

# People's Approach to Reorienting Public Administration



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## Abstract

Public Administration is the instrument of development for any democratic state aspiring to be a model state like England, America and Russia, who have set excellent examples of optimizing the potential of state bureaucracy to uplift their war-ravaged countries during W.W.I & W.W.II, to admirable heights. However, the same model doesn't seem to be bearing the same results in Afro-Asian & Latin American Countries. According to F.W. Riggs, India represents the case of a prismatic society - an ex-colony of Britain which is undergoing three stages of development in the same era. There are, three major challenges which India has to face, fast speed ICT (Information and Technology), 30% down the BPL line civil society, high level discrimination, discontentment and rampant violence. Thirdly, and most importantly the threat to security and peace exhibited in form of naxalism and terrorism in bordering state. In the face of these challenges, Indian bureaucracy has to reinvent "out of the box thinking" to innovate new models of development which is inclusive as well as sustainable in nature.

**Keywords:** Bureaucracy, Peoples' Approach, Reinventing, Innovation, Colonial Mindset, Prismatic Society, Decentralization, Democratization, Polarization, Panchayati-Raj-Institution, Corruption Index.

## Introduction

It is truly said that Public Administration is essential to maintain peace, harmony and stability in society. To quote C.P. Bhambari "With breakdown of the machinery of Public Administration, the civilization shall itself go to pieces." Public Administration stabilizes social structure, social relationship.<sup>1</sup> Under the impact of science and technology and the concept of welfare state, Public Administration has assumed an even greater importance than in pre-globalization era with the expansion of government functions. Right, but is the present Government responsive to the needs of the citizens for whom it was designed to serve? Is it serving the society and strengthening the social relationships? Has it assumed the role of a facilitator from traditional regulator? The answer is a reserved one.

Traditionally speaking, in developing societies administration is the main agency of socio-economic change. Administration is carried out by a body of officials popularly termed as bureaucracy, who act as the agents of development. Similarly in India, the bureaucracy became the single largest guiding force of the nation post 1947. The preparation and execution of long term plans of industrial, agricultural developments, innovation of modern types of institutions and skills necessary for sustaining a modern technological society became the onus of the bureaucracy as in case of Green revolution, white and blue revolutions during '70s to '90s.

Has the Indian bureaucracy been true to its role of agent of change? An exploration of the sociological, economic, psychological, political and administrative growth in the country will answer these complex questions. The inadequacy and unfulfillment of the vital basic needs of poor people like Roti, Kapda or Makan speaks volumes about failures of Indian bureaucracy to attain its goals.

It is true that bureaucracy derives its powers from its political masters, therefore, the strength and weaknesses of the former cannot be ascribed solely on itself. That is how, the terms politico-bureaucratic nexus came into usage. Failures after failures to obtain the planned targets and yet, over-consumption of exchequer's money resulted in to money-laundering and corruption of the worst order upto 2013. With 40% approximate BPL population, India is the 78<sup>th</sup> on corruption index list (2018 rank in the world), issued by the UN.

Modi govt's. tireless efforts, to eradicate ongoing problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy along with the same old basic needs of fooding, clothing and shelter, along with the super most neglected areas of sanitation, toilet, sewerage, sweeper's predicament, has established his vision in no uncertain terms to root out these socio-economic-cultural issues which our country is facing since last 70 years that is post-independence.

A brief evaluation of the working of Public Administration in India over a period of 70 years could be the only possible way to answer the question. Tenure of Indian administration could be divided into three segments for an easy analysis-Pre-independence, post-independence from 1947 to 90 and 1991 onwards, post-globalization.

As is common knowledge, the British era administration in India was devoted to the cause of the sustenance of the British rule. Naturally, this kind of administration had very little sympathy with the urges, aspirations, needs and demands of the people. In short, it was autocratic, irresponsible and irresponsive in nature true to any foreign regime. In the post-independent era, the goal of nation-building, created the pressure for the socio-economic planning initiated by Nehru to fight against backwardness, poverty and lack of industry. Government intervention had become necessary in new fields - industrial production, price control, distribution not merely of industrial goods but also of food. Unconsciously, the administrator was being prepared for the change from Laissez-faire to the planned, economy and Nationalization to be followed later during Mrs. Indira Gandhi's regime-Nationalisation of banks, removal of Previ-purses and Garibi Hatao were the most popular.

In the 2nd place, India took great strides in the fields of industry, technology and agriculture which testify to the vision and sagacity of Pandit Nehru. Undoubtedly providing infrastructure for building up a socialist society was uppermost in the mind of Nehru. In contrast to this, the 3rd period, i.e. 1990 onwards was characterised by the process of deregulation, decontrol and free-market economy where the MNCs dominated the sovereign decisions. Post Globalisation, Russia and China became the biggest trend setter in the realm of Administration Reforms. Acceptance of openness in their financial administration despite their socialistic ideology, sent a clear message to international collaboration in global market. There was a clear manifestation that "Neutrality and Isolation" were the policies of the past, hence, unsustainable. India followed the suit under Narsimha Rao regime, when the then finance minister Manmohan Singh opened the doors for LPG-Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation. Ever since, drastic changes have taken place on Indian and Global platform. Indian market is seized by the Chinese market and ease of doing business and FDIs have become the living trends.

In view of the above changes, it can be strongly reiterated that administration is not a permanent or static institution rather it is a dynamic and constantly changing one. Keeping pace with changing technology, international pressures, and

citizen's aspirations should be the indicators of change in the 21st Century.

#### **Reforms and Indian Administration**

Changes which are wide ranging in scope and content involving a major shake-up in government is called reform. An administrative reform becomes necessary to remedy the malfunctioning of natural administrative process-especially when self-adjusting organisational response to changing conditions does not take place.<sup>2</sup> Need for administrative reforms was felt from very beginning in India for the inherited bureaucracy was not tailored to suit the holistic development of the society and people, but of the ruling masters. Therefore, the ongoing demands for administrative reforms. In response to the demand, the Government of India had set up around 30 committees and commissions to inquire into the shortcomings of the administration, for e.g. A.D. Gorwala Report, Appleby report, Santhanam Committee Report, however, the first proper Administrative Reforms Commission ARC 1966 was the most important, headed by Morarji Desai and K. Hanuman Thaiya.

The suggestions offered by these bodies mostly revolved round structural or procedural reforms which is related either with division of work, delegation and decentralization, creation of autonomous agencies or involves changes in financial rules, alteration of work procedures like filing methods, avoiding red tape, etc. These reforms whether comprehensive or sectoral are all within the framework of the existing bureaucracy. Whereas what we need today is the change in the philosophy of administration - a people oriented administration. To some extent this aspiration was dealt with by Hota committee 2004 and the second ARC 2005 which submitted 15 reports by 2009 covering Local governance, ethics, e-governance and combating Terrorism.

#### **Aim of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to project a balanced view of Indian administration and bureaucracy in the 21st century. Although, we inherited an orthodox and rigid bureaucracy with the shadows of the British past, however, it is the machinery which is endowed with vast powers, which if, utilized empathetically to people's cause can transform the dynamics of our socio-economic and political predicament. The singular message of this study is to revitalize the instrument of Indian bureaucracy and attain the desired changes/targets for the masses, only then, can we become a strong democracy with 3rd, 4th world ranking.

#### **Reorganisation of Bureaucracy**

The new philosophy envisages a comeback of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) in which the central and State-Level services should be split down into three tier village level service as advised by Balwant Rai Mehta Committee 1956, Ashok Mehta Committee 1977 and Sarkaria Commission, 1983.

1. Gram Panchayat
2. Tehsil
3. District

Eventually, 64th to 74th Panchayati Amendment Acts ensured the creation of PRIs as mandatory all over the Country. And there was a sea change in the Indian mind-set after the amendment set rolling into rural areas into 250,000 gram Panchayats.

It would be revolutionary in the sense that it would recruit personnel from amongst the local youth and not merely the educated market. The ancestral, generational skills prevalent in the families got a chance to be revived by the resurrection of PRI's. In this way political empowerment formed the basis for administrative changes. Some people may find the proposal to reinvent the PRIs in public administration as presumptuous, but to those who want to make public administration people-oriented responsive and innovative, Panchayati Raj reform is essential.

It is about 3 decades ago that David Osborne and Ted Gaebler wrote in their book "Reinventing Government" on the eve of Bill Clinton's ascendancy to presidency in 1992 that "Our government are in deep trouble today. It is for those..... who want their government to be more effective."<sup>3</sup> It is important that the book inspired Bill Clinton and others to make government entrepreneurial and responsive to the needs of the people. And America succeeded in becoming a strong economic power under Clinton regime.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the ideal of reforms in the Indian Administration should not intimidate the bureaucracy. In fact they must welcome it with the changing socio-economic challenges of the society. From British rule to planned economy to liberalization, there are various stages in the development of public administration. The present day change is the most complex and challenging one for, our population army is more than one billion of which, half is illiterate, 30% is semi-literate or so and rest 20% is highly educated. It is therefore, difficult to perceive any single model of development for India after Independence. I too, venture to suggest a mixed form of administrative reform for development in the 21st century. However, the players would be different as mentioned earlier. i.e., the local mass, women and the rural youth of the area. Credit goes to Modi Govt. to innovate lateral recruitment in public administration which can introduce and contribute "out of the box" ideas in galvanizing the administration. He is asking for the reorganisation of bureaucracy in true sense of the term. There is a resentment amongst the properly selected public servants against this people's approach. It is true that the civil servants, have to undergo a very tough process of rejection and selection to rise to this position, however, the process of social, economic and political changes will continue to accelerate in the 21st century, making it vitally important that Public administration adopts itself to the changed conditions of rural life. To be effective, public organisations will need to be increasingly more responsive to local needs & aspirations. The key to responsiveness is organisational adaptability to change. The administration so far, was an all-pervasive affair through excess political interventions, selfish economic management, social polarisation and

increased bureaucratization. However, there is growing public resentment and hostility towards increase in bureaucratization as reflected in the increasing demand for PRIs. Decentralisation, democratization and public participation in administrative system is geared up to keep pace with cultural transformation, social discontent, alienation and violence may ultimately lead to the breakdown of the social fabric."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, employing the local youth to services is important to save them from falling victim to crime & violence by deviating into the underworld or mafia.

Unfortunately, Indian society is facing this social discontent, alienation and violence in day-to-day life. The common man stands disillusioned by the government today. This situation stands in sharp contrast to the rights and freedom granted to him by our constitution. Although inspired by the Gandhian ideology, what stopped the Congress regime from translating this dream into reality? Modi Govt. is trying to expose the same. He wants to bring administration as near to common man as possible and is very much concerned with the administration at the grass-root level. That is why he laid great emphasis on rural administration.

Unfortunately, Village panchayats and the common man both were reduced into non-entities because of the high-handedness of the bureaucracy because, strengthening of Panchayats were not the main objective of former govts. Modi mission is to reorganise the government machinery by organizing the Panchayat Services around local skills, local youth, women and adivasis to widen the public services network. In other words, if the existing bureaucracy combines with the Panchayat services as well as NGO services it will widen the area of functioning of administration much more than what it exists today. Loknayak Jayprakash Narayan was of the view that Panchayats should remain away from politics and elections and concentrate on constructive work of the area by creating "a services of panchayats." Just as the urban youth have various job options through IAS/allied services similarly, even the rural youth can be absorbed creatively in the rural area itself through Panchayati services, thereby stopping their migration & displacement.

#### **Human Approach to Administration**

This approach calls for a major shake-up in the administrative system but it can go a long-way in imparting stability and sustenance to the common man. The awe of the civil services must be reduced to normal and the man left out of the services of administration so far, must be included in the ambit of civil services. The unorganised services in the rural and urban areas both must be registered with administration. The unorganised sector refers to those skilled and unskilled workers and craftsmen, who eke out their living even under adverse and hostile circumstances. If these people are organised on their community lines, a huge work force can be created who with a little training and capital can be transformed into specialized services like carpentry, cobblery, smithies, pottery, fishing, small vegetable

growers etc. These are the people who actually need the state help which Modi Govt. has succeeded in identifying through five flagship schemes PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, Ayushman Bharat, PM Ujjwala Yojana, Swachha Bharat Toilet Mission, Gramodaya house construction scheme etc. It also includes Solar Charkha mission, Poshan Abhiyan, Gobardhan Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao etc. Post-1990s globalization concentrated on the uplift of urban areas only. The focus now has shifted to human development in rural and semi-urban areas. The human element is going to be the yardstick of development. The touchstone of development policies should be the betterment of the people's lives, not just expansion of foreign markets. Skilled India, Start up India, and make-in-India are schemes in the direction of increasing self-reliance of Indian youth. The idea is to innovate and become employers rather than to be merely job seekers.

### **Community Development & Services**

Keeping in view the local development as the prime objective, range of innovative services will have to be created which caters to the needs of local people assuring the rehabilitation of villages without displacement. It must stop mass migration from rural to urban areas, to control farmer & student suicides. No amount of planning and piece meal approach can translate the dream of welfare state into reality unless a new dose of motivation, encouragement and dreams are instilled in the youth. To my mind, PM Modi is discharging his duty very well in this regard. Administration must be geared up for ensuring greater access to education, better nutrition and health services, more secured livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence. Administration gearing up to meet human needs in tandem with the civil society was the recommendation of 2nd ARC 2004. It emphasised upon a citizen centric approach to delivering govt. services. Gandhian proverb to "Become the change you wish to see in the world," became the key word of the Indian Public Administration which is being translated by PM Modi into reality to a great extent.

As a matter of fact, remarkable changes which have come over in our society in all facets of human life-socio-economic-political, post 2014 has overhauled our bureaucracy in terms of its attitudinal and structural pattern gearing up for a constructive role in the 21st century. The impersonal, rigid, unresponsive and rule bound practices of bureaucracy must be a thing of the past. Bureaucrats must be reconditioned to address politely the pressing socio-economic problems of society. It should have a human faith and within the reach of the masses.

### **Conclusion**

The task of reorganising civil services may sound daunting and impractical. However, the growth of increased activities of NGOs and other people's

group is a clear indication that people are charting their own course and their faith in Administration has eroded completely. Instead of interacting with bureaucracy people prefer to tide over their own problems in their own surrounding. No doubt, the administration has undertaken the task of coping up with overpopulation, poverty, resource crunch, illiteracy, economic imbalances but the outcome has been much below satisfaction. The marginalised sections remain unaffected with such periodic gains and changes. Therefore, the appropriate course to include the left out people, from benefits of development would be to create services for traditionally skilled labours as desired by the people and provide them the required training and capital in the rural and semirural areas, so that some amount of self-reliance and livelihood can be ensured to the socially weak.

Benefits of science and technology must percolate down to the lowest strata of society. In view of this imperative, Modi Govt. has emphasised upon the simplification and accessibility of technology for the rural youth. This scheme targets people in the age between 15 to 35 yrs. It aims to turn the rural youth into a globally competitive workforce. A variety of digitization programmes have been launched to connect the poor and uneducated people with online system, for eg. Bheem App, Paytm, Rupay Card etc. Thus, human face of Public Administration has been launched by BJP Govt. to uphold the vision of inclusive growth in the 21st century India. If we want to become a 5 trillion economy, compete with the Chinese neighbour and fight terrorism with a strong hand, Modi reform is a march forward.

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