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Role of Local Bodies in Public Administration

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ABSTRACT: In India, the realization of the importance of local bodies leads to two major constitutional provisions. The 73rd amendment provided a framework so as to formalize gram panchayat, it included Part IX to the Indian Constitution containing articles 243 to 243O. The 74th amendment aimed at localizing the urban areas by adding Part IXA ranging from the articles 243-P to 243-ZG. Panchayats is the generic term used to describe rural local governments. Municipalities is the term associated with urban local bodies. The recognition and constitutional status of local bodies enabled catering to the political, socio-economic, and cultural needs of the locals.

KEYWORDS: local bodies, public administration, gram panchayat, municipalities, governments, constitutional

I.INTRODUCTION

Local government bodies or the third tier of the government can be defined as institutions responsible for the self-governance of their respective administration. These institutions govern the regional population of their respective units. In recent times, the role exhibited by local bodies has been essential for the efficient working of a nation. The need for democratization emphasized the construction of local-level institutions. Like any other democracy, the Indian government also realized the importance of the involvement and participation of the locals. Right from the two amendment acts in the 1990s under Narasimha Rao's government, the country has been following what is called the bottom up-approach. This approach reflects that the primary unit of governance in rural and urban areas are the constitutionally established local government bodies.[1,2]

The role and purpose of local bodies are significant and have a lot of potentials. At a broad level, local bodies perform legislative, executive, and judicial roles.

- Legislative Role – In accordance with what is mentioned in the eleventh schedule, the Panchayats in rural areas have power as well as the authority to legislate on the 29 subjects. Similarly, the twelfth schedule includes 18 subjects that are legislated by the municipalities.
- It is necessary for citizens to participate in elections and local bodies' meetings in order to secure the values of democracy at the grassroots level.[3,4]
- Executive Role – It is necessary for local bodies to execute various policies and provide basic civil amenities to their subjects. Apart from raising public awareness about the centrally sponsored schemes, it performs its obligatory functions such as water supply, drainage system, and women and child development. In addition, municipalities can raise their funds through taxes, fees, fines, etc. so as to finance their execution processes.
- Judicial Role – At the local level, administrative functions are based on the principle of self-regulation and autonomy. It indicates that the panchayats and municipalities are required to provide justice provisions providing workable solutions to communities in case of conflicts. For instance, local bodies are entrusted with the responsibility of managing and overseeing civil, criminal, and revenue justice. Regulation of its subjects is to ensure that citizens are in line with the law of the land.[5,6]



II.DISCUSSION

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are small local bodies that administer or governs a city or a town of specified population. Urban Local Bodies are vested with a long list of functions delegated to them by the state governments. These functions broadly relate to public health, welfare, regulatory functions, public safety, public infrastructure works, and development activities.

There are several types of Urban Local bodies in India such as Municipal Corporation, Municipality, Notified Area Committee, Town Area Committee, Special Purpose Agency, Township, Port Trust, Cantonment Board etc.

The main source of revenues of ULBs are as follows:

- Collection from tax and non-tax sources as assigned to them under Assam Municipal act, 1956.
- Devolution of shared taxes and duties as per recommendation of State Finance Commission.
- Grants-in-aid from the Government of Assam.[7,8]
- Grants-in-aid from the Government of India under Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
- Share of State Govt. of Assam against Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Govt. of India.
- Award of Central Finance Commission Grant, GOI.

The Significance of Local Bodies can be better understood by Analyzing its Functions

1. Economic Development and Social Justice

First and foremost, the concept of self-governance or decentralization has been an important principle of democracy. The idea behind decentralization was the wide scope of economic development and social justice from ground zero. The local institutions, people of the region, and private sector cooperatively work towards improving the local economy. [9,10]

2. Better Solutions to Multidimensional Problems

It is a well-known fact that people of a region are more aware of the problems faced by them. These people, therefore, may find better solutions to break away from the socio-economic, cultural, and political problems they face. Judicious and efficient use of available resources is the first step towards solving the existing problems.

3. Increasing the Prospects of Community Development

A high level of community participation improves the overall community development of different regions. Community development is a prerequisite for removing obstacles in the implementation of policies and renewing democracy. [11,12]

4. Better Civic Amenities

A sort of cooperation between the locals and the local government helps in providing better services to the citizens. National development depends upon the development fragmented at local levels. Thus, an improvement in the civic amenities available to people at the local level results in the overall development of a nation.

5. More Participatory

Local bodies help citizens to directly participate in democratic decision-making by allowing the constituent representatives elected at the local level. It encourages the idea of a strong democratic society consisting of vigilant and vibrant citizens. It is important to note that different marginalized groups should be given equal opportunities to express their political opinions or dissent.

6. Shaping Future Leaders

Local self-governance serves as a training ground for shaping future leaders. It provides a practical experience for aspiring politicians on how decision-making takes place in a democracy.[13,14]

7. Women Politicians and Leaders

Local governments have the potential to promote women participants as political actors and candidates through the reservation of seats. Some proportion of seats is also reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This way, the third tier of our system can safeguard the interest of minorities.

8. More Transparent Working of the Centre

Local governments are often considered as an intermediary between different communities and the central government. The institution serves as a link between the two ends. Ordinary citizens are made aware of the policies and programs of the government. The Union government, on the other hand, are made aware of the demands of citizens

9. Better Infrastructural Facilities

Local governments are not only a subsidiary to the central government, but also provide a space to articulate the political demands on the society. Existing at grassroot level, it is also responsible for looking after the day-to-day needs of people such as adequate water supply, sanitation, and electricity. [15]

10. Greater Accountability

Delayed responsiveness and poor accountability on the part of state governments often make the local people feel politically alienated. Devolution of power to regional and district levels encourages inclusiveness and greater accountability to the government authorities.

11. Safeguarding Individual Identity

The local bodies are empowered to preserve the individual as well as the cultural identity of various marginalized groups. It promotes the principle on which lies the foundation of democracy, that is, pluralism.

As subjects concerning an individual's political aspirations and quality of life are safeguarded by the local government, the central government can divert its focus on key issues such as national defense and security. Apart from the political communication that exists between local governments and the people they administer, the small local units are also responsible for tax collection, administration of justice, and management of legal affairs. [16,17]

III.RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The idea behind extending administrative powers at the local level was to ensure effective administrative setup and working of the government machinery. The constitution obligations such as

- conducting regular elections to local bodies
- Establishment of State Finance Commission to regulate the financial health affairs of local bodies under article 243(Y)
- channelizing shares of state funds to finance local level governments
- reservation of seats for lower castes as well as women indicate that the Union government under article 243D has an intention to strengthen the working of local level institutions[18,19]

Local bodies are not necessarily confined to rural areas. The depth of participation in the local government is largely contingent on how the citizens take part in the process of decision-making. An increase in the amount of funds received may even make these institutions more impactful. The joint working of local and state governments may result in better execution of policies and programmes. For instance, state governments can encourage local bodies to create political awareness of the policies benefiting the citizens. The lack of coordination among the various authorities can be an obstruction in the implementation of policies and programmes. The fundamental purpose of establishing grassroot level institutions is to reduce the concentration of excessive power at the hands of the Centre, thereby, operationalizing democracy. [20,21]

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