

Bureaucratic System in the Era of New Public Administration: A Study Based on Bureaucracy in Contemporary Indian Society

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Abstract

Bureaucratic structure during the sixteenth century as mentioned by Max Weber contained many elements of centralization. During the period the governmental structure also centralized in character. But after the emergence of New Public Administration and New Public Service, the bureaucratic structure and functioning subjected to change. This changes drastically altered conventional type of administrative system. In the era of globalization, the license permit raj came to an end and instead its place a new administrative structure, which is citizen friendly addressing the diverse needs of the people. But majority of third world countries such as India, this has not happened. The structure of bureaucracy still remains centralized and hierarchical as what Max Weber mentioned during the 16th century. The causes may be studied and analyzed. This paper is an attempt to disclose all these things in detail.

Key Words: Bureaucracy, hegemony, globalization, new public management, new public service.

Introduction

Max Weber, the German sociologist and famous protagonists of bureaucracy, pointed out that bureaucracy constitutes the efficient and rational way in which one can organize human activity. Systematic processes and organized hierarchies were necessary to maintain order and maximize efficiency (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005)¹.

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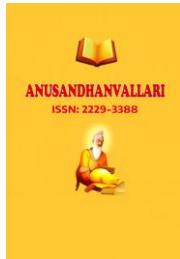
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The term 'bureaucracy' is a combination of French word 'bureau' with the Greek word 'Kratos' which means political control originated from a desk or office. The French economist Jacques Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay coined the term in mid-18th century. As a literary theme it was richly developed by Plato and Machiavelli which has the characteristic form of public administration, especially with extensive territorial sovereignty.

The institution of bureaucracy was dominant feature in ancient Indian society, where it functioned in different forms. This concept was more popular during the 16th century. This does not indicate the other parts of the world was unknown the concept. Chanakya's work 'Artha Shastra' had many descriptions of bureaucracy. The bureaucratic set up mentioned by him was not only meant for good administration, but it was a platform of seamless information transmission system. Many rulers of India executed and maintained, a well-established bureaucratic system, which was the back born of revenue administration for those periods. Perhaps the success of Mauryan Empire was not only based upon the political structure but also upon the wonderful communication techniques as embedded in Artha sastra (Boesche, R., 2003)².

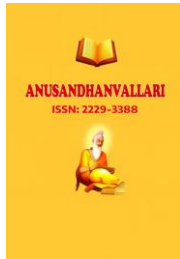
Contemporary Indian administrative system is a specimen of ancient administrative system of pre-historic regimes. Evidence of bureaucracy, in India's oldest history, is found in the Indus Valley civilization itself. In view of the systematic structure of most of the cities of Indus Civilization, standard and planned construction of measurable weights, many scholars believe that entire Sindhu region was organized under the same vast empire, whose administration was in the hands of a huge Bureaucracy. After the Indus Valley Civilization, due to the prevalence of small states in the Rig Vedic era, there was presence of only a few officers in the administrative system. But in the post Vedic period when the change of 'Jan' was happening in 'Jan pad', there was an increase in the number of administrative officers. In terms of administrative facilities, many departments have been formed in the states. During this period, the government used to operate the administration with the help of 'Rathin'(minister and administrative staff). There was also a major role of Bureaucracy in the republics of Buddhist era. Although in the republics of Buddhist era, the actual power was vested with the Sabha (assembly).

Besides this, there are many detailed descriptions about the important role performed by bureaucracy in Maurya administration. Since a completely autocratic-centralize government was established in the Maurya Empire, so the well-structured system of the huge bureaucracy was a great need of that time (Deva 1984)³. In Maurya period, 18 departments were created, which was called the 'Tirtha', for the convenience of bureaucratic administration. There was a president for the operation and inspection of each department, which was called *Amatya*. In fact, *Amatya* refers to the bureaucrats, administration and judiciary. Since they actually administer the state, their importance is next to the sovereign ruler. Kautilya gave detailed explanations of the appointment and work of

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these Amartya's in his Arth shastra. In such a setup, administration was controlled by the elites. This led to recruitment in administration on the basis of caste, heredity etc. (Chand, 1961:152)⁴.

In the medieval (sultanate) India, there was a fundamental structural change in the central power and the Muslims were rulers reigning as a new ruling class. Administration of the Sultanate was primarily focussed on military administration. Sultans of Delhi had made a systematic arrangement of officers from the beginning of their rule. Sultan's position was supreme arrangement of officers from the beginning of their rule and the position of Sultan was supreme in governance. The government was divided into several departments and these departments were placed in the control of different officers, who used to provide assistance to Sultan in governing his governance. It is also worth mentioning here that there were many similarities in the administration system in Delhi Sultanate and in the earlier governance system of country.

Bureaucracy in British colonial Era

The establishment of British State under the British East India Company in India, laid the foundation for unprecedented development of public services in India. The structure and function of the Indian bureaucracy during the British regime was highly conditioned by colonial and economic hegemony (Prasad, 1974)⁵. Lord Cornwallis was the first governor among the British governor generals, who felt the need for a strong and cohesive bureaucracy in terms of administrative convenience. According to the centrally sponsored scheme of year 1781, the revenue board was formed. Six year later, in 1787, the work of district was established East Indian college was established in the year 1806 in Hailey bury, England, in which bi-annual course of civil service officers stated. Lord William Bentinck's arranged for appointment of Indians on upper administrative positions. As a result, Indians also got an opportunity to participate in the administration. By this time, two types of services, namely, the covenanted and uncovenanted were born in the colonial administration of India, in which European citizens had a monopoly on the covenanted services. The important element of the Indian bureaucratic legacy namely, the district overlord or collector, was taken over by the British and instituted all over their Asian and African possessions. It still forms the foundation of field administration in all these countries after independence.

Bureaucracy in the Era of New Public Administration

The Weberian concept of bureaucracy has been criticised by many. To the critics, Weberian concept did not fit in the real-life administration. Hence, the post-Weberian views has emphasised on decentralisation and bottom-up approach. The bureaucracy of this type, is not favouring rigid model of administration, instead, it aims an administration, which is responsive, responsible, accountable, transparent and goal oriented. Max Weber considered ancient Asian bureaucracies as irrelevant for the modern world. The relational aspect of bureaucracy, its interaction with the public and its subservient to the public interest is not properly articulated in Weber's theoretical construct. James D Thompson has puts it "classical theory is pre-occupied with behavioural relations ordered by a single unified authority structure from which client is excluded (Thompson, 1962)⁶.

Globalisation had created far reaching changes in every field of activity including public administration. These changes has affected public administration due to the impact of pressures generated on it by global institutions,

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information technology and increasing concern for efficiency and productivity (Welsh & Wong, 1998)⁷. Globalisation has no doubt, changed the centrally planned market structures. The nature and process of public administration have been severely affected by the changing perceptions of the role of the state, managerial orientation in governance, market drawn approach to development and increasing advocacy of the contemporary roles of government, market and civil society. Due to globalisation public administration seems to be moving towards protection of citizens' rights, ethical values, research and training. (Farazmand, 1999)⁸. The management orientation in Public in public administration has changed the bureaucratic set up from a centralised hierarchical legal to participatory. The new model in public administration condemned the traditional public administration as a failure. The emergence of communication movement as a result of globalisation, provides a broader perspective on society as comprising new forms of community working with the spirit of mutual concern and co-operation. It is beyond doubt that market techniques such as privatisation, consumer orientation, entrepreneurship and performance orientation are aimed at improving the efficiency of public administration (Bhattacharya, 2001)⁹.

Today governance is all about efficient and effective provision of goods and services. Public administration exists for the betterment of the public service by providing services such as health, education, economic security, maintenance of law and order, national defence etc. In this context, James Midgley's typology of state's responses towards citizen participation is worth mentioning. The four typological responses, suggested by him, are 'anti participation', 'manipulative', 'incremental' and 'participatory'. The anti-participatory- mode explains that in the capitalist system is not interested in ameliorating the conditions of the downtrodden. The manipulative mode seeks to neutralise political opposition by co-opting autonomous movements with the ulterior motive of gaining control over them. The incremental mode has an ambivalent approach to community participation. The participatory mode is characterised by state's own initiative to create institutions of community participation to ensure effective involvement of the people in grass roots of development (Bhattacharya, 2002)¹⁰.

The globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation movement drastically changed the bureaucratic set in the world. These changes brought the bureaucracy more people centric, competitive with private enterprises, free from red-tapism. The traditional type of bureaucracy was hierarchical authoritarian and legal. This type of bureaucracy disappeared altogether in the contemporary world. Profit motive was not a concern for traditional bureaucracy across the world in those days. Though the concept of bureaucracy has drastically changed in the world in the globalised era.

Bureaucracy in Contemporary Indian Society

Bureaucratic dominance has been a constant theme in the literature of administration in the developing countries due to their common legacy of imperial rule. The administration among the third world countries lacks public participation and accountability and the major administrative benefits goes in favour of influential and powerful elite. Administrative discretion, delegated legislation and administrative adjudication have effect of increasing powers of the executive. The developing countries like India as Fred W Riggs, would say the "transitional societies," which face problems such as unstable politics, inherent poverty, economic depression, social upheaval, inefficient administrative systems, out of-date civil service systems, and so on (Riggs, 1964)¹¹. Governance in

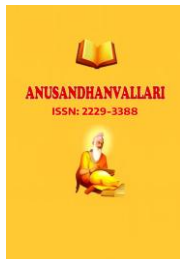
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India is the greatest challenge to politicians as well as bureaucrats due to her size, diversity and complexity. The civil servants in India along with the elected political leaders' shoulder major responsibility in the actual administration and governance of the country. Here one thing everybody should be kept in mind, in a democracy, the civil service cannot substitute the elected representatives and the political executives. But it has a distinctive role to play. Indian administrative system which is being used by the politicians for their selfish interests, the bureaucracy is probably the only hope of the country. The lower echelons of the bureaucracy are unable to resist the pressures of politicians and a substantial portion of it has traditions of corruption, nepotism, and feudalistic subservience to those in power. The Indian civil service does not have adequate protection from the tyranny of bosses (Ranganathan Rajgopal & Gadkari, 2000)¹².

The process of globalisation is not uniform in different parts of the world with old inequalities being sustained by new myths. The responsibility for perpetuating inequalities-intra-state inequalities rests at least partially with the states of the South or Third World such as India. The policy of liberalisation of 1991 in India has reflected clearly how lack of transparency, corruption, and mismanagement could cause such disastrous consequences. politico-administrative corruption percolated into the society and thus created social tensions, as priorities were distorted and inefficiency triumphed over efficiency. The need for institutional innovation to deal with corruption and citizen grievances has been felt in India. Various committees and commissions, had been set up to bring administrative changes, and create new controlling agencies have made many worthwhile suggestions from time to time. For instance, the Santhanam Committee on Prevention of corruption thought that it was necessary to devise adequate methods of control over exercise of discretion by different categories of government servants. The Administrative Reforms Commission set up in 1966 took up on priority basis the matter of redressal of citizen's grievances. The commission recommended two-tier machinery of Lokpal and Loka Yuktha for the redressal of citizen grievances. Lokpal would deal with complaints against ministers and secretaries to the government at the central as well as state levels. The Seventh All India Conference of Lokayukthas and Upa-Lokayukthas held in 2003 suggested that constitutional status be conferred on these institutions to give more teeth to fight corruption.

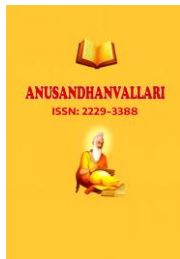
The several institutional experimentations have made at the different levels-centre, state and local, has not resolved the diverse issues confronting the administration in the country. The issue of corruption in public administration has again and again come up for discussion at different levels and in different forms. The Citizens' Charter initiative is the latest mechanism to define the relationship between citizens and administration. It demands from government and other service providers that a certain degree of accountability, transparency, quality and choice of services be made available to the people.

Despite an elaborate system of Administrative Adjudication, bureaucracy in India has been authoritarian in character and monopoliser of power. Indian bureaucracy still seems to be suffering from the hangover of colonial era. Coming from a narrow social base, bureaucracy in India, is unable to appreciate the problems of development, especially in rural India. Indian bureaucracy is confronting certain general and specific issues. The general issues are endemic overstaffing and ill-equipped service accompanied by unsustainable staffing expenditure. Lack of performance culture is another general issue facing Indian bureaucracy. Lack of accountability, political interference and gradual erosion of public service values are the general issues facing Indian bureaucracy. The specific issues facing Indian bureaucracy are politicisation and communalisation of civil service (Bava, 1997)¹³.

Globalization process had made many impacts in every aspect of life, including the functioning of the government. As a result, the processes and institutions of governance, state and its implementing agency bureaucracy, has

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undergone a transformation. Bureaucracy, in its traditional form, is finding it difficult to cope up with these challenges and is therefore adopting various measures to respond to them. The emergence of New Public Management (NPM), New Public Service and New Public administration has transformed the administrative system. In order to make NPM reforms successful in India it is important to have measures which help promote the participatory governance in the form of citizen centric reforms like introducing citizen charter, giving space to NGOs as supplementary public agencies, decentralization and empowerment of localities through strengthening the grass root governance, various personnel reforms and other administrative measures like reorganization of government department.

New public services a more people-oriented administrative model, must be incorporated as the governance model. It calls for initiation and implementation of reforms from below, with the involvement of the people in the decision making and implementation process. It also envisages enabling reforms, such as reforms in the education system, health sector, empowering the local self-government. The performance of NPM reforms is very much reflected in the administration of the Indian Railways. There has been a mixed bag of successes and failures in the Indian railways following the adoption of selected features of NPM reforms. There is a need of further reforms in Railways particularly in the personnel system.

Conclusion

Bureaucracy is an important instrument for smooth running of administration in each and every society, from ancient to modern. This concept has been subjected to change to the changing times. The concept was popular in Europe and Asian in ancient period onwards. It was centralised and hierarchical in character during ancient period. The Artha Shastra of Kautilya contained lot of descriptions about the concept and subsequently, the rulers of the country adopted certain specific administrative system specifically in the field of revenue and military administration. The entry of colonial powers in India changed the structure and function of bureaucracy. The bureaucratic set up was more powerful and hierarchic during the British era. They recruited the right personal for the governance of each and every department. After the British had left this country, the independent Indian government followed the foot print of British for a long period. But the advent of globalisation changed the entire world scenario. The world becomes one umbrella and import-export restrictions has been lifted as per the World trade WTO agreement. This had its repercussions in the bureaucracy and civil service of the world. The bureaucracy of the world became citizen friendly and decentralised. India had also a recipient of globalisation. But in India the bureaucracy has not changed completely. The over dominance of civil service can be seen in every field of administration. The presence of incapable and inefficient political leaders followed by lack of political dialogue and discussion made the bureaucracy in a pitiable condition. But the bureaucratic system prevailed in the country is still have traditional soul. The authority is still centralised and hierarchical. It has never reached the doorsteps of common man. Centralisation tendency is growing day by day. Though the country is in favour of New Public Administration, Public Choice Approach, still something is missing in practice. Red tapism, corruption and hierarchy are still a common feature of Indian bureaucracy. These maladies can be rectified only by efficient political leadership with the help of efficient administration. Here the role of citizen is also rose to the occasion engaging a pro-active role in strengthening the administrative system. Then only the administration will reach at the door steps of common man.