

Historical Developments In Indian Bureaucracy

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Abstract:

The history of bureaucratic organisation in India commenced when the East India Company made the decision to assume the role of Diwan and take control of the governance of the three provinces that were ceded to them. The Indian situation did not suit the Weberian model of bureaucracy for the majority of British rule. In the provinces, democracy was not established until 1935. Ministerial control over civil servants existed. However, the existence of imperialism made this control more formal than real. The legacy of Indian Administrative Service is based on the model of the Indian Civil Service created by British in India. India has long been concerned about reforming public administration. India is participating in this comprehensive discussion about the reform. The approach of the bureaucracy needs to shift from "only government can do" to "government in partnership with the people can do."

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Administration, Pre-Liberalisation Era, Post-Liberalisation Era, Development Administration.

1. Introduction

The East India Company was the first to initiate a structured civil service. The Regulation Act (1772), passed under the Warren Hastings administration, was the first part of British bureaucracy to be introduced to India after their arrival. The creation of the All India Services (IAS) did not occur simultaneously. The British Civil Service had already adopted the Weber's idea of political neutrality, which later applied to the Indian situation. Warren Hastings established the position of the collector on May 14, 1772 and is credited with organising the early Indian Civil Service (ICS) (Chitkara, 1994).

The European officials took the place of the native servants and branded as Collectors, who were selected by Warren Hastings to manage taxation and the administration of justice. Lord Cornwallis made these officers permanent by placing them in a "covenanted" service. The Act of 1793 reserved all top administrative positions for members of this service, and in order to prepare them for their duties, they were required to go through a training program in the 1806 founded by Haileybury College in England. The Court of Directors proposed the candidates for this position.

Indians were not allowed to hold any important positions within the Institute of the Covenanted Services. Obviously, this caused resentment in India, but all that could be done to appease the country's feelings was to include the clause in the Charter Act of 1833. "No native of the said territories or any natural born subject of His Majesty residing therein shall be disqualified from holding any place, office, or employment under said company solely on account of his religion, place of birth, descent, or colour (Mandal, 1997)." This provision merely stated that Indians were not disqualified or prohibited from holding positions of responsibility, but nothing was actually done to pursue a clear strategy of elevating Indians to higher positions. In reality, Indians were only allowed to work as clerks and subordinates and were not allowed to join the Covenanted Service.

First and foremost, in 1853, Lord Macaulay established a system for recruiting civil servants through competitive examinations from among university graduates with strong academic records (Pande, 1978). The Directors' power to nominate candidates for the Covenanted Services was removed, and competition was approved for the appointments. However, because the exams were held in London and British university students were able to compete on equal footing but for Indian students it was a daunting task. Indians were kept out of the way by providing less higher education opportunities, travel challenges, and cultural taboos. The idea of nominating a few Indians without subjecting them to a competitive examination was adopted in 1870 with the goal of securing one or two individuals annually for the judicial branch of the civil service. This principle was expanded in 1879 to include recruiting for the administrative branch as well but candidates who met the requisite qualifications were meagre. As a result, this experiment was abandoned and in its 1879 report, a Commission

recommended splitting the Indian Civil Service into three branches: the Indian Civil Service, the Provincial Civil Service, and the Subordinate Civil Service. Indian Civil Service recruitment continued to be made in England but for the other services in India. This was supposed to give Indians a chance to hold positions of some responsibility.

The British Civil Services Commission only offered the Indian Civil Services examination in England till 1922; after that, it was offered in India. The first ICS examinations were administered by the newly established Public Service Commission for India in 1926. For the recruitment of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), Indian Police Services (IPS), and Non-technical Central Services, a combined examination was introduced in 1947 (Chitkara, 1994). In administration, our bureaucrats act like foreigners in their own country despite the "steel frame" of administration that was inherited from British structure. Therefore, the British traditions and the democratic welfare system are two distinct sets of influences that have contributed to the bureaucracy in India even today (Chitkara, 1994).

2. The Colonial Legacy in India

India has long been concerned about reforming public administration. What's novel about it now is the context in which it's being deliberated. The era 1991 mark the inception by the advent of a liberal economic system which strived to demolish the centrally directed agenda of economic development. It also marks the start of the phase in which aid is being conditionally provided by international multilateral organisations. These conditions were initially restricted to guidelines for how the aid would be managed but they have steadily expanded in scope by offering reforms to the total agenda of governance itself. The entire world is experiencing this. Every nation is participating in this global conversation about reform which is still in the tentative form. This discourse is being driven by changes in the intellectual environment that have led to a new dimension of the purpose and scope of public administration while "Reinventing Government" reviews and cheers this dimension.

Reform is in the air and no country is left out of this global discourse. Changes in the intellectual climate that provided a new understanding of the role and scope of public administration

propels this discourse while 'Reinventing Government' summarises and celebrates this new understanding.

When discussing the failure of the planned strategy for development, especially in the accomplishments of the several five-year plans, the conversation typically turns to the obstacles caused by the inherited bureaucratic and administrative system from the British colonial era. The administrators noted this in various chapters of the plan documents and demonstrating their awareness of the need for a different system to carry out the intended development objectives. In order to address this issue, the government formed several committees that made recommendations for systemic changes. Public administration developed as an academic discipline in India in this expression of concern for administrative reforms and contributed the intellectual foundation for suggestions to boost public administration in actual practice. The nature of attempts at administrative reform and intellectual analysis of the issues with public administration are profoundly related.

The contributions of many British administrators are mostly from the Indian Civil Service, who served as the foundation for the study of public administration in India. The nature memoirs, where many of these contributions were rich in information about how the British Indian administration operated in addition to providing descriptions of Indian social customs and manners. One of the main results of these writings was the development of what has come to be known as the "ICS mythology" and an idealised form of field administration (Mason & Woodruff, 1954). Although Woodruff claimed to have coined the term "guardians" a number of authors (ex-civil servants) joined him in spreading the myth that the ICS was characterized by altruism with a preference for platonic guardianship and men's superior virtue. Among the many other qualities that the ICS appeared to possess were a love of the outdoors, dedication to the district and the welfare of its residents, courage and daring in decision-making, independence, and integrity. Through their own writings in the post-independence era, the Indian members of the ICS contributed to the enduring of these myths. (Chettur, 1964; Panjabi, 1965).

3. Bureaucracy in India from Pre to Post Liberalisation

The term "bureaucracy" is referred to a team of non-elected government officials besides an administrative policy-making body. In the past era, a bureaucracy was a form of government administration which is organised by the departments and operated by non-elected officials. In the present era also, bureaucracy as an administrative system is placed whether a complex organisation is privately or publicly owned. Bureaucracy is represented by the public administration in many jurisdictions and sub-jurisdictions, as well as by any organisation with a centralised hierarchical structure, e. g., academic institutions, commerce and trade industries, hospitals, social institutions, and many others.

There are two main problems in bureaucracy. Whether bureaucrats should be independent or directly accountable to their political leaders is the first conundrum (Dahlstrom & Lapuente, 2022). The second conundrum is whether bureaucrats should behave in a way that strictly complies with the law or whether they should be given the freedom to choose the best course of action in various situations (Dahlstrom & Lapuente, 2022).

Many analysts have defended the need for bureaucracies in contemporary society. According to the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), organised hierarchies and systematic procedures are required to uphold order, maximize efficiency, and eradicate favouritism. Bureaucracy is the most effective and rational way that human activity can be organized. However, Weber also believed that unimpeded bureaucracy posed a threat to personal freedom by having the power to imprison people in an impersonal "iron cage" of rule-based, logical control (Agevall & Swedberg, 2005).

4. Role of Bureaucracy in the Pre-Liberalisation Era

In India, the civil service system or bureaucracy were established under British colonial rule. The Government of India Act, 1858 gave the British total authority over Government of India. Through a committee of approved experts, the British Empire began to rule over India at this point. In less than a century, the British had established a capable government and developed a strong

bureaucratic environment with the help of native citizens who were loyal to the British regime.

Invariably, this administrative structure could be well-defined as the sine qua non of British Rule in India. India's top bureaucracy adopted a firm and distinctive stance after gaining its independence, when developing nations were looking to develop skilled and knowledgeable professional services. It gave India autonomy and continuity continuously and will provide in future as well, which have remained unaffected even during times of political unrest and unstable political control at the national and state levels.

Thus, the office-based governance is the primary definition of bureaucracy. One of the first personalities to critically examine bureaucracy in modern times was German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). He described the idea as a way to rationally organize a complex organisation. The coordination of a large group of people who must cooperate is a necessary component of bureaucracy. In the phrase "government by offices," bureaucracy is defined. "Bureaucrats assign government policy to take into account the laws passed by elected officials and successfully carry them out." The executive branch of government employs these people on a permanent basis as professionals. Although they answer to the ministries, the main duty of these people is to support the operations of governmental organisations. Civil servants are the permanent positions in the department which are appointed in government offices. They frequently begin working for their governments when they are young and continue to do so until they reach retirement age, which is normally between 50 and 60 years.

Therefore, the modern bureaucracy was developed during the British rule, and it served to advance and protect British interests up until 1947. After Independence, the Indian bureaucracy was given the primary task of building the nation, and in the early years, the bureaucrats were quite successful in fostering the social and economic growth of the fledgling democracy. But over time, issues like bureaucratisation and politicisation began to affect how well this bureaucracy operated. It started to become less effective over time and has been unable to meet societal expectations. Afterward, the bureaucratic organisation faced challenges from

the LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation) trinity, and it almost became fashionable to advocate for de-bureaucratisation and to embrace the private sector in order to develop a market economy.

5. Role of Bureaucracy in the Post Liberalisation Era

The civil service system supports the administrative system, which is the most important tool used by the Government of India. The government service was reorganized immediately after achieving the independence. The "License Raj," a stagnant economy, ineffective public sectors, and an overabundance of rules and regulations existed before the inception of a new era of structural reforms in the Indian economy. The private players had to deal with red tape.

Advancing the technical orientation of our bureaucracy: The globalisation of the economy is largely due to the swift advancement of communication technology. Nowadays, use of technology is necessary for effective and efficient administration. This would aid in improving the technical skills of our bureaucracy.

The approach of the bureaucracy needs to shift from "only government can do" to "government in partnership with the people can do." Over the period of time, better government has been demanded, therefore private sector's and civil society organisations' roles in governance have expanded.

International organisations like the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc. now hold more significance as a result of globalisation.

- In the modern world, where economic, political, and social systems are intertwined, we can no longer ignore these organisations. To tackle with these organisations requires professionalism, tough negotiating techniques, etc.
- So, in order to avoid losing while tackling with these international organisations, we must train and reorient our civil services with the prerequisite skills.

One of the worst affected nations by global terrorism is our own. The actions of global terrorist networks have exposed the limitations of traditional national security structures built on the

contemporary nation-state system, forcing national governments to participate in the new kind of global cooperation.

- Cybercrimes and the use of information technology by these terror organisations are other issues in this context that require immediate attention. Our civil services require specialized training to combat these aspects of crime.

The "License Raj," a stagnant economy, ineffective public sector, stringent regulations, and bureaucratic barriers for private entrepreneurs characterised the years prior to liberalisation. Deregulation and economic liberalisation came about as a result of the mixed economy's failure to address the twin issues of poverty and economic backwardness. Liberalisation was brought for the purpose of removing redundant controls and limitations. An effort was made to establish an economic environment that would allow business and industrial enterprises to operate without any difficulty and support to the process of social and economic development.

The civil services should serve as a mediator, coordinator, and change catalyst in the context of economic liberalisation in order to:

- Promote aggressive participation in the global economy and facilitate progressive integration with it.
- Move away from an overburdened and ineffective public sector engaged in commercial activities and toward one that is sharply focused on performing the essential services of defence, health care, and education, among others.
- Ensure a sound market and give the private sector the opportunity to hold up the growth momentum.
- Facilitate space for the young talent of the entrepreneurs.
- Make it easy to do business with you and to leave your agreement. For e.g., bankruptcy laws have made space for private players to take risks and launch new businesses.
- The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution have significantly altered the situation and provided constitutional status to the local bodies. Local governments in both urban and rural areas must be given

the tools to become institutions of self-government. But there hasn't been a substantial transfer of authority. It is required to strengthen administration at the district level.

Decentralisation and citizen centricity must be prioritised in order to move from preeminent government to effective governance. Therefore, it is expected that civil servants will see the private sector and civil society organisations as partners in the governance of the nation.

The liberalisation era in India officially commenced in 1991, when extensive economic reforms were introduced. Government and the bureaucracy especially dominated the nation's socio-economic transition prior to liberalisation. In addition to upholding law and order and delivering public goods, the bureaucracy played a significant role in almost every aspect of service delivery, including production. Excessive domination of bureaucratization led to inefficiencies in the public sector and barriers for owners of private businesses.

Liberalisation aimed to make it easier for businesses to operate efficiently and participate in the process of social and economic advancement by removing futile protocols. Hence, the functioning of the state has reformed. The present buzzword is "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance." Thus, the function of bureaucracy is shifting from an inward-looking administrative wheel to that of a supporter of the free market and a facilitator of social services.

6. Indian Bureaucracy Allied the Weberian Model in Post-Independence Era

All modern bureaucracies possess the Weberian characteristics to different degrees regardless of the nature of the political systems. The Indian bureaucracy also demonstrates some of these traits to the following degrees:

a) Hierarchy of Authority

Certainly, the Indian bureaucracy firmly adheres to the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy of authority, the decision-making processes have become incredibly slow, subjective, and authoritative in nature, leaving less space for participatory and dynamic decisions.

This distinctiveness has only been observed in India when higher-ranking officers supervise the lower-ranking ones.

b) Division of labour

While specialties have improved the momentum in a number of fields, the Indian bureaucracy has struggled to foster a culture of teamwork and coordination. It has made it easier to avoid accountability. Since nobody is fully accountable for the project or the product, the accountability mechanism is severely impacted.

c) Presence of Rule

The threat of "red tapism" has become deep-rooted in the system permanently due to the extreme form in which the rule of law has been implemented, delaying every aspect of its operations. A pathological bureaucrat from India has been produced as a result of Weber's model, which has shown signs of dysfunction.

d) Procedural Specification

The current administration's approved procedures need to be reviewed because they are not technically sound. The result of this procedural specification is the highest level of red tape and corruption. The Indian administrative system places a greater emphasis on "procedures" than "results."

e) Impersonality

The Indian bureaucracy is set up in such a way that impersonality is non-existent. Personal prejudices and preferences are blatantly obvious. In actuality, personal preferences not impersonality have led to the rise of nepotism. The individual people involved in all spheres are held in high regard.

f) Technical competence

In the public bureaucracy, technical proficiency and merit were the determining factors for appointments; however, when it comes to hiring, a variety of social pressures and pulls are at play, which dilutes merit. Following administrative procedures, rules, and regulations helps to establish the norms of conduct for public servants. Today, procedure violations have become routine.

Since the beginning of the national planning process, the administrators are now heavily responsible for achieving the society's welfare goals. Thus, the role played by the government bureaucracy transcends the conventional notion of a Laissez faire state. The officials act as a catalyst in order to accelerate the process of social and economic transformation. It has been argued that a different type of bureaucrat is needed for social economic development, especially if it involves extensive public sector intervention. As a result, one needs a bureaucrat who is less rigid in following procedures and less concerned with seniority and hierarchy.

Instead of being a "developmental bureaucracy," the Indian bureaucracy is primarily classified as a "traditional bureaucracy." The Weberian characteristics are the foundation of the conventional idea of bureaucracy. The Indian bureaucracy has not been pressurised presently to be responsive to the needs, demands, aspirations, or desires of the population. We need to move toward a developmental bureaucracy because we are a developing country and care about encouraging innovation and growth in addition to system stability. Without the support and active participation of the people, developmental activities cannot be successful. The traditional bureaucracy and the developing bureaucracy must be properly channelised. Governments must create the necessary modifications to systems, rules, practices, attitudes, behaviour, and orientation in order to accelerate economic development and growth.

The main purpose of bureaucracy in developed western nations is to maintain the system. In contrast, no bureaucratic function in a developing nation like India is purely a maintenance function; instead, all functions are primarily involved in the "development process."

7. Administration in Developing Countries

Except for the nations referred to as developed, all other nations may be classified as developing. They've gone by a lot of names, including "less developed," "emergent," "transitional," "expectant," and "underdeveloped," but "developing" has gained traction since it suggests that their current state of underdevelopment is temporary and that they are heading towards a higher level of development. This group mostly

comprises the nations of Africa, Asia (apart from Japan, South Korea, and Singapore), South or Latin America, and a few island nations; however, several European nations might also be included under this heading.

The administrative subsystems of these nations differ more from one another than from those of industrialised nations. This is because of their vast numbers, diverse cultural backgrounds (which represent a spectrum of political cultures throughout the world), and shared historical experiences. The majority of these nations have experienced varied lengths of time under the colonial authority of a foreign nation. Even though each "developing" country has unique institutions and procedures, these nations have some common characteristics.

While writing about the cultural traits of Asian people which have important bearing on the political and administrative systems, Amara Raksatya observes that in Asian countries, personal relations are of utmost importance; people are not regarded as equals but are classified by several standards into a long hierarchy; peace and harmony are more important than violence and conflict. Any conflict should be avoided at all costs; spiritual well-being is more important than material well-being; individualism is more important than collectivism; self and close associates are important to Asians; collective action is possible under pressures; personal tranquillity and serenity which are pre-requisite to personal enlightenment are more valued than competition and projection of oneself above the others; there are vestiges of political and administrative structures, as well as distinct patterns of behaviour including the concept of individual responsibility to the society especially among the ruling caste or elite (Raksataya, 1978).

Generally, existing social formations are disintegrating and new ones are attempting to replace them in developing nations as capitalism grows. This shift usually results in a unique kind of condition. The phases of development are being telescoping with great effort. A blend of capitalistic, feudal, and Asian modes of production (Deva, 1984). The economy is still based on agriculture. The apparatus of authority serves as a protector of the status quo and an upholder of the current property relations. The expansion of the agricultural bourgeoisie is balanced in favour of agricultural

management. Maintaining equilibrium between capital owners and land holders, large farmers and other stakeholders is the responsibility of the national leadership. It upholds "order" for the benefit of these groups by using bureaucracy to control the working class (Deva, 1984). The development of monopolies and corruption is mostly unchecked. Under the guise of socialism, government involvement has increased significantly in some of these nations, such as India, but only in name. Government authority has been more centralised as a result of this (Deva, 1984).

Differentiating distinct structures for the vast range of tasks that must be completed in society has only partially occurred in these emerging nations. Similar to feudalism, a single group of officials or authority may perform all military, political, administrative, religious, and economic duties in an undifferentiated manner (Riggs, 1963).

The increasing establishment of hitherto independent social structures, adapted from Western models to which diverse political and administrative functions are allocated is a hallmark of the modernisation process being carried out in the developing world. However, a dualistic situation is still being created by the older institutional foundation of conventional society during this process. In a complex structure of diverse overlapping, formally superimposed institutions modelled after Western models coexist alongside older, indigenous institutions of a traditional kind. The older patterns continue to persist most tenaciously at the periphery, in the rural hinterlands and at lower social levels, while the new patterns flourish best at the centre and in higher social levels. Nevertheless, the mixture is present everywhere and creates new forms that are neither typical of traditional Western institutional systems nor of Western ones (Riggs, 1963).

According to Riggs, emerging nations' various functional areas are changing at varying rates. Development in public administration is at a faster pace than political institutions such as the legislature, executive branch, and electoral procedures, among others. Because of this, bureaucracy becomes increasingly prevalent in emerging societies and has a disproportionate impact, which has various negative effects (Riggs, 1963).

8. Conclusion

The post-independence bureaucracy perhaps exactly be presumed as the legacy of British rule in India. As a result, the system evolved was of exceptional quality and proved as an asset to India after independence. Without the experience of the civil body, the transition of bureaucrats from colonial administration to the contemporary developed democratic culture would not have been integrated. Members of the ICS (Indian Civil Service) are still under the control of the majority of Indian governments after independence.

The Indian Administrative System was eventually in the control of Indian Administrative Services officials after the Indian Civil Services officials retired steadily and the majority of them had resigned till the late 1970s. One could argue that this marks the inception of a new era in Indian bureaucracy. Despite its ups and downs, the contemporary Indian bureaucracy is strong and capable of governing the country.

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Acknowledgement

Qazi Fabihan Meraj is the awardee of the ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellowship under the supervision of Professor (Dr.) Chanchal Kumar Sharma, Department of Political Science, Central University of Haryana, Mahendergarh. This research article is largely an outcome of the Post-Doctoral Fellowship sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. However, the responsibility for the facts stated, opinions expressed, and the conclusions drawn is entirely of the author.