

EDITORIAL

While the world is celebrating the Christmas and the New Year, much of the northern part of British island is struggling against vagaries of weather. Six Atlantic storms hit the island nation within a span of four weeks. On Christmas Day, the historic city of York was flooded after two of its river, the Foss and Ouse burst their banks. Lakhs of people are still stranded. The government is facing the fury of people. But, the government is caught midway. The governance structure is so much split and categorized that it becomes difficult for different bodies to go beyond its domain and work for redressing the issue in its entirety. Andy Johnston, Chief Operating Officer, Local Government Information Unit admitted in a signed piece in the British newspaper, *Telegraph*: “The governance of flooding in England and Wales is a mess. Different bodies are responsible depending on whether the flooding is from a large river, a small river, a ditch, ground water or heavy rain. To add to the complexity water doesn’t stand still and can flow into several different jurisdictions in one afternoon. So, floodwater may start in a farmer’s field, cross a road which is the responsibility of the Highways Agency, enter a culvert owned by a water company into a main river which is the responsibility of the Environment Agency, then join a flooded city centre caused by heavy rain and therefore the responsibility of the local authority.”

Britishers displayed pride in their efficient public service system. But a prolonged rough weather has exposed the loopholes of the administrative system. When the British administration was taking roots in India and elsewhere, the radicality in governance was epitomized by the apparatus of ‘section’. While going through administrative record of the British India, I could not trace the usage of this term in administrative organization till 1858. But, suddenly the term appears in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in 1860. IPC comprises of sections. So much was the appeal and efficacy of “*Section*” that it spread across the governance spectrum within next few decades. Section was the ultimate panacea for modern administrative organization. The offices had the basic functional units known as section headed by the Section Officer. In the schools, classes were sub-divided into sections. Similarly, at the smallest level, railway zones were divided into Sections. Section was the organizing unit in army organization, and in police organization.

The term, Section, came in vogue during 1550s, and derived from Latin term, *sectionem* (nominative *sectio*) “a cutting, cutting off, division.” The stem is “*secare*” “to cut,” from root “*sec*”- “cut”. Whenever ‘*Sec*’ stem is used, it denotes the “parting or cutting off”. One can derive the usage from the series of words like secession, separate, sedition, select, segregate. Interestingly, all these terms are also connected with modern government.

Likes of Andy Johnston are only reiterating the practical constraints of the governance structure which British established long back. The British policy makers themselves have realized the incompatibility of ‘section’ as an apparatus to handle the 21st century governance. There is lot of innovative suggestions coming under the rubric of “shared services”. The reverse journey of administrative apparatus from *division* to *sharing* is now the latest buzzword in the UK public service system.

The Britishers have introduced the Next Generation Shared Services (NGSS) in the back office transactional services like HR, Payroll, Finance and Procurement. Since small departments were not cost-effective, it was decided to share some of the services with other departments.

Since India inherits much of the British architecture of governance, it is imperative upon our policy makers to move from the paradigm of “*section*” towards paradigm of “*sharing*” to handle the emergent complexities of 21st century governance. This ought to be replicated in academics where the division and sub-division of domains have led to such an absurd state of affairs that no integrated vision can be propounded.

The Journal of Indian Research, since its inception, is harping upon synthetic tradition of knowledge rather than merely analytic tradition. We hope to continue our endeavour in the future and request academic fraternity to share their wisdom and innovative thoughts on this platform.

– **Niraj Kumar**