CHAPTER-III
ROLE OF DISTRICT COLLECTOR IN CHANGING SCENARIO

Before independence, the Indian administrative system was governed by a “ruling bureaucracy” in the sense that the officials combined in themselves a significant measure of political authority with adequate administrative clout. They had unfettered powers and a relatively limited responsibility. The District Collector was the principal functionary, the fulcrum and the pivot of the district administration. He represented the provincial government in its totality. He verily acted as the eyes, ears and arms of the government. Such an overriding role of the Collector was envisaged as early as 1872, exactly a hundred years after the inception of this institution when Sir George Campbell, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal wrote:

It is the Lieutenant Governor’s wish to render the heads of the districts no longer the drudgery of many departments and masters of none but in fact the general controlling authority over all departments in each district... the real executive Chief and Administration of that tract of country committed to him and supreme over everyone and everything except the proceedings of the Courts of justice.  

The institution of District Collector, as it exists today, was created and developed during the British rule and has become a unique feature of Indian public Administration by the time the Country became independent in 1947. Though the political complexion of the country changed after independence; the institution of District Collector was retained. The role and functions of the Collector have multiplied and today in most of the states, he is inundated with multifarious responsibilities. Not only his traditional functions continue to be sustained substantially, his additional responsibilities in the realm of development administration have also increased considerably.

In spite of many structural changes in the office of the district collector ever since its inception in 1772 by Warren Hastings, the district collector functioned as the most decisive officer of the administration throughout the British period. It was through this officer that the colonial state used to 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.⁴

He represented the crown at the district level for all other official responsibilities. The DCs maintained high quality of devotion, dedication, loyalty, integrity and professionalism towards their duties and the Rule. District Collector played very important role in implementation of Lord Cornwallis’ permanent settlement of land records. This was a major landmark in the history of land management in India. As head of police administration of the district, he/she played significant role in containing any disturbances and maintaining peace and order.⁵

On the eve of independence, in 1947, the Collector had become something of a jack of all trades. He had no effective control over the activities of specialist departments in the district even though he was generally charged with the satisfactory functioning of each department.⁶ The old priorities were suddenly gone. The role of the administrative system changed in the context of three major factors, namely democracy, development and decentralization. The Community Development Programme was introduced in the early fifties and the early the three-tier Panchayati raj in the late fifties and the early sixties. Administration was to carry out the policies and programmes for economic development and social change. This implied transformation not only in the aims of administration but also in its means. This together with a rapidly growing population and its rising expectations changed the

⁴ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/District_Collector.
entire nature of district administration. The district administration was no longer the rulers but the servants of the people.  

**CHANGES AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

The office of the District Collector “admirably survived the historic role of change from an alien regime to a national one.” With the adoption of Indian Constitution on January 26, 1950, the country became a welfare state and assumed the role of social benefactor and nation-builder apart from regular of peace and order and collector of revenue. After Independence, in the wake of acceptance of the ideology of the “welfare state” and the technique of planned development, the district magistrate became the District Development Commissioner. There was an increase in the powers of the District Collector. With the introduction of Five Year Plans in 1951, National Extension Programme in 1952 and PRIs in 1957, an era of planned development and public participation in governance was initiated. The representative form of democratic government required holding of free and fair elections at regular intervals for Central and state legislatures and political executives. All these led to wide ranging structural and functional changes in the tasks performed by the DC. Apart from maintaining law and order and revenue administration, the District Collector became the king-pin of all developmental activities right from the district to the ground level. In actual sense he was the Maibaap (parents) of the District, as all roads led to the district headquarters. Before enumerating the functions of the Collector, a brief summary of the official position of this post is given.

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR**

During the British period, the Collector used to belong to the Indian Civil Services. Presently, the District Collector is normally a functionary borne on the cadre of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), and “this is still considered the basic one (One of the) most important responsibilities for which the service is

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A District Collector may, therefore, come from the following backgrounds: officers appointed to the IAS through regular recruitment based on annual competitive examinations; released emergency commissioner/short service commission officers appointed to the IAS through special examinations during the 1960s and the 1970s; and state civil service officers appointed to the IAS through promotion. An officer of the Indian Civil Services (ICS) got his substantive appointment as Collector after acquiring nearly twelve years of experience in various assignments, whereas, a directly recruited officer to the IAS spends the first two years of his service under training and the next two years as sub-divisional officer in charge of a revenue sub-division. Since the post of District Collector is generally a senior IAS scale post, a directly recruited officer becomes eligible for being appointed to a comparatively small and easier district charge in the fifth or sixth year of his service.

As far as transfer of Collectors are concerned, there is perhaps no other functionary with a quicker turnover. In an All India Survey of Collectors conducted by Jack Gillespie in 1962-63 under the aegis of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, it was found that the All-India average length of posting in a district charge was one year eight months. In another study conducted by S.P. Bhatnagar and G.B. Sharma regarding transfer of Collectors in Rajasthan during the period 1956-65, the average State length of posting came to one year two months and six days. This study showed that out of 190 postings of Collectors during the said period, 93 postings (48.9%) were of a duration of less than one year while 24 postings (12.8%) were of a duration of more than two years but less than three years numbered only 3 (1.5%). These studies tend to confirm the general impression that Collectors are frequently transferred. The reasons appear to be lack of suitable transfer policy in respect of Collector post, interference by district level politicians and “increase in utilization of directly recruited officer for secretariat and other non-district requirements.” These developments in the cadre structure and utilization of the IAS,

which is meant to provide the vast majority of Collectors, appear to be of great significance. The Collector today has far more to do than ever before and what is more important, a great deal is expected of him by the Government and the people.  

**ADMINISTERING A DISTRICT**

The District is the lowest administered unit of the Union. The area and population of a district varies from state to state and even within the states/UTs. Administration of the present day district in India is quite a complex affair. The revenue administration directly reports to the DC. The development functions are performed by plethora of district level functionaries who reports to the DC as well as to their departmental heads in the Division or State Headquarters. The DC controls the police through District Superintendent of Police (DSP) to maintain law and order in the district. Various statutes of the Central/State governments give wide-ranging powers to the office of DC. These vary from maintenance and management of land records, collection of land and other government revenues, acquisition of land, maintenance of peace and order, preventive detention and other such measures, implementation of social legislations, conduct of elections, regulation of essential commodities or services etc. The district is, therefore, a multifunctional unit of administration. With the amendment of Criminal Procedure Code in 1973, the magisterial functions of DC were reduced to preventive actions only. The power of committal of accused criminals to the Sessions Courts was transferred to the Judicial Officers.

In the public parlance DC is considered as ‘Mai-Baap’, i.e., parents of the people in the district. For any type of the grievances or injustice, related to all kinds of officers of the Central/State government, DC is approached by the public. It seems as if she/he has the panacea for all ailments in district level governance. This is continuing as the legacy of the British Raj even though the powers of DC have been significantly pruned down over the years after independence.

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FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DC

The District Collector is the Chief Representative of the government in the district. The functions of the District Collector are many and varied, which is not a new phenomenon. Rajani Kothari observes: “The office of the Collector in India is in many ways unique and its supposed stature and authority have engendered a sort of institutionalized charisma that is in some ways unparalleled in modern administrative development.” His functions can be broadly organized under two heads: regulatory and developmental. Regulatory functions include: maintenance of law and order, collection of revenue, magisterial responsibilities (criminal) and general functions.\(^{18}\) The tasks and responsibilities of the present day DC varies from State to State. However, major functions common to many States are as under:

PUBLIC SECURITY, LAW AND ORDER AND PREVENTIVE ACTION

On the magisterial side, he has first-class magisterial powers.\(^ {19}\) The District Collector is in charge of law and order which is the basis of civilized life. Under the Police Regulations, Collector and District Magistrate is the head of Criminal Administration of the District. With the assistance of DSP, she/he maintains law and order in the district. With the prudent application of the powers conferred under various statutes, he takes preventive actions to ensure public peace and tranquility in the district. He has powers to bind down miscreants for good behavior and peaceful conduct, make the preventive arrests under Criminal Procedure Code, impose restrictions on unlawful assembly or impose even curfew that restricts free movement in the declared areas, get the risk to public life removed, order for experiment of hardened criminals from the district boundaries with directions for regular intimation to them local police about the actual whereabouts, issue/suspend/cancel arms licenses, order for preventive arrest under National Security Act if there is threat to public security, grant parole to under-trials/convicted criminals etc. District Magistrate (DM) is the head of the Jail Administration as well in the district.

Additional District Magistrates (ADMs) and Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) assist the DM in carrying out these responsibilities. With the growing discontent among the public regarding provision of civic amenities, caste and


communal tensions, student and labour union agitations, farmers’ movement and political instability over last two decades, tasks of DM to maintain law and order has become more difficult. He has to bank upon the Central Police Forces e.g. Rapid Action Force (RAF), which has expertise in controlling riot or riot like situations and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) apart from the State Armed Police and district police to contain serious law and order deterioration in the district. With the present day scenario of terrorism, militancy, naxalism and separatism going on in some parts of the country, which are major threats to public peace and order, the role of DM further enhances to ensure coordination among intelligence agencies and State as well as Central Police/Armed Forces. This is necessary to ensure effective action against those who disturb the law and order and instill confidence among the public to have their normal day-to-day activities.

As head of criminal justice in the district, DM monitors the progress of prosecutions/acquittals in the district and allows filing of appeal in the criminal cases acquitted by the judicial courts. He also coordinates with the District Judge and District Superintendent of Police to facilitate disposal of criminal cases and serve the interest of the State by ensuring that the judicial courts penalize the guilty.\(^{20}\) The District Collector in his capacity as the district magistrate performs the following functions.

1) To control and supervise the subordinate magistracy.

2) To issue orders when there is threat to public peace and order under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

3) To dispose all the petitions received from the government and orders.

4) To release prisoners on parole.

5) To inspect the jails.

6) To submit an annual criminal report to the government.

7) To grant, suspend or cancel many kinds of licenses like arms, hotel, explosives, Petroleum and others.

8) To grant superior classes to prisoners.

9) To supervise and direct the control local bodies.

10) To control and direct the action of district police.


12) To call the armed forces to aid and assist the civil administration to deal with any abnormal situation in the district.

13) To prosecute offenders under the Factories Act and Trademark Act.

14) To order disposal of unclaimed property.

15) To recommend schemes for the development of forests.

**REVENUE FUNCTIONS**

Under Land Record Manual, DC is the custodian of all land in the district. Historically, collection of revenue has been the first charge (function) of the District Collector as the very title Collector signifies. He is still the head of revenue administration in the district. He is responsible for the collection of revenue to the state government through the Board of Revenue or Revenue Tribunal in Maharashtra and Gujarat or Finance Commissioner in Punjab, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir. As the head of revenue administration in district, the Collector is responsible for following functions:

1) To collect land revenue.

2) To collect other government dues.

3) To distribute and recover taccavi loans.

4) To maintain land records.

5) To collect rural statistics.

6) To exercise the power of land acquisition officer, that is acquiring land for the purpose of colonization, industry, slum clearance, and capital construction and so on.

7) To implement land reforms.

8) To look after the welfare of the agriculturists.

9) To make an assessment of losses of crops and recommend relief during natural calamities like fire, drought and flood.
10) To supervise treasury and sub-treasury.

11) To enforce Stamp Act.

12) To pay rehabilitation grant.

13) To manage government estates.

14) To hear revenue appeals against the orders of lower authorities.

15) To pay Zamindari abolition compensation.

**DISTRICT PLANNING**

DC heads the District Planning Council (DPC). In some States, Chairman of Zila Panchayat (District Board), who is an elected public representative, chairs the DPC. In such cases, DC is the vice-chairman of the Council. This body is responsible to prepare five-years and annual district plans for the amount allocated to the district by the State Planning Board. Inputs from all the line departments are taken and considering the allocations for committed expenditures on ongoing schemes and projects, fresh amounts are allocated for the programmes specific to the district that can utilize the strengths of the district to generate employment, assets and infrastructure. As head/deputy head of the Council, DC monitors the progress of implementation of approved schemes/projects and anticipated expenditures by the line departments at regular intervals. As a resource mobilization, DC heads the Co-ordination Cell of the banks in the district. This body prepares annual plan for public lending under all sectors by different banks operating in the district and monitors the progress on periodic basis.

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

Various types of natural disasters like flood, drought, forest fire, earthquake and manmade disasters like fire, major accidents, riots etc., pose big threat to the lives and properties of the people in the districts. Some districts are more prone to specific type of disasters than the others and those will require preventive measures. DC chairs the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC), which is responsible for making advance plan to mitigate the effect of impending disasters and provide assistances for protection, relief and rehabilitation in the face of such disasters. He is authorized to grant gratuitous relief to affected families to attend to immediate
hardships caused by the disaster. DC also monitors distribution of social security/insurance schemes to the poor in the district.

Some of the DCs have played very important role in attending to the challenges posed by the natural disasters like cyclone of Orissa, major floods in different areas, or earthquake in Uttarkashi (erstwhile UP and present Uttaranchal) or Bhuj (Gujarat) etc. DC heads the civil defense organisation in the district. This organisation has enlightened and motivated citizens as members, who give their time voluntarily to attend to public grievances. Also, the district has Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) and Rural Youth Clubs (RYC), with volunteer youth (men and women) to provide support services in the wake of any public emergency. The district level officers of these organizations report to the DC.

DISTRICT CIVIL SUPPLIES

The DC is responsible to oversee the arrangements for provisions of essential commodities to the citizens through Public Distribution System (PDS). The PDS operates through chain of fair price shops that issue rationed quantities of essential commodities like wheat, rice, sugar, kerosene etc. at subsidized rates to the economically weak section of the society. The District Supply Officer who manages these shops works directly under the DC. The distribution is assured through ration cards issued to the eligible families through the district supply office. This department has been authorized under law and government instructions to penalize the hoarders of essential commodities ensure proper usage of weights and measures, deal severely with adulteration in diesel/petrol etc. For this purpose, DC gets raids conducted at regular/random intervals in different business premises.

DISTRICT EXCISE DEPARTMENT

Income from the auction of liquor and other intoxicants’ shops is a major source of income to the exchequer of the States, which are not following dry strategy. District Excise Officer directly reports to the DM and organizes annual auction under his chairmanship. Various liquor mafias are operating in different parts of the country and therefore, these auctions become a challenging task to ensure that the State gets maximum revenue and at the same time the auction is not grabbed by such mafia elements. A prior thorough check up of the antecedents of auctioneers is ensured. After the confirmation of the auction, DM oversees through the departmental officers
that monthly rentals are paid regularly and the quality of liquor is not deteriorated by adulteration or imitation (me-too) products.

**FAIR PRICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS**

District and sub-division level agricultural markets have been set up to ensure that the farmers are able to auction their products at reasonable price. To save the farmers from distress selling after the harvest, government announces minimum assured prices for major agricultural products and DC sets up a chain of such procurement shops under the auspices of marketing department, cooperative department etc. to purchase the farmers’ products at these prices and supply the same to Food Corporation of India (FCI), which maintains very large regional warehouses to ensure supply through FPS or market, if there is any kind of scarcity of such products, to control the market prices. This onerous task is performed in the district under direct supervision and control of the DC.

**ENTERTAINMENT TAXATION**

The District Entertainment Tax Officer reports to the DC. He is responsible to ensure that there is no pilferage of entertainment tax in the district. The DC grants permission to hold public entertainment events after ascertaining the sensitivities of local population and levying relevant tax. He supervise cinema halls and disc TV from the point of view of compliance of government instructions and guidelines and timely deposition of due taxes.

**SUPERVISION OF THE DISTRICT TREASURY**

The DC is incharge of district treasury. Chief Treasury Officer and other Treasury Officers work under his supervision and guidance. This calls for not only guarding the public money and government property but also ensuring strict compliance of government instructions on financial prudence. Any slip may cause major trouble in terms of monetary embezzlement of misappropriation, which is viewed very seriously by the government. Now-a-days most treasuries have been computerized and that makes accounting much simpler. The treasuries store not only the cash and revenue stamps but are also engaged in disbursing pensions to retired government servants, salaries and other benefits to government employees, finances for government schemes/projects/programmes etc. The level of transactions is colossal for each district and daily statements on receipts and disbursal under various
heads/sub-heads of the budget with full details are sent to the government. He is authorized to take action under the Indian Treasure Trove Act when he has to report to the State Government the discovery of a treasure, its nature, value etc.\textsuperscript{21}

**REGISTRATION OF TRANSACTIONS AND STAMP DUTY COLLECTION**

State laws require payment of stamps duty as certain fixed percentage of the amount or some fixed amount for registering different types of transaction e.g. sale deed, transfer deed, gift deed etc. for the purchase and sale of properties DC is authorized to notify circle/area rates so that transactions do not take place at lower rate to avoid government tax. Registrar/Sub-Registrar who report to DC manage all business related to payment of or regulation of stamp tax. Additional District Collector (Finance and Revenue) assists DC to ensure strict compliance of government instructions on the subject. The DC/ADC hears the appeals to the orders of Registrar. Also, stamps are sold through District Treasury, which is controlled by the DC.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICITY**

The state government posts District Information Officer (DIO), reporting directly to DC, to promote and popularize government’s schemes, programmes and priorities. She/he does this through distribution of published material received from state headquarters or printed in the district, organisation of puppet/road shows, cultural events, cinema or video film/documentary shows etc in rural/urban areas. She/he also liaise with local newspapers and representatives of national news agencies/electronic media to project a positive image of the government. Any campaign of the government e.g. awareness regarding health and sanitation or ill effect of drug abuse etc. is organized by this officer. These efforts consume significant time of the DC.

**RESIDUAL FUNCTIONS**

Any function of the government in the district, which is not allocated to any line department automatically, comes within the jurisdiction of the DC. Being the chief executive of the district, his status is like a mini government –all in one – at the district level. This casts a very big responsibility on her/him and requires quick

decision-making and high coordination skill. Her /his limitation is that she/he has no authority to mobilize resources and yet she/he is expected to perform the duties with available budget and with all the constraints imposed under government order/instructions. He has to keep in line with the government priorities and be sensitive to the local needs as well. For example, if the district has high potential for tourism promotion, he can seek instructions of the government to initiate specific programmes and cannot start things on his own. That too, if the government of the day has different priorities, he will have to keep his tourism promotion programme on the back sheet and concentrate on government’s directions.

Some of the examples of residual functions are: campaign for encouraging small savings by public; distribution of scholarships to the students belonging to SC/ST/OBC/handicapped categories; overseeing district armory, which includes ceased arms/ammunitions and reserved arms; organisation of tourism/sports events; forced removal of encroachments on the public way; overseeing collection of trade tax; security arrangements for religious processions/congregations/fairs/festivals/big cultural events; conduct of decadal census etc.

**E-GOVERNANCE IN THE DISTRICT**

With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), e-governance has become an important agenda in all Indian districts. Central Government has opened offices of National Informatics Centers (NIC) with experts on ICT in every district. Varying degree of work has been done in application of technology in management of land records, criminal records, arms records, development projects and schemes etc. Some States have attempts developing prototypes but actual applications on ground are based on the interest taken by individual officers. Especially state of Andhra Pradesh has done pioneering work in providing public services through IT kiosks.

**PROTOCOL FUNCTIONS**

This has assumed a very important role with the proliferation of political executives. The DC oversees all protocol functions in the district as per standing instructions/guidelines issued by the government. This responsibility includes receiving and seeing off apart from organizing stay, conveyance and security to the dignitary. In some of the frequently visited districts because of
religious/tourist/business importance, a senior Additional DC is posted for this purpose only, whereas in all other districts DC deputes one of the Deputy Collectors to perform the requisite tasks and responsibilities. In case of certain dignitaries like President/Vice President/Prime Minister of India and Governor/Chief Minister of the State, he has to be personally present and supervise the duty. Protocol duty is a very sensitive matter and any lapse on part of the district administration is blown out of proportion to embarrass the DC and sometime get him transferred.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

The development role of the Collector became a focal point after independence with the initiation of development planning in India. The Collector is responsible for the direction and execution of developmental plans in the districts. The Balwantrai Mehta Study Team 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 developments and should be made fully responsible for securing the necessary coordination and cooperation 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 cooperation with other departments, their speed in work, their dealings with the people and their reputation for integrity, he should be invested with such powers.”

The Kerala Administrative Reorganization and Economy Committee had observed:

“While organizational and professional or technical control over Development officers of district rank will be that of departmental Superiors, the functional control in non-technical matters will be Exercised within certain limits, by the District Collector.”

The Committee opined that the Collector should be responsible for ensuring that:

a) The development and welfare schemes are such as would meet the needs of the people;

b) Whenever necessary, people’s co-operation is secured;

c) The time-table for various schemes is adhered to and targets reached in time;

d) There is proper co-ordination and difficulties in the execution of schemes are removed; and that

e) There is no corruption.\(^{23}\)

Apart from the direct responsibilities, a collector frequently gets involved with the programmes of other departments, like the PWD, irrigation, power, forest, agriculture, health and family welfare. He has to co-ordinate their activities and also helps them in sorting out their local problems. This role of the DC as a co-ordinator is becoming increasingly important as well as difficult. The co-ordination mechanism is weak with the result that the different limbs of district administration to not pull together and indeed after work at cross purposes. Although facing all these problems DC is trying to do his level best in maintaining coordination between different departments.

**DISTRICT COLLECTOR’S FUNCTIONS RELATING TO PANCHAYATI RAJ**

As a result of the Balwant rai Mehta Study Team Report (1957), the position of the Collector in the field of development administration underwent a change. His position in relation to Panchayati Raj Institutions varied from State to State. For instance, in Maharashtra and Gujarat, all development activities were transferred to the District development Officer, who also belongs to the IAS and the Collector’s role in development administration was only peripheral. In the remaining states, the Collector was 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.

Various centrally sponsored rural development programmes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme, Drought Prone Areas Programme, Desert Development Programme, Development of women and Children in Rural Areas etc., meant for the amelioration of the weaker sections of the society, are being implemented by the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) established in each district, under the Chairmanship of the concerned Collector. The Collector, with the assistance of the district level staff, is responsible for the implementation of the 20-point programme and the revenue campaigns launched by the Government for the speedy settlement of land and revenue disputes.

After the passing of the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, the relationship of District Collector with PRIS has changed immensely. Constitutional amendment and the enactment of Panchayati Raj laws by various states in 1993 have reduced the burden of the Collector in regard to developmental activities. The Act has given enough scope to the State Government to set forth the yardsticks of the relationship of the PRIs and the District Collector. 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 in States like Rajasthan, the Collector is a nominated member of the District Planning Committee (DPC) whereas, in some other States like Madhya Pradesh, the Collector is the Member-Secretary of the DPC. Earlier, the District Collector, in Madhya Pradesh, had access to Rs. 10 lakh for developmental works which has now been hiked to Rs. 1 crore, making him more powerful.24

Thus, we can say that even after the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, there is no uniform pattern with regard to the position of the District Collector in relation to PRIs.

CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS

Holding of regular free and fair elections is *sine qua non* of representative form of democracy like India. Election Commission of India has been entrusted with the task of holding elections for Central/State legislatures whereas the responsibility to hold elections for PRIs and ULBs devolves on State Election Commissions. The DC is designated as District Election Officer (DEO) and he is responsible for

preparation/updating of electoral roles and holding of free and fair elections in his
district. Every election is a major event for the district, especially with diverse
interests controlled by caste/religion or other considerations leading to violent clashes,
at times. He also conducts elections to various cooperative institutions in the district.

RETURNING AND CENSOR OFFICER

The District Collector acts as the returning officer for elections to the Lok
Sabha and the State Legislative Assembly and coordinates the electoral work in the
district. Moreover, he functions as the District Census Officer and is thus responsible
for the conduct of decennial census operations. 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.

COLLECTOR AS DISTRICT MAGISTRATE

Collector’s control over the police and law and order administration in a
district is a part of British legacy. In the capacity of District Magistrate he performs
two main functions:-

1) To decide criminal cases
2) To maintain law and order

According to the Criminal Procedure Code and the Police Act, the District
Magistrate is responsible for maintaining law and order in the districts. The District
Magistrate has no connections with the ordinary criminal trials in the district. For the
purpose of maintaining of law and order in the district the District Magistrate needs
the help of district police. The Superintendent of Police (S.P.) is the head of Police
administration in the district. In a district the District Magistrate is responsible for day
today operational control of the police force, though the police have its own internal
administration for the discharge of its duty through its own departmental line and for
purposes of disciplinary and technical supervision the Superintendent of police is
responsible to the Director General of Police. The relationship between the District
Magistrate and the Police is desired for the effective management of law and order in

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the district between the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of the district.

**MAINTENANCE OF LAND RECORDS**

The Collector is also the ‘Land Record Officer’ of the district and the responsibility of maintaining the records of rights and rental as well as compiling agricultural statistics lies with him. Land records consist of the basic village records, including the detailed village map showing every single plat of land however small it may be a register describing the nature of each Plat, its size, its soil and the crop grown on it and a register of holdings, the name of the cultivators, the rent of revenue payable and other details.

Patwari play an important part in the maintenance of land records. The records and their update maintenance are entrusted to him. Although the subordinate staff work under the guidance of the Collector but the general control and supervision is the responsibility of the Collector.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE SCHEMES**

The District Collector is responsible for the various community development programmes. Community Development includes so many functional entities that it becomes difficult in finding one’s way amongst them. There may include programmes for the help of the handicapped people, women and children and scheduled caste and scheduled tribes etc.

At the district level Zila Parishad is concerned with all these activities, so is the Panchayat Samiti at the block level and the village Panchayat at the village level. The District Magistrate is concerned with all these activities.

**NEED FOR FIELD VISITS**

In fulfillment of such a multiplicity of responsibilities, the District Collector undertakes tours in the district and inspects government offices within his jurisdiction. While on tours, the Collector:

a) Meets the people in their natural surroundings,ascertains their needs and problems and tries to redress their grievances;

b) Listens to people’s alternative suggestions for policy formulation and execution;
c) Finds out how development projects are being carried out;

d) Gets an opportunity to assess the work of officials, and

e) Can exhort people to build up their areas through voluntary cooperative community endeavour.

The aphorism that “In Indian public administration tent is mightier than pen” reflects the absolute value of field visits. However, the District Collector’s tours have suffered considerably since independence. The visits are increasingly becoming rare occurrences, very much a rapid jeep and dust affair. P.R. Dubhashi observes:

“A more serious matter for concern is that the district officers instead of moving closer to the people seem to have moved further away. The distance between the people and district administration seems to have increased. In earlier days, intensive tours on house back used to be undertaken by district officers who camped in villages. Now with mechanical transport at their disposal and constant visits of VIPs from State Headquarters, they return to the district headquarters after flying visits to villages.”

The district officers have started feeling that since they have to attend to any number of meetings of committees where the people’s representative are present they not establish direct personal contact with the people in the village.26

Deputy Commissioner discharges mainly three functions in Shimla district, i.e., District Magistrate, Collector and Deputy Commissioner.

As Deputy Magistrate, he exercises power under the following Acts:


2) Licensing Authority under Indian Arms Act.


4) Defense of India Act, 1971(power under Rules 7, 8, 9,14,17,19, 32, 41, 50, 62, 63 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 74,125,154,160 and 168).

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6) Licensing Authority under H.P. Cinematograph Rules.
7) Punjab Police Rules (Applicable to H.P.).

As District Collector, he has to ensure compliance of several Acts, some of which are:

1) H.P. Land Revenue Act, 1953.
2) H.P. Land Revenue Act, 1953.
4) Punjab Restitution of Mortgage (Applicable to H.P.) Act.
5) Land Acquisition Act, 1894.
7) Commissioner under Workman’s Compensation Act.
8) H.P. Roadside Control Act
10) Indian Stamp Act.
14) Land Improvement Act, 1883.

As Deputy Commissioner, he exercises power under the following Acts/Rules/Manuals and functions by virtue of being Chairman or Member in respect of several committees:

1) Marriage officer under Special Marriage Act, 1954.
2) Controlling Officer and Head of Office in respect of all heads of accounts operated in the office of Deputy Commissioner.
6) Chairman, Market Committee.
7) Chairman, Governing Body of DRDA.
9) Chairman, Legal Aid Committee/Review of cases under PCR Act/Vigilance Committee under Bonded Labour/Anti-Corruption Unit of the concerned Zone.
10) Chairman, District Welfare Committee.
11) Member, District 20 Point Programme Implementation Committee.
12) Co-Vice Chairman of District Planning and Development Committee.
13) Member, District Grievances and Food and Supplies advisory Committee.
14) Chairman, District National Integration Committee.
15) Chairman, District Preventive Measures and Fire Risk Committee.
16) Chairman, District Transportation Committee for Apple and Potatoes.
17) Chairman, District Lead Banking Committee.
18) Chairman, District Land Development Committee.
19) Chairman, District Educational Building Committee.
20) Chairman, District Scheduled Castes/Tribes Development Corporation Committee.
21) Chairman, Zila Sainik Welfare Committee.
22) Chairman, District Afforestation/Environment Committee.
23) Chairman, District Coordination Committee for implementation of Scheduled Caste Component Plan.
Indeed the traditional authority of the Deputy Commissioner has been eroded to a sufficient extent but they are supplemented by a number of Acts, which have enabled Deputy Commissioner to retain pivotal position in the district.

SUMMARY

To conclude, DC enjoys immense power to do justice to the poor and needy, ensure an environment of peace and order to provide opportunity to public for social and economic development, help create-necessary infrastructure and promote all-round growth in the district. This is a very honorable position in the development, which requires strong sense of commitment, accountability, ethical and moral standards, honesty and integrity, hard-work and fair judgment. Even though PRIs have been invigorated taking away some of the development responsibilities of DC, the institution is still extremely important from the point of view of revenue, development and welfare administration and maintainer of law and order in the district and has the distinction of being the principal representative of the government at district level. In fact, in all times of crisis, it is the DC who is maximally depended on by all government bodies. With the onset of e-governance District Administration has brought speed & efficiency in its working.

In spite of all the changes in the role of District Magistrate he continues to be accepted by and large as the principal representative of the State Government in the district. The regulatory functions of the Collector in the field of revenue and land records administration, general administration, criminal administration, and law and order have remained more or less unaffected. He is therefore an authority towards whom every other agency can turn for guidance and assistance in its own programmes.