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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A CRITICAL STUDY ABOUT THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS IN INDIA.

Rajni Kumari.

Ex. Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, M.D. University, Rohtak.

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Abstract

The present research work study about the need of decentralization planning in India. The review of literature clearly emphasis on the need for responsive administration to match the people's needs and aspiration at ground level. The present study examine the system of decentralized planning process at the block and grassroots levels. Even after 64 years of independence, India is still on building steps in decentralization planning. Decentralization is a way of involvement of every person to be a part of the system. Decentralization Planning provide a local platform for people to meet and discuss the local development problems, analyses the development and administrative actions of the elected representatives, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability.

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Introduction:-

Decentralisation is commonly regarded as a process through which powers, functions, responsibilities and resources are transferred from central to local government. It provides a structural and institutional venue through which local people can participate and exert more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies and the determination of their development in general. Decentralization is also seen as an effective way of generating confidence, ownership, maturity in behavior, autonomy and freedom to act in the citizens at the grass-root level. A good plan can fail through bad implementation but a bad or unrealistic plan can never be made effective through good management. Decentralized planning is planning by the people and is democratic in nature. It is based on the bottom-up approach. In this approach, the people through Gram Sabha and the elected representatives of village panchayats took part in plan preparation. In fact to be meaningful, planning must effectively tackle the local problems, meet the felt needs of the people and reduce even intra-district imbalances. Further, it is well known fact that for the success of any plan, people's participation is very essential and decentralized planning provides opportunity for people's participation.

Decentralized planning is considered to be an important component of the planning mechanism in India. The 'top down' approach in planning gives emphasis mainly on national priorities and programmes and fails to give adequate attention to the development of area and people at the micro level. The predominantly centralized planning methodology which has been practiced so long in India should be implemented by decentralized planning which ensured better perception of local needs or felt needs, better co-ordination and integration of development schemes and programmes, participation of people in all aspects of planning process at the grass-root level and better exploitation of local resources and growth potentials. The people must become active and the government should cooperate in the process of development.

Corresponding Author:- Rajni Kumari.

Address:- Ex. Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, M.D. University, Rohtak.

The various reports, Commissions and Committees strongly recommended the block/samiti as basic unit of decentralization ; panchyats should have special powers to levy taxes; also laid stress on block level planning to form a link between village and district level planning; decentralization of functions, powers and finances and setting up of district planning bodies and district planning cells; decentralization of planning, implementation, monitoring of rural development programmes of PRIs at the district level and below and thus gave necessary impetus to 73rd Amendment enactment. This concept of giving power to the people has been given definite shape with the passing of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. It has given formal recognition to the panchayats at village, block and district levels to function as a government. In addition to this for the first time reservations for women and dalits have been made so as to enable and encourage their participation in the political and development processes. Therefore, to provide a focus to the decentralization of powers and the empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions as true local self governments, in May 2004, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was formed after carving out the Panchayati Raj Division in the Ministry of Rural Development. All States and Union Territories except Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, J&K and NCT of Delhi are required to set up District Planning Committees in accordance with Article 243ZD, 1992 of the Constitution of India and District Planning Committees are constituted in all the Districts of Haryana.

Decentralized Planning in Haryana:-

Decentralized Planning scheme was introduced under the concept of planning from below or grass root planning. It was felt that under the existing system of development planning, some of the minor development works got neglected due to paucity of funds. Hence, the need for providing funds for these small development works of local nature arose. Consequently, this scheme was launched in Haryana during the year 1985-86 with a view to provide untied funds for these works. This scheme was converted into MLAs Local Area Development scheme during 1994-95 and 1995-96. But it was again reverted to Decentralized Planning scheme during the year 1996-97. Under this scheme, funds are allocated to districts as untied funds in the form of grant-in-aid. The main objective of the scheme is to provide funds to the districts for execution of those development schemes/works of local needs which are not being undertaken under Annual Plans of the State Government departments. Funds under the scheme are provided to Additional Deputy Commissioners-cum-Chief Planning and Development Officers (ADC's-cum-CPDO's) of the districts and not to the concerned departments. Total amount allocated under the scheme for the State as a whole is distributed among the districts on the basis of selected parameters such as population & relative backwardness. The schemes/works identified and executed under this scheme are of local importance providing immediate and direct benefit to the people. Individual beneficiaries are not identified under the scheme but the works are undertaken for the community as a whole.

Review of Literature:-

The study of decentralization is an area of attraction for writers, researchers, teachers and students. Since the beginning of civilization, thousands of manuscripts, books, articles, reports have been available in India and abroad. The process of decentralization and decentralized planning is in its transition phase. We review some of the books, articles relating to the decentralized planning to fulfill the need of review of literature.

The book ``District Planning in India`` by Inamdar and Kshire, have examined the practice of district planning in Maharashtra from the points of view of popular participation, initiative and coordination among different agencies in the process of formulation, implementation and notification of district plans. They have identified the weakness of the planning machinery at the district level and particularly in the urban areas. It is found that the role of the Panchayati Raj Institutions was negligible in the formulation of plans and was mainly confined to suggesting schemes and proposals for inclusion in the district plan. They have also stressed the need for improvement in the functioning of the DPDC, regular flow of funds, improvement in the scope of popular participation and the devolution of decision-making power to the district level to make the district planning exercise a real success. The book ``Planning at the Grassroots`` by Kamta Prashad, explains the conceptual, methodological and organizational aspects of planning at the grassroots deserves special mention. It put the special emphasis on planning institutions and their functions at different micro levels below state as it examines the slow process in India's planning. It also makes some policy recommendations for qualitative improvements in the decentralized planning process. The book ``West Bengal Landscape`` by Arun Ghosh, throws light on the decentralized rural development planning activities in Bengal in the wake of the launching of decentralized planning. The Book is particularly useful for understanding planning below the district level. The book ``District Planning-A Hand Book`` by R.P. Misra, deals with the foundations of district planning process in India. The book seeks to highlight the intervening role of the district planning between grassroots level and the national level through empowerment of the people. It also includes the

guidelines for the preparation of district planning (issued by the Planning Commission in 1969) which helps a lot to understand the methodological and administrative aspects of the problem. It also reported a clear message for integrating the development administration of the district with the Panchayati Raj and empowering the district Panchayat with reviewing, approving and authenticating the district plan.

The book ``Local Government in India`` by S.R. Mahashwari, explains both the rural & urban arms of local governance in India. After tracing the history of local government, it attempts to discuss the structure, personnel, finance & functioning of rural as well as urban local government and finally to suggest ways & means of imposing the system of local government in India. The book ``Decentralised Governance in India: Myth or Reality`` by Surat Singh, enlightens that the 73rd Amendment Act 1992, become effective on April 24, 1993 has been hailed as a great landmark in the evolution of Panchayati Raj and it ensure the empowerment of women & weaker sections, the Schedule castes & Schedule tribes, through reservation. The book ``Governance at Grassroots level in India`` by S.S. Chahar, contains 29 articles having core area of rural as well as urban local bodies like, 10 years journey of new panchayats, financial resources of local bodies, status of womwn in these institutions, decentralized planning, working of these bodies, problem & prospects and suggested remedial for their development etc.. The book ``Local Governance in India: Decentralisation & Beyond`` by Nirija Gopal Jayal, edits their books in six parts, the 3rd part discuss the local governance & sectorial experiences like decentralization. The article ``Decentralised Planning-An Overview of Experience and Prospects`` by C.H. Hanumantha Rao, concern that the decentralised planning in India is as old as planning itself. However, barring a few exceptions, the performance in this respect has been dismal despite the setting up of formal structures like panchayati raj institutions on a statutory basis. It also concerns with the factors which have contributed to the non-implementation of the idea of decentralised planning.

The article ``The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi``, R. Prabhu and U.R. Rao, stated that every village has to become a self sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolution. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work. Everyone of the seven lakhs of villages becomes a well-living republic in which there are no illiterates, in which no one is ideal for want of work, in which everyone is usefully occupied and has nourshing food, well-ventilated dwellings, and sufficient Khadi for covering the body. The article ``A Decentralisation Success Story?`` by K.C. Suri, reveals that there has been a tremendous revival of interest in decentralised government in developing countries. The supporters of globalisation and liberalisation laid greater stress on the twin tasks of downsizing the centralised states in developing countries such as India, which had hitherto largely followed the path of development through centralised planning, state capitalism and administering welfare, and promoting participatory planning and empowerment of people at the local level. Decentralised government was considered a necessary means to promote democracy and development in these countries. This new thinking motivated new drives in decentralisation, as was evident in the passage in India of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and their energetic implementation in several states, as well as a plethora of research reports. The article ``Panchayati Raj in Haryana: An Overview`` by S.S. Chahar, overview the position of Panchayati Raj in Haryana through discussing the historical background of the topics, changes occurred before & after 73rd Amendment Act and in State panchayati Raj Act, devolution of department wise administrative as well as financial powers & electoral politics of Haryana Panchayati Raj. The author observes that the state bureaucracy is the means of control over Panchayati Raj Administration, Political interference in the working of Panchayats, duplicacy & confusion of functions in all the three tier institutions, no judicial function with gram panchayats, DRDA is kept out from the preview of Zila Parishad & devolution of power is only on paper etc..

Need for the Study:-

The need of decentralization planning in India has been emphasized for a long time. The large size of the country, the uneven resource endowment, the highly differentiated nature of the society in terms of language as well as institutions, the varying levels of social and economic development in different areas have made the plea for decentralized planning a weighty one. The review of literature clearly shows that despite political rhetoric and repeated emphasis on the need for responsive administration to match the people`s needs and aspiration at ground level, the term has neither been conceptualized properly nor operationalised clearly. The term `decentralization and responsiveness in administration` has failed to receive justice, it deserves both from local peoples and from bureaucrats. As a result, there exists a yawning gap between the body of literature and actual performance. Although, responsiveness in administration is the heart of the problem of development administration, as the review of literature shows, it has not been thoroughly explored theoretically and empirically. The present study has therefore, been undertaken with this end in view to fulfill this gap.

Objectives:

The main objectives of the study is to study and examine the system of decentralized planning in Haryana, to study the decentralized planning process at the block and grassroots levels, to study the procedure of planning observed by the DPCs, to suggest certain remedial suggestions for making the decentralized planning effective.

Conclusion:-

Even after 64 years of independence, India is still on building steps in decentralization planning. The largest democratic country in the world is still not able to implement decentralization planning successfully. In recent years, decentralized planning i.e. planning below the national and sub-national level has become an instrument for future development of local areas in most of the democratic societies including India. Both the decentralized as well democratic planning go hand in hand for facilitating development in the democratic societies. The decentralized planning in a democratic society believes in multi-level planning at the sub-national government levels to facilitate maximum utilization of available local resources and manpower for the local development. Decentralization is a way of involvement of every person to be a part of the system. By implementation of decentralization planning all the works which get hampered or blocked due to shortage of money can be carried out. And in doing this the development of local, rural and backward areas can be done in very efficient way. Decentralization Planning provide a local platform for people to meet and discuss the local development problems, analyses the development and administrative actions of the elected representatives, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability. Most importantly, it provides opportunity for the participation of all sections of the village (women, Dalits, tribal and other marginalized groups) in planning and implementation of local development programme. The government has tried to provide all the basic services in the reach of every Urban areas. Lack of the proper implementation of programmes in Haryana there was no special programme at the state level.

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