**Ending the diarchy in civil services**

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The excessively centralised and outmoded colonial cast of our civil service often sparks many bizarre impediments and paradoxes. The circus often sours the working relationship between the Federal and the Provincial governments, gives undue fodder to the media which is intent on battering the democratic system. The saga has become more frequent and serious in Sindh, which is rather more ruthlessly splashed due to a spat between the federal government and the PPP leadership at the province. The controversy about the powers and the posting of various Inspector Generals of Police in Sindh, for instance, may be cited just as a conundrum that remained for several months and make a mockery of the constitutional powers and privilege of the elected Sindh Chief Minister as an executive.

The cases interestingly reminds us of the tussle between Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. Benazir appointed a civil servant to the position of the Chief Secretary of Punjab while Sharif was adamant not to accept him for this slot and spewed his ire by declaring that he would make the nominee serve as the superintendent of the Jinnah Gardens. Now, ironically, Syed Murad Ali Shah, asserted his prerogative to select a civil servant whose credentials and competence conformed to his criteria. The federation maintains a corpse of the civil servants selected, trained and administered by it in terms of their postings, promotions and performance. While the provinces, despite being granted full authority in some sectors like the police, law and order, lands and district management, have to depend upon the federation to lend them some senior executives to manage these departments.

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Sometimes the center may have genuine problems like the officer requested may be in the mid of some other assignment or may be even on the demand list of some other province. This situation creates a real constitutional impasse that an elected icon like a Chief Minister, for instance, is responsible and answerable for the portfolio and the powers conferred on him but practically he is hampered by the efficiency and performance of the functionaries, whom he is not completely authorised to find. Even the bureaucrats often seem to be caught in quandary. They have to work under the command and control of the provincial icons while relying on the federation for their assignments and career advancement.

Any discrepancies in what the federal and provincial governments want certainly impacts not merely their performance, but even their personal regimen. This diarchy obviously was understandable under the centralised colonial system that has now legally ended for the departments that have been devolved to the provinces. The duality or the conditions about seeking and engaging only the officers of a federal cadre, even for certain provincial functions, thus has to be abolished. The provincial governments, in this context, should be entitled to select, train, regulate their perks, privileges and performance parameters and carry out the posting and promotions of the officers for the cadres for which they have so far relied upon the centre. Initially, the absence of high tier training academies and the requisite facilities in the provincial domains would certainly be quite problematic. Even before training, the examination, selection and recruitment procedure may be stymied by the shortage of evaluation experts and facilities.

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The provision of accomplished professional managers helping the elected leaders is, of course, an essential pre-requisite of an efficient and good governance practices. Yet the elected icons have to be in leadership roles. These leaders at district, tehsil and the basic unit level would evidently also need specialised civil service cadres as the devolution moves to these tiers. Specialised cadres accordingly have to be created and groomed for this as the devolution still unduly stalled at the provincial levels, filters down to the remotest thresholds. A prompt, productive and proactive diffusion of authority is. Only the real elected representatives of a region or community can grasp the need, relevance and priority of their projects. They are also the most suited to sanction them, steer their pace, direction, completion and maintenance.

Appropriate amendments and reforms for this purpose obviously have to be instituted in the constitution as well as in the statues related to the Federal Public Service Commission and functioning of the training portals. The Federal Commission, in a devolved set up following the eighteenth amendment, would evidently be responsible for the selection of the officers required only for the Secretariat and the departments that still fall under the purview of the government.

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