

Indian Bureaucracy and Politics

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Abstract

The primary objective of the study is to look at the relationship between bureaucracy and politics in India in the post liberalization era. It will also assess the influences of policy of liberalization on the functioning of bureaucracy in India. The present study will also try to reveal the real face of bureaucratic system and the factor behind the politicization of the services. Politicians and bureaucrats both play a blame game. Bureaucrats blame politicians for politicization of the services and our political leaders blames openly officials for ineffective system. The ineffectiveness and politicization both are the big hurdles in the development of nation in this thesis, the attempts is made to study & examine the core problems of the Bureaucracy and political system. Secondly, this study will focus on the issues which are responsible for the lapses, failures, short comings and setbacks in the working of bureaucrats. Thirdly, it will point out the role of our political system in the ineffective administrative functioning. Fourth, objective is to find out the facts behind the exploitation of the civil servants by politicians. Finally, it will also throw light on the real face of neutrality in the bureaucratic set up of India.

The specific methods used in this study are descriptive and analytical method. A study of the description and analysis of the influence. The control issues in relation to bureaucracy and politics in India is the focus of the study.

KEYWORDS: Politics, Politicalization, Bureaucracy, Government, Liberalization

One of the most important and persisting challenges of modern government is how to reconcile the demands of politics with the imperatives of bureaucracy. In many countries around the world, politicians and pundits bash "bureaucracy", frequently in the name of popular governance.

Bureaucracy is considered as the most important part of the political system of any country. It plays important role in political process as well as decision making.. Relationship between bureaucracy and politicians has been very old theme since the beginning of intellectual inquiry into the structures and processes of administration. The relation between politics and bureaucracy – and especially the distribution of power between the two spheres - is a classic theme in political science, public administration and sociology since the writings of Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson and several other prominent writers. Today, it seems as if the idea of a total separation between a political and an administrative sphere of bureaucracy has been abandoned. Rather than a dichotomy, politics and administration is today seen as two overlapping spheres. In practical terms, this notion implies that administrators most probably are important political actors. An overlapping between politics and administration also opens up for the possibility that there may be both conflict and co-operation between politicians and administrators.

The concept of today's bureaucracy in India was introduced by British government. They established bureaucratic system for the sake of East India Company, to run their trade and administrative tasks. Independent India continued with the same machinery with the focus of establishing socialist, secular and democratic society. The new government changed Indian Civil Service (ICS) to Indian Administrative Service (IAS)

in 1947¹ but the bureaucratic culture in India is still dominated by the value patterns set up by the British².

Bureaucracy is very important and most efficient form of the organization which exercises legal authority. Bureaucracy has always been dominant force in all the system of government and has emerged as powerful institution in the contemporary world, virtually everywhere, especially in a developing country like India. In India too bureaucracy plays a vital role in the system, in fact Indian bureaucracy is the administrative arm of the government but unfortunately the face of bureaucracy has been spoiled a lot, which should be a big concern for all of us. There was a time when our bureaucracy was considered as a steel frame of the administration, but now the frame has been rotten someone quoted absolutely right that the frame has now remained without steel. Today our bureaucracy is suffering from severe ailments of corruption, biasness, irregularities, and punctualities. Now that question has arisen is that who is responsible for this? Well majority blames our Political system and their politicians for the present state of the Indian bureaucracy. For me relationship between the two is very sensitive. The question of the relationship between bureaucracy and politics does not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, it is hopelessly entangled with the game of politics and of power as it is played in our country. Given the necessity for a state, the bureaucracy is an inescapable concomitant irrespective of the nature of the state. Even states emerging out of vast revolutionary upheavals spawn bureaucracy. Mao thought that he could alter the sorry scheme of things through cultural revolutions. But his successors are settling down, looking for cats, black and white, who will efficiently perform their function of catching mice. So bureaucracy - that is, government officials in its collectivity constitutes an integral part of any state. The second essential point to note is that the bureaucracy in any state embodies the urges for the maintenance and continuity of that state and society. That is why conservatism has its natural ally in bureaucracy.³

But in India conservatism has no meaning. What are we to conserve? The vast poverty? The social structure is ridden with caste? Illiteracy? Our incapacity to feed, educate and clothe the people? In some other age, we might have frozen all these urges by erecting a rigid law-and-order state. But in the last decades of the twentieth century, the awareness of our people is so heightened that every political party appears with a flaming manifesto promising change. But the art of taking money from the rich and votes from the poor is becoming increasingly difficult to practice. For it is one thing to write a manifesto, it is quite another to put it into effect.

Thus verbal radicalism unsupported by a sustained political will and unsustained by political instrumentalities is doomed to failure. Faced with such a situation, the collective conscience of our politicians mutters: "What can we do? Didn't we mean well? Didn't we pass resolutions? Didn't we laid it down in our manifesto? Didn't we adopt decisions in the Cabinet? The failure is due to our bureaucracy"

Virginal academics, whose knowledge of the facts of life is minimal, write papers proving that our bureaucracy is dysfunctional vis-a-vis our democratic social order; where politicians make speeches urging abolition of the bureaucracy. Periodically, we witness the recrudescence of such ill humor, which brings to my mind the story

prevalent in the Nazi era; every Nazi, so the story goes, had a favorite Jew and, when two Nazis quarreled, they beat each other's Jew.

Of course, it must be said that the structure of our bureaucracy is not partially suited for transmitting the impulses for change. It has remained Virgo intact since the days of Macaulay. It was designed for the maintenance and continuity of the Empire and since no one thought of changing the design, the laws of inertia prevailed. But then one might legitimately enquire: On whom does the responsibility rest for bringing about the change? Why have all the changes made in response to the needs of development and then planning been so ineffective?

Someone said that the whole difference between efficient and inefficient administration lies in the creative use of officials by the elected representatives. Our attempt to mould the bureaucratic framework to suit the political processes at the local level took the form of democratic decentralization and the setting up of Panchayati Raj. But rural society with its segmented structures and primitive institutions when exposed to modern democratic experience could not generate a responsive and creative leadership. With the prevalent traditional order the new political as well as administrative structure only created tensions. Empirical evidence shows that the conflicts and tensions between the officials and non-officials owe their origin to the prerogatives of power, personality clashes and self-aggrandizing tendencies.

Two things clearly stand out today in the countryside: (a) emergence of traditional propertied and social elites as an ambitious, avaricious and power-oriented leadership; and (b) the officials' general lack of faith in the capabilities of the elected members to sustain and carry forward the key and central goals of society. The politicians are not satisfied with the formulation of policies for which they have little time, but reach out for a hand in their implementation to suit their particular end. On the other hand, officials without any change in their attitude, outlook or methods see in all this a challenge to their own position of power and status.

Is then all lost? Not necessarily and inevitably till we understand the logics of bureaucracy. First of all, politicians as Ministers have a right and duty to enunciate clearly the policies. This right does not belong to MPs and MLAs. Along with policies the bureaucracy, especially that part of it which is directly concerned with developmental processes, should be set concrete tasks and judged by an objective appraisal system. Once this is done, there should be no interference. Appointments, writing of confidential reports, promotions, postings and transfers should be sternly and rigidly objective; only then will the system work, provided Ministers have the skill, the will and sense of direction for riding the bureaucratic horse. This will require not merely ability but character and integrity. So the problem of the relationship between politicians and civil servants is rather complex.⁴

If we look back to find the traces of politicization, we find that the history of India's democratic system is deeply linked with the political influences over the bureaucracy. Till 60s the Indian bureaucracy was free from politics⁵, but slowly and gradually it got infected by the virus of politicization. The committed bureaucracy reached its highest point during the darkest period which was emergency (1975-77). The whole

Bureaucratic machine become a pliable tool in the hands of an unscrupulous political setup which in addition was extra constitutional during the emergency when the coercion of civil servants by the government exceeded all limits. After emergency in 1977 congress was voted out and the Janta Dal came into power but the Janta Dal Government could achieve nothing much in cleansing the bureaucracy, in fact they too adopted a similar policy and bureaucrats close to Mrs. Indira Gandhi were treated with suspicion and mistrust and even transferred. When Mrs. Gandhi returns to power in 1980s she brought the concept of “*Yes Mam*” for bureaucrats. She gave the concept “*Yes Mam*” and her message came out loud and clear was that political masters must have loyalty on personal and party plans⁶. Yes minister was at peak performance and during this period progressively administration was not carried on as per law. After this, what was emerged that it is what the politicians wanted and not what the law says. No law can be enforced against supporters of powerful ministers who continue to break laws with impunity, making of increasing lawlessness in ministers, through their power of transfer, suspension and denial of promotion can get civil servants to toe a thin line. Corrupt ministers and corrupt civil servants often form a cozy relationship and foster linkages with antisocial groups which make up for the unholy alliances⁷. The situation become worst when the bureaucracy becomes corrupt and politicized, when regulations controls, licenses and permits are introduced which increases the new opportunities for corruption and corrupt bureaucracy finds a congenial climate for its nourishment, under the permit-license raj. At the end of four decades of centralized planning and highly regulated economy with an import-substitute model of development India has now graduated towards market an open economy system. A new page in the Indian Administrative history was added with the adoption of new Economic policy in 1991, and we call it the Era of Liberalization⁸. This process of economic liberalization in its basic conceptual formulation also seeks reduced intervention of government in the economic sector and seeking a reduced role of bureaucracy in the process of development. Almost 19 years have passed since liberalization was adopted in India but there has not been any reduction in the size of bureaucracy. Another liberalization process was that bureaucracy had to loosen its grip on the govt. But bureaucracy has been reluctant to give up its authority and discretion. Indian bureaucracy has become inefficient and more corrupt in discharging its duties. Our system has dozens of reforms for administrative progress but it is of no use. In fact many suggestions and remedies have been given by many experts but not much progress has been seen. In spite of so many committees and commissions has been introduced in the system but the fact is that the post liberalization phase is on the high road to politicization. Still there is a difference between theory and practice. That is why in today’s time our bureaucracy is an ill defined term. Though it is assumed to be neutral but in practice it is totally different. The two past incidents proves the above statement and shows stresses and strains. In 1990’s the debate has been triggered by men like T. N. Seshen, who want to root out corruption in elections and G. R. Khainar, Deputy Commissioner of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, who made a bold attempt in June 1994 to expose large scale links between ashtra’s ministers. Khairnar has since then been demoted and in July 1994, suspended from

services for violation of conduct rules. These two incidents show how our political system intervenes and influences our Administration process.

The problem of our bureaucracy is the India's electoral system. Unlike in the US, where the bureaucracy gets replaced with every change of government; in India, the bureaucracy adapts itself to the newly-formed govt. It is expected to adjust to the expectations of the elected governments. As such, it becomes the moral responsibility of each bureaucrat not to compromise to his discharge of duties, what is expected of him, no matter which ever political party comes to power. It is indeed a litmus test for the integrity and solidarity of every bureaucrat in order to balances his professional ethics and maintains a cordial relationship with politicians⁹. Today Indian Bureaucracy has become inefficient and more corrupt in discharging its duties. But the solution does not lie in dismantling of the bureaucratic machine¹⁰. It is still as important as was in the last century. No government of any political philosophy could and would function without bureaucracy. Therefore, if a bur is not functioning efficiently, the remedy is not to dismantle or throw it away, but to re-invent it to deliver the good and to meet the challenges of liberalization.

Under the new phase of liberalization, there is drastic need for re-vamping the Indian bureaucracy and the bureaucrats have to be more accountable and responsible towards the interests of citizen¹¹.

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