

## **CHAPTER-V**

# **DECENTRALISATION AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL IN SIKKIM**

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The concept of decentralisation is receiving attention of the scholars, in the field of administration, as well as the policy makers of different democratic countries. A decentralised administration is synonymous to good administration. The word 'decentralisation' has its root in a Latin word meaning 'away from the centre' (Mac Makon, A.W., 1961). L. D. White explains it as the transfer of authority, legislative, judicial or administrative, from a higher level of government to a lower level (White, 1959).

Scholars are of the opinion that centrally administered bureaucracies represent an inefficient administration that negates the equal allocation of resources within a given society. They propogates two reasons behind their opinion—firstly, they argue that centrally administered state agencies lack the 'time and place knowledge' to implement policies and programmes those reflect people's real needs and aspirations. Secondly, they hold that 'time and place gaps' give local officials unlimited ability to distribute resources and extract rents according to their own will (Johnson, 2003).

Decentralisation may take any of the four forms:

1. Deconcentration—handing over some amount of administrative authority to lower levels.
2. Delegation—transferring responsibilities for specifically defined functions to organisations those are outside the regular bureaucratic structure and indirectly controlled by the central government.

3. Devolution—creation and strengthening of sub-national unit of the government activities of which are substantially outside the direct control of the central government.

4. Privatisation—passing all responsibilities for functions to non-governmental organisations independent of the government. The word 'decentralisation', therefore, relates to the devolution of powers resulting from the creation of bodies separated by law from the national centre to local representatives (Meenakshisundaram, 1994).

There are several conditions for the success of decentralisation. Jaya Prakash Narayan has identified six conditions for its success. These are: a) education of the people, b) non-politicisation of the Panchayats, c) trust in people leading to the devolution of power, d) local control over resources, e) local ownership of the civil servants, and establishment of democratic gram sabhas to ensure people's participations. The World Bank also identified four other conditions for success of decentralisation these conditions are: i) supports by central political leaders and bureaucracies; ii) conducive culture, behaviour and attitudes for decentralised decision-making; iii) appropriately designed policies and programmes; and iv) adequate financial, human and physical resources to all the operating units ( Pareek, 1989).

The amount of decentralisation depends on readiness of the operating units to use decision making power given to them. Unless the operating units are made competent to use effectively the delegated authority for the purpose of developmental and other goals, the ultimate aim of decentralisation may fail. Scholars have identified four types of competencies important for this purpose—1. Technical competencies, 2. Planning competencies, 3. Human process competencies i.e., tendency to take responsibility and effective team work, and 4. Negotiating competency (Pareek, 1989).

Decentralisation, in India, is as old as its civilisation. Decentralisation was found even in the age of Vedas (Jayswal, 1955). Even in 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' there is the mention of decentralised form of government (Mookherjee, R, 1958). In case of Sikkim also, the process of decentralisation has a long history. The modern history of Sikkim begins with Phuntsog Namgyal, in the year 1642, who is declared as the first Chogyal of the state. The State was more or less centrally administered during his period.

To run the administration efficiently and effectively, the Chogyal has divided the whole territory of the state into twelve Dzongs (Districts in modern sense of term) with the heads called Dzongpons. The names of these twelve Dzongs are:

1. Lassu,
2. Dallom,
3. Yangthang,
4. Gangtok,
5. Rhenok,
6. Barmeak,
7. Tashiding,
8. Song,
9. Libing,
10. Maling,
11. Simik,
12. Pandom (Chhetri, 2012).

The Dzungpons, the head of the Dzongs, were to be appointed by the Chogyal himself, generally, from the members of the leading families of the State and were responsible to the Chogyal. The chief qualifications demanded of a Dzungpon were adequate wealth, wisdom and popularity.

The power and authority of the Dzungpons flow from the Chogyal himself. They had to work under the direct supervision of the Chogyal. The main functions of the Dzungpons were to maintain the law and order within Dzongs, to collect rent in kind or cash from the cultivators on specified land. They used to enjoy some judicial power also (Chhetri, 2012). Actually, they had to perform the duties of a District Collector in our time. So, it can be opined that decentralisation of administration was there, though in a limited sense of term, during the time of the first recorded Chogyal of the State.

The then administration in Sikkim was designed to be controlled centrally. However, the Chogyal allowed the presence of the village panchayats system under various names in different parts of the country. Some of these systems like, Chhodu system in Dzongu, community panchayats in Tsongs were even older than the Tibetan colonisation in Sikkim.

The Lepchas in Dzongu had their own administrative system at the village level called Chhodu i.e. the village council. This council was to constitute of the elders of each household. The council enjoyed some administrative as well as judicial powers. Muktiar, Mandal, Gyapon and Youmi are some of the office bearer of the council (Chopra, 1979).

Muktiar was the official link between the State and the people. He was responsible for the supervision and coordination of the work of all village Mandals. He has to supervise all tax accountants and visit the villages twice in a year to inspect the fields to see that grains had not been planted in excess of the

amount on which tax had been paid. He had to maintain the register of births and deaths within his jurisdiction (Gorer, 1967).

Mandal was made responsible for the collection of revenues. He was responsible for the maintenance of law and order within his jurisdiction. He had some welfare functions also. Being the head of the village he had to arrange even the marriages of most of the people, to advise the villagers and to act as the intermediary between villagers and the court. The office of the Mandal is hereditary. The chief qualifications demanded of a Mandal are good character, wisdom, adequate wealth and popularity (Gorer, 1967).

Youmi was to be nominated by the Mandal in consultation with the village elders. According to the convention, a Youmi must be an old and experienced person and must be an ex-Gyapon. He must have engaged in social welfare activities. Youmi was to assist the Mandal in his works. On the other hand, the Gyapon was an elected person who was to be elected from the villagers. The main functions of the Gyapon were collection of taxes, summoning the villagers for ceremonies, collection of grains from each house for communal ceremonies, and prevention of crime etc. (Gorer, 1967).

Another form of decentralised administration is seen in the Bhutia inhabited villages Lachen and Lachung those are situated in the present North district of Sikkim. The villages have their own assembly called Dzumsa. The meeting of the Dzumsa is held in a public hall called Mong-khyim i.e. Dzumsa Ghar. The head of the families of the village can be the member of the Dzumsa. Initially, the male members only could be the members of the Dzumsa. However, later on this restriction has been removed and at present, both the male and the female can be the member of the Dzumsa. The important officers of this village assembly are Pipon and Gyapon (Chhetri, 2012).

Dzumsa the village assembly meets every year to elect two Pipons—one senior Pipon and the other junior Pipon. However, initially, the Pipon was not an elected representative of the villagers. He was to be appointed by the Chogyal himself. After the introduction of two-tier panchayati raj system in that Sikkim, the senior Pipon is made the member of the Zilla Panchayat. In the village Lachung the Pipon is directly elected by the village people at the meeting of the village assembly. However, in case of Lachen the Lama, the Buddhist priest enjoys the ultimate power to nominate the Pipon (Chhetri, 2012).

Normally, the Pipon was to be elected for a period of one year. He is eligible for re-election also. However, he may be replaced before the completion of the term through the device of recall. The qualifications demanded of a Pipon are: he must be a member of the Dzumsa, he must be a land revenue payee and possess wealth, he must be a popular person in the village, he must be a male member and preferably elder one from the family, and he must be able, intelligent and has a good family background.

Dzumsa generally meets once in a year. However, the Pipon may call the meeting at any time, if the situation demands. Any kind of dispute is to be settled through the meeting of the Dzumsa. The meeting is summoned by the Pipon in consultation with the elders and the Gyapon. Gyapon is the office bearer of the Dzumsa. He has to inform the villagers about the meeting. Initially the attendance in the meeting was compulsory and absentees were fined by the Pipon. However, with the advent of modern era the attendance is made voluntary and imposition of fine to the absentees has been removed (Chhetri, 2012). It is interesting to mention that the State of Sikkim is still experiencing the Dzumsas. Under the Sikkim Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 2001, the State Government deemed it expedient that the traditional Institutions of the Dzumsas continued to exist in accordance with the Traditional and Customary Law.

These Institutions were made to exercise powers and functions provided under the Act in addition to those exercised by them under the existing Traditional Law (Shresta, 2005).

There is another kind of local government in Sikkim, known as Gaon or community panchayats. The Nepalese in Sikkim settled mainly low land of the state. They had their own type of traditional village administration. The society in Sikkim was purely feudal in nature hence, there developed a number of feudal lords who occupied a sizable portion of agricultural land in different parts of the State. This private occupied portion of land gave birth to Ellakas. Each Ellaka was directly under the control of Ellakadars—the owner of the Ellakas. The Ellakadars enjoyed the executive as well as judicial powers. The Mandals were appointed by the Ellakadars in order to regulate the intra-village affairs. The mandal was empowered to maintain the law and order within his jurisdiction and to collect the revenues. This Ellaka system was recognised officially in 1906 under Political Officer's Notification No. 2338 (Chheri, 2012). This notification defined the powers and functions of the Ellakadars.

The clause 2 of the Notification of 1906 enumerated the following administrative powers of Ellakadars:

1. Link between the state government and ryots,
2. Collection of land revenue and house tax,
3. Registration of birth and death in the Ellakas, and
4. Agent of government at local level.

Besides, the Ellakadars has the judicial power to try petty cases of cattle trespass, petty land disputes, and debt cases of value not more than Rs.10.00 with fine to the extent of Rs. 5.00 (Chhetri, 2012).

The traditional systems of local self government in Sikkim remained the same till 1965. The Sikkim Panchayat Act of 1965 integrated the chhodu system with the pattern prevalent in the rest of the country. The local self-government prevalent in Lachen and Lachung was, however, remained to be continued at present day also. The British rulers, also, though brought many changes in the working of the administration, left it untouched and allowed to run as it was. In fact, the basic feudal fabric in the State remained the same. It is only the systematisation of the revenue collection that was the contribution of the Britishers as the protector of the State (Basnet, 1974).

J.C. White was appointed as the Political Officer at Gangtok in the year 1989. After his appointment, Mr. White tried to introduce the land settlement programme that brought substantial changes in the land ownership pattern. The Notification No. 2338, 1906 recognised the Ellaka system, for the first time, and defined the powers and functions of the Ellakadars.

There were 104 Ellakas in Sikkim of which 11 were managed by Managers appointed on commission by state. Generally Managers were selected from any of the neighbouring Ellakadars and the system of collection of revenue was same as that of the lessees. 15 Ellakas formed the Private Estate of His Highness, the Maharaja of Sikkim. Five Ellakas' land revenue tax went to the upkeep of the five big monasteries of Sikkim. Of the Ellakadars of the State 21 were Kazis, 6 were Bhutias, 8 were Lepchas, 13 were Nepalese and 1 was a domiciled Plainsman (Administrative Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1936-37 to 1937-38).

In order to carry out the intra-village affairs, each Ellaka was divided into some convenient blocks headed by Mandle (Administrative Report of the Sikkim State for the year 1936-37 to 1937-38). The Mandles were appointed by the Ellakadars. The ceiling of land that Mandle and the Ellakadars could hold

was also decided by the government orders. A Mandle of the various blocks of an Ellaka may acquire the land up to 30 acres and the Ellakadars could acquire not more than 100 acres (Chhetri, 2012).

During this system the Ellakadars enjoyed both administrative and judicial powers. The Ellakadars were responsible for the collection of taxes—land revenue and house hold taxes—with the help of the Mandles. They were empowered to try petty cases of cattle trespass, petty land disputes and debt case of value not exceeding Rs.10.00 with fine to the extent of Rs.5.00, the Ellakadars performed their functions as the magistrate on both of his private estate and leased lands, and was responsible for maintaining the local courts and police (Chhetri, 2012).

According to the judicial power enjoyed by the Ellakadars they could be grouped into four different categories. The first category of Ellakadars enjoyed the judicial powers to try ordinary civil and criminal cases and to fine up to Rs. 100 or imprisonment of one month within the limit of their Ellakas. The second category of Ellakadars was conferred with powers to try ordinary civil and criminal cases and to fine upto Rs. 50. The third and fourth categories of Ellakadars enjoyed powers to try ordinary cases and fine up to Rs. 25 and Rs 15 respectively. However, this judicial power does not include the British citizens residing in the State (Chhetri, 2012). It was only the Indian Panchayat that could try the British people. This Panchayat was consisted of four Indians, one Nepali, and one Sikkimese.

The policy of decentralisation in Sikkim experienced many changes during the rule of Tashi Namgyal and his son Palden Thondup Namgyal. During the rule of Tashi Namgyal, the eleventh Chogyal of Sikkim, a Panchayat Tribunal was established under the notification No.3054-254/PS dated 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1948. This Panchayat had to be consisted of the Land Lord and other

four villagers of the estate. According to Clause 5 of the Notification the Mandal would ask their block people in a meeting called for the purpose to select four persons to represent the block in the final selection. These four members of the blocks would then elect the four member of the Panchayat Tribunal. The qualifications of the membership, according to the Notification were:

a) Member of the Panchayat would be not less than twenty-two years of age,

b) He must be literate in any vernacular language,

c) He would be a payee of a land tax of not less than Rs. 15. One development towards the establishment of transparent administration could be noticed in this Notification. The conviction of an offence of moral turpitude would be a disqualification for membership (Dhamala, 1985).

It was the year 1951 when Sikkim experienced an elected representative body at the village level when Local Area Panchayat came into existence vide Sikkim Darbar Gazette Notification dated 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1951. The Indo-Sikkim treaty gave recognition to the demand of Sikkim State Congress for the formation of village Panchayats and transfer of power from the Landlords to the village Panchayats (Dhamala, 1985).

According to the provisions of the Notification the members of the Local Area Panchayat were to be elected by the villagers directly and after election the members had to be confirmed by the Darbar. Any person who attain the age of 18 and above and who had resided in that local area for at least 12 months prior to the electoral date were entitled to vote. The Notification also held that the candidates, the proposers and seconders must be bonafied voters of that area (Dhamala, 1985).

Under Clause 8 of the Notification the Local Area Panchayats enjoyed the following power and functions:

- The Panchayat had power to establish primary schools in conformity with Government's resolution, set up amenities such as travellers rest house, wayside benches etc;
- It had to maintain and repair of village path with the co-operation and assistance of the villagers;
- It had power to build cattle ponds, at convenient places and assess damage to crops by stray animals; and
- It also enjoyed the judicial power in the civil cases up to the value of Rs.100 (Dhamala, 1985).

During the period of the Chogyal Tashi Namgyal the state of Sikkim witnessed a number of steps towards decentralisation. The land reform initiatives were taken during his regime. Whole territory of Sikkim was divided into two Teshils (Revenue District) i.e. east Sikkim and West Sikkim. Each Teshil was kept under the supervision of an officer called Teshildar. The Teshildars were to be assisted by a number of officers namely, a Deputy Development Officer, An Extension officer, a Revenue Inspector, those who were appointed by the Sikkim Darbar and there were other officers also deputed to the 'district' level by the various departments of the Secretariat (Chhetri, 2012).

The Teshildars were entrusted with some revenue functions, Executive functions and Magisterial functions. Being the head of the revenue administration within the Teshil, the Teshildar had to collect taxes, maintain the records and accounts of the Khazana or land tax, so far as the collection of was corned it was the prime responsibility of the Teshildars to see that not only done promptly, efficiently but also sympathetically. He was

head of the police force within the district. He was also empowered to pass sentence of imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and fine not exceeding two hundred rupees. He would look after the cases of defaulter of payment and impose the fine accordingly. The complaints and the police charge sheet were to be filed directly in the courts of Teshildar. He had the power to inspect the records and working of the Honorary Courts and to submit their reports to the Dewan. So far as the executive powers were concern, the Teshildar had to act as the sub-registrar within their jurisdiction. The applications for royalty free use of timber in forest were to be verified by the Teshildar (Chhetri, 2012).

The demand for more democracy and decentralisation was raised from within the political parties in Sikkim. Consequently, various steps had been taken by the Chogyal to respond these demands. As a result, Sikkim had experienced the formation of State Council, Executive Council, Advisory Council and the General elections to the State council. Not only this, the territory of Sikkim was divided into four Districts with district officers, namely, North, South, East and West with their headquarters at Mangan, Namchi, Gangtok and Gyalshing respectively.

The District Officers were appointed by the Chogyal himself. They were in charge of the district and had to act as a Magistrate, Deputy Development Officer and Inspector of Land Revenue. The District Officers were invested with the following functions:

- I. To act as link between the Chogyal and the district administration;
- II. To ensure the law and order in the district;
- III. To draw a plan for integrated socio-economic development of the region;

- IV. To provide good and efficient administration;
- V. To co-ordinate and implement the economic development programmes (Chhetri, 2012).

The 50s of the last century witnessed a tilt towards decentralisation. Many leading ideas on local governments emerged during this period (Lalitha, 2004). Sikkim was also not an exception to this direction. Influenced by the ongoing process of decentralisation, the Chogyal of Sikkim passed the Sikkim Panchayat Act, 1965. This Act stipulated a single tier Panchayat system with Block Panchayat at the village level. There was the concept of Block Sabha under the Sikkim Panchayat Act, 1965. Block Sabha was consisted of the adult Sikkim subjects who pay land revenue or local tax to the Government for the landed property or house owned in their names.

Clause 11(1) of this Panchayat Act enumerated different functions of the Block Panchayats that can be grouped as follows:

1. Planned improvement of agriculture establishment and management of model agricultural farms, crop experiments to secure minimum standard of cultivation and construction of compost pits;
2. Promotion of dairy farming poultry, piggery, improvement of cattle and cattle breeding.
3. Organisation of community Programme for soil conservation and tree planting, embankment against floods, petty irrigation works etc. ;
4. Construction of public latrine, sanitation, health hygiene and conservancy;
5. Maternity and child welfare;

6. Promotion of cottage;
7. Construction and maintenance of roads, bridge and drains;
8. Construction, repair and maintenance of school buildings;
9. Taking preventive and remedial measures connected with epidemics;
10. Cultural and social development activities;
11. Maintenance of burning and burial grounds;
12. Recording of birth, death and marriages;
13. Recommendations for improvement of Gorucharan, khasmal and primary schools;
14. Rural water supply and programme of minimum rural amenities including construction of approach roads linking each village to the nearest road;
15. Management of primary schools; and
16. Works programme for the full utilisation of manpower resources for rural areas and other such matters as may from time to time be referred to it by the District Officer (Chhetri, 2012).

Besides, the Block Panchayats there was Bazaar Committee Act, 1969 that dealt with the establishment and administration of the Bazaar areas. The Committee was to be constituted of six members—among them two were to be elected from Sikkim subjects, two from non Sikkim subjects residing in that area and one was to be nominated by the Chogyal himself. The District Officer acted as the Ex-officio Chairman of the Committee. So, after analysing the story of decentralisation before merger it can well be said that it was the principle of deconcentration and delegation were there during that time.

After 1975 when Sikkim became an integral part of India the other two principles of decentralisation, gradually, took place. The concept of devolution has reached to its culminating point after the introduction of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment Acts in 1992. However, ten years before these Acts Sikkim Panchayat Act of 1982 was enacted to replace the previous Sikkim Panchayat Act of 1965.

Establishment of Panchayat in the state was made in 1948 under Notification No. 3052-254/ P. S. dated 24. 01. 1948. The Sikkim Panchayat Act, 1965 was passed to ensure rural development and enable participation in all communities in the village level. In 1982, another new act was enacted to introduce the two tiers Panchayati Raj System in that state—Gram Panchayat at the village level and Zilla Panchayat at the district level. However, under Act the Panchayat members must not be an elected member. In most of the cases, like other part of India they were nominated by the majority party in power. All major developmental functions like agriculture, education, health etc. were directly under the concerned departments of the state government.

The Sikkim Panchayat Act 1993 was enacted in conformity with the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and provided appropriate framework for involvement of people in the formulation of plans and execution of rural development programmes and social justice. It is primarily aimed at restructuring the society towards participatory democracy as well as laying the foundation for democratic decentralization in Sikkim.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) act as the unit of local self government and as an effective instrument of implementing various development programmes in the rural areas. Both the Gram Panchayats and the Zilla Panchayats are empowered with the overall supervision, co-ordination and

implementation of development programmes at the village as well as the district level and also preparation of plans for the area of their jurisdiction.

The Rural Management & Development Department (RMDD) is the in charge of the effective functioning of the PRIs. The Zilla Panchayats and the Gram Panchayats, according to Sections 69 of the Sikkim Panchayat Act, 1993, the Zilla Panchayats are invested with the powers relating to regulation of melas and haats, construction and maintenance of Panchayat ghars, dharmasalas, minor irrigation, regulating supply of drinking water and water for irrigation, forestation, promotion of social forestry and environmental conservation, establishment and maintenance of primary schools, health centre and child welfare and maternity centre, organisation of relief works, preparation of plans for all round development of the district.

34 of the said Act, 1993, as amended in the year 1995, the Gram Panchayats have the power relating to construction and maintenance of sanitation, drainage, village roads, dharmasalas, buildings; imposition and collection of taxes, fees or rates; immunisation; management of common grazing ground, burning place and public grave yards; registration birth and death; regulating in floe of animals; disposal of stray and ownerless dogs, unclaimed cattle.

Despite these mandatory functions there are some assigned functions for both Gram Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats. Under Section 35 of the above mentioned Act the Gram Panchayats have to deal with the management of government primary schools, dispensaries, primary health centres, child welfare and maternity centres; construction and maintenance of minor irrigation; welfare programme for the infirm and destitute; rehabilitation of displaced persons; cattle improvement programmes; promotion of education including

adult education and plantation; land reforms; regulation of fairs, melas, haats etc.; bringing into cultivation waste and fallow land.

On the other hand, under Section 70 of the same Act the Zilla Panchayats are entitled to carry out the functions like promotion of responsibility of employment through community farming; organisation and maintenance of clubs and other places for recreation or games; establishment, encouragement and maintenance of library and reading rooms; construction and maintenance of destitute homes; slaughter houses and encamping grounds; promotion of agriculture and of communal harmony.

Section 11 of the said Act as it was amended in 2005 provides that the Gram Sabha enjoys the authority to approve the works and the development plans, to identify the beneficiaries for extending benefits of social sector schemes besides, there is the District Planning Committee that consolidates the plans prepared by the Panchayats into the draft district plan of the district.

After merger a more or less autocratic and centralised administrative system (despite a number of steps taken by the Chogyal towards democracy and decentralisation) has been transformed into a democratic one. Consequently measures have been adopted by the government of Sikkim. And with the advent of democracy and decentralisation, the concept of good governance received too much importance in Sikkim like any other developing countries.

Good governance is a term that has suddenly entered the vocabulary of public administration since the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bhattacharya, 1999). The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines good governance as an “act or manner of governing” and “the office or function of governing” while ‘govern’ is defined as “rule or control with authority; conduct the policy and affairs”. It means, governance refer to a process or the act or function of exercising authority (usually legitimate) to regulate affairs of man in a given territory,

generally a State (Dey, 1999). R. C. Sekhar (1999) holds good governance may be defined sometime in terms of goals, sometimes in terms of means, sometimes left entirely too democratic choice of goals and sometimes with pre-ordained goals.

From the experiences of the World Bank at several developing countries, the Bank realised that “good governance is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development and it is an essential complement to sound economic policies”. Three distinct aspects can well be identified in the conceptualisation of ‘governance’. These aspects are: i) the form of political regime; ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources; and iii) the capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies, and in general, to discharge government functions (Bhattacharya, 1999).

The World Bank identified seven parameters of good governance those are relevant to both of the developed as well as developing countries. These parameters are:

1. Legitimacy of the political system which can best be achieved through regular elections and political accountability.
2. Freedom of association and participation by various socio-economic, religious, cultural and professional groups in the process of governance.
3. An established legal framework based on the rule of law and independence of judiciary to protect human right, secure social justice and guard against exploitation and abuse of power.

4. Bureaucratic accountability including transparency in administration.
5. Freedom of expression required for formulation of public policies, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of government performance.
6. A sound administrative system leading to efficiency and effectiveness.
7. Co-operation between the government and civil society organisation.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has also identified four indicators of good governance. They are as follows:

1. Legitimacy of government;
2. Accountability of political and official elements of government;
3. Competence of government to make policy and deliver services;
4. Respect for human rights and rule of law.

If we look into the working of the government of Sikkim we can identify a number of measures taken to ensure good governance. Firstly, the government officers are made accountable to the common people. At the grass-root level, the people's representatives are made answerable to the common villagers through the meetings of the Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha, under the new Panchayat Act of 1995, has power—to review the annual statement of accounts, to review the reports of the preceding financial year, to review and submit views on development programmes for the following year, and to participate in the identification of beneficiaries for some government schemes. Besides, there are the Vigilance Committee and the Beneficiary Committee. This Committee is

generally consisted of the Panchayat members of respective village. This Committee has to monitor and over see the works of the Panchayats. And the Beneficiary Committee is formed to minimise the role of the contractors and middlemen in carrying out public works and enable speedy completion of work that is undertaken. The clearance certificates are to be sanctioned by the Beneficiary Committee before drawing of final bills from the departments after the completion of work.

Audit is another weapon that made the officials accountable. A system of statutory audit has been introduced under the state Panchayat Act. The provisions for both the internal and external audit are there in Sikkim at the Panchayat level. The internal audit is conducted by Audit Officers of the state government and the Auditor General and his staff conduct external audit annually for the Panchayats.

Secondly, a transparent administration also ensures good governance. The quality of transparency is further enhanced if stakeholders are not merely informed of what business transpires, but are also given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and effectively influence it (Jha, 2006). People must have an access to 'reliable' and 'user-friendly' information about the functioning of the government. This access may be provided in two ways: 1) the citizens must be given the right to information, and 2) the PRIs also should furnish informations about their activities (Ghosh, 2005). The right to information act promote openness, transparency and accountability in administration by making government more open to continuing public scrutiny (Mander and Joshi, 1999).

The third ingredient, that is an indispensable part of good governance, is participation. People's participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal, highly institutionalised or adhoc, continuous or intermittent (Cohen &

Uphoff, 1980; Mishra & Mishra, 1999). Being a democratic state indirect participation of the common people is ensured at the state level of administration. But the people directly participate in the working of the Panchayats through Gram Sabha.

Legitimacy, democracy and decentralisation are also essential for good governance. In Sikkim, there is no point of difference that, a legitimate democratic government is running since 1974. The measures to make the administration more and more decentralised have been taking place from the reign of the first recorded Chogyal of the state. And keeping all these things as background the present study will try to identify the degree of good governance that is achieved through the decentralised system of administration.

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