



DOI: **10.5958/2249-7137.2021.01809.7**

ROLE OF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER IN DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Vikesh Kumar*

INDIA

ABSTRACT

The deputy commissioner (DC) or district magistrate (DM) or district collector or district magistrate and collector is the head of the revenue administration. The DC is required to be an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer who is in charge of governmental assets in his district of jurisdiction. The DC is responsible for collecting revenue within the district as it pertains to various Governmental enactments such as Stamp and Registration Act, Land Reforms Act, Irrigation Act, Excise Act and Public Health Act. When executing duties with regards to revenue collection, the DC can exercise quasi-judicial functions. After independence he continues to occupy a preeminent position at the district level and is the key functionary of the State Government. Keeping in view the importance of District Collector, this paper highlights the evolution of the institution of the Collector; his role in district administration; and the constraints, which inhibit the performance of his functions.

KEYWORDS: *Indian Administrative Service, District Administration, Governmental Enactments*

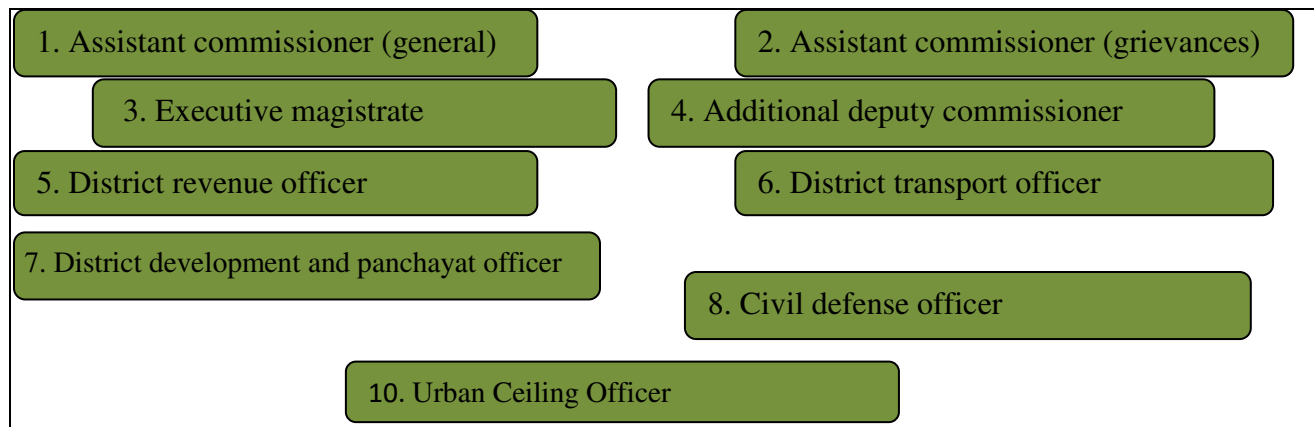
INTRODUCTION

The district is the basic unit of administration. Deputy Commissioner is the head of the district administration, is a functionary of the State Government, under the administrative control of Divisional Commissioner. A Deputy Commissioner is the chief administrative and revenue officer of a district. The office of the deputy commissioner traces its origin to the district collector system of the early phase of British rule. The district supervisor was appointed with limited functions in 1769. Warren Hastings introduced the district collector system in 1772. The system was, however, repealed in the following year, but restored again in 1787.

FORMATION

There have been many structural changes in the office of the district collector, ever since its inception in 1772 by Warren Hastings during the British Raj period.^[1] It was through this officer that the colonial state would execute its commands, and maintained local control. Originally, the business term 'collector' was given to the European district officer to make other powers in Bengal feel that he was not really a ruler, but merely an officer for revenue collection which was the duty of the British East India Company as the *Diwan* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. For many years, the Company pretended to be the *diwan*, and not the sovereign of the country. But the term became so much a part of the colonial system that it was retained down to the end of British rule. Now the collector has become an integral part of administration, and must work under the supervision of state government, although the collector has been appointed by central government.

He is assisted by the following officers for carrying out day to day work in various fields:--



ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

He has wide powers and manifold responsibilities. In many ways he is chief custodian of law and authority, the pivot on which runs the local administration. He deals with the natural calamities like drought, unseasonal rains, hailstorms, floods and fire etc. The main functions of the Deputy Commissioner may be broadly categorized as: co-ordination of development and public welfare activities as Deputy Commissioner, revenue officer/Court of the district as District Collector, and law and order functions as District Magistrate. Thus, he acts as Deputy Commissioner, District Collector and District Magistrate on different occasions. His role in each of these capacities is described, in brief, as under:

AS DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

- 1) He is the executive of the district with numerous responsibilities in the sphere of civil administration, development, panchayats, local bodies, etc. Due to immense importance of his office, the Deputy Commissioner is considered to be the measuring rod of efficiency in administration.
- 2) The Deputy Commissioner is responsible for implementing the State Government's programmes and policies at the grass root level and collecting information regarding the

needs and facilities to be provided to the general public, their difficulties, redressal etc. and making the government aware of these. In fact, the Deputy Commissioner is the Government at the district level.

- 3) The Deputy Commissioner acts as a link between Central and State Govt. and co-ordinates their programmers. The Deputy Commissioner evaluates the working of all govt. departments within the distt: and looks after the law and order situation in the district.
- 4) In times of any natural calamity like floods, locusts, drought, storms etc, the Deputy Commissioner is the primary relief agency. During the occurrence of natural calamities or during the internal or external disturbances, the Deputy Commissioner calls for military assistance and co-ordinates the efforts of the Civil-Military administration.
- 5) He is Representative of the Government and is responsible for the implementation of Govt. Policies and coordinating different departments.

In addition to above the Deputy Commissioner is responsible to solve all kinds of problems/crises created from natural calamities, such as storm, floods, draught and other incidents etc. procurement of food grains, to attend public functions, protocol duties etc.

AS DISTRICT COLLECTOR

- 1) The Deputy Commissioner is the highest Officer of revenue administration in the district. In revenue matters, he is responsible to the Government through the Divisional Commissioner and the Financial Commissioner, Revenue. He is responsible for the collection of land revenue, other kinds of Government taxes, fees and all dues recoverable as arrears of land revenue.
- 2) He is responsible for ensuring the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date records of rights as regards the land.
- 3) He is also the appointing authority for Patwaris and Kanungos and ministerial staff posted in the tehsil offices, and in the offices of Sub Divisional Officers (Civil) and Deputy Commissioner except in the case of Superintendent of Deputy Commissioner's Office and for most of the subordinate revenue staff in the district. As the District Collector, he is the highest revenue judicial authority in the district.

AS DISTRICT MAGISTRATE

- 1) The Deputy Commissioner as District Magistrate is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the district.
- 2) He is the head of criminal administration and supervises all Executive Magistrates in the district and controls and directs the actions of the police.
- 3) He has supervisory powers over the administration of jails and lock-ups in the district.

AS DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICER

- 1) He is responsible, as District Election Officer, for the peaceful and orderly conduct of all elections held in the district from time to time.

- 2) For elections to Lok Sabha constituency/constituencies of his district, he functions as Returning Officer.
- 3) He is responsible for revision electoral role, issue of identity cards to voters, deletion of names of foreigners from the electoral rule, updating of electoral rule and also responsible for implementation of provisions relating to conduct of election as contained in the constitution of India.

AS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

- 1) He is responsible for maintain **Public Health, Education, Social Welfare**, welfare of **Backward Classes and communities**. Each of these functions is looked after by separate department, headed by specialist officers in the district.
- 2) The various special economic programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranty Act (MNREGA), Samgra Grameena Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), etc. and the poor people's housing scheme Indira Awas Yojana and many other Schemes are implemented by the Zilla Panchayat, Which is headed by Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Panchayat. The Deputy Commissioner does not get a direct role in these schemes. However, since these programmes call for an integrated effort by various field departments at the district level, Public Works Department and Minor Irrigation, Forest etc., the role of D.C. in co-coordinating and guiding their activities is of prime importance for successful implementation of these programmes.
- 3) Social Security measures like Old age Pension, Widows Pension, Maternity allowance to expectant mothers and stipends to physically Handicapped persons, Workmen's compensations matters, rehabilitation of displaced persons under various projects Aids are also carried out.

AS PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OFFICER

The DC is the District Public Grievances officer, in consequence of which he maintains the overall responsibility to ensure proper functioning of all departments in the district.

OTHER POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

In addition to the above, the collector also performs the following functions:

- i) He acts as the District Census officer. Hence, he conducts the census operations once in ten years.
- ii) He acts as chief Protocol officer in the district.
- iii) He presides over the district Plan Implementation Committee.
- iv) He acts as the official representative of the state government during ceremonial functions in the districts.
- v) He acts as a kind of buffer between citizens and administration in the district.
- vi) He supervises the municipal administration in the district.
- vii) He acts the Public Relations Officer of the government.

viii) He is responsible for civil supplies- food and other essential commodities.

ix) He maintains liaison with military authorities and look after the welfare of both serving and retired members of the armed forces.

COLLECTOR'S WORK: SOME CONSTRAINTS

In the performance of his functions, he faces a number of problems and constraints, which inhibit his work. Problems like frequent transfers, increasing workload, political pressures, crisis situations, and individual orientation of Collectors are a few which need to be examined in this context.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Political interference and pressure is another area affecting work of the Collectors. Such pressures are generally brought to restrain the District Administration in cases of land acquisition by the Government or use of judicial support for their followers or issue of gun licenses or permits for scarce commodities like sugar etc. If the District Collectors concede the request, they are accused of partisanship; and if they resist the pressure, they are accused of being insensitive to the requests of the people's representatives. Quite often, resistance to pressures leads to politicization of issues. This may even lead to transfer of the Collectors. This has an adverse effect on performance of the Collector as an agent of change. It also adversely affects their job performance.

- The visiting dignitaries like the Minister frequently interrupt the Collector's work. Protocol requires that the Collector must receive and be available to have discussions with the visiting dignitaries. Thus, protocol duty is another area, which affects the Collector's work to some extent.
- The Civil Servants need to have a tenure, which is long enough to understand the environment, establish constructive relationships, and to implement the development programmes. A well-accepted policy is to retain an officer in a particular place for a period of three to five years. Unfortunately, this policy does not seem to be the practice in case of the Collectors. There are too frequent transfers inhibiting the proper performance of the Collector's functions. For example, in Rajasthan, the average tenure of Collectors was 14.2 months, which is not conducive to attain development objectives. This indicates that they are dislocated before they acquaint themselves with the problems of the district. Some of the Collectors have tenure of less than four months, and there are very few Collectors who enjoy three years of tenure. This type of frequent transfers apart from having a negative influence on the Collector would adversely affect district development administration.
- In the district, the Collector is responsible for the maintenance of law and order. In practice Superintendent of Police, who is the Head of the Police force, in the district looks after this function under the overall supervision of the Collector. Quite often, the people come to the Collector with the complaints about the partisan attitude of the police and their failures. The Collector's association is indirect and minimal after the separation of functions that is judicial and executive. The relations with the police have always been very delicate and sensitive to the Collector. In recent years, police began to resent the control of the Collector in the maintenance of law and order. There have been cases of strained relations between the two.

With increasingly unrest in the rural areas, the role of Collector is becoming increasingly important in the maintenance of peace and tranquility.

The District Collectors should try to overcome these pressures through better relations with the politicians; proper time management; and delegation of work to their subordinates. Some officers make use of the political executives at the district and State levels to iron out the problems in development administration and make positive use of their interactions with the politicians. There are others, who view the intervention as an unwelcome interference in their work and feel disgusted. The performance of the Collector, therefore depends upon his own inclination and orientation towards its development goals. It also depends on his capacity to make use of the environment in the district positively and constructively to undertake his functions. No textbook propositions can be made to overcome some of these constraints.

LAKHINA EXPERIMENT

Need for administrative efficiency and also responsiveness to the community led Mr. Anil Kumar Lakhina, a District Collector, to undertake an exercise to reform district administration. The exercise was done in the Collectorate of Ahmednagar in Satara district of Maharashtra. Some of the changes brought about in the District Administration includes regulation of visitors to the Collectorate; designing the office as per task sequence, making documents available to those who handle them; preparation of desk manuals, weeding out documents which had outlived their usefulness, provision of dust proof and firefighting equipment; motivation and training etc. This experiment revolved around the assumption that attitudinal changes in the administrator can result in effective administration. It sought to link attitudinal changes with physical work and environment. The experiment was undertaken in only one district and possibility of its adoption elsewhere is yet to be proved. But the Lakhina experiment is a pointer that structural changes coupled with attitudinal changes and the 'will' to adopt reforms can bring efficiency in district administration, What is true of the Collectorate is equally true of other administrative organs At the district level.

CONCLUSION

At last we can conclude that the office of Deputy Commissioner is one of the most important designations in India. He is a multipurpose functionary around who revolves the entire administration of the district. That's why all the youths appearing in civil services have a heartiest desire to pass the civil services exams and to become the Deputy Commissioner. However, the constraints emerged cannot be overlooked and his role and status depends on the personality of the Deputy Commissioner, demographic features of district where appointed, level of presence of opposition thereby, as well as the attitude of state Government under which he has to work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Bava, Noorjahan (ed.), (2000) *“Development Policies and Administration in India”*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi
2. Fadia, B.L. (2010) *“Indian administration”* Sahitya Bhawan Publication, New Delhi
3. Jain, R.B. (ed), (1980) *“District Administration”*, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi

4. Lakhina, Anil Kumar, (1984) "*Reforms in the Collectorate of Ahmadnagar (Maharashtra - A Report)*", The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. XXX, No. 2 , April-June, 1984
5. M. Laxmikanth (2008) "*Public Administration*" Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing company Ltd., New Delhi
6. Maheshwari, S.R. (2003) "*Indian Administration*", Orinet Longmans Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi