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Indian Bureaucracy and Development Orientation

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When we speak of bureaucracy in the context of development we are speaking of personnel occupying policy-making and supervisory positions in the administrative system. On the other hand, when we speak of development we have in mind the concept of change — change that is “broadly predicted or planned and administered or at least influenced by developmental action.”¹ The process of development, however, presupposes a system of bureaucracy that accepts development as its paramount goal. The bureaucrat’s approval of developmental goals may be possible only through change in their social, political and administrative values.

The Classical Models and Revisionism

The bureaucratic model that is most widely accepted even today, by scholars and administrators alike, is the classical or Weberian model first portrayed by Max Weber in the 19th Century.² Weber’s model was built on the principle of hierarchical organisation, division of labour and impersonality. In it, authority is exercised by the administrator only by virtue of the office he holds and in accordance with clearly defined rules and regulations.

Indian bureaucracy is not only Weberian in structure, it also inherited characteristics of the British Civil Service such as neutrality, anonymity and the broad acceptance of the dichotomy or separation of policy-making (politics) from policy-implementation (administration).

This classical model of bureaucracy today has come under searching criticism and the one single factor that has stimulated this evaluation more than any other has been the emergence of the third world and its quest for rapid socio-political and economic development. Today, political scientists no longer cling to a rigid separation of politics from administration. It is now acknowledged that in practice, the bureaucracy participates in policy-making by

virtue not only of the advice it gives to the minister but also by virtue of its function of collecting, analysing and presenting data to the ministers/cabinet on the basis of which the ministers/cabinet take decisions.

Modern research has also conclusively shown that the "socialization" process of the bureaucracy does influence and shape its values and the advice it gives to the elected government. As Paul Appleby,³ the noted American expert on administration, has pointed out, the old concept of administration being a mechanical art which a technician could perform with efficiency and accuracy, irrespective of the fact whether he is interested or disinterested in the objectives of the policy, no longer holds good. Making a distinction between "partisan" political activity and "programme" activity, Appleby asserts that a civil servant has "full internal freedom" with regard to programme activity.

More recently, administrationists like Warren Bennis and Frederick Thayer have attempted to evolve post-Weberian models or structures of bureaucracy more suited to the needs of rapid development. Bennis for instance, paints the picture of non-hierarchical organisations, which are temporary in arrangement and which would be governed by ability rather than authority and which would adopt democratic methods of supervision.⁴ Along similar lines, Thayer suggests that hierarchy should disintegrate under pressure to devolve decision and that clients (citizens) should be involved in administration.⁵

Now Bennis's model may have helped the USA to put man into space; but it is a moot point if such models can work in a country like ours where an amorphous caste and community conscious clientele confronts developmental agencies like the Electricity Board or the Irrigation Department. These so called "post-bureaucratic organisations" are still on the leading edge of administrative research and we should be cautious before jumping in to recommending them for our country.

This does not mean that we can afford to stay content with our present bureaucratic set-up or their values. There is an urgent need to train our administrators in flexibility, in adapting to new emergent situations, in being more client-oriented, in adopting more open communication and embarking upon problem-solving and participative decisions, but without abandoning the broad parameters of the classical bureaucratic model.

Does Indian Bureaucracy have Development Orientation?

Before answering this question, it is necessary to explain what we mean by the term "development orientation." As already stated, development implies change in a specific direction. Now for our country the crucial indicators of desirable socio-economic-political change may be listed as: (a) bringing about change of identity from the predominantly religious and ethnic to the national; (b) bringing about a change in participation from elite to mass; (c) bringing about change in criteria of distribution from status and privilege to achievement; and (d) bringing about socio-economic development based on the real needs of the people vis-a-vis the available resources.

The role the Indian bureaucracy will have to play in development then means bringing about the above mentioned desired changes. Fortunately, and thanks to the British legacy, the Indian bureaucracy's penetration (both direct and indirect) is deep and wide enough to make it particularly suitable for this role. The bureaucracy can play a major role in nation-building by doing everything possible to release the forces that help promote mobility and inter-dependence. Karl Deutsch⁶ has pointed out in a pioneering study that nation-building is in direct proportion to the growth of mobility and inter-dependence.

A few studies have been made regarding whether the Indian bureaucracy has or does not have a development orientation and these findings are revealing. In 1970, V.A. Pai Panandiker and S.S. Kshirsagar selected civil servants from two agencies engaged in agricultural development and two agencies involved in industrial development and sought to determine the extent to which they possessed the four essential characteristics ("dimensions of adaptation") required of development administrations viz. (a) change orientation, that is, concern to bring about desirable change, (b) result orientation, that is, concern to achieve certain specific programmatic results, (c) citizen orientation, that is, citizen centredness displayed by civil servants and (d) commitment to work. The researchers found that in terms of the above four criteria, civil servants are moderately adapted to their development role, about 55% to 64% of the civil servants being so oriented.⁷

Self-oriented Bureaucrats

Newspapers abound in reports of civil servants entrusted with development tasks whose behaviour prove their poor citizen

orientation and poorer commitment to work. There are stories of district officers having thrown files and papers back in anger at citizens. To those who have had the opportunity to observe or deal with bureaucratic behaviour at the district and lower levels, it should not come as a surprise that the poor and the dispossessed do not feature prominently in the agenda of the district officer. Rajinder Singh Bakshi's study reveals that the masses prefer channels of communication through politicians for getting developmental projects sanctioned and executed rather than approaching bureaucrats—the higher ones being almost inaccessible to rural masses.⁸

Most IAS officers have poor work commitment and little or no concern for the citizen client because they are fully pre-occupied with personal advancement and benefit. Reporting about "Life in the IAS: A View From Within", B.S. Som observes:

As the IAS officer rises in the hierarchy (and gains seniority not necessarily amounting to wisdom) he aspires to bigger and better things. In the states, certain corporation jobs may be alluring because of the perks attached — a good flat, a car, or an expense account, for example... In Delhi, certain ministries like industries and commerce are the most sought after because they involve among other things foreign junkets and close contact with influential sections of society. If you have passed the rigorous screening to become a joint secretary to the Government of India—and many fall by the wayside here—then you have to ensure yourself a posting. All manner of devices are used to fix postings... once one becomes beholden for the favour bestowed, one has to pay the price of loss of independence. Having secured the job, attention turns to trying to get a good room, a good P.A. and a good house. Careful watch has to be paid to maintain one's position against the rival claims of colleagues and to retain the benediction of bureaucratic superiors and political masters. Plans have also to be made for postings abroad or in international agencies. Ambition is the name of the game and no holds are barred. With such concentrated attention given to the promotion of self, where is the time and energy to learn the job at hand?⁹

Anti-democratic?

A study sponsored by the Nebraska University, also in the seventies, indicates that Indian bureaucracy's commitment to democracy and modernisation is neither very deep nor widespread. The study found that 42.5% of the IAS officers interviewed held views unfavourable to democracy and that 56.25% thought administration is better off without politics and offending politicians. The Nebraska team also found that 68.75% civil servants interviewed liked "routine clerical work" and "strict adherence to rules and regulations." What emerges from this study then is that the Indian civil servant is anti-democratic, lacks innovativeness and has a narrow clerical bent of mind.¹⁰

J.B. D'Souza, whose contact within Indian administration has been long and intimate, informs us that by and large the Indian civil servant has not succeeded in rising above his obsession with procedures and the "negative aspects of regulations they quote so facilely." As D'Souza so tellingly puts it:

Ask the civil servant in retirement what he has accomplished during his career and the odds are that he will tell you how successfully he thwarted this minister or that, or prevented some useful outcome that infringed a petty regulation. Seldom will he take credit for tangible and positive benefits delivered to the people he was paid to serve.

D'Souza also has some very fine examples to give of how our civil service woefully lacks sensitivity to the poor and their needs. Thus he blames the Indian bureaucracy for suggesting and/or supporting such callous government policies as spending the poor taxpayer's money ("they all at least pay indirect taxes") first on producing thousands of automobiles, and then on expensive flyovers and free-ways to help these cars to travel faster, whereas the correct priority would have been to first spend on public transport system, on buses and bicycles, which could serve the numerous poor.¹¹ A development oriented bureaucracy should help the people's representatives to formulate policies and determine priorities on the basis of scarce resources that would first go to meet the basic and real needs of the mass of their citizen clientele.

It seems crystal clear that at present the bureaucracy has no suitable method for determining the real needs of their clientele, nor does it seem to possess the skill or the wherewithal for such an exercise. This is obvious from the bureaucratic over-emphasis

we have often observed on issues like prohibition, family planning, recruitment of backward classes and naming of streets, to the near total neglect of such other and more urgent citizen requirements as supply of drinking water and power.

Lacks a Rural Bias

In our country the bureaucracy will not be able to contribute to development unless it develops a rural bias which at present it woefully lacks. E.N. Mangat Rai, a retired ICS officer narrates how in his day he had to cover nearly 1700 kms by rail, 1070 kms by camel, nearly 1200 kms by horse, 2758 kms by bus, 1230 kms by cycle and about 3700 kms by car.¹² And all this the officer did cheerfully, enjoying his work and not with distaste.

In contrast, present day IAS officers shun rural areas and assignments and if they do happen to land with a rural posting, seek at the earliest possible, a transfer back to urban areas. As the staff correspondent of a leading national daily observes,

The M.P. (Madhya Pradesh) government is somewhat dismayed by the tendency among young IAS officers to shun positions to backward areas. According to authoritative sources, it has been the unhappy experience of the administration that no sooner orders for transfer to backward districts are passed than pressures begin to work for their modification, if not cancellation. This is all the more surprising as the concerned officers are mostly young, unmarried and without family responsibilities like children's education. The usual excuses are 'old father' or 'ailing mother'...The sources said that the young recruits seem to bring with them a measure of built-in cynicism and strive hard to choose soft options instead of the thrills and adventures in meeting the challenges posed by development problems in the backward areas.¹³

Recruitment for Development

If we desire to have a bureaucracy which is development oriented it is necessary for us to first take a close look at the present procedure for recruiting civil servants and to see whether it is geared to give us the right personnel. The colonial government, not confronted with the problem of rapid development, devised a recruitment system suited to meet their needs. Initially

their recruitment was based on patronage but later it graduated to a merit system—but the goal was the continuance of the imperial system, maintain law and order and collect revenue.

After Independence, the system of recruitment has continued more or less similar to what it was under the British. Many things can be said against the present system's suitability for recruiting development oriented persons. In the first place, the present system of recruitment is highly academic in the sense that it rewards examination minded persons—those who have mastered the knack of preparing for securing first classes—at the cost of those who have administrative capabilities, like the capacity to plan, execute etc. Secondly, it is indifferent to the commitment to carry out welfare and development programmes. Thirdly, there is nothing in the recruitment procedure which may provide a place for persons especially enthusiastic about programmes. The result is all too obvious for us to see. Many recruits are misfits who either impair efficiency or make their own lives miserable.

It is time we gave serious thought to whether we should continue with the present practice of letting candidates select from a wide range of subjects, many of which like the pure sciences (theoretical physics) have no cultural value nor any immediate bearing on administration. Moreover, the inclusion of applied science, subjects like Applied Mechanics or Prime Movers can only succeed in drifting the scarce and much needed technical manpower into the already saturated field of administration. May it not be more meaningful, relevant and helpful to recruiting development oriented persons if we confine the written examinations to development oriented subjects like economics, sociology, politics and administration?

Some have argued in favour of the present system (wide option of subjects) claiming that (a) it is more democratic and (b) that technical men would bring with them something of special value to the services. However, the correct course to adopt here would be to have separate recruitment for technical services with attractive salaries and work conditions.

After having given and passed the written examination in select subjects mentioned above, the candidates must be made to appear for a comprehensive *viva voce* examination. An oral or *viva voce* examination provides a fine opportunity for testing and determining the development orientation of candidates. Unfortunately dissatisfaction with the *viva voce* examination is quite old. Way

back in 1955, the Union Home Minister had complained that the *viva* merely tested good manners, etiquette and command over the English language and therefore invariably went against the candidates from the rural areas and backward classes. Another grievance against the *viva* was that quite some students who did well in the written were rejected in the *viva*. The Union Public Service Commission felt that this was because the students did well in the written examinations by cramming. The Home Ministry, however, thought differently and in 1957 it decided to abolish the compulsory passing in the *viva*. As a result, students came to be ranked primarily on basis of performance in the written examinations.

Even today the emphasis during the *viva voce* examination seems to be on testing the candidate's competence in the specific subjects offered at the written examination rather than on testing individual or personal qualities of leadership and initiative.

Development administration demands several qualities which can only be tested in the course of an elaborately arranged *viva-voce* examination, qualities such as the capacity for team-work, leadership, ability to co-operate, alertness in grasping the facts of a given situation, ability to marshall and present data and persuasiveness in presenting a point of view. But to test these qualities, several new testing techniques will have to be introduced such as various "situational" and "projective" tests which help the candidate to project his personality.

In 1951, A.D. Gorwala in his *Report on Public Administration* had urged that the present *viva* examination be gradually replaced by various psychological tests which were in use by the British civil service and which had served well the purpose of probing the candidate's mental and emotional make-up. In the U.K., for instance, among the various tests the candidates are subjected to, there is "the constructive thinking test" wherein the candidate is presented with a situation posing a problem or problems and he is asked to solve it or them; there is the "interpretation of statistics" test where the candidate is presented with data and told to draw common sense inferences from the same or indicate the limitations of the given data; yet another test consists of asking the candidate to draft a letter dealing with an aspect of a specific administrative problem which calls for a "a tactful solution", etc... The U.K. testing procedure is lengthy lasting almost two days and is heavily "psychology oriented."¹⁴ The three member assessing Board comprises one senior or retired civil servant, a young civil

servant of principal's rank and a psychologist. In 1952 the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission of India went to U.K. to study these tests and reported that they do give a better insight into the personality traits of candidates. But little was done to seriously introduce these tests. The Union Public Service Commission merely stayed content with extending the time given for the interview and introducing an element of "debate".

Since in our country, bureaucracy will not be able to contribute to development unless it first possesses a healthy rural bias, our recruitment system will have to devise suitable measures for testing such a bias in prospective candidates. Some attempts seem to have been made in this direction lately. Thus, since 1980, we are informed,¹⁵ the Union Public Service Commission has begun the practice of asking candidates particularly those with a rural background, such meaningful and relevant questions as what changes he has observed taking place in his environment in the last ten or fifteen years, how these changes have affected the rural community in which he lives, etc. In the case of urban candidates it is necessary to probe what the candidate thinks of his countrymen and how he thinks he (or the nation) could help them. Hugh Tinker reported how an official told him, "I do not like to spend a night in the village. I have nothing to say to the villagers nor have they to me."¹⁶ Obviously, civil servants with such attitudes would not have been in the services if our recruitment was more broad-based, imaginative and development-oriented. One thing is clear. Unless the qualities that make for a development-oriented bureaucrat are demanded, they will not be on offer.

Having tried to recruit the personnel with the correct rural cum development bias and orientation, we should also take care to see that life is not made unduly hard for our urban youth who, fired with the zeal to uplift the poor and change the rural scene, may opt for rural postings. One reason for the reluctance of our young recruits to take up pioneering work in backward areas, is the lack of reward or compensation. Positive incentives like increased allowance, liberal leave facilities, etc. should be provided for work in difficult areas.

Training for Development

Since 1969, IAS probationers are made to undergo what has come to be called the "sandwich training programme", comprising of a six month foundation cum professional course at the National

Academy of Administration at Mussorie, followed by training on-job (usually in one of the states) and a come-back to the Academy for a final six month institutional training. The training programme during the foundation course (three months) confines itself to the essentials of typical college subjects such as Public Administration, Law, Political Theory, Indian Constitution, Indian History, and to the teaching of Hindi and some regional language. After passing the foundation course examination, the IAS probationers prepare for the professional course examination (another three months) for which all those subjects introduced to the probationers at the foundation course are taught in greater detail with special emphasis on Law and Economics. The training is based primarily on the lecture method along with tutorial and study groups which are formed to discuss problems arising from lectures.¹⁷

The one year training in the states usually consists of the following: (a) a short period in the state secretariat; (b) work in the Collector's office; (c) work in treasury and accounts; (d) acquaintance with settlement and land records; (e) work in police office and inspection of police stations; (f) work in development departments such as agriculture, co-operation, panchayats, irrigation; (g) work in the sub-divisional office; and (h) magisterial and other judicial work. During the last six months of institutional training, the probationers come back to the Academy and discuss administrative problems confronted during practical training. The course seeks to be problem-oriented.

Two facts about the present training programme stand out. Firstly, the training programme is still, by and large, an extension of university education; and secondly, it is (as the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Public Administration complained in 1974) rather "diffused", not concentrating on developing the "development orientation" referred to earlier.

The training programme for the probationers needs to be re-structured to equally emphasize four basic components of the training programme, *viz.*, the knowledge component, the skills component, the behaviour component and the value component.

The knowledge component should consist of imparting essential information regarding history and culture (world and Indian) as well as regarding legal, social, economic and political institutions. The information imparted must necessarily include knowledge of problems concerning industry and commerce since these have a vital bearing on the economy of developing societies.

Secondly, among the skills to be emphasised, mention must be made of leadership, problem-solving, management, communications, research and evaluation. The young probationers must especially be warned against bureaucratic rigidity. A sense of pride must be inculcated in them for doing and achieving and not merely for sticking to rules. As the study made by Jain and Chaudhuri of the two states of Madhya Pradesh and Punjab reveals: "In the initial stages of development a little flexibility in the existing system of bureaucratization is perhaps desirable and necessary", but once the programme gets going it is perhaps better to have a more bureaucratic (rule bound and authority conscious) structure. Jain and Chaudhuri conclude that "there is need to inculcate a constellation of different value systems, other than the strictly bureaucratic one amongst all officials particularly those engaged in achieving development targets."¹⁸ The skills component must also include training in public relations management in a democratic society.

Trainees must not only be made aware of the crucial importance of framing a development programme, they must also be skilled in monitoring details of its progress and in assessing its implications for the larger organisation and the country. The central challenge of social transformation, as the Asian Colloquium indicated, is to build into our large bureaucratic organisation "a capacity for innovative learning, for identifying and articulating alternative development plans and/or schemes, for management of systems (rather than management of specific projects), for continuous self-monitoring and rapid self-control, over more formalised planning and evaluation methodologies. In short, our training schemes must aim at producing 'managerial administrators'.¹⁹

The third and fourth components of the training programme are the behaviour and value components. Under the former, the trainees will have to be given some understanding of behavioural sciences like psychology and the socialization process of individuals; while under the latter, attempts should be made to make the trainees imbibe and understand the ethical and value systems within which the bureaucrats and public managers must work *viz.*, personal and social values such as responsibility, integrity, loyalty, commitment to work etc. Since a spirit of team work is more necessary in the case of development, it is necessary that values like status and caste or class consciousness get low priority among officers involved in development tasks.

Finally, training cannot be treated as a one time affair. This is because fresh IAS recruits, who, to begin with may be good, (in the sense of having had a good exposure to the four component training programme) can deteriorate rapidly once they cross the age of 40/45 years and come to occupy key posts. At this age and juncture, they rarely add to their store of knowledge while their spirit of public service has almost vanished. Hence a rigorous mid-career training cum evaluation becomes necessary. A scheme of rewarding those who do well in such mid-career testing could also be instituted by granting those who do well a higher retiring age.²⁰

Professionalising the Civil Service

The above discussion regarding recruitment and training for development has been based on the present personnel structure which gives pre-eminence to the generalist administrator.

However, to meet the needs of rapid development, the time has come to look at the structure itself and modify it with a view to introducing into our civil service more specialism and professionalism. Our present civil service is largely generalist in the sense that the men in the top key positions (held by the IAS) are recruited on the basis of general educational background, irrespective of the subjects studied in the university. The generalist IAS recruit is thus often a highly intelligent young man who may have had his education in classics, linguistics or philosophy; this liberal education is sought to be supplemented by certain personal qualities of character and poise. In short, what is sought is broad background rather than specialised or functional knowledge and selection is not on the basis of pre-entry professional training or qualifications.

The conflict between the generalist and the specialist, especially in India, developed mainly because the generalist IAS, due to historical reasons has come to man the higher and top positions in the various departments. To make matters worse, the IAS still continues to adopt an air of superiority and continues to under-rate the specialist and his advice.

With Independence and the adoption of planned development, naturally the number of specialists in services increased manifold and soon they began to take a stand against the undue predominance of the IAS in Indian administration. Indicative of the growing resentment at the shabby treatment of specialists, the 'All India Confederation of Central Government Officers Associa-

tion" was formed in 1970 and took a pledge to break the monopoly of the IAS.

The major issue before us is: if the generalist IAS is really over-rated and its predominance is hindering development, how can we reduce it?

Two major and considerably valid criticisms that can be made against the IAS or generalist predominance are: one, today it is not easy for a specialist to be appointed to secretarial or administrative posts. As a result, the specialists have hardly any direct dealings with ministers and they have to deal with ministers through the mediation of generalists. Two, the present arrangement does not enable the specialist to influence policy and make the maximum contribution he is capable of. Today the specialist's main complaint is that although he has a right to demand that his advice be sought, this is hardly done; and that often, even in the realm of purely technical matters relating to means, his advice is not always acted upon.²¹

The IAS spokesmen seek to rebut these charges by saying that specialists are generally "one goal men" for whom one goal takes priority over all else, while for the generalist the technical aspect is subservient, to the broader politico-administrative goals. In short, the specialist, it is claimed, is an over enthusiast (by training he is not given to look at all aspects) and therefore disqualified for taking final decisions.²²

On the basis of the valid points in the arguments put forth by both the generalist and the specialist, the following suggestions can be made to restructure our civil service with a view to accelerate development:

Firstly, where the work of the department is purely technical or scientific or industrial, as the Estimates Committee recommended in its 93rd Report to Parliament (1966), technical men should be inducted as heads of the departments. This is increasingly done. Secondly, where the heads of departments are men with generalist backgrounds, joint discussions by both the generalist and the specialist with the minister should be encouraged. For this the IAS must be advised to give up its exclusive group feeling and refrain from attitudes which exacerbate relations with specialists. Finally, attempts should be made to professionalise the civil servant with the generalist background. This can be done by following the Administrative Reforms Commission's²³ recommendation to carve out a separate functional field for the

IAS. This field should be land revenue administration, magisterial functions and regulatory work in all fields except financial.

In short, restructuring our bureaucracy to meet the needs of development requires that all posts which are essentially functional requiring specialised skills, or, posts for which close familiarity with the field is essential for success of the job, should be encadred into a separate functional service. As the Administrative Reforms Commission recommended, staffing must be functional and posts which require special knowledge of say taxation, agriculture or industry, should be given to persons drawn from the functional service. As it is we have quite some uni-functional services like accountancy, audit, postal as well as technical services like engineering. Many more specialised services need to be set up.

Staffing must become "functional" all the way to the top. Today when it comes to filling a post in the Delhi secretariat, the men taken for the posts of joint secretary and above are from the IAS cadres, even if the posts require special functional knowledge. This must cease to be. To illustrate, a joint secretary in the department of agriculture need not be an IAS man promoted after years of service in the district as magistrate or Collector, but should be a qualified agriculture science man, drawn from the men of the agriculture department either at the Centre or the states. The Administrative Reforms Commission had suggested the filling of all posts above the level of joint secretary by some sort of "mid-career proving of abilities". If such mid-career testing is made open to all services, this will give the men from the uni-functional/technical services, a chance to become heads of departments and will prevent the most generalist of administrators, the IAS, from getting an undue share of higher posts in the secretariat.

If the country has the desire to derive maximum benefit from the services of specialists, these experts should be adequately motivated and compensated. This motivation does not come by providing monetary incentives alone, it comes from a sense of equality with others, from a sense of dignity and pride in the profession and a sense of involvement in shaping the destiny of our country by contributing to its development and progress. This is why the time has come to bring about a planned "deglamourization" of the "secretariat" and start a parallel development for enhancing the status and authority of the various specialist positions. The emoluments structure of all services is in need of urgent revision so that every specialist has the opportunity of rising to the highest level even if he chooses to stay in his own specialist stream without going in for an administrative assignment.

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