hierarchy, Deputy Commissioner, Disaster, District Council.

INTRODUCTION:-

A District is the basic unit of administration in India. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as a 'territory marked off for special administrative purposes.' In other words, "District administration is that portion of public administration which functions within the territorial limits of a district." District Collector is the head of district administration and the official agent of the state government in the district.

The post of a District Collector is a "dream post"-every young officer, dreams to reach that position and once he has held it, he continues to sustain the challenge. It is the district setting that the collector, "understands" himself. If at all he fails, it is the failure of his total "self". So he is expected to be very careful and vigilant in performance as even the smallest failure may sometimes injurious to his/her career. Any achievement on part of District Collector is merely seen as discharge of the duty for which he/she is being paid by the Government.

Perhaps, no other position on the Indian Administrative service is as challenging as that of a district collector. No other job perhaps is designed to bring out the best in the man who holds it. "For a District Collector, no day is like any other day, no man he meets is like any other man, and no situation is exactly like any other situation. There is an unparalleled uniqueness around him. A District Collector encounters the extremes of turbulence which may try his best he may as well drive a good deal of satisfaction from the fulfilment of his mission". An ignorant Indian villager may not know anything of the structure of state government, but the 'collector' is the living reality to him. The success of any state government depends on how its policies are implemented by the district administration.

The Collector and District Magistrate is the king-pin of district administration. "He has been described as 'Maai Baap', 'working arms of the government', 'the man on the spot', and recently in more benevolent terms, as the 'friend, philosopher and guide', 'advisor, educator and helper'".

Evolution Of District Collector And District Magistrate

Historically, the Mauryans who build up their imperial system in the country, were the first to constitute, a 'district' as the most prominent territorial unit and to centralized its administration

with all power concentrated in a single officer called 'Rajuk' who is at the top of administrative hierarchy. All the succeeding Imperial powers including Guptas, Mughals and British adopted the Mauryans pattern.

The present office is the creation of the British Rule in India. During East India company days the office of collector was created by **Warren Hastings** on **14th May 1772**. The East India Company appointed Collectors "to superintend the revenue collections and to preside in the courts" Since independence many autonomous departments and directorates have been created but District Magistrate continued to function as the representative of both central and state governments in the district.

Function And Role Of Deputy Commissioner In Meghalaya:

Meghalaya became a full state on 21st January 1972. At present there are 12 districts in the state of Meghalaya. The head of the District in Meghalaya is the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner is the Chief Officer in-charge of the General administration of the District. He is assisted by Additional District Magistrates, Assistant Commissioner and extra Assistant Commissioners.

In Meghalaya the posting, transfer and promotion of District Magistrate are now, decided by state Chief Secretary with approval of the Chief Minister. Deputy Commissioners are selected from direct UPSC recruited IAS officers of 5 to 6 years of service in Assam Meghalaya cadre or senior most seasoned trust worthy bureaucrats of State civil servants promoted to IAS after long 25 years of service.

His /Her most important function and role concern public safety and tranquillity. The **maintenance of law and order**, control of crime, administration of justice, **revenue administration** which is specially the function of the Deputy Commissioner in his role as the Collector of the District and involved in land acquisition for the Government for various purposes like for construction of Railway line, National Highways, establishment of national and state institutions, National parks etc. **functions concerning developmental Administration**, the role of the Deputy Commissioner in specialised areas like Agriculture, public Health, Education, Industry, Treasury, Excise, Road and Communication and Social Welfare and allied subjects, is more as a co-ordinator,

as in these Departments the chain of command and directions flow from their Directorate and Administrative Departments. He is the Chairman of the District Rural Development Agency and has administrative control over the establishment of the Block Development Officers. Regarding **control, regulation and distribution of food and civil supplies**, the Deputy Commissioner has a statutory function and duties under the Essential Commodities Act. These functions cover the proper distribution of food grains through the public Distribution System as prescribed by law;

The conducting of **general Elections to Parliament and State Legislative Assembly and other local body elections** assigned to the Deputy Commissioner as the district election officer.

The functions concern **emergencies like accidental and natural calamities**, the deputy commissioner along with district disaster management officer and disaster response team tries his level best to mitigate the disaster to the best of his capacity in consultation with his higher authorities.

His/Her role in District Councils of Meghalaya, the Deputy Commissioner conducts election as Returning Officer, all the funds sanctioned by the government are issued directly to the Deputy Commissioner who releases such amount to the District Council for implementation of rural development programmes and Council in return submits utilization certificates to the state Government through the Deputy Commissioner.

Regarding management of Urban Administration, the Additional District Magistrate (ADM) or Sub-divisional Magistrate remains in charge as administrative officer or executive officer who manages the municipality under the direction and supervision of Deputy Commissioner of the district as per Meghalaya Municipal Act.

Deputy Commissioner along with grievance redressal committee **redresses the grievances** of the people at the district level.

Being the district head the deputy Commissioner is the **chief protocol officer** in the district who receives and treats the high dignitaries visit to the district.

Regarding **local cadre management**, the deputy commissioner being the chairman of district selection committee, recruits the class III and class IV staffs of the district and manage their cadre. All the district officials report to him/her. He/she either writes or counter signs their ACRs. Along with these regular functions the Deputy Commissioner carry out many residual functions also.

Function And Role Of Collector And District Magistrate In Odisha:

Odisha which was earlier called Orissa became a separate province on 1st April 1936. In 1950 Odisha has 13 districts. Not only for getting more financial aid from central Government but also for administrative convenience the then chief minister of Odisha Mr. Biju Pattanaik reorganised the state of Odisha and 30 districts were created in 1993.

The head of the district Administration in Odisha is called the Collector and District Magistrate. In Odisha also the posting, transfer and promotion of District Magistrate are now, decided by state Chief Secretary with approval of the Chief Minister. Like other state Governments the District Collectors are selected from direct UPSC recruited IAS officers of 5 to 6 years of service in Odisha cadre or senior most seasoned trust worthy bureaucrats of State civil servants promoted to IAS after long 25 years of service. Normally there is a trend in

Odisha out of 30 district Collectors and District magistrates at least 6 Collectors are chosen from the IAS officers promote from state civil Service.

Like the other Collector and District Magistrates of other states the role of District Collectors and District Magistrates of Odisha are mainly statutory and functional. His statutory role includes executing statutory laws passed by both central government and state government from time to time. Important functions and role of district collector of Odisha includes:

1. Maintain Law and order,
2. As Collector he along with his staff collects Revenue and recovers other loans,
3. He is the chief Development officer who looks after all developments in the district.
4. Redressal of Citizen's Grievance,
5. Manage all disaster the district faces,
6. Collector as district election officer conducts various elections in the district as per ECI or State Election Commission guidelines.
7. Collector is also chief District protocol officer who manage the visit of any VIP in the district.
8. District Collector looks after the Urban Developments within the districts,
9. The District Collector also looks after the implementation of Rural Development schemes of the government & monitors the working of Panchayati Raj System in the district.
10. The District Collector monitors Education Department through district education officer for implementation of RTE as well as other educational schemes of the government in the district and peaceful conduct of various exams including all India exams.
11. The district plays a key role in cadre management of the district staff.
12. The District Collector along with district Industrial officer carries out promotion of industry in the District.
13. District Collector makes necessary arrangements as per government instruction to ensure Fair Prices to the Agricultural Products and prevent the farmers in distress selling of their products in the district.
14. District Collector is responsible to oversee the arrangement for provision of essential commodities to the citizens through public Distribution System (PDS) and proper implementation of Food Security Act in the district by the district Supply officer.
15. District Collector through the District Welfare Officer monitors the implementation of tribal development projects in the district.
16. District Collector supervises and monitor district Excise Department.
17. District Transport Officer reports the collector regarding management of transport in the district and implementation of motor vehicle Act in the district.
18. District Collector and district Public Relation officer try to maintain good public relation in the district.
19. District Collector and other departments: In Odisha there are other departments like district treasury, District Forestry, Fishery and Animal Husbandry, Mines, Irrigation, Statistics, Labour and Employment, Census and statistics and their district level officials work under the direct supervision and monitoring of the district Collector.
20. Residual functions of District: A number of other residual functions are also done by the district Collector.

Comparative Study Of Role Of District Collector Of Odisha & Deputy Commissioner Of Meghalaya.

Similarities:-

Although both of the states are situated in different location of the country, one (Meghalaya) is a north-eastern hill state another (Odisha) is in the eastern part of India a medium size state having a combination of both coastal area and hill area, yet both are having the uniform model of district administration headed by one senior IAS officer called collector and District magistrate in Odisha, Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate in Meghalaya.

There is **similarity in appointment process** like selection, posting, transfer, promotion etc. As the selection and posting of district Collector and Magistrate of Odisha and Meghalaya are decided by state Chief Secretary with approval of the

Chief Minister.

There is **similarity in administrative structure or hierarchy** in both the states with little differences. There is **similarity in function and role** of both the district heads. There is **similarity in managing all kinds of disasters**. Being the chairman of the disaster management committee both of them prepare their disaster management plan along with its committee members and response to the disaster by maximum utilisation of the resources and disaster response forces at their disposal. There is **similarity in managing or conducting election** in their respective districts. They are the district election officers and returning officers or assistant returning officers who conduct election in the district as per the guideline of Election Commission of India, State Election Commissioner or as per guide lines of representation of people's Act 1951. There is **similarity in maintaining the Protocol** of the high dignitaries who visit to the district by both the district heads in their respective states. There is **similarity in cadre management of local district staffs** in the respective districts by both the head of the district.

There is **similarity in carrying out all developmental activities** of the respective district. Being the head of the district both of them mainly supervise and co-ordinate the works of various departments within districts, so that different services are properly delivered to the people at their door step.

Differences:-

In spite of so many similarities between two district heads of both Odisha & Meghalaya, there are certain **visible differences** between them too.

On the basis of Size, location, topography, climatic condition, population, economy, religion, custom, culture, tradition, food, language, Dress, local governance model etc., one is totally different from other.

Socially, culturally and literature wise Odisha is quite develop than Meghalaya. But one special features of Meghalaya is that all the three dominant tribes like Khasi, Garo and Jaintia follow the **matrilineal system of inheritance** of property while in Odisha all people including tribals follows the Patri-lineal system of inheritance of property. Odisha follows Panchayatiraj system model of governance in local governance system and Meghalaya is having District council system of local governance model as per 6th schedule.

The main **differences are like there is difference in the nomen clature**. Since British period the head of the district administration in plain or general provinces are called District collector and the head of the district in the frontier provinces like east-while Assam and Punjab are called Deputy Commissioners. Odisha being a general province and its district head is called District Collector and District Magistrate and Meghalaya which was a part of Assam till 1972 and its head of the district is called Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate.

There is **difference in workload** of both the district heads of both the states. Although officially both are having co equal powers but in reality the work load of District Collectors of Odisha are more as compared to Deputy Commissioner of Meghalaya.

In Odisha the number of population are more, the literacy as well as conscious level of people is higher. The connectivity (both road and rail) to the district headquarter is much better. So the District Collector's office is over crowded till late evening in Odisha. But contrary to that in Meghalaya the population are very small, the literacy as well as conscious level of the people very less. Except a few regional head quarters and

state capital districts like Shillong, Tura and Jowai other district head quarters are not well connected. As the area is full of jungle there is always a threat from wild animals or underground people. Most of the Deputy Commissioner's office look very deserted just after the lunch hour in Meghalaya.

So far the **accessibility common man** to the Deputy Commissioner or district Collectors are concerned, normally in Odisha, the common men are not accessible to the District collector neither in office nor in residence. But in Meghalaya common men are accessible to the deputy commissioner if required.

In case of **service delivery to the people**, the District Collectors of Odisha renders better service to the people of the district as compared to Meghalaya. As the people are very conscious about their rights they demand such services from the District Collector. The media (electronic, print and social) is also very active in Odisha. In case of Meghalaya as the communication as well as connectivity is not up to the mark so also the conscious level of the citizens are not up to the mark except urban area, so the service delivery to the people is not up to the mark to the common men in rural areas.

So far **Inspection and field visit** by the District collector in Odisha is concerned, the Collector prepares his/her monthly tour programme to the offices in the field in a regular basis so that he/she can get the first hand information regarding the implementation of welfare schemes of the government in different departments. But in case of Meghalaya, since the connectivity is not up to the mark the deputy commissioner hardly makes visits to the field offices except in certain regional or state head quarter districts.

So far the **political interference** is concerned, in Odisha the Collector and his office is more prone to political interference as the administration as well as the political system is very much pro political in nature. Mainly the district level politicians like MLAs, MPs, Ministers of the districts very much influence as well as interfere in the day today administration of the district. In case of Meghalaya, the people are not that politically active. It does not mean that there is no political interference by local politicians. But it is very less in case of Meghalaya as compared to Odisha.

So far the **influence of pressure groups** are concerned in Odisha most of the pressure groups mainly the NGOs are either help the district administration or take the help of district administration or get their work done. In most of the cases they have a very cordial relation with the District Collector. But in case of Meghalaya, the pressure groups mainly the mother's Union, Student's organisations unnecessarily interfere with district administration on any issue. If the Deputy Commissioner does not listen to them, there is every possibility for arising law and order situation or he may get transfer immediately. So the Deputy Commissioner usually deals with them very tactfully.

So far the **level of monitoring by the higher authorities** is concerned, in Odisha the immediate authority of the Collector is RDC (Revenue Divisional Commissioner), there is direct supervision from Chief Minister's Office, by Chief Secretary of Government of Odisha. In case of Meghalaya the office of RDC is not there. The Deputy Commissioner is directly monitored by chief Secretary of Government of Meghalaya as well as by the Chief Minister's Office.

CONCLUSION:

District Collectors/ Deputy Commissioners in India in general and Odisha and Meghalaya in particular are great fighters who are constantly fighting against all odds without potential

weapons to fight. Due to growth of welfare state development is the major goal for District Collector/Deputy Commissioner in both the states, but he/she fails because of the following reasons like, (a) pre-occupation maintenance of law and order, (b) Lack of Commitment, (c) Short Tenure, (d) Political and administrative interference (e) the ad-hoc nature of office (f) Individual differences in ability and motivation (g) Growth of action shy and comfort loving nature, (h) growth of corruption and criminalisation of politics, (i) political bureaucracy etc.

Since the office of District Collector and Deputy Commissioner is indispensable for the people of the district as well as the state authority, instead of creating hindrances it is better to facilitate the District Collector and create a congenial atmosphere for him/her so that he/she can render his/her best service as the head of the district administration.

There should be security of tenure for the district head instead of unnecessary and frequent transfer. The 2nd ARC recommended "an IAS officer should be posted as collector/District Magistrate only on completing of 10-12 years of service". The 5th pay commission recommended that, "no IAS officer should be posted as a District Collector unless he has completed nine years of service".

So appointment of senior and seasoned bureaucrat as District Collector with a fixed tenure, Proper and timely sincere monitoring by political and administrative authorities, people's conscious participation in administrative process can pave the way for District collector for providing a people centric governance in the district.

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