

ASSAM

MANIPUR

Kolasib

Mamit

Aizawl

Lalneihzovi

Champhai

**District Administration**

in

**Mizoram**

Lunglei

Saiha  
(Siaha)

BADESH

A Mittal Publication

District is the administrative unit of the state government in India with which every citizen comes into contact. It is the level at which the policies are made into practice and the problems of local people are studied and communicated to the government. It is the district that the big and complex administrative machinery of government is in operation and it is by its accomplishments at this vital centre that the extent of success of governmental policies, plans and programmes are measured.

The book is divided systematically into eight chapters. The first chapter deals objectively with a theoretical concept of District Administration and traces its evolution from ancient period till date in India. Also highlighting the functioning of the district administration in the North-Eastern region. The remaining seven chapters deal with Mizoram in general and the Aizawl District in particular during the period of 1972-1995. The basic thrust of the study is to find out as to what extent the district administration has come up to the expectations of the people in the Aizawl District and to suggest certain recommendations in order to make district administration responsive, change, goal and result oriented in the management of the affairs of the people. This will be very useful for policy makers, practitioners, teachers, scholars and students, and to all those interested in public administration studies.

Rs. 350



LALNEIHZOVI (b. 1966), M.A., Ph.D. (Public Administration) is Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration, Mizoram University, Aizawl. She has been teaching Public Administration for more than seventeen years at the post-graduate level.

She has participated in several local, regional, national and international seminars, conferences, workshops and contributed many scholarly and research papers. She has a few papers published to her credit including an edited volume on *Role of Ropuilliani in the Freedom Struggle*.

She is a member of some academic bodies of this University and also a life member of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Mizoram Regional Branch, (New Delhi) and New Public Administration Society of India, Warangal.

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# DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN MIZORAM



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## THE AUTHOR

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**DISTRICT  
ADMINISTRATION  
IN  
MIZORAM**

**—A Study of the Aizawl District**

**LALNEIHZOVI**



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*Dedicated to*

My husband  
**ANDREW LALSANGZUALA**  
and sons  
**ALAN LALRINAWMA**  
&  
**ALBAN LALFAKAWMA**

## FOREWORD

---

Public Administration touches all of us and herein lies the need for a well organised, efficient and responsive administration at various levels. I congratulate Dr. Lalneihzovi for bringing out this well-organised treatise in the form of a book dealing with structure-function of public administration at district level in general, and that of the Aizawl District of Mizoram, in particular.

The book is organised into eight chapters. The first chapter deals with the concept of public administration and how district administration has evolved from ancient times till today in India. The remaining chapters focus on Mizoram, particularly the profile of Aizawl district administration covering 1972-1995 period in detail. This provides a window for us to look into the organisation and functioning of Aizawl district administration in terms of law and order, revenue, development activities (Irrigation, Health and Family Welfare, Education, Rural Development, Food and Civil Supplies, Transport), and village and urban administration.

I enjoyed reading this book, and I am sure, teachers, students, policy makers, administrators and public at large would find it a valuable resource. It is necessary to fully understand organisation and working of a system to identify its strong and weak points. This enables us to fine tune the organisation for optimum performance.

**PROF. A.N. RAI**  
*Vice-Chancellor*  
Mizoram University,  
Aizawl.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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This empirical administrative profile of the Aizawl District during the period of 1972-1995 would not have been completed without the help, guidance and cooperation of some dignified personalities and family members. So I warmly express my deep sense of gratitude to all those people, who have helped/ supported me in preparing this volume. First of all, I acknowledge my deep sense of gratefulness to my supervisor and guide to Dr. R.N. Prasad, Professor and Head, Department of Public Administration, the then North Eastern Hill University, Mizoram Campus, Aizawl and thereafter Professor and Head, Department of Public Administration, Mizoram University, Aizawl and the first Dean, School of Social Sciences and presently Professor, Department of Public Administration for his constant inspiration, encouragement, keen interest, academic guidance and supervision, and a plenty of precious and valuable time that he has all along provided to me for this academic work, being a first of its kind.

I shall be failing in my duties if I do not express my profound sense of gratefulness and respectful regards to Prof. Arvind K. Sharma, Former Founder Vice-Chancellor, Mizoram University, Aizawl who has always inspired, encouraged, guided and helped/suggested me in various ways to complete this research work.

I wish to sincerely thank my husband Andrew Lalsangzuala, sons Alan Lalrinawma and Alban Lalfakawma, my father and mother H. Thanmawia and Malsawmi (Late) and my in-law parents H. Raltawna and Rita Neihpuii for the constant support, encouragement, and help in various forms that I received from them without which it would have been quite a painstaking task for me.

I am also thankful to Mittal Publications for bringing out this volume with great care.

**LALNEIHZOVI**

## ABBREVIATIONS

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AAI	Assistant Agriculture Inspector
AAJ	Antyodaya Anna Yojana
ACR	Annual Confidential Reports
AD	Agriculture Demonstrator
ADC	Additional Deputy Commissioner (Judicial)
ADM	Additional District Magistrate
ADS	Assistant Director of Survey
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse and Midwifery
AO	Administrative Officer
APO	Assistant Project Officer
ASO	Assistant Settlement Officer
ADTO	Assistant District Transport Officer
AEO	Agriculture Extension Officer
BDO	Block Development Officer
BE	Bachelor of Engineer
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
BNLF	Bru National Liberation Front
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CA	Circle Assistant
CC	Chief Commissioner
CEM	Chief Executive Member
CEO	Chief Electoral Officer/Chief Executive Officer
CHC	Community Health Centre
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CO	Circle Officer
CPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CS	Chief Secretary
CSS	Centrally Sponsored Scheme

DAO	District Agriculture Officer
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DCC	District Council Court
DCO	District Census Officer
DCSO	District and Civil Supply Officer
DDST	Deputy Director Supply and Transport
DDO	Drawing and Disbursing Officer
DDS	Deputy Director of Survey
DEO	District Election Officer/District Education Officer
DIC	District Industry Centre
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DMO	District Medical Officer
DPC	District Planning Committee
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
DTO	District Transport Officer
EAC	Extra Assistant Commissioner
EAS	Employment Assurance Scheme
EM	Executive Magistrate/Executive Member
EO	Election Officer
ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
FAO	Finance and Account Officer
FCI	Food Corporation of India
FM	Farmer Manager
FPS	Fair Price Shop
GCI	Galvanized Corrugated Iron
GAD	General Administration Department
GOI	Government of India
GOM	Government of Mizoram
HA	Head Assistant
HC	High Court
HPC	Hmar People's Convention
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
IAY	Indira Awaas Yojana
ICAR	Indian Council of Agriculture Research
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IGP	Inspector General of Police
ILP	Inner Line Permit
ILR	Inner Line Regulation

IPC	Indian Penal Code
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
ISRH&HO	Innovative Streams for Rural Housing & Habitat Development
IWDP	Integrated Wasteland Development Programme
JGSY	Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana
JE	Junior Engineer
KVI	Khadi and Village Industry
KVK	Krishi Vighyan Kendra
LAD	Local Administration Department
LC	Lushai Clerk
LDC	Lower Division Clerk
LG	Lieutenant Governor
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
LLM	Master of Laws
LSC	Land Settlement Certificate
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of Surgery
MCS	Mizoram Civil Service
MDC	Mizo District Council
MEd	Master of Education
MHIP	Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl
MIE	Mizoram Institute of Education
MLA	Mizoram Legislative Assembly
MMS	Mizoram Ministerial Service
MNF	Mizo National Front
MP	Member of Parliament
MPC	Metropolitan Planning Committee
MR	Master Roll
MST	Mizoram State Transport
MVI	Motor Vehicle Inspector
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NEHU	North Eastern Hill University
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NLUP	New Land Use Policy
NOAPS	National Old Aged Pension Scheme
NPC	National Police Commission
NPIC	National Programme on Improved Chulha
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
OSD	Officer on Special Duty

PDC	Public Distribution Centre
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PLRC	Pawi-Lakher Regional Council
PMGYGA	Pradhan Mantri Grammodaya Yojana Gramin Awaas
PMRY	Prime Minister Rojgar Yojana
POs	Political Officer(s)
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PWD	Public Work Department
RBI	Reserve Bank of India
RO	Returning Officer
SC	Sub-Centre
SCERT	State Council of Education Research and Training
SDAO	Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer
SDF&CSO	Sub-Divisional Food & Civil Supplies Officer
SDM	Sub-Divisional Magistrate
SDM&HO	Sub-Divisional Medical & Health Officer
SDO	Sub-Divisional Officer
SGRY	Samporna Grameen Rojgar Yojana
SGSY	Swarnjayanti Gram Samridhi Yojana
SGV	Senior Gram Sevak
SHC	Subsidiary Health Centre
SMS	Subject Matter Specialist
SP	Superintendent of Police
SRID	State Institute of Rural Development
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SSO	Survey Settlement Officer
TB	Tuberculosis
THW	Leprosy Temporary Hospitalisation Ward
TRI	Tribal Research Institute
UDC	Upper Division Clerk
UT	Union Territory
VC	Village Council
VDP	Village Defence Party
YMA	Young Mizo Association

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# DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

## —Concept and Evolution

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Today India consists of 593 districts (Census of India, 2001) and each district consists of about thirteen hundred villages. Average area covered under a district is about eleven thousand square kilometers, while some of the districts cover an area as large as forty thousand square kilometers, there are some districts having areas as small as a few hundred square kilometers. There are 5,470 Sub-districts, 5,161 towns and 638,588 (Census of India, 2001) villages in the country. District, hence as a unit of administration, is neither too large nor too small an area to enjoy competence/autonomy. It is just the "optimum unit" that can draw sufficient resources and the technical know-how that are needed for the efficient administration, and to maintain the right balance between homogeneity and diversity that is needed for sustaining an active elite group. It is the first level in the country where the officials try to implement the planned programmes. Therefore, District is the level at which the government machinery is represented in its totality. It is the cutting edge of the administrative machinery since it implements all the policies formulated by the State and the Central Governments. It is the first level in the administrative hierarchy at which plans and policies are formulated and implemented. The formulations of all the plans and the policies by the State and Central Governments requires huge amount of data which can be collected and compiled most effectively at the district level due to its optimum size and the fact that each and every department of the Government is represented at the district level. District is also the first level in the hierarchy of administration in India at which the administrative machinery both

the Central and the State Governments comes in direct contact with the people. It is the level at which the image the Government is formed. Any inactivity on the part of the district administration is directly manifested in the form of decrease in the popularity of the Government. Thus, every village and town in the country forms a part of the district.

As regards the meaning of district, the basic territorial unit of administration in India is the district and 'district administration' is 'the total management of public affairs within this unit.' According to the Chamber's Dictionary, a district is "a sub-division of a division". The Oxford Dictionary defines, a district as a "territory marked off for special administrative purpose." From the stand point of Government a district is defined as "a sufficiently large territory with an overall unity, governed by common historical, geographical, social and economic conditions." To S.S. Khera, "District administration is total functioning of a government in a district; that total and complex organisation of the management of public affairs at work, dynamic and not static in the territory of a geographically demarcated district—District administration includes all the agencies of government, the individuals, officials and functionaries, public servants—all institutions for the management of public affairs in the district—all the bodies corporate such as the panchayats at different kinds—all advisory bodies associated with the administration."<sup>1</sup> The size of a district varies from state to state but the functions and roles of the district administration are more or less the same in the country.

There are various types of district. The largest number is that of Rural District, as the average district in India continues to be on the whole a rural district. Then there is Urban District where the local administration concentrates more on urban areas and on urban problems. Delhi can be cited as an example for this type. In the third place, we find Industrial Districts which are found in highly industrialised areas. Such district are mostly discernible in Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana, Maharashtra, West Bengal etc. Backward Districts constitute the fourth type. They are those districts where the local do not enjoy those opportunities or advantages, which are the monopoly of more developed areas e.g., education, health, electricity etc. Finally, there are the Hill Districts where the pattern of living and that of local administration, differs from those of the districts which are situated in the plains areas. Therefore, a number of districts constitute the mixture of these different types. Briefly, District Administration means the management of the task of

government so far as it lies within an area legally recognised as a district. In broad, this task can be categorised into five kinds viz., Revenue, Magisterial, Judicial, Executive and Development. The district has been placed under the charge of a district officer—called either Deputy Commissioner or District Collector or District Magistrate (if he is endowed with judicial powers)—who virtually acts as the eyes, ears and arms of the State Government. A district has also been the unit of administration for various other departments of the State Government. Thus, many state functionaries like the Superintendent of Police, Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, District Agricultural Officer, District Medical Officer, etc. are located at the district headquarters and the jurisdiction extends to the district. The district is, thus, a multiple one, having a galaxy of officers for administering the affairs of Government. There are, to be sure, some notable exceptions to this general arrangement. The unit of administration of the department of irrigation, for instance, is not co-terminus with the district; the unit follows channels of irrigation quite often transcending district boundaries, agencies operating in the district come under the coordinating discipline of the District Collector.<sup>2</sup>

In the present age of development administration, the districts do face a change in the ecology of administration; those in charge of the district, in turn, face a challenge in their new role as change agents. A part from this, District Administration has even assumed greater significance in the light of the growing emphasis on development planning and the implementation of welfare and development programmes through process of democratic decentralization. Consequently, the problems relating to district organisation and the efficient functioning of administration have increased tremendously, and these have at times defied adequate and appropriate solutions.

By the end of seventies and early part of eighties, District Administration got added dimensions so as to function as a real and effective instrument of change and development. This perhaps has been reflected in the policy statements of successive governments and constitution of various committees and commissions to achieve the goal of decentralized planning and democratic institutions up to the grass-roots level. Behind all these efforts, the main concern has been to make District Administration action and development oriented and to make it responsive to the hopes and aspirations of teeming millions in the countryside. The vision and expectations of the founding

father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi could not get the proper hearing by the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and only a lip service was given to decentralization and responsive District Administration. As a result, after Independence instead of adopting the bottom-up approach to all the developmental activities at the district level, the policy planners and implementors opted for 'top-down' approach and trickle down theory which resulted in dismal performance at the development front.<sup>3</sup>

However, district administration has now evolved into a fairly/ clearly establishment, conforming to the total purpose and apparatus of government in the district. The purpose is of mainly three: the maintenance of law and order, the revenue administration and the socio-economic development of the people of the district without discrimination of any sort. Briefly, district administration being a principal point of contact between the citizen and the processes of government constitutes its vital importance in the nation's governance. District, hence today, has emerged as the most important unit of administration.

### **Evolution of District Administration**

District is a key unit of the State government in India. It has always existed as the administrative unit in some form throughout the long history of the country. For instance, the code of Manu describes the general form of administration which starts with the village as the basic unit. He describes the village as a more or less self-contained republic, a social group in a state of stable economic equilibrium, a political group running its own affairs as a community in a state of balance. Each village had its headman. About one thousand villages formed a district and was in the charge of separate official. "The figure of thousand is of significance because even today it closely approximates the all India average of about 1100 villages to a district."<sup>4</sup> The Mauryas, Guptas and others established the historically identified empires/kingdoms in India to administer their huge dominions efficiently and effectively. They divided the empires/kingdoms into provinces, which were further sub-divided into districts known as 'ahars', 'vishyas' and 'pradeshas'. The districts were under sthanikas or Rajukas during the Mauryan period and under Vishayapatis during the Guptas. The Vishayapati administered the state business in the district. He collected taxes and revenues and maintained law and order for which purpose the Vishayapati commanded a small military force. The term 'Bhakti' or 'Mandal' perhaps corresponds to modern commissioner.<sup>5</sup> Pathaka was a unit lower to the Vishaya which can be compared to a modern sub-division or tehsil.<sup>6</sup>

During the Mughal period, the duty of overall administration of a district including revenue administration and law and order administration belonged to a district level officer known as "Karori Faujdar".<sup>7</sup> The district themselves were known as "Sarkar" where the name itself suggests the presence of the Government machinery in its totality at the district level. "Amil" or "Amalguzar" used to be there discharging his duties as a chief revenue officer at the district level. His duty was to encourage the raiyats to bring waste lands into cultivation and to take all such measures as he deemed necessary for the promotion of agriculture and the protection of peasants either against natural calamities or the oppressive conduct of groups and individuals. He was authorized to advance loans to the peasants and supervise the work of the district treasurer. He also exercised certain degree of judicial authority in the settlement of disputed claims during assessment. But he was neither a judicial officer nor the chief executive officer of the Sarkar. There was Qazi and Mir Adil to perform civil judicial function of Government in the district. "Kotwal" used to be the chief judicial and police officer of the Sarkar and used to assist Karori Faujdar in the discharge of his duties as the revenue officer. Alongwith these officials, there were Zamindars too who used to function more or less as a semi-official agency, operating locally in subordination to the Karori Faujdar. They were entrusted with revenue collection to the treasury in return for fixed payments and they also assisted Faujdar in the preservation of peace, by placing at his disposal the entire rural police contingents employed for revenue collection or night patrolling by them (Zamindars). This system of administration was found to be advantageous by the Mughals, since it was very economical. There were no expenses for the maintenance of police force and the maintenance of administrative machinery.

When the British came to India and acquired territories through conquest or otherwise, they needed a machinery to collect the revenue from the areas occupied by them. They, however, found the system of administration adopted by the Mughals as defective. The fault with the system was, as Warren Hastings wrote in 1772, that the district bureaucracy mostly depended on the military and financial resources made available to it locally. It was hence found to be paralysed whenever Zamindars and other landed classes or interests chose to withhold these resources and declared themselves as independent. The absence of any form of control by the provincial and district administration led to the unchecked independence of the Zamindars. Hence, according to him, the need was there to have a strong police administration as well as a strong district administration

at the district level. For this purpose, he created a new office of District Collector. The Collectors were appointed "to supervise the revenue collections and to preside in the courts" following the historic decision of the East India Company to "stand forth as diwan and to take upon themselves, by the agency their own servants, the entire care and administration of the revenues".<sup>8</sup> Warren Hastings under the Regulations of May 14, 1772 created the office of the District Collector. Thereafter they began to be appointed to man the district administration.

The post of District Collector was abolished in 1773 due to some administrative reasons. There followed a period of centralization of revenue administration. This system, however, did not work properly and the District Collectors had to be brought back in 1781, but with much reduced authority. As a result, in 1786, a rational scheme was adopted. Accordingly, districts were organized into regular fiscal units, each under a Collector. Again, in 1787, "leaving aside a few districts, the Collectors were also vested with magisterial powers and could try criminal cases within certain limits".<sup>9</sup>

In 1793 this arrangement was altered by Lord Cornwallis, that is, the combination of executive and judicial functions in one and the same functionary. However, it applied to Bengal only. Later on, the Collector was divested of his magisterial and judicial functions which along with police and general administration were assigned to a Judge-Magistrate. Henceforth, the Collector was only a collector of land revenue and the District Judge and Magistrate became the head of the district. In contrast to the Cornwallis system, there was the Munro School of Thought about District Administration. This School as opposed to the former believed in Mughal tradition of concentration of power in the hands of District Officer. It regarded itself as an inheritor rather than an innovator. It believed that: the *ryot*, government must be represented simply; not by a multiplicity of written forms but by a single officer who has powers to enquire, to judge and to punish without delay and intricacies of the western legal process.<sup>10</sup> Munro was of the view that "in India whoever regulates the assessment of the land really holds in his hand the mainspring of the country".<sup>11</sup> The District Collector became the real and effective head of the district and was responsible for the general administration and the welfare of the people in his charge under the Munro system. As a result, the non-covenanted posts of Deputy Collectors and Deputy Magistrates were created to provide participation to the Indian in 1833 and 1843 respectively.<sup>12</sup>

The office of the District Collector underwent a change once again in 1859 mainly due to uprising of 1857, and it preferred the

Munro system. This change had reunited the office of the Collector and Magistrate on a general plan in the whole country. Therefore, the Collector-Magistrate system which kept changing from time to time, came to stable as a permanent feature of District Administration. This status lasted up to 1919. With the introduction of Dyarchy in 1919, the institution of the District Officer had been reduced and his powers and authority became limited. But, the influence of the Collector in the affairs of the district was not reduced, by and large, by the introduction of Dyarchy.

With the inauguration of provincial autonomy in 1937 under the Government of India Act of 1935, the District Officer ceased to be representative of the British Government and came to be an agent of the popular Government. The change in his position was reflected in corresponding change in the nature of his work. A number of subjects were transferred to the popularly elected governments at the provincial level and they were to be the masters of the District Collector with respect to these subjects e.g. health, education, minor roads etc. Further, as a result of division of political powers under the system of Dyarchy, more and more separate departmental lines began to get established (separate from the office of District Collector) and hence vertical departmental hierarchy going right up from the village level was established. However, inspite of this, the total presence of the Government as a whole continued to be contained within the same old apparatus of the district administration. Office of the District Collector continued to act as a chief coordinating officer at the district level and it provided the mainline of communication between various departments, local self-governing institutions which were established in the later part of the British rule. He had to be engaged more and more in the rural development also for which he was not really trained. Phillip Woodruff writes about this period in his own characteristic style as follows — In the district, things had not changed so violently at anyone moment as might have expected. . . It had been the basic assumption...that a District Officer must concentrate on the first essentials, public order, the swift administration of justice, prompt payment of taxes moderately assessed the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date land records which would prevent disputes. Those had been the front first things.... With the introduction of several schemes for rural development during 1937-39, the Collector was put incharge of these schemes in the villages. Besides, the problems created by the World War II (1939-1945) added new dimensions to the functions of the Collector and imposed several additional responsibilities on him such as recruitment to the armed forces, taking care of their families, civil defence measures, etc. Briefly, it may be said that on the eve of independence, in 1947, the Collector

had become something of jack of all trades. He had no effective control over the activities of specialized departments in the district even though he was generally charged with the satisfactory functioning of each department.<sup>13</sup>

### **District Administration in India**

The office of District Collector/Deputy Commissioner has, however, changed fundamentally in terms of its prestige and powers since independence. The District Administration is directed towards objectives and programmes. Consequently, there are major changes in the structure and the methods of administration owing to three major factors.

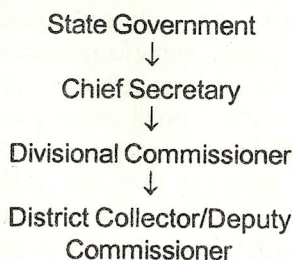
*Firstly*, the adoption of parliamentary form of Government has transformed this institution from being an agent of a paternalistic alien rule into a sensitive instrument of a popularly elected democracy. Democracy... itself generated forces causing a certain re-arrangement of the colonially established hierarchies and processes, both governmental and administrative, wherein District Collector's office could not remain completely unaffected.<sup>14</sup> The office of District Collector "admirably survived the historic role of change from an alien regime to a national one".<sup>15</sup> The constitutional position of the executive being held continually accountable to the legislature has caused an unmistakable concentration of power and authority in the hands of the Minister and his office namely, the Secretariat with the consequence that the District Collector is no longer the final decision maker in many matters as he used to be during the days of the alien rule.

*Secondly*, the environment in which the District Collector necessarily functions today has altered in a basic way. The people ruled by him are no longer so subject, servile, uncomplaining and subordinate as they were during the British period. The District Collector is today increasingly called upon to explain, to convince and to persuade the people, not to coerce them. Also, the political network in the district is much more active, virile and vigilant, thanks to the existence of various political parties in the district. More importantly, the panchayati raj has led to the emergence of a new class of district level politicians who have come to command not inconsiderable patronage and power, even influence over the State Government, thus obscuring even to an extent eclipsing, the position and place of the District Collector in the state administrative system. Once called the eyes and ears of the State Government, today the latter counts on many who act as such, he being only one. Even otherwise, democratic polity suffers no bureaucratic institution to exist and function on what may be called colonial terms.

Thirdly, the District Collector of today is also less adequately equipped for his job the complexity of which has, if any, increased manifold since 1947 than his counterpart of the British era. A member of the Indian Administrative Service is appointed to this post in the fourth or fifth year of his joining the service whereas member of the Indian Civil Service could expect to get charge of a district much later in his career. Besides, as E.N. Mangat Rai has observed, "the work of the Deputy Commissioner has less importance in the entire career of an officer than it did. A member of the Indian Civil Service in the British period. . . could expect to spend 12 to 18 years' work in the district whereas a member of the Indian Administrative Service today may spend an average of 4 to 6 years in this way".<sup>16</sup> Despite these momentous changes overtaking this institution the fact is, as K.K. Dass appropriately remarks, "There is not, and never has been, an official quite like the Collector anywhere else".<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the office of the District fundamentally changed in terms of its prestige and powers since independence. This has come about as a result of simultaneous operation of certain factors: adoption of parliamentary form of government; social and political environment, emergence of a new class of district level politicians owing to the introduction of Panchayati Raj institutions and the District Collector presently being less adequately equipped for his job than his counterpart in the British era due to the increased manifold complexities since independence.

The District Collector belongs to the General Administration Department (GAD) of the State Government while the officials over whom he exercises control and supervision belong to a variety of departments, in the district hierarchy of which he may or may not have a formal assignment. His position is illustrated in the following table.



As head of the district, the District Collector is involved in a network of interrelationships with other district level functionaries. With the latter his relationship may fall in one of the following four categories: (i) Officer whose head at the district level are the Collector

in all matters and who represents departments having no district heads of their own, for example, the Tahsildar; (ii) Officers whose head at the district level is the Collector for only administrative and certain disciplinary matters but who in technical matters are under the control of their own district level officers; for example, District Agricultural Officer, District Excise Officer; (iii) Officers who are themselves heads, at the district level, of their field staff but are made subordinate to the Collector only in certain specified matters. A part from these, they are under the control of their own respective regional officers. The Superintendent of Police, the Civil Surgeon, the Assistant Registrar of Cooperatives, the Executive Engineer of the Public Works Department etc. come under this category; and (iv) Officers, the control over whom does not at all vest in the Collector Labour Officer, Sales Tax Officer, etc.

The District Collector is normally a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). As the IAS consists of (i) direct recruits, and (ii) promotees from State Civil Service, these two sub-groups constitute the two natural sources from which the District Collectors are drawn. The District Collector who was recruited to the IAS directly (that is, through competitive examination) is a young man, usually in his thirties. The post of District Collector is also occupied by officers who were originally recruited to the State Civil Service and who have since been promoted to the IAS. This category belongs to a higher age group. There may also be some District Collectors who are not members of the Indian Administrative Service. Such officers still belong to the State Civil Service but are likely to be promoted to the IAS; or are on verge of retirement, and, therefore, afforded the satisfaction of functioning and, then, retiring—as District Collector.<sup>18</sup>

As has been experienced, the district, which exists today, suffers from various problems and ailments such as structural or organisational inadequacies, administrative process and problems thereof viz., planning, information collection, unity of action, control and coordination, motivation, mobilization of personnel and human resources development, behavioural inconsistencies involving district collector and other officers and the general public, elites, representatives, party functionaries, organised groups, press correspondents, social interests, economic interests of industries, professional groups of doctors, engineers, lawyers, contractors, forest lessees, administrative classes, police officers, judges, magistrates, attorneys and procedural hurdles and bottlenecks, red tapism, delays in justice, “preferred justice” civil procedural hurdles.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly, this pivotal administrative unit and office of the collector have

experienced ups and downs during the course of their long history. The decline in authority and prestige of the District Collector/Deputy Commissioner is not an isolated phenomenon but is part of an all-round decline of institutions and professions caused by the steady erosions of the value system. Despite, it also remains true that by whatever Constitution, India may be ruled, no government will be able to do without the district and its district officer. It may be further added that District, before 1947, was indeed, an image of total government writ small. Professor Richard L. Park says that, "It is not very surprising that independent India saw little reason in 1947 to develop a new organisation. The old administrative pattern was accepted more or less intact."<sup>20</sup> All essential welfare activities for the people are undertaken/performed at the district level. With the introduction of planning and development functions, the district administration has become overburdened, no doubt, but it has been trying to develop/build the country from below.

Most States in India have the Divisions with Divisional Commissioners. The Division is divided into Districts under the charge of Collectors/Deputy Commissioners. Districts in turn are divided into Sub-Divisions under the charge of Sub-Divisional Officers; these are further split into Tahsils/Taluks/Talukas in some State like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu etc. which are headed by the Tahsildars. In Bengal and Bihar/North-Eastern States, there are no Tahsils/Taluks/Talukas and a sub-division is the unit below the districts.

### **District Administration in North-Eastern States**

The North-Eastern States are of eight (8) in number such as Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Assam has, as per 2001 Census of India, twenty-three (23) districts headed by the Deputy Commissioners (DCs). Meghalaya is having seven (7) districts which are also headed by the Deputy Commissioners. There are nine (9) districts in Manipur. The Deputy Commissioners carry out the administration of these districts. Mizoram has eight (8) districts whose heads are Deputy Commissioners. Nagaland comprises eight (8) districts headed by the Deputy Commissioners. Tripura has four (4) districts. The administration of the four districts are carried out by the Deputy Commissioners. There are thirteen (13) administrative districts in Arunachal Pradesh headed by the Deputy Commissioners. Sikkim has only four (4) districts. The Deputy Commissioners head the district administration. The Deputy Commissioners who are the executive

heads of the districts in all the eight States of the north-eastern region either belong to the cadre of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) or State Civil Services. Since these are the cadre posts, the officers of IAS cadre are normally assigned responsibilities to carry on the district administration in all the federating units of India. In order to assist the executive heads of the districts in the carry out of their manifold functions and responsibilities, there are a number of functionaries (both gazetted and non-gazetted) posted to the districts headquarters. As regards the Deputy Commissioner's functions in India including the North-Eastern States, they discharge multiple functions like those pertaining to collectorate, magisterial, regulatory functions, conduct of elections to Lok Sabha/Assembly/Local Bodies/District Councils, maintenance of law and order, revenue, arms/ammunitions licence and their renewal, registration of marriage, implementation of government orders, relief works, looking after Development Blocks especially in the hills States of the North-Eastern region, co-operation and co-ordination with the officers of the technical and development departments in the Districts in order to achieve the success of the on going schemes/projects in the Districts. They are, now, no longer heads of the technical and development departments. They have the powers to appoint, transfer and post government officials within their jurisdictions. Besides, they have to maintain a good relationship with the elected representatives, political leaders, public and press. After transformation of the country into a welfare state, the Deputy Commissioners have to be responsive to the needs of the people. They should not have hesitation in looking into those cases promptly, which are referred to him by the Legislators and other elected representatives for disposal. After all, the elected representatives/legislators are spokesmen of the people and they are responsible to the electorate. There are, however, cases where the politicians in their self interest, are likely to take a narrow view of things and will be unmindful of administrative propriety. In such cases, the Deputy Commissioners should not avoid in resisting pressure. What should be the relationship between the elected representatives and the executives have been aptly summed up by Sardar Patel as follows:

“Do not quarrel with the instruments with which you want to work. It is a bad workman, who quarrels with his instruments.”

As Abhimanyu Singh has rightly said, “the District Officer's job is truly a tricky job. He is standing on a precipice all the time. His actions are under scrutiny, his conduct is under observation, he is

expected to serve several matters at the same time and keep all of them in good humour. It is a stupendous job, indeed, a challenge to his administrative and human abilities."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the Deputy Commissioners in all the federating units of India remain a strong link between the government and the people.

It may be further noted that the powers, functions and responsibilities of the Deputy Commissioners of the Districts in the rest of the country have been curtailed/reduced following the introduction of the provisions of the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 and the Constitution (Seventy-Fourth Amendment) Act, 1992 relating to a set up of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for rural areas and Municipalities for urban areas. Since these Constitutional provisions have not been in operations in some of the hills States of the north-eastern region, the Deputy Commissioners of these Districts enjoy more powers viz., executive and judiciary compared to their counterparts in the plains districts of India. Therefore, an imperative need to bring about a separation between the executive and judicial powers of the Deputy Commissioners is emphasized/suggested, as regards the provisions of the Directive Principle of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution of India.

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