



## DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF DECENTRALISATION

**Dr. Shuvajit Chakraborty**

Associate Professor

Department of Political Science

Nehru College Pailapool Cachar, Assam

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### Abstract

The question of whether an organisation should be centralised or decentralised is among the most significant challenges faced by all types of organisations, including public organisations. In point of fact, this is one of the conundrums that the administration and the government are now grappling with today. While on the one hand the compulsions of socio-economic planning, the requirements of national integration, and the consideration of defence strategy pull the administration toward centralization, on the other hand the political commitment for autonomy, greater participation by the people, and the need to take democracy to the grassroots level pull the administration towards decentralisation. As a result, we are put in a position where we are subject to opposing pulls and pressures. To further demonstrate this point, Avasthi and Maheshwari state that "the Planning Commission symbolises the movement towards centralisation, whereas 'Panchayati Raj' epitomises the trend towards decentralisation." In this "Unit," we are going to talk about the meaning of decentralisation, deconcentration, delegation, and devolution, as well as the system of decentralisation that was used in India both before and after the country gained its independence. In addition to that, the forthcoming tendencies in decentralisation, as well as the workings of rural and urban local bodies, will be outlined.

**keywords:** *decentralisation, administration*

### INTRODUCTION

Decentralization signifies distribution of authority among a number of person or unit; it entails the development of relatively autonomous field and regional offices and delegations of decision making powers and responsibilities to them. The underlying meaning of decentralisation is that conditions and circumstances and needs and ambitions of people vary in various locations. Therefore it demands decentralised administrative structure which may accommodate to requirements and ambitions of people in region particular. Scholars defined the term decentralisation in different manner an explanation of some of them definition is given in the para supplied below. According to Allen, "decentralisation refers to the deliberate endeavour to delegate to the lowest levels all authority save that which can only be exerted at central places. L.D. White described the decentralisation as the process of transfer of administrative power from a higher to a lower level of organisation. Koontz and Weihrich defined it as "Decentralization is the tendency to spread decision making authority in an organised system. It is key component of delegation; to the degree the authority is not transferred, it is centralised". The core of Decentralization is delegation of power.

It has been said by Henry Fayol that "anything that goes to strengthen the role of subordinate is decentralisation and everything that goes to diminish it is centralization." Deconcentration and devolution are two processes that go hand in hand with decentralisation. In the process of deconcentration, a higher-

ranking official reduces the amount of work that he has to do by handing off part of his responsibilities to a subordinate in order to ensure that the administration runs smoothly. The term "devolution," which also refers to the distribution of authority, describes the process by which power is moved from one organ of government to another through the use of law or the constitution. Additionally, decentralisation is not the same thing as delegation. <sup>3</sup> The act of entrusting another person with a portion of one's labour is known as delegation. This approach gave preference to qualities that led to the development of skills as well as confidence. The subordinates who are given the responsibility of completing the tasks that have been assigned to them earn experience as a result of this strategy. On the other hand, decentralisation is a term that covers a lot more ground. It is the "transfer of planning, decision making, or administrative authority from the central government to its field organisations, local administrations units, semi-autonomous and parastatals organisations, local governments, or non-governmental organisations." <sup>4</sup> Mohit Bhattacharya asserts that contemporary ideas towards decentralisation may be analysed from one of three perspectives simultaneously. To begin, it is considered a method for the moral and intellectual development of the individual, both in their capacity as a worker and as a citizen. Participation in the process of decision making is made possible by decentralisation. It is something that may assist a person in growing and developing their personality as they go through life.

The second benefit of decentralisation is the instrumental value it offers as a tool to enhancing the performance of an organisation. It is possible to improve the performance of organisational functions by establishing decentralised decision-making centres. These centres provide access to local information and data, foster popular support for administrative action at the local level, and ultimately lead to an increase in the effectiveness of the organisation. Thirdly, a paradigm change in public administration is reflected in the contemporary thought, which is an extremely significant development. The bureaucratic paradigm, which has been so prevalent in this area for such a long time, does not appear to be sufficient to explain the modern Its defining characteristics include circumstances that involve both politics and administration, the concentration of power, and a bureaucratic approach to making decisions. The most recent ideas of decentralisation, on the other hand, centre on issues of power distribution and participation. The fields of organisation theory and political science, which did not interact with one another all that frequently in the past, are now almost completely converging in their explanation of the idea of decentralisation.

### **Approaches to Decentralization**

The concept of decentralisation has received a lot of attention in the fields of political science and public administration, primarily from the perspective of how the government is structured. The many strategies for decentralisation have been organised by James W. Fasler into four distinct groups. These are the theological, political, administrative, and dual role responsibilities.

**Doctrinal approach** attempts to approach decentralisation as a goal in itself rather than as a means to achieve organisational efficiency and effectiveness; strives to treat decentralisation as a method to achieve organisational efficiency and effectiveness. This strategy places an emphasis on the autonomy of the local community, which might refer to a city, town, or hamlet. It is said that the Panchayati Raj in India exemplifies an age-old practise of decentralised authority over communities. The idea behind this method is to give people more influence over their own lives by delegating decision-making and functional authority to them. As a result, this strategy treats decentralisation as an end in and of itself, rather than as a means to an end—value end goal, which would be the traditional method.

**The political approach** thinks that political institutions are responsible for the process of decentralisation. Politics determines whether or not there will be a desire to establish decentralised units and whether or not

such units will be given the authority essential for them to operate independently. An effort to establish autonomous governance at the level of the community is being made through the process of decentralisation, which takes the form of devolution to local self-governing organisations. Consequently, the establishment and upkeep of local government requires a significant commitment on the political front. If such a pledge is not made, the provision will only continue to exist in legal precedent rather than in real practise. It was pointed out by Fesler that there was a "illusory decentralisation. For instance, in India, although formal devolution of power to local bodies has been granted, these bodies have not been given the funds, functions, or functionaries necessary to operate as an independent institution. Instead, they are subject to significant control or influence from the respective state governments.

**The administrative approach** is grounded in the principle of making the most out of limited resources. When field administrative units are established through a process of decentralisation, the measure is ideal for decision making at the field level as well as for the redressing of complaints that occur at that level. As a result of this procedure, there may end up being a large number of administrative units located between the local administration and the Central Headquarters. As a result of the increasing complexity of administration, there will be an increase in the demand for specialised activities, which will lead to the establishment of a number of functional departments at the field level. The administration is having trouble meeting both the general area-based administrative needs as well as the specialised function-centered claims of some functional departments. The district administration in India is now battling the challenges posed by the dualistic nature of the area's functions. Conflicting claims of area and function in decentralised field administration need to be re-adjusted on a regular basis in order to overcome this challenge and advance such operational principles. Conscious efforts to do so are required in order to do so.

**The dual role Approach:** The dual method was developed with the intention of drawing attention to the tension that exists in the sphere of administration between tradition and progress. According to Fesler, the fundamental contradiction is between the traditional purpose of maintaining law and order and the promotion of socio-economic development. This dichotomy is what causes the conflict. The majority of the field administration systems were established during an age in which the primary goal of administration was to preserve the status quo. The primary responsibilities of administration were the upkeep of peace and order as well as the collecting of tax income. However, in order to accommodate the new conception of welfare state, rapid socioeconomic development is necessary. It necessitates the collaboration and participation of individuals in administrative tasks, as well as the delegation of functions by field generalists to their subordinates and a rise in the level of coordination among various administrative units. As a result, there is an immediate requirement to transform the system into one that is decentralised, participatory, and inventive. In order to resolve the conflict that has arisen between two distinct perspectives in the field administration, it is necessary to adjust decentralisation so that it can accommodate the shifting conditions. W. Fasler's four separate approaches each tackle a unique set of problems and obstacles that must be overcome before decentralisation can be achieved. In the conceptual approach, decentralisation is treated as an aim in and of itself. The political strategy emphasises the political nature of decentralisation. The administrative strategy prioritises saving time and resources while also prioritising rational decision making. In conclusion, the important aspect of the dual role approach is the process of reorienting roles from the status quo to a change orientation.

## Types of Decentralization

The nature of decentralisation changes depending on the nature of the political environment and the administrative settings. Decentralization may be broken down into four distinct categories. Decentralization can occur on several levels, including the political, administrative, budgetary, and functional levels.

**Political Decentralization:** The term "political decentralisation" refers to the process of transferring the authority to make political decisions and perform core duties from a higher level of government to a lower level of government. The institutions to which power and functions for local administration are delegated are those that are controlled by the people who live in the area. As a result, those individuals who live on the outside of the local institution have a larger possibility of participating in the process of decision making. When more people are involved in government, the legitimacy of those administrations increases, which in turn leads to greater political stability. In addition, engagement from a large population improves both the formulation of public policy and the usage of available resources. The seventy third and seventy fourth amendments to the constitution are major pieces of legislation for establishing up three tiers of rural and urban government. This extension of political decentralisation was made possible by these amendments.

**Administrative Decentralization:** Administrative decentralisation happens when a politically independent entity gives some of its power and function to subordinate units within its organisation. This can be thought of as distributing authority. Decentralization of administration can take either a geographical or functional form. The construction of area administrative units such as divisions, districts, zones, and circles, as well as the assigning of power and responsibility within predetermined boundaries, are all examples of what is meant by territorial decentralisation.

**Fiscal Decentralization:** Devolution of financial authority to lower levels of government is what is meant by the term "fiscal decentralisation." If local governments are not given the authority to levy taxes and collect money, political decentralisation would remain nothing more than a pipe dream. If there is not sufficient financial capacity, the local government will not be able to perform its responsibilities. For example, the seventy-third and seventy-fourth constitutional amendment act includes a provision that creates a state Finance Commission with the responsibility of analysing the financial situation of local bodies and recommending steps that can be taken to improve those bodies' financial situations. Insufficient financial power is one of the reasons why the Panchayati Raj system was unable to be successful. According to the Status Report (2000) on the Autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipal Bodies, all of the states in India, with the exception of Kerala, have not attempted to place the prerequisites for financial decentralisation while they have been operationalizing their respective acts.

**Functional Decentralization:** The term "functional decentralisation" refers to the process by which functions are transferred from the national or state government to local entities so that such authorities are better able to carry out the duties and obligations that have been delegated to them. For example, the seventy-third constitutional amendment act in India gives the 29 powers stated in the eleventh schedule of the Constitution of India to the Panchayati Raj institutions in India. On the other hand, they are only suggestions and not requirements, as the Indian constitution classifies municipal governance as a state issue. Subjects and activities that are delegated to local authorities as part of functional decentralisation need to be specific and explicit; failing to do so can lead to increased confusion and anarchy, rather than the empowerment of local communities, as is the case in the majority of states in India. 6 Panchayati Raj institutions do not have a well defined functional jurisdiction, and even that aspect of their authority is up to the discretion of the state governments in which they operate. The same is true for urban local authorities, which, according to the 12th schedule of India's Constitution, are tasked with performing

eighteen different responsibilities. It also implies that the proper technical or professional bodies are given the autonomy to make their own decisions in regard to professional and technical matters by the central authority. For instance, the Medical Council of India is granted the authority to oversee and promote medical education, and the University Grant Commission (UGC) is in charge of regulating the situation in regard to higher education.

### **Fiscal Decentralization:**

The term "fiscal decentralisation" refers to a set of policies that are intended to provide local governments a greater degree of control over their own finances. Local governments and private organisations need to have the power to make spending choices, in addition to receiving appropriate resources transferred by the central government, in order for them to be able to carry out decentralised duties in an efficient manner. The following are the requirements that must be met in order for fiscal decentralisation to be implemented:

- Self-financing or cost recovery through user charges
- Co-financing or coproduction, in which users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labour contributions
- Expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes or indirect charges
- Intergovernmental transfers of general revenues from taxes collected by the central government to local governments for general or specific uses
- Authorization of municipal borrowing and financing
- Self-financing or cost recovery through user charges Authorization of municipal borrowing and financing Self-financing or cost recovery

When resources are provided by local actors in a fiscally decentralised system, it is possible for those resources to be used more effectively and productively. This is made possible because the costs and benefits of the goods and services provided by local governments are limited to the region in question. The supply of these goods and services by central governments is more time consuming and expensive, but the provision of these goods and services by local governments is easier to establish customer preferences and offer goods and services that are more relevant to these preferences. In addition, it is far simpler to hold local governments responsible than it is to do so with national governments. (Durmuş, 2006: 74) These are just a few characteristics of fiscal decentralisation that highlight the aspects of its political and economic rationale. In this respect, it has been stated that the transfer of the budgetary authorization right from the central government to local or regional governments will result in an improvement in productivity as well as the development of local initiative and entrepreneurialism.

### **Deconcentration, Delegation and Devolution**

Many people get the concepts of delegation, deconcentration, and devolution mixed up with the meaning of the word "decentralisation," however this is not accurate. The main idea here is that each of these terms conveys a different sense. Delegation, for example, is not the same thing as transferring authority; rather, it is merely the act of a higher level of government assigning authority to a lower level of government. Delegation is nothing more than a method of administration or management, but decentralisation tackles some of the most pressing issues facing democracies today. Delegation and deconcentration are both administrative strategies that can be used to accomplish certain goals. The term "deconcentration" refers to the delegation of specific responsibilities to an agent of the central or state government who is stationed in the field. Because there have always been challenges in controlling the country from the centre, the government is forced to deconcentrate some tasks to its agents or officers in the field. This allows the

government to respond more quickly to emerging issues. Another phrase that is synonymous with deconcentration is devolution, which does not differ from deconcentration in a significant way. When it comes to nominally established local authorities, the process of devolution is utilised, but deconcentration is more commonly used when discussing field agencies or personnel.

As a result, it is abundantly obvious that delegation, deconcentration, and devolution are only the technical means of effective management. Both the concept and the scope of decentralisation are far more expansive and profound. It is a process of democratising political authority, and as such, it seeks to realise democratic principles in actual life. The goal of decentralisation is to broaden the scope of people's participation in decision-making at all levels. micro level political authority and autonomy accomplished by delegating certain powers to people's representative institutions at the ground level. In order to make the contrast between the two terms more obvious, one example of decentralisation is the Panchayati Raj. The process through which state governments in India are requesting increased powers is known as devolution. One example of deconcentration is when the District Collector was given power over the development departments in the district. One example of delegation is when the rights to allow holding of public meetings are given to the Assistant Commissioner of the concerned area by the Commissioner of Police rather than remaining in his or her sole discretion.

## **SYSTEM OF DECENTRALISATION IN INDIA**

The Government of India Act of 1919 and the Government of India Act of 1935 were the two laws that were responsible for the progressive decentralisation of a highly centralised imperial rule at the level of the provinces. The term "Dvarchv" was first used in the provinces as a result of the Act of 1919, which was passed as a follow-up to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. This meant that for the first time ever, certain departments were put under the control of elected ministers who were accountable to the legislature. On the other hand, the remaining departments continued to be under the control of government officials, who are known as Members of the Governor's Executive Council.

The Act of 1935 established a federal system of government for the first time and granted "Provincial Autonomy" to the provinces, on the condition that certain protections were adhered to at all times. This process of decentralisation of powers from the central government to the provincial governments was deliberately pursued during British rule for a variety of reasons including administrative convenience, political pressure generated by the national freedom struggle, and the need for political accommodation of the elite and the intelligentsia. During British rule, India was divided into thirteen provinces, each of which had its own government. During the time of colonial administration, there was also another type of decentralisation movement that was evident. This effort took the form of a policy that encouraged the establishment of local self-governing organisations in both urban and rural regions. This sort of decentralisation at the grassroots level is the one that continues to create concerns and controversies up to this day, and this so-called "decentralisation debate" has taken on a significant amount of importance in recent times for two main reasons: First, issues concerning the relief of poverty and the promotion of social justice have risen to the top of the political agenda; discussions on institutional decentralisation are taking place in this framework. Second, the institutions of the Panchayati Raj have been failing to function properly in the majority of states. The lack of a constitutional guarantee has been identified as the root reason of the failure of the Panchayati Raj. Since the idea of Panchayati Raj being protected by the constitution was initially floated by the government that came before, it has become a contentious topic of discussion how this should be done.

### **Pre-Independence Period**

The influential Ripon Resolution of 1882 may be traced back to the time when decentralisation was being discussed in relation to colonial control. Ripon was a strong advocate for the cause of decentralisation of administration through the establishment of local self-governing institutions because he wanted to teach the Indians the art of governance, give them the opportunity to learn from experience, and open up avenues for the political participation of the educated class. All of these goals could be accomplished through the establishment of local self-governing institutions. The British administrators were not willing to accept the Ripon thesis because they questioned the ability of Indians to manage local administration and feared that a general weakening of field administration would occur under a regime of local self-government. Consequently, the British administrators were not prepared to accept the Ripon thesis. The discussion centred mostly on whether set of principles should be prioritised more highly: democracy or efficiency. The pace of the liberation fight forced the imperial policy to gladly grant Indian aspirations for self-government and involvement in administration. This occurred despite the imperial policy's initial resistance to these demands.

### **Post-Independence Period**

The floor of the Constituent Assembly was the setting for the second phase of the discussion on decentralisation that took place in India after the country's independence. In Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a future India, in which economic and political power would be decentralised and each village would be economically self-sufficient, an essential component of that future was the institution of Panchayati Raj. The adoption of Article 40 of the Constitution of India, which stipulates that "the state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government," was done in accordance with the wishes of Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, on the other hand, held an opposing viewpoint towards the rural society of India. In the Constituent Assembly, he claimed that the Indian social system in the village of Ceval was repressive, hierarchical, and unresponsive to change. He cited an example from the community. It was his opinion that granting authority to the panchayats would be a bad idea since it would involve granting authority to the established rural power structure, which would be to the disadvantage of the harijans and the rural poor. He believed that this would be a risky course of action.

As a result, the Constituent Assembly heard two opposing points of view about decentralisation: a visionary stand point of decentralisation and a pragmatic view of decentralisation. Any plan for decentralisation must begin with the assumption that the community in question is harmonious. In an uneven society, democratic or decentralised political or planning procedures do not succeed in assuring true people's involvement, as Dantwala has found. The Galidhian ideal of a village community may be understood as a normative model that acts as a guidepost. However, observations made during Dr. Ambedkar's tenure as India's Panchayati Raj administrator appear to have, for the most part, lent credence to the aforementioned notion. It is interesting to note the observations made by the Asoka Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions in this context. The committee stated that "Panchayati Raj institutions are dominated by economically and socially privileged sections of society and have as such facilitated the emergence of oligarchic forces yielding no benefits to weaker sections." The dispute over decentralisation may be traced back to the level of its underlying concepts. The idea of Panchayati Raj has never been fully explained, and the Asoka Mehta Committee made the following observation about it: "Some would treat it just as an administrative agency; others would treat it as an extension of democracy at the grassroots level; and still others would treat it as a charter of rural local government." The dispute between bureaucracy and democracy about decentralisation, which dates back to the Ripon reforms of the late nineteenth century, has been rehashed in more recent times as well. This discussion has been going on

for a long time. When it came time to delegate responsibility for local development, the majority of state governments decided to delegate those tasks to its official field apparatus, essentially ignoring the Panchayati Raj institutions in the process. According to the report that was written by the Asoka Mehta Committee, some of the state governments planned to either delay the conduct of elections or supplant the Panchayati Raj institutions for one reason or another. The fundamental core of the issue was that the political elite at higher levels had a tepid attitude toward the growth of the democratic process at the grassroots level.

### **IMPORTANCE OF DECENTRALISATION**

The emphasis of Development and Administration is primarily placed on the acceleration of socioeconomic change. As a result, there is a widespread interest in the invention of new types of administration that are suitable for the requirements of growth across the whole developing globe. Decentralization has been viewed as an exceptionally beneficial style of administration for the purpose of delivering public services from easily accessible local centres that are situated in close proximity to the consumers' geographic location. The goal of decentralization in the majority of developing countries is to bring administration closer to the citizen and to establish a direct relationship between the client and the administration. Bringing administration to the doorstep of the citizen also establishes a direct relationship between the client and the administration. The need for decentralisation may be traced back to a variety of different places.

To begin, it was driven by the necessity to distribute the fundamental public goods as quickly as possible from local units of government. These fundamental public goods include food, shelter, and water. Second, the majority of people in developing nations reside in rural regions, which are typically located a significant distance from the nation's capital city, which is typically located in a distant metropolitan area. The administration has to "penetrate" the rural areas and establish connections between those places and the rest of the country. Thirdly, societal disparities are often expressed in the form of racial, linguistic, and religious distinctions in many different nations. In order to accommodate the differences that exist throughout the regions, administration needs to be decentralised. Only if the administration were to relocate to the regions and localities could regional and local resources be utilised for the sake of area development, which brings us to our fourth point. Therefore, decentralisation makes it easier for local planning and development to take place with the assistance of local resources.

The fifth point is that decentralisation has its own importance in terms of both politics and administration. Politically speaking, the meaningful articulation of local demands can be facilitated by local engagement in development activities coupled with intensive reactions to such efforts. The planning process thus becomes significantly more grounded in reality and is met with unwavering political backing. Through continued engagement in local decision-making, local governments gain the capacity to administer their own regions, which is significant from an administrative point of view. The discharge of local energy and the recruitment of local support for development efforts are both anticipated outcomes of decentralisation. As a result of this process, the community at large has the potential to gradually mature politically and administratively.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is not possible to apply in every setting the management strategies that have been shown in academic literature as producing beneficial outcomes and which are widely recognised and practised in both developed and developing nations. There is always the risk that the geographical, cultural, and historical

circumstances of a nation, which have been created by ineffective administrative procedures, may force decentralisation to fail. This is something that cannot be completely ruled out. This fact brought to the forefront the significance of putting into practise, on a periodic basis, management strategies that are designed with the understanding that every society operates within its own unique historical and cultural context. The process of shifting some of the political authority of the central government to the governments of the states and other federal divisions is what we mean when we talk about political decentralisation. In order to put this concept into practise, either local governments in nations with a federal structure should be granted some degree of independence in executive and legislative domains, or state governments in unitary states should move to province governments. It has been noticed that the implementation of political decentralisation in response to the needs of mostly culturally heterogeneous communities has resulted in the formation of ethnic divides in a great number of nations. To be successful in these endeavours, it is necessary to create a new autonomous state that is separate from the existing ones and is only partially dependent on the federal government. Therefore, the adoption of political decentralisation in nations with a high degree of ethnic fragmentation has not yielded very substantial results. It is abundantly obvious that the nation-states that have a unitary structure and a multi-part ethnicity are the most suitable candidates for an administrative decentralisation system.

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