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THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR



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ABSTRACT:

No other institution in India is as much shrouded in the mystery and magic of majestic epithets as the Collector. He has been variously described as *Annadata*, *Maabap*, "representative and agent of Government", "general manager of all Government activities", "eyes and ear (and sometimes arm) of Government". The study observes, a wide range of factors were responsible for a special status being accorded to the Civil Service in the governance of the country. These included the nature of the Service as an abiding national network; its exposure in the broadest spectrum of public administration through live handling of issues at the center and

industries in the states; and its merit and capability. It would be worthwhile to estimate the performance of the Civil Service in the light of the above mentioned factors.

KEYWORDS

District Collector, Civil Service, public administration.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Civil service refers to the body of government officials who are employed in civil occupations that are neither political nor judicial. The concept of civil service was prevalent in India from ancient times. The Indian bureaucracy, with its national character, has been a strong binding force to a Union of States. The civil service system has rendered yeoman service to the overall socio-economic development of the country, which has been at the forefront of development process. It has not only played a pivotal role in structuring and activating policies but also ensured basic service delivery at the cutting edge of government-citizen interface.

No other institution in India is as much shrouded in the mystery and magic of majestic epithets as the Collector. He has been variously described as *Annadata*, *Maabap*, "representative and agent of Government", "general manager of all Government activities", "eyes and ear (and sometimes arm) of Government", "the Kingpin of administration" "the Key-stone of the arch of District Administration", "the captain (sometime non-playing) of the team", "the man on the spot", "the area specialist", *primus inter pare*, "the first citizen in the district", "the supreme head of the District Administration", and more recently in more benevolent terms, like "friend, philosopher and guide", "adviser, educator and helper", "the fulcrum of grassroots democracy", "the main-spring of development" and "the director of the Rath of Lord Jagannath (the Rath of Panchayati Raj)". Many of these are attributes of a bygone age; others are a hangover of the past, and quite a few are already getting eroded by the wind of change. And yet, the undefinable charismatic aura continues to linger.

The functions of the District Collector are many and varied, which is not a new phenomena. The fact is that the office of District Collector was designed to be an open-ended institution which it has always remained. According to Sir Edward Blunt:

The district officer has many executive duties of which, it is impossible to give a complete list for they vary from place to place and from season to season... And when Government has evolved some scheme for benefiting the people he will be requested to first to advise on it and in due course to put it in operation. In times of stress, the burden of his responsibilities becomes well-nigh intolerable... Whatever the trouble may be, the district officer must see to it. In the old Roman formula, he must take care that the state suffers no harm. He must prevent the trouble, if he can: if he cannot then he must alleviate it, or quell it, or pacify it. He may divide the work but he cannot divide the responsibility, this is his.

As the twofold appellation namely Collector-Magistrate indicates, the Collector has been traditionally associated with revenue and magisterial functions. These functions, however, form only a part of his work as he has also to discharge, as a representative of the Government in the district, several miscellaneous executive duties and anything which cannot be assigned to any other department is cast upon him. He is also associated, in varying degrees, with developmental functions in different States. The functions of the Collector can, therefore, be classified under the following heads: (a) Revenue, (b) Magisterial, (c) Developmental and those relating to Panchayati Raj, (d) As representative of State Government, and (e) Miscellaneous.

(a) Revenue Functions

The Collector started primarily as a Revenue Officer and he continues to be the principal

Revenue Officer and head of the revenue administration. The Collector has primarily been a revenue functionary. On the revenue side, he is responsible for all matters arising out of the collection of land revenue and administration of land. While discharging these functions, he is assisted by a hierarchy of revenue functionaries—Additional Collectors, Sub-divisional Officers, Tehsildars, Naib/Deputy Tehsildars, Supervisors Kanungo and Patwaris and Amins. He is the appointing authority for most of the important subordinate revenue staff in the district and supervises and controls the work of all of them.

As Collector, he is responsible for the collection of main dues such as land revenue, irrigation dues and taccavi loans and other miscellaneous government dues (e.g. excise dues, stamp duties, sales tax, income tax, canal dues) and all other dues which are required to be collected as arrears of land revenue. He, therefore, coordinates the realization of arrears of various taxes and dues within the district on behalf of different taxing departments. For this purpose, the Collector is vested with certain coercive powers like arrest and detention of a debtor for a limited period and attachment and sale of his movable and immovable property. Thus, he is the repository of the final coercive forces of collection. With the help of this function, i.e. collection of land revenue and other government dues, the Collector plays an important role in the manifold relations existing between government and the agricultural classes. He is responsible for the grant and eventual recovery of certain types of loans for agricultural improvement. In the words of P. R. Dubhashi:

The significance of the land revenue function, extended far beyond the physical fact of collection of some amount of money for the public exchequer. The incidence of land revenue was almost universal on the people in the rural areas of the district. It established a bond between the governor and the governed and it provided a starting point of enquiry into the fortunes of the farming families in the district. The Collector could well use the 'Socratic Method' for his *Jamabandi* and enquire into condition of crops, the returns from agriculture, position of indebtedness, expenditure on marriages, and social functions, investment in land, use of the Persian wheel and digging of wells, availability of good animals in the cattle fair, increase in number of holdings and the pressure of population, village feuds and the decision of the caste panchayats, census of land holdings and cattle etc.

Another important aspect of revenue administration is the maintenance of land records. The Collector is responsible for the maintenance of all records of land pertaining to the rights of landowners and the tenants and the incorporation in the record of rights of changes that may take place in such rights from time to time. The Collector is also the recorder of Government property in the district. Besides, the Collector is also responsible for the collection and consolidation of various village statistics for the district and for timely submission of a large number of periodical returns to higher authorities.

In addition to these duties the Collector is also responsible for the welfare of the agriculturalists who form the bulk of the rural population. The revenue administration continues to be the only administration which is most important for them. He keeps in touch with the fluctuations in agricultural prosperity in the rural areas of his district. He is also responsible for taking and suggesting timely remedial action. Whenever, there are agricultural calamities such as floods, water logging, soil erosion, drought, spread of weeds, ravages by wild animals, serious epidemic, cattle diseases, locusts, etc., the Collector has to pay special attention. These have to be taken note of and preventive and remedial action taken.

The Collector has to interest himself in all matters affecting the well-being of the people... A Collector of strong and sympathetic character and with the gift of insight may gain the strongest hold

over the affections and imagination of the peasantry, and tales of his sagacity and good deeds will be told in remote villages many years after his name, has creased to be borne on the civil list of his Province.

The Collector is in overall general charge of the treasury, but the immediate charge is held by the Treasury Officer. The Collector conducts annual verification of the cash and other balances of the treasury. He usually exercises general supervision over the District Treasury.

In the capacity as the chief revenue authority of the district, he is also concerned with the work relating to stamps and registration and excise. In some States such as Haryana, he himself is the District Registrar while in most States, the District Registrar and the Sub-Registrars work under the Collector. The District Excise Officer also works under his administrative control.

The Collector also exercises original and appellate jurisdiction under various revenue laws. In most cases, Additional Collectors and Deputy Collectors specially empowered by the Government take up the case work on behalf of the Collector. However, the Collector also takes up a minimum number of cases, particularly appeals from subordinate courts so that he does not lose touch. The State Government in consultation with the Collector, appoints the District Government Counsel (Revenue) and his deputies.

As far as the authority of land acquisition is concerned, the Collector exercises the statutory powers provided under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. Although this function is an old one, the magnitude of land acquisition has expanded considerably after Independence. As a result of the progress of developmental plans and programmes, land acquisition proceedings are being taken for a variety of schemes such as development of industries, irrigation, resettlement of displaced persons, slum clearance, etc.

After independence the most important change with regard to the revenue administration has been the introduction of land reforms measures. Land reforms normally provide for abolition of intermediaries, security of tenure, ownership rights for tenants, ceiling of agricultural holdings, and distribution of surplus land to the landless agricultural labourers and consolidation of holdings. It is the Collector who is generally responsible for ensuring satisfactory implementation of these measures which are designed to give effect to economic and social objectives embodied in the Constitution. In the words of E.N. Mangat Rai.

In regards to Collectors duties... there have been almost revolutionary changes. Land reforms and tenancy legislation seeks to establish new rights and obligations in land, and the consolidation of holdings operation being together in each village, the fragmented and scattered plots owned by individual families, to assist in efficient agriculture. The result of these two major administrative measures, and others of less importance is that the name 'Collector' now represents, in regard to land problems, a misleading and nominal part of his present duties. These have in fact, expended to a huge administrative venture of economic and social change."

(b) Magisterial Functions

On the magisterial side, he has first-class magisterial powers, although he in fact tries few cases and in many States, none.²³ As District Magistrate, the Collector is responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the district. He is the head of criminal administration in the district although the Superintendent of Police is the head of the police force. The Superintendent of Police is expected to

keep the District Magistrate fully informed both by personal conferences and special reports on matters of importance concerning the peace of the District and the state of crime and to take orders from the District Magistrate who has the prime responsibility for maintenance of law and order. He supervises all executive magistrates in the district, controls the police and supervises their work. He remains in touch with the activities of police department through a series of periodical reports received from the Superintendent of Police. With the exception of some States like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, the District Magistrate writes the annual confidential report on the work of the Superintendent of Police. In some States, the transfer of officers in charge of police stations in the district requires the prior concurrence of the District Magistrate. The District Magistrate and executive magistrates subordinate to him have powers to inspect the police stations located within their jurisdiction. The District Magistrate can also order magisterial enquiries into certain types of complaints against the police for example, in case of death in police custody.

The District Magistrate is concerned to some extent with the administration of jails and sub-jails. He is required to make periodical inspections of the district jail. He is also empowered to order magisterial enquiries in certain cases, for example in case of escape of a prisoner from the jail. He is consulted by the Government before the grant of parole and remission of sentence to a prisoner.

The District Magistrate is responsible for issue of permits and licenses for such things as arms, explosives, petroleum and cinemas. He is also responsible for the issue of passports, extension of visas and control of foreigners.

The Government in consultation with the District Magistrate, appoints the District Government Counsel and his deputies. The District Magistrate controls and supervises their work and ensures satisfactory conduct of cases. Proposals to State Government for appeals against acquittals have also to be sent through the District Magistrate.

In his task of maintaining law and order, the District Magistrate is assisted by Additional District Magistrates, Sub-divisional Magistrates and other Executive Magistrates. Besides the District Magistrate, the Additional District Magistrates and Sub-divisional Magistrates are empowered to issue prohibitory orders under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. These Magistrates also try cases under the preventive sections of the Code such as sections 107 and 145. All these sections are mainly concerned with precautionary measures to prevent breach of public peace and law and order.

The District Magistrate is also generally authorised by the State Government to pass orders under any preventive detention law in force. In some States like Uttar Pradesh, he tries cases under certain miscellaneous laws such as the Control of Goondas Act. Some legislation like the Arms Act and the Essential Commodities Act require the prior sanction of the District Magistrate before the prosecution is launched against the offenders in the courts.

After Independence, one important factor affecting the role of the District Magistrate is the separation of the judiciary from the executive. This reform which was affected after Independence in a phased manner through executive orders in different States has become complete with the coming into effect of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973. This Code created two distinct classes of magistrates, judicial and executive. The category of judicial magistrates was placed under the administrative control of the District and Sessions Judge. The executive magistrates were made subordinate to the District Magistrate. The judicial magistrates try cases under the Indian Penal Code and other miscellaneous criminal laws. The executive magistrates, on the other hand, try cases under preventive sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure, promulgate prohibitory orders under section 144 of the Code and are

concerned with the maintenance of law and order. Consequently, the District Magistrate is relieved of his responsibility in respect of trial of criminal cases. As a result of separation, the District Magistrate has retained only a thin connection with the administration of justice in the district. His relations with the police for maintenance of law and order, however, remain untouched and he still remains the head of criminal administration of the district. Above all, he is responsible for the prevention and suppression of crime and preservation of peace.

(c) Developmental Functions and those relating to Panchayati Raj

The Collector in his capacity as revenue officer and general administrative officer always had a good deal to do with whatever 'development' activity was carried out in the district. Before Independence, relief works like repair and construction of small irrigation sources were undertaken by the Revenue Department. In times of famine or scarcity, various relief works including construction and repair of roads, wells and tanks, were undertaken by the Collector. He was also associated with local government institutions-the district boards and the municipalities. He was expected to supervise the work of the District Officers of education, health and other welfare departments. During the inter War years, as agriculture, co-operation, and other rural development activities began to receive greater attention, he was expected to look after them also.

An era of systematic economic planning and development was ushered in after Independence. The year 1951 saw the beginning of the first Five Year Plan. "From the maintenance of law and order and the collection of revenue, the major emphasis now shifts to the development of human and material resources and the elimination of poverty and wants". The year 1952 witnessed the introduction of the Community Development Programme and National Extension Service. For the successful implementation of these programmes it was considered essential to harness into service the traditional prestige and position of the Collector. The Collector, whose duties had so far been regulatory in character, was asked to take upon himself the functions of promoter and coordinator of all development activities. This completely changed the emphasis of his functions and development became the main item of his work.

The Balwantrai Mehta Study Team on Community Development and National Extension Service, which in fact gave shape to the concept of Panchayati Raj envisaged the following role for the Collector:

At the district level, the Collector or the Deputy Commissioner should be the captain of the team of officers of all development departments and should be made fully responsible for securing the necessary co-ordination and co-operation in the preparation and execution of the district plans for community development. Where he is not already empowered to make the annual assessment of the work of the departmental officers in regard to their co-operation with other departments, their speed in work, their dealings with the people and their reputation for integrity, he should be invested with such powers.

As a result of the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Study Team Report (1957), the position of the Collector in the field of development underwent a change. The Committee, inter-alia, recommended a three-tier system for democratic decentralization Zilla Parishad at the district level, Panchayat Samiti at the Block level and Village Panchayat at the village level. Though the Committee had recommended that the Collector should function as the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad, a different

view gradually began to emerge which was opposed to the retention of the Collector in any dominant position in the Panchayati Raj set up which, it was felt, would not be inconsonance with the spirit of decentralisation. The position of the Collector in relation to Panchayati Raj Institutions varies from State to State. Broadly speaking, the following five patterns have emerged.

- (1) In Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh the Collector is kept out of the Zilla Parishad.
- (2) In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the Collector is entitled to attend the meetings of the Zilla Parishad and its standing committees but without right to vote.
- (3) In Assam, Punjab and Rajasthan the Collector is a non-voting member of the Zilla Parishad.
- (4) In Andhra Pradesh the Collector is a member of the Zilla Parishad and also the Chairman of all its Standing Committees.
- (5) In Tamil Nadu, the Collector is the Chairman of the District Development Council and the Zilla Parishad.

There is, thus, a broad variation in the Collector's powers and functions with regard to Panchayati Raj Institutions. All States, except Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, however, show unanimity in granting to the Collector certain kinds of powers (both negative and positive) under special circumstances in the panchayati raj legislation. He has the power to direct execution of any work immediately required for the safety of the public or for implementation of development programmes. He also has the power to suspend a resolution of the Zilla Parishad or Panchayat Samiti if its execution is likely to endanger human life or cause suffering to the people. The following analysis of one State Punjab-holds good in the case of other States (except Maharashtra and Gujarat) as well.

While there is unanimous agreement that as head of the district, he must associate himself fully with, and do all in his power to further their programmes, his exact sanctions are not quite clear. He is certainly expected to use the maximum influence and guidance to help the councils and direct their staff. The need for his presence is thus conceded: a fuller definition of his powers remains to worked out.

In Maharashtra and Gujarat, all development activities in the local sector have been entrusted to Panchayati Raj institutions. The district level officers of development departments concerned with these activities work under the administrative control of the Chief Executive Officer (called District Development Officer in Gujarat) of Zilla Parishad. The Chief Executive Officer/District Development Officer has thus emerged as the coordinator of development activities in the district in these two States. The Collector, however, still remains the coordinator in respect of development activities in the state sector. In the remaining States, the Collector is associated, in varying degrees, with development functions and he continues to be entrusted with the task of administrative coordination of the work of district level officers of developmental departments. Some States like Tamil Nadu have considerably strengthened his role in the field of development. Some States viz., Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa have abolished Zilla Parishads.

The Collector is also an important link between the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the State Governments. While he has to bring to the notice of the Government the needs and aspirations of the people as articulated by the members of these institutions, it is his task to see that priorities and targets

laid down by the State Government are adhered to by these institutions. The Collector has also been given certain powers with regard to Panchayati Raj Institutions. In all States, except Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the Collector can suspend resolutions of the Village Panchayat. In Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the Collector can suspend the resolutions of the Panchayat Samiti also. In Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, he has the power to remove office bearers of village Panchayat. As regards the suspension or dissolution of Panchayati Raj bodies, the Collector can exercise this power in Haryana and Orissa in case of the Village Panchayat only. In most States the Collector has been given powers to inspect and supervise the work of Panchayati Raj bodies. Again, in practically every State the Collector has been entrusted with powers (i) to suspend resolutions of the Zilla Parishad or Panchayat Samiti if their execution is likely to cause danger to human life, health or safety or is likely to lead to a breach of peace, and (ii) to direct the execution of certain classes of work or resolution.

After the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, December 1992, the relationship of District Collector is likely to change immensely. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has given enough scope to the State governments to set forth the yardsticks of the relationship of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the District Collector. Accordingly, some States have created the post of Chief Executive Officer and some States have opted for District Development Officer or Deputy District Commissioner. In the same direction some states have kept District Collector out of the purview of District Planning Council and some other States have made him part of the District Planning Council. However, what could be the final shape of the relationship between the District Collector and the Panchayati Raj Institutions could be determined only when the Panchayati Raj Institutions under new dispensation start functioning.

(d) Collector as Representative of State Government

The Collector has generally been accepted as a representative of the Government at the district level. His recommendations in all matters carry weight. There is considerable protocol work that devolves on the Collector. The visits of Very Important Persons (VIPs) to the district take a great deal of his time, particularly in bigger places of religious or historical importance and those located on national highways. Being the official representative of the Government, the Collector is supposed to make arrangement regarding these visits. This work has considerably increased after Independence. State Governments have issued detailed instructions regarding the level of representation for receiving and seeing off the Very Important Persons.

The Collector also acts as the chief grievances officer in the district. "He is the representative of the Government in the large area under his charge, in the eyes of the public, he embodies the power of the 'State' or 'Sarkar', and it is to him that they primarily look to redress their grievances and to promote their welfare". The difficulties and grievances in respect of all the departments as well as matters concerning private disputes existing amongst citizens are freely brought before him. Somehow, people do look to him to redress grievances in all sorts of matters whether he is directly connected with them or not.

The Collector is, therefore, called upon to play some kind of an 'Ombudsmanic' role as between the citizen and the administration and as between citizen and citizen. He receives a large number of visitors at headquarters as well as at his camp when he is on tour in the interior areas of the district.

According to an instruction issued by almost every State Government, the Collector has to do a certain minimum touring during a year. During these tours he, inter alia, inspects revenue offices, Block Development Offices and police stations, checks land records makes spot inspections and take action on the complaints brought before him by the public. In the words of L.S.S.O' Malley:

The value of personal visits cannot be exaggerated for they serve as a tonic to the District Officer by substituting favourable impressions for the unfavourable views he may derive from work at headquarters and they are highly appreciated by the villager, who has a prepossession for personal government. He wants to see and talk to the representative of Governments, and to know that he is actually heard; he suspects that a written petition may never reach the District Officer for whom it is intended, and the pen in any case is a poor substitute for personal access.

After Independence this function has gained even greater importance owing to the proliferation of Government Departments and increase of their powers over the citizen.

As the official representative of the State Government the Collector has certain important functions to perform with regard to urban local bodies namely, municipalities, notified area committees, town area committees. The Collector coordinates the work relating to the conduct of municipal elections. The budgets of local bodies and their requests to the Government for grants, assistance etc. are scrutinized in the office of the Collector. He also looks after the utilization of these grants and has the power to inspect these institutions. In case of mismanagement or any serious irregularity he can advice the Government to take suitable action against the local body which may even extend to its supersession. He can also stay the execution of any resolution passed by these bodies if its implementation, in his opinion, is likely to result in breach of peace. It should ,however, be noted that these powers of supervision and control are not meant to be used for unduly interfering in the internal working of local bodies but are mainly intended to ensure a minimum of good government in the locality.

The Collector has a special role in an emergency and acts as the chief relief officer in the district. "In India it may more truly be said that when the Government wants a hard bit of work done, it calls on the District Officer ... He has not only to discharge the everyday duties of administration ... but also to cope with sudden emergencies of extraordinary diversity". "In times of stress and difficulty, his duties and responsibilities are increased ten-fold". In case of floods, for example, it is his job to take adequate advance precaution for evacuation of flood affected areas and to provide the necessary relief, to victims. In case both of flood and fire, the Collector has wide discretionary powers to afford relief and often he can go beyond them, wherever he considers necessary. In the case of famine, the Collector is the authority under the Famine Code to keep a vigilant watch to stop the signs of developing famine, keep the government fully informed of such a situation and take whatever steps are considered necessary to give relief. In such matters, it is the initiative, zeal and vigilance of the Collector that makes all the difference between speedy relief and tardy help. In times of local or national emergency such as strikes by power or transport personnel in which case it is the Collector who has to take all steps in consultation with the concerned authorities to ensure that essential services are kept going. In the event of grave crises, the Collector is responsible for the formulation and implementation of Civil Defence Plans. In times of food shortages, Civil Supplies and rationing becomes the prime responsibility of the Collector. Thus, the role of the Collector in an emergency is to deal with whatever is most important and to bring to the situation all the authority of the State Government and the prestige of his post. "It is the stature to which the Collector can rise in such situations that determines, in the public

eye, the success or failure of his term of office”.

(e) Miscellaneous Functions

Besides such emergencies, there are other duties which naturally devolve on the Collector and for which he is made responsible. The Collector is the Returning Officer for elections to Parliamentary and Vidhan Sabha Constituencies, and has the responsibility for coordination of election work at the district level. After Independence this function has become very heavy.

The Collector also acts as the District Census Officer. In this capacity he is responsible for conducting census once in ten years. He makes arrangements for appointing enumerators, their training and supply of necessary materials and gets the district census report prepared. This work entails more elaborate arrangements than elections.

The District Collector is also responsible for such work as the National Small Savings or the State Loans floated every year. It is his task to see that the necessary enthusiasm is roused amongst the public for such matters and to ensure that public response is satisfactory. There are also special occasions like the National Defence Fund or the Nehru Memorial Fund in which the District Collector is expected to interest both as the chief official of the district as well as the first citizen.

The control and distribution of food grains and certain essential commodities such as sugar, kerosene, coal, cement etc. has become an important item of work at the district level. The Collector has always been in charge of civil supplies work and whenever scarcities of essential commodities arise, it has been his job to see to their equitable distribution and also take effective steps to prevent the hoarding and black marketing of these commodities. For this purpose he is armed with various powers under the Essential Commodities Act and control orders issued under the Act by the Central and State Governments.

One of the important duties of the Collector is regarding training of junior Indian Administrative Service and State Civil Service officers posted under him. During the British period, Collectors used to take considerable interest in the training of junior officers. As A. D. Gorwala pointed out “... the nature of this unofficial training was somewhat remarkable. A good Collector's house was often a second home to the young Assistant Collector. He was encouraged to drop in of an evening. Hardly ever was the Collector so busy or so occupied with his own avocations that he would not have time for a few words with the young man. While much depends upon the interest taken by the Collector concerned in the training of junior officers, the general impression is that Collectors, particularly in heavy district charges, are not able to pay sufficient attention to this aspect of their responsibility due to increasing work-load. Several State Governments have, issued instructions to Collectors from time to time emphasizing this important aspect of their responsibility.

Even the above list, formidable as it looks, leaves many things unsaid. In fact, functions not specifically allotted to any officer by any department but which nonetheless are required to be performed at the district level, devolve naturally on the Collector. He has to collect information in regard to matters including parliamentary questions concerning his district.

The Madras District Revenue Administration Enquiry Committee (1955) analysed the role of the Collector and concluded:

Speaking generally, a Collector at the present day, for fulfilling his role adequately, has to be prepared to accept as his daily routine hours of work far beyond those usually recognised as official hours. Almost every Collector has more than a fair day's work and he finds no difference between a working day and a holiday. Frequently a Collector has to work from early morning till late at night, even to cope with his normal work. When the routine is upset (as it often is) by something special - the visit of an important personage or an emergency like floods or bad seasonal conditions or something on the law and order side -- arrears accumulate and call for an extra spurt for return to normal.

All this obviously entails an enormous amount of work for the District Collector. In 1959 an effort was made by the Bombay Committee on Reorganization of District Revenue Offices to analyse the Collector's workload. The analysis is interesting.

An average district seems to provide him (Collector) with 2,975 hours (correspondence-1,600 hours, Meeting 200hours, Case hearings 100 hours, Jamabandi and inspections -200 hours, Field inspections - 250hours, Journeys - 240hours, VIPs-80 hours, Daily visitors - 125 hours) of annual work. If we were to allow for Saturdays, half Saturdays, and other holidays, the whole daily work-load comes to about 11.4 hours and if we were only to allow for Sunday, it comes to 9.9 hour. The pressure no doubt is heavy. This has made the general control so tenuous as to become almost ineffective. This position leaves the head of the district in a most dissatisfied state of mind and makes a cynic out of him.

From what has been said above it is clear that civil servants have come to play an important role in a modern state. The functions which civil servants perform are varied and numerous. They collect facts and figures, undertake research, advise the Minister who is new to his job, and make plans to satisfy the needs and requirements of the people. With the expanding activities of the State, their role is also becoming more and more vital. It was not without reasons that Ramsay Muir said: "Parliament is a tool in the hands of ministers and ministers are a tool in the hands of permanent civil service". In India the civil service can play a still greater role and is making efforts to rebuild its shattered economy so that the standards of living of the people may be raised. The civil servant needs a change in his attitude if his role is to be meaningful. The days are now gone when he was a kind of terror to the common man. He is now the humble servant of the people to work for them and help in their welfare. That a change has come about in the outlook of the civil servants, cannot be denied, but still they have to go a long way to make the common man feel that they exist for his welfare and prosperity and that he should cooperate with them in the task of building India, a land of peace, prosperity and Plenty. Jawaharlal Nehru's words should ever ring in his ears. He said, "Administration like most things is in the final analysis a human problem to deal with human-beings not with some statistical data ... Administration is meant to achieve something and not to exist in some kind of an ivory tower following certain rules of procedure and Narcissus like, looking on itself with complete satisfaction. The test is after all the human beings and their welfare". Any assessment of the role and importance of Civil Service, in India's governance needs to take into account the political environment and social reality in which the administrative system has operated. Michael Oakeshott rightly asserted:

We acquire habits of conduct not by constructing a way of living upon rules or precept learned by heart and subsequently practiced, but by living with people who habitually behave in a certain manner; we acquire habits of conduct in the same way as we acquire our native language.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, a wide range of factors was responsible for a special status being accorded to the Civil Service in the governance of the country. These included the nature of the Service as an abiding national network; its exposure in the broadest spectrum of public administration through live handling of issues at the centre and industries in the states; and its merit and capability. It would be worthwhile to estimate the performance of the Civil Service in the light of the above mentioned factors.

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