

Decentralisation and Responsiveness in Administration (A theoretico – operational framework)

Author

Chaitali Pal

Supervisor

Dr. Furqan Ahmed,
Department of Pol. Sc.
Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi-
110025

In most developing countries like India where the administrative capacity is low, decentralisation is a means of creating large numbers of skilled administrators and capable managers and a prerequisite for responsive administration especially at the grass-root level. Need for administrative responsiveness as a part of reform strategy has been felt. It can only be achieved through efficiency and effective management in government. To make the administration responsive enough decentralisation is an essential process and moreover it is the solution itself. An important objective of administrative reform is to strengthen democratic practices and procedures of government and administration in order to make them more responsive and accountable to the people. One of the best ways to achieve this reform is through decentralisation. By and large, it is thought that decentralisation would improve government responsiveness to the public and increase the quantity and quality of the services it provides at the local level. At this juncture, administrative responsiveness cannot be neglected.

Decentralisation is an ideological principle associated with objectives of self-reliance, democratic decision making, popular participation in government and responsiveness and greater accountability of public officials to citizens. And as a matter of fact, responsive administration is a system of governance that is capable of perceiving, and anticipating, the felt needs, hopes and aspirations of the citizens or client groups, of fulfilling them efficiently and effectively. Decentralisation and responsive administration have thus come to be intertwined more closely day by day. It has become the need of the hour.

During early 1990's the process of globalisation has started and likely to effect the role of the centre, state and local level governments. The impact of on the nature of local government is very much there. Globalisation increases the flexibility of social organisation and gives scope to utilise the strengths of people in local affairs. However, as a result of above a bold initiative taken by the central government, in 1992, the Panchayati Raj was prescribed as a constitutional stipulation, and so far as the democratic decentralisation is concerned, is the passing of the 73rd Amendment of the constitution in 1993. Again the challenge lies in finding the proper balance between centralised and decentralised arrangements and to link them in ways that promote development in most effectively. To meet this objective in India, the government has

recently passed a bold legislation, conferring constitutional status on the local bodies and following this, the Panchayati Raj bodies are being revived. The subjects of decentralisation and district and local planning are once again under the intensive discussion in all states of the country.

In the present study, concentration was mainly on to what extent these institutions and administrators will face the challenges of the future and to the extent of political leadership committed to these institutions. The main concern was to examine the powers and functions of democratic decentralisation can help in making the administration responsive to the hopes and aspirations of the people. Since the older concept of administration being 'mai baap' of the public has become obsolete, and the present environment administration is supposed to reach to the doorsteps of the people and not the vice versa.

But before 73rd Amendment one of the states like Haryana there was a two-tier Panchayat Raj system. In view of this, the present study made an attempt to examine the democratic decentralisation and responsiveness in administration while collecting the opinions from officials as well as people's representatives in Haryana. After implementation of 73rd Amendment whether Haryana has introduced the three tier system of Panchayati Raj and how it is functioning and also to know the status of responsiveness in administration in respect of officials and people's representatives who were involved in the process of implementation of rural development programmes.

Main objectives of the present study are (a) to analyse and discuss decentralisation both theoretically and operationally (b) to give a detailed description of responsive administration and differentiate it from responsiveness in administration (c) to establish correlation between decentralisation and responsiveness in administration and (d) finally to examine how district administration could be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people.

However, an attempt has also been made how and what extent the district administration could change its colonial image and become responsive to the needs and expectations of the people in countryside through primary data which has collected from the field i.e, from Faridabad, Karnal, and Sonapat districts of Haryana state. Two types of Samples i.e., the Panchayati Raj representatives of all the three levels, and the government officials attached to PRIs as well as DPC were interviewed with the help of structured and guided scheduled. 450 people's representatives (150 from each district) 75 from each panchayat samiti randomly.(Two Panchayat Samities from each district).

On the basis of the above mentioned objectives and hypothesis of the present study the broad summary, conclusion and some suggestive measures are given which may be considered by the Central and State Government to be responsive for practicing genuine decentralisation. In the study I have come to the conclusion that decentralisation should be called as a political decision and its implementation a reflection of a country's political process. I have also realised that interface between bureaucrats and citizen cannot be ignored. For it, effective institution of democracy is needed and here, PRIs could have a constructive role. Based on all these observations role of people's

participation and proper co-ordination of bureaucrats is of great importance as responsiveness will be fruitful if there is a sense of responsibility within the grassroots people and the administration until and unless people's representatives and bureaucracy work hand in hand in every respect, the real progress in grassroots democracy will not be made in a responsive manner.